



**Governance and Audit
Committee**

Tuesday, 13 October 2020

Subject: Member Development Annual Report

Report by:

Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer:

Ele Snow
Democratic and Civic Officer

Ele.Snow@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

To review Member Development for the previous Civic Year and to agree relevant actions for the current Civic Year

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. To accept this report as an accurate reflection of Member Development for 2019/20 and 2020/21 to date; and**
- 2. To offer suggestions for future development opportunities, to be considered by the Member Development Group.**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: Members must receive training to sit on certain previously agreed Committees. If this training is not provided, the Council could be open to judicial review.

Financial: FIN/79/21/TJB

Member Development has existing budget of £5,200. There are no new financial implications at this stage and it is hoped that any proposals could be contained within existing budgets. This may be reconsidered once alternative delivery options are identified.

Staffing: Any staffing requirements for training events or development opportunities would be met within existing staff numbers and there are no additional duties identified outside of existing job roles.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: Consideration has been given to how training expectations may impact Members' travel requirements and how these can be limiting according to location or disability. Alternative methods of delivery will aim to further alleviate any individual difficulties.

Data Protection Implications: N/A

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: The provision of online training will reduce travel time required for Councillors and therefore support carbon reduction policies.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations: N/A

Health Implications: N/A

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

[Annual report to G&A Committee 15 October 2019](#)

[Update Report to G&A Committee 16 June 2020](#)

Risk Assessment: N/A

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

x

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for the monitoring of Member Development and has committed to receiving an annual report in order to maintain oversight.
- 1.2 The annual report would usually seek to demonstrate what has been achieved through the previous Civic Year (2019/2020) and review the focus of Member Development for the coming months and years.
- 1.3 Sadly, due to the global pandemic, national lockdown and the 'new normal' of working from home (with large meetings of people being prohibited), Member Development has been largely frozen with the view to resuming with renewed vigour once the national picture was more settled.
- 1.4 As it is now obvious that the restrictions will remain in place for some time, alternative solutions, as well as the online learning platform, are being used, as detailed in this report.

2 Summary of Development

- 2.1 From May 2019 to January 2020, apart from the continuation of Induction Sessions, there were eight sessions provided for Members with an average attendance rate of 25% of all Councillors. This is an increase on the previous year where there was an average attendance rate of just 18%.
- 2.2 In addition to the internally provided sessions, such as those for Statement of Accounts, Risk Management and Treasury Management, Members were offered the opportunity to attend workshops for Planning, Social Media and Scrutiny all of which were facilitated by external presenters. These were all well received with an above average rate of attendance for each session, including additional Members to those who had been recommended to attend.
- 2.3 A scheduled session on Chairing Skills, due to have taken place on 2 April 2020, was cancelled due to lockdown however a replacement session was held virtually on 24 September 2020 with 11 Councillors in attendance. Feedback from this session has been sought and, once collated, will help form a view on whether the workshop will be repeated in the near future, or added to the programme of development sessions as a permanent fixture over a two or four year period, in line with other committee-related sessions.
- 2.4 There was an increased number of Councillors attending additional development events, such as the first East Midlands Scrutiny Conference and a series of one-day sessions for newly Elected Councillors. Whilst these events do not directly come under the remit of the Member Development Group, attendance is recorded on individual training records.

- 2.5 The planned roll out for access to the online training platform was agreed by the Governance and Audit Committee on 16 June 2020 and the work plan for this is detailed in section three of this report.
- 2.6 The Member Development Group has not yet met in the current Civic Year however it is anticipated that the first meeting will be held prior to Christmas 2020. The purpose of the meeting will be to review the roll out of the online learning platform and discuss best actions for the group under current circumstances.
- 2.7 In June 2020 the By-Election Induction Programme template was approved for future use, meaning the Council now has a full plan in place to ensure any new Councillors joining through a by-election receive the same level of induction and support as those who join through all-out elections. This is a positive step as it had previously been identified as a weakness by new and existing Councillors alike. This had been identified as a work stream for the Member Development Group and has now been successfully completed.

3 Online Learning Platform – Learning Pool

- 3.1 At their meeting on 16 June 2020, the Governance and Audit Committee approved the roll out to all Councillors of the online learning platform, LearningPool. The intention of this is to provide all Members with the opportunity to undertake development courses in their own time and at their own pace. There will be courses available on topics such as Data Protection and Safeguarding (to replace those sessions which would usually be provided by Council Officers in the Guildhall) and there will also be a selection of ‘own-choice’ courses which Members are free to undertake at their own leisure.
- 3.2 Whilst the initial roll out of LearningPool has been somewhat delayed, the updated work plan is provided below. The roll out will include individual contact with each Councillor (where required) with the option of virtual support sessions. It has also been agreed that the amendments requested to the home page can be actioned in order to ensure easy access for Members.

3.2 Work Plan

Time Frame	Action	Responsible Officer
By 31 October	Login details to be provided to all Councillors	Demo Services Officer in liaison with HR Senior Officer
By 30 November	All 1:1 virtual support sessions to have been provided where required	Demo Services Officer
Between 16 November and 18 December	Meeting of the Member Development Group to assess roll out, receive feedback,	Demo Services Officer in liaison with Chairman of G&A Cttee

	suggest any further amendments, agree next actions	
January 2021 onwards	Focus to be resumed on learning needs of Councillors to include mandatory learning programme for those sessions with a 2yr expiry limit.	Demo Services Officer in liaison with Member Development Group / Demo Services Team / Team Managers for provision of sessions

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 The impact of restrictions as a result of the Covid-19 global pandemic has been considerable. There is now, however, an increased number of presenters offering virtual workshops (such as the Chairing Skills workshop undertaken just this month) and this is likely to be the future of Member Development, to a greater or lesser extent, for as long as social distancing restrictions remain in place.