

## **Committee: Standards and General Purposes Committee**

**Date: 3 November 2016**

Wards: All

Subject: Report on Member Development

Lead officer: Kim Brown, HR Lead

Lead member: Cllr Mark Allison, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

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### **Recommendations:**

#### **That the Standards and General Purposes Committee:**

1. Agrees the draft learning and development plan for 2016/18
  2. Agrees the priority development activities for members as outlined in 2.10 of this report
  3. Agrees that there will be elements of mandatory training for members
  4. Agrees that sessions are offered to prospective councillors in September/October 2017 and March 2018
  5. Considers ways to encourage increased member take-up for development activities.
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## **1 Purpose of report and executive summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Member Development programme offer to members and explore ways to improve attendance at development events. The Council has committed itself to ensuring that all Members have access to learning and development that supports them and allows them to develop the necessary skills to fulfil their varied roles.
- 1.2 The provision of member development is managed within the HR division through close collaboration with Democracy Services.

## **2. Details**

- 2.1 Member development is based on the following principles:
  - The development will be based upon the identified and agreed needs of the individual Elected Member and they will contribute fully to that identification
  - Development will be delivered through a variety of methods and at times that ensure equality of access for Elected Members diverse personal circumstances, backgrounds and learning styles
  - The Council has a learning culture that views continuous development for all its staff and elected Members as vital to its success.
  - The Council acknowledges that Elected Members may have transferable skills from their work place and/or life experiences that can be used to help them perform their Council role.

2.2 The proposal for managing and delivering member development consists of three main components outlined below:

- (1) Ongoing personal/generic development
- (2) Sessions for potential candidates
- (3) Induction post-election.

2.3 **Ongoing personal/generic development**

Most councillors have very busy lives and many work during the day. The development activities for members are arranged in the evening and sometimes at the weekend (induction). The appropriate training is provided to councillors to enable them to fulfill their statutory obligation. There are some committees where members have to be trained before they are able to sit on these committees such as planning and licensing.

2.4 Generic development is identified by the roles members need to fulfil and legislation. A list of generic activities delivered since May 2014 shows:

Event Title	No of attendees
Budget Scrutiny	27
Chairing Skills	12
Dementia	21
Health Champions	14
Induction- Overview and Scrutiny	24
Induction- The role of a Councillor Part 1	20
Induction- The role of a Councillor Part 2	24
Induction- Keeping our people safe (Corporate Parenting, Safeguarding)	35
Induction- Community Leadership	24
Licensing for committee members	17
Licensing for ward members	14
Mind Mapping and Speed reading	4
Planning for committee members	16
Planning for Ward Members	20
Public Speaking	15
Tools and Techniques to cope with paperwork	5
Understanding Budgets	10
Universal Credit and Housing	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>322</b>

2.5 It is recognised that in addition to generic needs, members will have differing and specific needs, which need to be addressed through specific, and individual

learning interventions. To ascertain development needs members are invited to meet with a council officer to discuss them or are asked to complete a personal development form – Appendix D. Since 2014, 27 completed forms have been received. In the past, it has proved difficult to get members to complete personal development plans.

- 2.6 Members have the opportunity to attend development offered by the Local Government Association, London Councils. Examples of the courses available from the LGA are outlined in Appendix A. These opportunities are circulated to members and approval must be obtained by the group offices prior to being booked by HR.
- 2.7 Groups or members may require specific training based on the roles that they hold or are required to be fulfil such as Cabinet or Opposition. Development may also be provided and arranged within parties, such as mentoring and coaching by more experienced elected members.
- 2.8 In order to provide focus to the development offer it is proposed that elements of the member development programme should be mandatory and be undertaken by each councillor at least once during the 4-year municipal period:
  - safeguarding (adults and children)
  - equalities
  - information security.

And additionally:

- Planning (for Planning Committee members)
- Licensing (for Licensing Committee members)

## 2.9 **Potential candidates**

The Council in the past has run at least three sessions for candidates who would wish to be Elected members. The sessions are usually advertised in the local press. The session covered the following areas:

- The London Borough of Merton
- The Committee System
- Benefits of being a councillor
- Skills needed to be a Councillor
- Talk to Merton Councillors about 'Being a Councillor'
- Member allowances and support available

It is recommended that sessions are offered to prospective councillors in October 2017 and March 2018. Potential dates are suggested in appendix B.

## 2.10 **Proposed learning and development plan for 2016/18**

A draft development programme with dates and titles through to January 2018 has been prepared for the Committee's comments – appendix B. It is proposed that the priority activities for 2016/17 should include:

- information security

- safeguarding (including how to make child protection and mental health referrals)
- equalities
- keeping you and your constituents' safe
- using the council's interactive new website – to learn how to set up and use a personal account and to encourage constituents to do so too.

Other generic learning activities:

- Chairing skills
- Public speaking
- How to participate effectively in Committee meetings
- Managing in political environment
- Communication skills
- Effective questioning skills
- Corporate Parenting
- ICT skills and the use of technology
- Understanding projects
- Community leadership
- Social media
- Resilience

These programmes will be commissioned and advertised (six weeks) in advance of the event taking place to provide Councillors with adequate time to book themselves on sessions. The sessions are booked using dates from the Corporate calendar – avoiding meetings and committees.

### **2.11 Induction – post election**

All newly elected members are required to attend induction. In 2014, the induction process was reviewed and in response to member's feedback was condensed from a two-week induction to six sessions over a number of weeks. In addition to the Council offer London Councils produce Councillors handbooks and members briefing and updates via email. Appendix C outlines the 2014 induction programme.

It is recommended that the Committee receive a report early in 2018 on proposed induction programme for new councillors post the May 2018 election.

- 2.12 As part of this report, Committee's views are being sought on best way to encourage take-up of member development activities. The process currently is to email members with upcoming events and through the group officers. Encouraging members to attend development session is not unique to Merton, as this has been raised on several occasions at the London Member Development Network.

### **3. Consultation undertaken or proposed**

- 3.1 It is proposed that updates are supplied to this committee and CMT.

**4. Timetable**

4.1 To be agreed by the committee

**5. Financial, resource and property implications**

5.1 Delivery of the development plan will be done using existing resources.

**6. Legal and statutory implications**

6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the report

**7. Human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications**

7.1 Member development enables members to make decisions which can impact the communities they serve.

**8. Crime and Disorder implications**

8.1 None

**9. Risk management and health and safety implications**

9.1 None

**10. Appendices – the following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report**

- Appendix A- LGA Leadership Academy outline of the programme and dates
- Appendix B- Member's Training Plan
- Appendix C- Example Induction Programme (provided as a separate document)
- Appendix D- Personal Development Form (provided as a separate document)

**11. Background papers**

11.1 None

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