



Member Development Group

Monday, 25 September 2023

Evaluation of the 2023 Councillors' Induction Programme

Report of the Service Manager – Corporate Services

1. Purpose of report

1.1. Contained within the Terms of Reference for Member Development Group are the following specified roles:

- Creating an environment that encourages self-development and continuous learning
- Identifying, delivering and evaluating learning and development opportunities for all Councillors.

1.2. Every four years the Member Development Group is responsible for creating an Induction Programme for new Councillors following a Borough Council Election. This report presents the evaluation of the 2023 Councillors' Induction Programme and poses a number of questions for the Group to consider in relation to future training and the development of the next Induction Programme in 2026.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Member Development Group:

- a) Discuss the information provided by officers in relation to the evaluation of the 2023 Councillor Induction Programme
- b) Suggest any actions or ideas they may have in relation to future training for Councillors or the development of the next Councillor Induction Programme in 2026.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

3.1. Learning and Development is an essential part of being a Councillor. The Member Development Group has been set up to advise and direct Councillor Learning and Development. The Councillor Induction Programme is a vital element of the Councillors Learning and Development Policy. It is good practice to evaluate training after it has been delivered to identify any improvements or changes that need to be made in the future.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. The 2023 Councillors' Induction Programme consisted of an Induction Handbook and three targeted sessions over the ten days following the Borough Council election on 4 May 2023.
- 4.2. The Induction Handbook, at 32 pages, contained a large amount of information about the Borough and the Council, the role of a councillor, contact details for officers and partners, meeting and training session dates. It was handed to every councillor on the declaration of the result for their ward on Friday 5 May 2023.
- 4.3. In terms of the Induction Programme, session one, on Wednesday 10 May, titled 'Admin and Logistics', was a drop-in session enabling new and returning councillors to take care of essential admin at an early opportunity. As well as signing the Official Acceptance of Office, councillors were able to complete their Register of Interests, a Starter Form, gain access to council emails and have their photo taken for their ID badge. Refreshments were served and there was the opportunity to meet fellow councillors and senior officers. 40 councillors attended.
- 4.4. Session two was entitled 'The Fundamentals' and took place on Saturday 13 May from 9.30am until 3pm and included lunch. It covered information about the Borough, how the Council operates, and its governance arrangements providing new councillors in particular with the information they needed with regard to committee places in advance of Annual Council. A number of returning Councillors also attended and they were invited to share their experiences and provide insight at various points during the day. Practical training was also given in regard to the Council's microphones. 28 councillors attended.
- 4.5. Session three, on Wednesday 17 May, entitled 'The Bigger Picture' focused more on the internal workings of the Council including the services it provides. There was also an opportunity to hear about the work of Town and Parish Councils, and how to build relationships with them, as well as the chance to meet key partners and learn about the Council's biggest projects at the moment. This session was attended by 30 councillors.
- 4.6. All of the induction sessions were delivered by senior officers and were open to all councillors. Attendance across the three sessions was 74% (98/132).
- 4.7. A SurveyMonkey evaluation of the Induction Sessions was circulated to all councillors in May 2023 following the final session. 13 councillors provided feedback using the form and four more provided unsolicited feedback via email.
- 4.8. Session One Feedback:
 - Speed dating approach worked well
 - Clear where to go and who to talk to
 - Plenty of people to talk to

- IT needed more staff or a quicker process
- A list of expenses that councillors can claim would have been helpful
- IT not being able to load the portal onto Apple devices was disappointing
- 67% of respondents were very satisfied, 25% satisfied and 8% (one respondent) neither satisfied or dissatisfied.

4.9. Session Two Feedback:

- Excellent content conveyed in an interesting manner
- Mock up on Council meeting very helpful
- More on motions would have been helpful
- Having the slides in advance would have been good so that notes could be made on them instead of in a separate place
- 70% of respondents were very satisfied and 30% satisfied.

4.10. Session Three Feedback:

- Content of session very helpful
- Room layout was appropriate for the session
- 73% of respondents were very satisfied and 27% satisfied.

4.11. Respondents were asked after each session whether they found officers helpful and if the session met their needs – all responses were positive.

4.12. Feedback was received in relation to each of the induction sessions:

- “As an introductory session it met my expectations. Good balance not to overwhelm/overload new councillors. Very friendly atmosphere putting one at ease” [session one].
- “Thank you for yesterday. A very useful and engaging day” [session two].
- “It was a full introduction and I felt confident that I know where to go for specific information” [session three].
- “I found the induction sessions very useful, however, I did feel that an awful lot of information was thrown at us (not literally!) in a very short space of time and did wonder how completely newly elected councillors would manage to process so much new information in what was a very short space of time between sessions” [all sessions].
- “It is actually fantastically helpful to have it done like that. It will save hours of searching through emails or annoying Democratic Services” [the Induction Handbook].

4.13. The survey also asked for suggestions of where the Induction Programme could be improved:

- More ICT staff at Session One to expediate getting Councillors’ devices uploaded with software to enable them to access emails, the portal and paperwork for meetings.
- Provision of more information on expenses either in the Handbook or at the Induction sessions.

5. Questions to prompt discussion:

5.1. Member Development Group is asked to consider:

- Was the 2023 Councillor Induction Programme successful?
- Was the format and number of sessions appropriate?
- Did the content of the Handbook and Sessions meet the needs of new (and returning) councillors?
- Were the presenters clear, knowledgeable and welcoming?
- Does the Group have any ideas or suggestions to improve the Councillors Induction Programme?
- What does the Group wish to record now that would assist in the development of the 2026 Councillors Induction Programme?

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Background papers available for Inspection:	None
List of appendices:	None