

Committee: Standards and General Purposes Committee

Date: 23 July 2020

Wards: All

Subject:

Lead officer: Barbara Batchelor

Lead member: Cllr Peter McCabe

Contact officer: Barbara Batchelor Ext.3638

Recommendations:

- A. That the Committee agrees that additional proposed training sessions and any remaining development activities identified as mandatory/priority for members are undertaken from August 2020 onwards
 - B. That Committee considers ways to encourage increased member take-up for development activities including whether a lead champion should be appointed to support an increase in members' attendance at training events.
 - C. That Committee approves in principle that sessions for prospective elected members are planned for November 2020.
 - D. That Committee approve the agenda for candidates who would wish to be elected members, and that final decision will be the responsibility of Louise Round/Barbara Batchelor
 - E. That Committee approves that names/nominations of peer support for the engagement sessions of newly elected members will be sought through Group Officer.
 - F. That Committee approve the Members Induction Training pathway.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. 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 purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Development Programme offered to members from May 2018 to date and explore ways to improve attendance at development events.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1 The provision of member development is managed within the HR division through close collaboration with Democracy Services.
- 2.2. Member development is based on the following principles:

- Elected Members contribute to the identification of their individual development needs.
- 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.

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

- (1) Training delivered post-election
- (2) Ongoing personal/generic development
 - delivered to date
 - proposed August 2020 onwards
- (3) Sessions for potential candidates

2.3 Training delivered post-election

All newly elected members are required to attend induction. Induction was offered as six sessions over a number of weeks. In addition to the Council offer LGA produces Councillors workbooks which are particularly useful for new councillors. These are available from LGA website <http://www.local.gov.uk/councillor-workbooks>. A list of the topics included is listed in Appendix A.

Appendix B outlines the 2018 Induction Programme that was provided.

2.4 Ongoing personal/generic development

Delivered May 2018 to Date

- 2.5 Most councillors have very busy lives and many work during the day. The development activities for members have been arranged in the evening and sometimes at the weekend (induction). The appropriate training was offered 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.

Groups or members may require specific training based on the roles that they hold or are required to 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.

2.6 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 were invited to meet with a council officer to discuss them or are asked to complete a Personal Development Form – (See Appendix C). This would specifically include support for new Chairs and to the incoming Mayor each year to ensure they are confident in these roles, and may include advice on chairing or public speaking.

2.7 In May 2018, a development programme was issued to members, with a request to identify which training programmes they wished to attend. A summary of this training, (with titles and dates offered) has been prepared for the Committee's comments – (See Appendix B).

15 completed forms have been received. In the past, it has proved difficult to get members to complete personal development plans.

2.8 In order to provide focus to the development offer it was agreed 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)

This has also been progressed into a recommended Members Induction Training Pathway which can be found at Appendix D.

It is recommended that the Committee approve the Members Induction Training pathway.

The numbers of Members who attended these course is detailed in Appendix B

2.9 Members also had the opportunity to attend development offered by the Local Government Association, London Councils. Examples of the courses offered from the LGA are outlined in Appendix A. These opportunities were circulated to members. The LGA reports that 4 Merton Members have registered to the LGA's newsletter and 4 Members have attended LGA training since 2018.

Learning and Development proposed August 2020 onwards

As a result of COVID-19 the Learning and Development team have been working with our training providers to commission/deliver training via E-Learning or webinars.

It is proposed that further training should include:

- Autism Awareness*
- Cultural Awareness*
- Communicating with constituents – Keeping yourself safe
- Equalities and Diversity (Available as E-Learning)
- Finance / Budget Briefing (October)
- Information Security- Purplephish
- Information Security Refresher
- Media and Press training
- Social Media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Office 365
- Time Management*
- Mental Health First Aid*
- Stress and Resilience*
- Mindfulness*

*NB - * Represents externally commissioned training*

- 2.10 If Committee agree to these proposed programmes, they 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 will be booked using dates from the corporate calendar – avoiding meetings and committees.
- 2.11 The Committee are asked to comment on any further training that members require.
- 2.12 As part of this report, Committee's views are being sought on the best way to encourage take-up of member development activities. The process currently is to email members with upcoming events through calendar invites directly to their Merton email address.
- 2.13 The Committee are asked to comment on any other method members would like training events to be communicated to them.

2.14 Encouraging members to attend a development session is not unique to Merton, as this has been raised on several occasions at the London Member Development Network

2.15 The Committee are asked to comment on whether they would like to elect a lead member champion to work with HR L&D to liaise on training and development plans to maximise attendance at events.

2.16 Potential candidates

2.17 The Council in the past has run sessions for candidates who would wish to be elected members. The sessions are usually advertised in the local press. Each political party is invited to present.

2.18 The session covered the following areas:

- (i) The London Borough of Merton
- (ii) The role of the Council Committees
- (iii) Benefits of being a councillor
- (iv) Skills needed to be a Councillor
- (v) Talk to Merton Councillors about 'Being a Councillor'
- (vi) Member allowances and support available

2.19 It is recommended that these sessions are offered to prospective councillors 18 months prior to elections. i.e. November 2020. Committee are asked to agree this time frame in principle. Nominees to present will be contacted in due course.

2.20 Committee are asked to consider the proposed agenda (See Appendix E) and nominate speakers

2.21 It is recommended that the Committee receive a report early in 2021 on proposed induction programme for new councillors post the May 2022 election

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 undertaken 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 Councillor Induction Programme Workbooks
- **Appendix B** - Member's Training Plan
- **Appendix C** - Personal Development Form (provided as a separate document)
- **Appendix D** - Training and Development Induction Pathway (provided as a separate document)
- **Appendix E** - Proposed Agenda (provided as a separate document)

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None

Appendix A

Councillor workbooks

The workbooks are aimed at all councillors and will be particularly useful to new councillors. They are available to download on the LGA website <http://www.local.gov.uk/councillor-workbooks>. Topics include:

- Business planning
- Councillors guide to the health system
- Charing skills
- Climate change
- Community leadership
- Community safety
- Creating a 'fit for the future organisation'
- Effective member-officer relations
- Engaging young people
- Facilitation and conflict resolution
- Handling casework
- Health and safety in the council
- Influencing skills
- Introduction to planning- councillors guide
- Joining the chain gang- preparing for the role of civic mayor
- Media and communications
- Neighbourhood & community engagement
- Neighbourhood planning- ward councillors
- Performance management
- Scrutiny of finance
- Stress management & resilience
- Supporting constituents with complex issues
- The effective ward councillor
- Working with town and parish councils

For more information on our community leadership offer please contact Grace Collins grace.collins@local.gov.uk Tel: 0207 664 3054

Appendix B

Member's Training Plan (2018 Induction)

Title	Core /Optional /Specialist	Delivery Internal External	Number of Training Events Offered	Total Number of Attendees
Budget Scrutiny	Optional	Internal	3	31
Chairing Skills	Specialist	Internal	1	5
Communication skills	Optional	Internal	0	n/a
Corporate Parenting	Specialist	Internal		
Dementia Friends	Optional	Internal	1	10
Effective questioning skills	Optional	Internal	0	n/a
Equalities (included within Induction)	Specialist	Internal	1	27
Health Champions	Specialist	Internal	0	n/a
How to participate effectively in Committee meetings	Optional	Internal	0	n/a
ICT skills and the use of technology	Optional	Internal	1	Attendance figures not taken
Induction	Core	Internal	1	27
Induction- Community Leadership	Core	Internal	1	11
Induction- Finance and Business Planning	Core	Internal	1	15
Induction- Keeping our people safe (Corporate Parenting, Safeguarding)	Core	Internal	1	8
Induction- The role of a Councillor Part 1	Core	Internal	1	19
Induction- The role of a Councillor Part 2	Core	Internal	1	17
Information Security	Core	Internal (e-learning)	0	
Keeping you and your constituents safe	Core	Internal	2	6+ Attendance not taken
Licensing	Specialist	Internal	2	10+ Attendance not taken for one session

Managing in a political environment	Optional	Internal	0	n/a
Mind Mapping and Speed reading	Optional	Internal	0	n/a
Overview and Scrutiny	Specialist	Internal	0	n/a
Planning for Committee Members	Specialist	Internal	2	14+ Attendance not taken
Planning for Ward Members	Specialist	Internal	2	22
Public Speaking	Optional	Internal	1	6
Resilience	Optional	Internal	0	n/a
Safeguarding	Core	Internal	1	4
Social media	Optional	Internal	0	n/a
Speed Reading	Optional	Internal	1	
Tools and Techniques to cope with paperwork	Optional	Internal	0	n/a
Understanding Budgets	Optional	Internal	1	Attendance figures not taken
Universal Credit and Housing	Specialist		0	n/a
Using the Councils new website	Optional	Internal	0	n/a

Prospective Councillor Presentations

Date	Time
Saturday XXX November 2020	10am- 1pm
Wednesday XXX November	6pm-9pm

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