



**Governance & Audit  
Committee**

**Tuesday, 11 June 2024**

**Subject: Member Development Annual Report 2023/2024**

Report by:

Director of Corporate Services

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To review Member Development activity for the Civic Year 2023/24 and to receive and agree the proposed focus for the Member Development Group for Civic Year 2024/25.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

- 1. The report be accepted as an accurate reflection of Member Development activity for the 2023/24 Civic Year; and**
- 2. The proposed Terms of Reference for the Member Development Group, and subsequent work programme, for the 2024/25 Civic Year be approved.**

## 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.

Under the Local Government Act 1999, Councils must legally deliver 'Best Value', i.e. each council must be able to show that it has arrangements to secure continuous improvement in how it carries out its work. The Best Value Statutory Guidance, published in 2024, provides examples of where a council may be deemed as 'failing' by not upholding its statutory duty, which may, in turn, trigger a statutory Best Value Inspection to determine whether a Council is upholding its legal duties.

One of the indicators of failure listed in the statutory guidance is "lack of engagement with, and/or poor quality or non-existent member and officer training and development offer." West Lindsey's member training and development offer is designed and reviewed with the Member Development Group to ensure it is fit for purpose, engaging and meaningful, as well as meeting the requirements for statutory training, such as Planning and Licensing. Members are supported and encouraged to attend the training and development events on offer and attendance is monitored and evaluated to ensure continuous learning and improvement.

### **Financial: FIN/38/25/VA**

Member Development has an allocated budget of £10,000 per financial year, with a rolling budget of £9,000 per 'term of office' (ie, between each all-out election). There are no new financial implications at this stage, and it is hoped that any proposals could be contained within existing budget provision.

**Staffing:** Any staffing requirements for training events or development opportunities would be met within existing staff numbers. Since the last annual report was presented to the Governance & Audit Committee, the Democratic Services and Elections Team have recruited to a full-time post: Civic Engagement and Member Development Officer. The job description for this role puts an increased focus on the provision of development opportunities for our Councillors.

**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. Commencing in the autumn of 2023, a dedicated MS Teams channel has been set up to share recordings and associated slide decks / supporting information, for nearly all development sessions. This ensures that development opportunities are open to all Councillors, regardless of location, travel ability, caring or work responsibilities. For those who may be less comfortable using technological options to access such sessions, Officers are able to offer 1-2-1 assistance.

**Data Protection Implications:** There are no implications identified.

**Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:** It is acknowledged that entirely online provision of sessions does provide increased opportunities for supporting the Council's climate and sustainability aspirations. However, it is also acknowledged that the hybrid model of delivery (ie, the option to attend in person or online) has proved popular amongst Councillors and the climate related risks and opportunities have to be balanced with the need to provide effective and valuable development opportunities, in a format that is supported by Councillors.

**Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:** There are no implications arising from this report.

**Health Implications:** There are no implications arising from this report.

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

Report to Governance & Audit Cttee 26 Sept 2023:

[Member Development: Review of Original Induction; Revised Training Programme; Training Principles](#)

**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

## **Executive Summary**

This report provides a brief summary of Member Development activity between May 2023 and September 2023, the period of the initial Full Induction Programme. In September 2023, the Governance and Audit Committee received a report which reviewed the difficulties faced throughout that period, and which set out a renewed approach to run from September 2023 to April 2024.

A summary of that renewed approach, alongside details of improved attendance, limited feedback and additional sessions held, is contained herein and demonstrates the success of the updated programme.

The Member Development Group has been pivotal in re-affirming the focus on Member Development, to which end the Governance and Audit Committee are being asked to approve the updated Terms of Reference for the Group and the proposed work programme for the coming year.

It is anticipated that the Committee will receive a future report seeking approval for the updated Member Development Plan, a standing document that provides a strategic view of Member Development and explains the commitment of the Authority as well as expectations on Councillors and Officers alike.

## **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. The Committee also has parentage of the Member Development Group and as such is required to consider and approve any amendments to the Terms of Reference, and review and approve their work programme.
- 1.2 In addition to the annual report received by the Committee in advance of the May 2023 all out elections, a further report was presented in September 2023. This report sought to revise the provision of the induction programme, following difficulties experienced with the original induction plan (summarised in section two of this report), as well as establish some agreed principles regarding the provision of training for Councillors.
- 1.3 Following the approval of the proposals contained within that report, a renewed induction programme has been delivered between September 2023 and April 2024, details of which are contained within section three of this report.
- 1.4 At this stage, Officers are now focussed on confirming the programme for year two, as well as continuing to develop the full four-year programme, involving early discussions of the 2027 induction programme. Section four explains how this might progress.
- 1.5 The Member Development Group has been instrumental in continuing to provide sessions for Councillors that are both required and worthwhile, as well as being a voice piece for encouraging attendance. The Terms of Reference have been identified as requiring updating, and are attached here as Appendix 2 for approval by the Committee. Additionally, the Group have indicated their work programme for 2024/25, also for approval by the Committee. Further details can be found in section five.

## **2 Initial Roll-Out of the 2023 Induction Programme**

- 2.1 The 2023 Induction Programme was approved by the Governance and Audit Committee at their meeting in January 2023. The programme information was widely shared in advance of the elections through nomination and candidate packs to ensure sufficient communication of what may be expected by successful candidates in those first few weeks.
- 2.2 The elections in May 2023 brought significant changes to the make-up of the Council, as well as bringing a noticeably different range of individuals into the role of Councillor, with a variety of other responsibilities as well.
- 2.3 It became very apparent, very quickly, through limited attendance at induction sessions and informal feedback from Councillors, that the

original Induction Programme was no longer suitable for our new demographic.

2.4 Attendance at sessions from May 2023 to September 2023 was as follows (those marked with \* were held over two sessions):

Session Title	Delivery Method	Attendance		
		No. of Cllrs * Denotes 2 sessions	% of all Cllrs	% of mandatory attendees
How the Council Makes Decisions	In Person	12* (7 / 5)	33%	N/A
Overview of Committees	In Person	11* (7 / 4)	31%	N/A
The Council's Enforcement Role	In Person	11* (5 / 6)	31%	N/A
Your Role in the Local Community	In Person	11* (5 / 6)	31%	N/A
Risks, Protection and Policies	In Person	8	22%	N/A
Data Protection, Freedom of Information	In Person	5	14%	N/A
Use of Chamber Equipment	In Person	11*	31%	N/A
Introduction to Planning	In Person	9	25%	N/A
Member Officer Relations & Communications	In Person	11*	31%	N/A
Safeguarding	In Person	2	6%	N/A
Council Procedure Rules	In Person	6	17%	N/A
Code of Conduct and Disclosable Interests	In Person	6	17%	N/A
Full Day Planning Training	In Person	19	53%	80%
Licensing and Regulatory	In Person	13*	36%	73%

2.5 The overall attendance of Councillors during the induction programme ran at an average of 18%. Eagle-eyed Members will note the significantly higher than average attendance at the full day planning training session, this does slightly skew the statistics. Removing that one session from the equation leaves an average attendance rate of 16%.

2.6 Officers were keen to react to the obvious difficulties being faced by our new and returning Councillors, and with this in mind, the Governance and Audit Committee were requested to approve a new approach.

### 3 Revised Induction Programme September 2023 – April 2024

3.1 The full report as presented to the Committee in September 2023 is available [here](#) and will not be repeated in detail at this point, however, the key points were as follows:

- Training topics to be converted to video briefings, accessible at Members' convenience;
- Hybrid workshops for topics where Members had expressed a desire to engage in projects at a fundamental level, with the need for two-way interaction;
- Theme 1 – Core Governance Training for all Elected Members (provided by an external trainer);
- Theme 2 – Finance, Audit and Scrutiny (provided by an external trainer);
- Theme 3 – Planning: Topical Matters (to be run entirely online and available as recordings after the event).

3.2 Attendance at these sessions has proven much improved with an overall attendance rate of 25% for sessions since September 2023. Attendance for Theme 1 – Core Governance averaged at 33%.

3.2.1 Table detailing attendance

Session Title	Delivery Method	Attendance		
		No. of Cllrs	% of all Cllrs	% of mandatory attendees
Levelling Up Member Workshop	In Person	11	31%	N/A
Cultural Strategy Member Workshop	In Person	7	19%	N/A
Humber 2100+ Member Workshop	Hybrid	9	25%	N/A
Good Governance & Decision Making	Teams	12	33%	N/A
Treasury Management	Hybrid	10	28%	78%
Effective Council and Conduct	Teams	13	36%	N/A
Roles & Relationships	Teams	11	31%	N/A
Scrutiny	Teams	10	28%	90%

Audit Committee	Teams	8	22%	88%
Planning – Decision Making	In Person	9	25%	80%
Roles of Member in Planning	Teams	5	14%	N/A
Planning Development & Flooding	Teams	7	19%	N/A
Planning – Biodiversity/Ecology	Teams	7	19%	N/A
Emergency Planning (LRF)	In Person	8	22%	N/A

3.3 It has not been possible to analyse data in relation to Councillor feedback because the rate of return for the feedback forms is incredibly low. Where forms have been completed, feedback has been positive, however, it is suggested that the Member Development Group review the method of collecting feedback in order to ensure its effectiveness.

3.3.1 Table detailing rate of return for feedback

<b>Session Title</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Forms Returned</b>
Good Governance & Decision Making	12	4
Treasury Management	10	5
Effective Council and Conduct	13	4
Roles & Relationships	11	4
Scrutiny	10	3
Audit Committee	8	2
Planning – Decision Making	9	8
Roles of Member in Planning	5	0
Planning Development & Flooding	7	0
Planning – Biodiversity/Ecology	7	0
Emergency Planning (LRF)	8	0

3.4 A dedicated MS Teams Channel for Member Development has been rolled out, providing a 'one stop shop' for video briefings (on subjects such as Progress and Delivery and Enforcement); session recordings and associated slide decks. There is also a 'Q&A' function. Use of this channel remains low, however Officers have arranged a training session on the use of MS Teams in the hope this will encourage increased engagement with the channel.

3.5 The roll out of Theme 3 – Planning: Topical Matters is ongoing, with the updated schedule of sessions to be confirmed and shared in due course.



- 3.6 To summarise, it has been clear that there has been a noticeable increase in levels of engagement with Member Development sessions since the renewed approach was enacted. There have been some confusions with the location of sessions, however plans have been put in place to minimise this occurring in the future (see section four).

#### **4 Look Ahead – Year Two and Beyond**

- 4.1 As we enter the second year of four, there are fewer mandatory training sessions to be held (these will be repeated in Year Three), however it is a key year for achieving additional goals within Member Development.
- 4.2 Officers have created a 'running list' of sessions due to be arranged (attached to this report as Appendix 1) and will be working with colleagues, Councillors and training providers, to arrange dates for these sessions. The intention is not to rush through the provision of sessions, rather to have them booked and communicated to Councillors with as much notice as possible, as it has been confirmed this assists with greater attendance figures.
- 4.3 As mentioned in paragraph 3.6, there has been some confusion regarding the delivery methods of training sessions. To mitigate this, it has been requested that for the time being, all sessions (as far as possible) are delivered in a hybrid manner. Exceptions to this are expected to be the continuing sessions for Planning Topical Matters and also sessions where external trainer request set delivery methods. It is also anticipated that this approach will be reviewed within year two, to assess impact on attendance, efficacy of sessions and any particular benefits or difficulties.
- 4.4 Year Two will see discussions within the Member Development Group regarding the possible introduction of Personal Development Plans, the review of the Member Development Plan (an overarching document that covers the full four-year offering as well as establishing the expectations on Officers and Councillors alike), and smaller project work such as how to maximise feedback response rates.
- 4.5 It is anticipated that once the MS Teams training session has been completed, there will be greater use of the dedicated Member Development Teams Channel. This will continue to be a focus in Year Two, with Officers expecting there to be a greater opportunity to use video briefings to keep Members informed of project updates and suchlike. There is also an external online training platform that Officer intend to be available to Members, however it has been suggested that the internal MS Teams online materials are the current focus, before adding another layer of online options.
- 4.6 The Group will also be starting the plan for Year Three, to include the mandatory training sessions, and through all discussions there will be a running theme of 'Induction 2027', to ensure the next Full Induction Programme can be successfully delivered regardless of election results.

## 5 Member Development Group

- 5.1 As mentioned in paragraph 1.5, the Terms of Reference for the Member Development Group are required to be approved by the Governance and Audit Committee. The previous Terms of Reference were approved in 2018 and were specifically related to the planning and organisation of the induction programme. The amended Terms of Reference (attached here as Appendix 2) reflect the wider scope of the Group and the increased focus on all Member Development, not simply the induction.
- 5.2 The next meeting of the Group is scheduled to take place in September 2024, where Members will be reviewing progress on the 'running list of sessions' and starting to tackle their work programme, as presented to this Committee for approval. An overview of their focus in year two is provided in section four above, however the work programme is suggested as follows:
- 5.2.1 Table proposing indicative work programme for the Member Development Group (NB: dates may change according to Member availability)

Proposed Meeting	Proposed Actions
September 2024	Standing agenda item: running list of sessions – to be reviewed at each meeting Review use of MS Teams Channel & identify additional topics for video briefings if appropriate Review feedback form and identify improvements / alternatives / task officers with implementation Oct/Nov/Dec 2024 Receive draft Member Development Plan for input – to be confirmed for sign off by G&A cttee – date TBC Initial discussions re Personal Development Plans (PDPs) – next steps?
November 2024	Standing agenda item: running list of sessions – to be reviewed at each meeting (incorporate MS Teams Channel review) If not completed – confirm Member Development Plan and recommend to G&A for approval PDPs – depending on steps identified in September
January 2025	Standing agenda item: running list of sessions – to be reviewed at each meeting Receive data analysis re implementation of new feedback methods – next steps? Identify / confirm Year 3 requirements and start planning Year 4
March 2025	Standing agenda item: running list of sessions – to be reviewed at each meeting Feedback – depending on steps identified in January Identify / confirm work programme for the Group for 2025/26 Finalise plans for the Annual Report

June 2025	Standing agenda item: running list of sessions – to be reviewed at each meeting First meeting of the new Civic Year
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- 5.3 It is recognised that Year One for the Member Development Group was a time of, for many, 'getting to grips with' new roles and experiences. It is now with those 12 months of learning that the Group can further advance the Member Development offering within the Council.

## **6 Conclusion**

- 6.1 Members are asked to:
- 6.1.1 Accept the report as an accurate reflection of Member Development activity for the 2023/24 Civic Year; and
  - 6.1.2 Approve the Terms of Reference for the Member Development Group, and subsequent work programme, for the 2024/25 Civic Year.