

Member Induction 2021 and Member Development 2021/22

Standards Committee Monday, 15 March 2021

Report of: Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Purpose: For decision
Publication status: Unrestricted
Wards affected: All

Executive summary:

This report updates the Committee on the delivery of the Member Development programme. Committee Members are asked to review and agree the Member Induction programme which has been updated following the suggestions received at the last Committee. Members are asked to again consider the issue of Member engagement with the Member Development programme.

This report supports the Council's priority of: Building a better Council

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Recommendation to Committee:

- A. That the Committee agree the Member induction programme as set out in Appendix A
 - B. That the Committee agree the Member development programme as set out in Appendix B
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Reason for recommendation:

To inform the design of the Council's Member development programme and to support Member engagement with Member development.

Introduction and background

1. At the meeting on 11 January 2021, a paper was presented to Committee to update them on the progress with the Member Development programme and the Member Induction programme. As requested, the Committee provided a list of additional topics for inclusion in both programmes.

2. Appendix A contains the final version of the Member Induction Plan that will be implemented following the completion of the May election.
3. Appendix B contains the final version of the Member Development Plan that will be implemented during the 2021/22 municipal year.

The Member Induction Plan

4. The Member induction plan has been based on the template implemented in previous years but has been developed to include a broad range of subjects which are essential newly elected Councillors. Current Councillors are also encouraged to attend sessions so that all Members have the most up to date understanding of these topics.
5. The plan is for a process which will:
 - a. introduce new Councillors to their fellow Members, key Officers at the Council and the main issues facing the Council;
 - b. help new Councillors to understand the structure and procedures of the Council to enable them to take part in meetings and represent their residents;
 - c. provide training on each policy Committee to assist Councillors with understanding of both the Terms of Reference and to the work undertaken by that Committee;
 - d. provide skills-based training for Councillors who are elected as Chairs or Vice Chairs of a committee
6. Where possible, the date for policy Committee training has been set in advance of the first Committee meeting of the municipal year. Training for the regulatory committees – Planning and Licensing – has been given priority given the quasi-judicial function of each committee. Refresher training for the regulatory committees has also been planned half way through the year.
7. Following approval of the plan the key dates of the programme will be notified to both current and prospective Councillors to ensure attendance. That the plan highlights where attendance is compulsory.

The Member Development Plan

8. The Member Development Plan includes departmental briefings and e-learning modules in addition to more traditional Member development approaches.
9. Departmental briefings will be presented by the relevant ELT lead and the relevant team. The subjects that have been included in the plan have been selected based on Councillor suggestions and the likelihood of Members having to deal with the subject matter. The briefings include:
 - a. An introduction to the Planning Department and processes
 - b. An introduction to Council Housing

- c. Planning Enforcement
 - d. Wellbeing Team
 - e. Licensing team
 - f. Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support
 - g. Elections team
 - h. The Councillor's role in Emergency Planning and responding to local emergencies
 - i. Safeguarding
 - j. National Non-Domestic Rates & Council Tax
10. As reported to the Committee in January, some recent planned training sessions and Member briefings were not delivered due to insufficient staff capacity and absence. Following approval of the plan, the key dates will be notified to Officers to make sure as far as possible that all briefings are provided as planned.
11. LGA e-learning modules on a range of topics are a form of distance learning materials and are a free resource that are available to the Council. Many are complemented by workbooks which can be completed in parallel or separately. Both resources are aimed at all councillors and some will be particularly useful to new councillors. Each e-learning module takes between three to four hours to complete. A wrap up session will be schedule at the end of each cycle for Councillors to attend to discuss and feedback on the training undertaken.
12. It is appreciated that Councillors' time is limited, especially for those who are in employment and/or have young families. Rather than allocating courses to individuals, Councillors are encouraged to attend undertake at least two e-learning modules during the year at a time that is most convenient for them.
13. New Councillors will also be expected to complete an 'Introduction to How Councils Work' module during Cycle 1. This module takes about 1 hour to complete.
14. It is the intention that the introduction of the use of e-learning modules will provide the foundation to move towards a Continuing Professional Development approach in future years.
15. Where possible, training will be provided internally. £5,000 has been redirected from the staff training budget for 2021/22 to fund external trainers where required. It is intended to seek to identify a similar amount as part of the budget process for 2022/23 to enable ongoing funding for Member development.
16. Following the resolution of the Standards Committee on 11 January 2021, any training undertaken will be uploaded on to their Councillor profile page. It is scheduled that individual Member training history will be uploaded from 1 April 2021.

Member engagement with Member development

17. The Committee has previously discussed the importance of Member engagement with Member development, and the key role of Group Leaders in encouraging their Members to do so. A Member development session on 1st March on the topic of 'Making Tandridge a safe and inclusive place to work' was attended by only 6 Members (from the Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Independent Groups). The Committee is asked again to consider what further measures can be taken to ensure that Members engage fully with development opportunities so that all Members are supported to achieve the same level of skills, knowledge and behaviour.
18. The Councillor's role in ensuring that the Council is a safe and inclusive place to work will be covered as part of the induction programme and as part of training for all Members on the Member Code of Conduct and Protocol for Member/ Officer relations.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

As stated in the report where possible training will be delivered inhouse by staff at no additional cost. Members will also have access to the LGA e-learning modules on a range of topics and this is a free resource available to the Council. A sum of £5,000 has been made available for 2021/22 to fund the cost of any external training that is required.

There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

Member training and development is essential to ensure that Members are given the knowledge and skills to perform their roles effectively. Any training will also ensure that Members are up to date with all relevant legislation and guidance, which should help minimise the risk of complaint or legal challenge.

Equality

The Council's responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity will be included in the 2021 Member Induction programme.

Climate change

There are no significant environmental/sustainability implications associated with this report. The Council's climate change action plan does refer to the requirement to provide training to Councillors and it is intended to deliver this training later in the year.

Appendices

Appendix 'A' – Member Induction Programme – Final draft version

Appendix 'B' – Member Development Plan – Final draft version

Background papers

None

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