



**Governance and Audit
Committee**

Tuesday, 9 November 2021

Subject: Member Development Annual Report

Report by:

Monitoring Officer

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To review Member Development for the past 12 months and to agree relevant actions into Civic Year 2022/23

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. To accept this report as an accurate reflection of Member Development for the period October 2020 to September 2021; and**
- 2. To support the proposed action plan regarding future development sessions and initial preparations for the 2023 Full Induction**

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/124/22/SL

Member Development has existing budget of £9,000 pa for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. There are no new financial implications at this stage and it is hoped that any proposals could be contained within existing budgets.

Staffing: Any staffing requirements for training events or development opportunities would be met within existing staff numbers.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: As far as possible, sessions are provided in differing formats and at a variety of times in order to accommodate individual requirements.

Data Protection Implications: None identified

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: Priority is given to providing sessions in a virtual capacity where possible in order to minimise the need for Councillors to travel, thus helping to reduce associated emissions.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations: None identified

Health Implications: None identified

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

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 last report was received by the Committee in October 2020 and detailed the impact on the provision of Member Development sessions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.3 Over the 12 months since the last report, Member Development sessions have continued to run, albeit on a smaller scale. This has been primarily due to reduced resources available within the Democratic Services Team. However, with a refreshed team structure in place and recruitment underway, there will be increased capacity to move forward with renewed focus.
- 1.4 Member Development continues to be a priority for the Democratic Services Team, with Officers committing to continue the work of the Member Development Group with plans for the coming year and the 2023 Full Induction Programme following the all-out elections.

2 Summary of Development Sessions October 2020 – September 2021

2.1 Table of Development Sessions

Month	Session Title	Note
November 2020	Mid Year MTFP and Revised Budget	Workshop
January 2021	Treasury Management	
February / March 2021	LGiU Finances Series	A series of four sessions covering basics of financial understanding for Members and focussed sessions on the MTFP and Budget
May > July 2021	By-Election Induction Programme	Amended programme owing to national restrictions: series of 1-2-1 sessions with newly elected Councillor and key Officers
May 2021	Planning Development Session – Determining a Planning Application	First of a series of sessions open to District Councillors and Parish / Town Councils
	Budget Consultation	Workshop
	Levelling Up Fund	Workshop

June 2021	Planning Development Session – The Role of Councillors & Parish Councils in Planning	
	Future Delivery of WL Markets	Workshop
July 2021	Planning Development Session – Highways & Flood Risk	
August 2021	Selective Licensing	Workshop
September 2021	Planning Development Session – Heritage in Planning	
	Emergency Planning	

- 2.2 Overall, attendance at Member Development sessions for the period of October 2020 to September 2021 has increased, with some sessions seeing over 30% attendance. This is an increase on previous years and is considered to be as a result of sessions being held online. Without the need to travel, Councillors need only commit to the time of the session, rather than accommodating sometimes up to an hour's travel either side of the session. There are initial signs that attendance may be on the wane, however, this will be monitored over the coming months with figures reported back to the Member Development Group as necessary.
- 2.3 Initial concerns regarding ease of discussion in virtual sessions appear to have been unfounded, with sessions continuing to generate the same levels of discussion seen in face-to-face sessions.
- 2.4 It is anticipated that, for the foreseeable future, sessions will continue to be provided in a virtual setting. This is in recognition of the continuing risk of Covid-19, the Council's focus on 'virtual first' and informal feedback from Councillors. Future delivery options will be revisited, particularly for the Full Induction Programme.
- 2.5 Officers have recognised that the agreed roll out of the online learning platform, LearningPool, is yet to take place. A small number of individual Councillors have been provided access to the system however it has not yet become the 'go-to' platform for online learning sessions. This will be addressed within the Democratic Services Team and in collaboration with the Member Development Group.

3 Member Development Group

- 3.1 The next meeting of the Member Development Group will be scheduled to take place in November 2021. The primary focus, aside from the roll-out of LearningPool, will be the 2023 Full Induction Programme. There are expected to be significant changes to the 2019 programme, not only in delivery options but also relevance of subject areas covered.

- 3.2 The Member Development Group will also be asked to identify any development needs for the coming 18 months prior to the election. Following a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, it has been requested that Emergency Planning sessions be scheduled on an annual basis.
- 3.3 Officers will also discuss future reporting expectations with the Member Development Group as it is anticipated that there will be the need for approval of the Full Induction Programme, outside of the usual report annual reporting timeframe.

4 Proposed Action Plan

- 4.1 The table below details the proposed actions to be taken by Officers, in collaboration with the Member Development Group.

Action	Timescale
Meeting of the Member Development Group (MDG)	November 2021
Agree future development sessions from December 2021 to April 2022	November 2021 (at the MDG meeting)
Agree the timeframe for the roll-out of LearningPool	November 2021 (at the MDG meeting)
Commence discussions regarding Full Induction Programme 2023 (content, delivery options)	November 2021 (at the MDG meeting)
Meeting of the MDG – review initial plan for Full Induction Programme, agree development sessions for 2022/23	March 2022
Annual Reporting to align with the Civic Year	May 2022
Meeting(s) of the MDG	Between June 2022 – December 2022
Full Induction Programme 2023 to be approved by the Committee	By December 2022

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The upcoming months will see a significant increase in Member Development focussed work. Working with the Member Development Group to finalise the schedule for the next 18 months as well as the Full Induction Programme, there will be increased opportunity for Member involvement, by attendance at sessions as well as shaping the future delivery options. Increased Officer capacity will also enable further expansion of the Member Development work stream.

5.2 Members are asked to:

5.2.1 Accept this report as an accurate reflection of Member Development for the period October 2020 to September 2021; and

5.2.2 Support the proposed action plan regarding future development sessions and initial preparations for the 2023 Full Induction.