

Committee: Standards and General Purposes Committee

Date: 10 March 2022

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Member Induction 2022

Lead officer: Louise Round, Managing Director, South London Legal Partnership

Lead member: Councillor Peter McCabe, Chair, Standards and General Purposes Committee

Contact officer: Amy Dumitrescu, Democracy Services Manager, x3357

Recommendations:

- A. To agree the proposed member induction programme for 2022 set out in paragraph 2.2
 - B. To agree to the provision of electronic devices to all members and to agree that papers will be circulated electronically unless there are specific accessibility reasons why members require printed copies. .
 - C. To agree the main member induction event will take place on the evening of Monday 9 May 2022,
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Following the May 2022 elections, a number of statutory and non-statutory training and induction events will be required to be provided to new Councillors as well as those new to particular committees or roles. This report sets out the proposals for how these events could be organised and also sets out the proposed arrangements for providing information technology support and equipment.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. As in previous years, a distinction will be made between a number of induction events to be held in the days and weeks immediately following the election and an ongoing training and development programme.
- 2.2. The main Councillor induction event is proposed for the evening of Monday 9 May 2022. This will be an opportunity for councillors to hand in completed forms, ask any questions, have their photographs taken and meet the Council's senior managers. This will include a presentation by the Chief Executive as in previous years. Over the next few weeks some of follow up sessions will be run and the programme will therefore be as follows:

Date	Subject	Delivered By	Attendees	Mechanism
Monday 9 May	Induction Evening	Chief Executive, Directors, IT and	All Councillors	In person

		Democracy services staff		
Thursday 12 May	Role of Councillor/ Code of Conduct/ decision making/ Information Governance and Social media	Monitoring Officer, Head of Communications and Community Engagement, Head of IT Systems	All Councillors	In person
Tuesday 17 May	Introduction to Policy and Scrutiny	Head of Policy Strategy and Partnerships	All Councillors	In person
Tuesday 24 May	Introduction to Finance and Business Planning	Director of Corporate Resources	All Councillors	In person
Tuesday 31 May	Keeping our People Safe	Directors of Children Schools and Families and Communities and Housing	All Councillors	In person
Wednesday 8 June	Community Leadership	Director of Environment and Regeneration	All Councillors	In Person
TBC	Planning Training	Head of Development and Building Control	Members of PAC	In person
TBC	Licensing Training	SLLP/ RSP officers	Members of the Licensing Committee	In person
21 June 2022	London Councils Event for new councillors	London Councils	New members who are interested	In person

Within first two months	Information Governance training	Cyber Ninjas	All Councillors	Online module
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- 2.3. It is proposed that the session be run in person in the first instance but that further follow up sessions be run via Zoom. Experience has shown that training using the hybrid models used for council meetings works less well than either having everyone in the room or everyone joining remotely.
- 2.4. Once the nominations process for election has closed, letters will be sent to all candidates letting them know what will be required of them should they be elected so they can keep the relevant dates free.
- 2.5. Councillors would also be provided with a link to the Councillor handbook to refer to. This handbook is already provided electronically and the content is being reviewed. It will be important to keep it under review throughout the four year term as the information in it can quickly become out of date.
- 2.6. Some Committee-specific training could take place immediately prior to the first meeting, for instance, the Standards and General Purposes Committee could be preceded by a briefing on audit and accounts – this may help to increase training attendance.
- 2.7. Statutory training for members on the Planning and Licensing committees would be provided as soon after the election as possible and prior to the first Committee meetings of Planning and Licensing taking place. Where changes to committee memberships happen ad-hoc during the year, those members are provided with 1-2-1 training on Planning/Licensing from a Council officer(s). This rolling approach to training could also apply to other subjects such as Chair’s training for new Chairs.
- 2.8. It would be sensible to carry out a skills audit of members once elected in order to identify specific training for individuals both in the early days and throughout their term. All training requests are sent through the group office staff in the first instance. The latter will be drawn up once the new councillors are in place, on the basis of an audit of their skills and in consultation with the group offices. By way of illustration, attached as appendix A is a schedule of all the training which has been delivered over the course of the current term. Once the make-up of the Council is known, and the Cabinet appointed, we could consider a specific programme for cabinet members.
- 2.9. Ward Information
- As part of the welcome pack for members we would aim to produce ward information packs containing key demographic data and information about key service delivery points, projects and issues in their ward. This could be supplemented by a series of “ward walks “ with senior council officers over the summer months following the election and, possibly, with the offer of a borough tour.

- 2.10. IT Provision
- 2.11. Democratic Services have worked with members and officers to move towards higher usage of the Modern Gov app to reduce reliance on paper agendas and to reduce printing costs. Whilst this has led to some reductions, it is proposed that all members are provided with a Merton device with the Modern Gov application installed to use for receiving and annotating agendas. No councillors will be issued with paper agenda packs unless there were specific accessibility reasons why they required them. The one exception to this would be for the budget papers and scrutiny savings packs which are too substantial to read online and in respect of which councillors may elect to receive a printed copy.
- 2.12. This proposal would lead to a substantial reduction in the amount of paper being printed to service meetings and is therefore in line with the Council's commitment to reducing waste embodied in the Climate Change Action Plan. Officers are aware that using laptops in the Council chamber has previously been problematic because of the absence of power points and the relatively short battery life of some laptops. Accordingly, power points are in the process of being installed in the Council Chamber and these will be available for use shortly.
- 2.13. An audit is currently being undertaken of the equipment which has already been provided to members and new laptops have been ordered. Members will be given a choice between a standard and a lightweight option or they may choose to retain their own devices. Since the Council moved to Office 365, it is possible for members to use the full Outlook functionality remotely using their own devices. Officers will be on hand on the welcome evening on 9 May to take details of members' preferences and the kit will be available for collection over the course of the following days. Members will be able to access their email addresses with effect from the 9 May.
- 2.14. Over recent months a number of questions have been raised by members about the information governance requirements relating to their casework and other information gathered by them in their course of their duties. In order to assist with records management and to ensure compliance with requirements around sharing and retaining data, officers are recommending creating SharePoint sites for each councillor which can be sub divided as convenient to allow for good records management. This will be covered in the session on the role of a councillor and further personalised support will be available when councillors collect their laptops. Staff from the IT team will also run regular surgeries before council meetings to provide ongoing advice and support.
- 2.15. Online training for councillors on their information governance requirements and it will be mandatory for them to carry out that training within two months of being elected.
- 2.16. It is also suggested that the resources for member move to a more online-based system. In close consultation with IT colleagues Democratic

Services would design a Councillor section of the Merton hub or similar where they could access councillor specific information, forms (such as those for declaring interests and gifts and hospitality) and training resources. This would reduce printing costs but also enable councillors to find all information in one place.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 3.1. We could decide not to deliver a full induction programme but that would be unlikely to help us meet our aspirations for good governance. Similarly it would seem to be a wasted opportunity not to move to a paperless environment for members in the next term.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. Group office staff and other departments will be consulted as part of the working group.

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. If agreed the training programme put in place for after the elections on 5 May 2022.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. If agreed to provide devices to new Councillors, some may be re-issued from retiring Councillors. If further devices are required these will need to be costed and purchased. An analysis of existing stock issued to councillors will be carried out to inform an estimate of likely additional cost..
- 6.2. External training provider costs will be met from existing budgets.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. It is good practice to ensure that new members receive the training and support need properly to carry out their duties, perhaps especially in relation to the requirements of the Code of Conduct and for those members making planning and licensing decisions, given the impact of those decisions on individuals and businesses. It is therefore proposed that such training be mandatory.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. Training locations and providers will need to be fully accessible and adaptations made where required

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. None for the purposes of this report

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None for the purposes of this report.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

Appendix A - Proposed Training Programme

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. None