



Member Development Group

Monday, 28 February 2022

Councillors Training - Update

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. This Training Update is brought before the Group to inform members of the current position in regard to Councillor Learning and Development (training) and prompt discussion about the training of Councillors both now and in the future.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Member Development Group:

- a) Discuss the information provided by officers in relation to Councillor Learning and Development
- b) Suggest any actions or ideas they may have in relation to Councillor Learning and Development which would address the concerns raised by officers through the report.

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 and has agreed to receive regular updates about this matter.

4. Supporting Information

4.1. A number of Councillor Learning and Development updates are presented below for discussion:

Learning and Development Policy

- 4.2. The Council adopted a new Councillor Learning and Development Policy in July 2021. This Policy contains a number of key Learning and Development Principles including the completion of all mandatory training within 12 months of becoming a Councillor (which was extended to December 2021 due of Covid-19) and dispensations for training undertaken with other employers (to avoid the need for councillors to do mandatory training such as GDPR more than once).
- 4.3. To assist Councillors in completing their mandatory and essential training, individual learning records were constructed and sent to Councillors in November 2021. These were updated in January 2022 to ascertain whether Councillors had undertaken mandatory or essential training – both in person and online. These will be updated again and sent to Councillors at the end of the financial year.
- 4.4. There are five mandatory training sessions which councillors must undertake before serving on a specific committee – these are for the Planning, Licensing, Standards, Employment Appeals and Interviewing committees. Training is mandatory for the Councillors nominated to serve on these committees.
- 4.5. In addition, there are five essential face-to-face training sessions – all Councillors must attend the annual Budget Briefings and Enforcement Briefings when these are held. Three sessions are open to all but only essential if certain committee positions are held – these are scrutiny training, treasury management training and risk management training.
- 4.6. There are 11 essential e-learning packages available to Councillors.
- 4.7. The table below shows Councillors’ progress towards completing mandatory or essential training in line with the Councillors’ Learning and Development Policy:

Name of Course	Mandatory or Essential	Percentage of required Councillors who have completed the training
Training for Planning Committee members	Mandatory	90%
Training for Licensing Committee members	Mandatory	82%
Training for Standards Committee members	Mandatory	100%
Training for Employment Appeals Committee members	Mandatory	N/A
Training for Interviewing Committee members	Mandatory	N/A
Budget Briefings	Essential for all	71%

Enforcement Briefings	Essential for all	no data held for the last sessions in 2019 but new 'Getting Tough' sessions scheduled for April 2022
ELearning: Your role as a Councillor	Essential for all	16%
ELearning: Equality and Diversity	Essential for all	13%
ELearning: Disability and Discrimination	Essential for all	13%
ELearning: Safeguarding Adults	Essential for all	20%
ELearning: Safeguarding Children	Essential for all	16%
ELearning: Hate Crime	Essential for all	18%
ELearning: GDPR 1, 2 and 3	Essential for all	32% completed GDPR 1 20% completed GDPR 2 20% completed GDPR 3
ELearning: Cyber-crime, phishing, smishing and vishing	Essential for all	11%
ELearning: Information Classification	Essential for all	13%
ELearning: Display Screen Equipment	Essential for all	9%
ELearning: Section 17: Crime and Disorder	Essential for all	11%
Scrutiny training for scrutiny committee members	Essential for some	76%
Treasury management training for members of the Governance Scrutiny Committee	Essential for some	64%
Risk management training for members of the Governance Scrutiny Committee	Essential for some	89%

- 4.8. Member Development Group is asked to consider what actions should be taken to encourage attendance / completion and whether any action should be taken for repeated non-engagement in training.

Corporate Governance Audit Findings

- 4.9. Between September and November 2021, the Council's internal auditor, BDO, conducted a scheduled audit of the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements. This resulted in a 'moderate rating' of assurance and two medium and six low level recommendations – two of these related to Councillor Development.

- 4.10. The auditors concluded that there was a medium risk that Councillors had not received adequate training and development to fulfil their roles.
- 4.11. There are five committees defined in the Council's Constitution as requiring mandatory training before a committee position can be taken up. This training should be updated on a regular basis and renewed at least once in every electoral cycle. At the point in time at which the audit was undertaken, 18% (two out of 11) of the appointed members of the Planning Committee had not undertaken the necessary training (this does not include any members that may be substituting on to this committee), and 20% (three out of 15) of appointed Licensing Committee members had not completed the necessary training. According to the Council's Monitoring Officer, all appointed members of the Standards Committee had completed the necessary training, but no records of attendance were kept. Training is also mandatory for participation in the Interviewing and Employment Appeals committees though this tends to be done as and when necessary as these committees meet infrequently.
- 4.12. The auditors concluded that: "There is a risk that Members are not appropriately equipped with up-to-date knowledge and skills when making decisions, which could lead to the Council not being able to achieve its objectives for the benefit of the local community" and made three recommendations:
- A schedule of Member training, which prioritises Members on Regulatory Committees should be monitored by the Member Development Group, and Chairs of the respective Committees
 - After a reasonable time (approx. 3 months), non-compliance with training should be reported to the Standards Committee.
 - The Council should ensure that all future training for Councillors is included in the central training spreadsheet.
- 4.13. Additionally, the auditors commented upon the skills of the Governance Scrutiny Group and recommended a skills audit be undertaken to assess whether further training on risk, assurance and audit matters is necessary.
- 4.14. The audit findings were reported as part of a wider progress report to the Governance Scrutiny Group in November 2021. Since then, the following actions have been undertaken:
- A planning training event was held on 19 January 2021 and was attended by 27 Councillors (one councillor nominated to the committee has still not received the mandatory training)
 - Licensing training booked for April 2022 (unable to schedule earlier due to staffing issue)
 - A skills audit for Governance Scrutiny Group members will be undertaken after Annual Council to ensure the right mix and level of skills is present within the Group (this is in line with new Treasury Management Code requirements).
- 4.15. Member Development Group is asked to consider whether any further action is required as a result of the internal audit into Corporate Governance reported in November 2021.

Current Training Position

- 4.16. In line with the auditor's recommendation, a copy of the current combined training record for all councillors is at Appendix One.
- 4.17. By the time of this meeting, training for scrutiny group members into effective questioning and listening at scrutiny will have taken place. Additional training planned for 2022/23 currently includes a 'Getting Tough' briefing about the Council's planning and environmental health enforcement powers, risk management.
- 4.18. Member Development Group is asked to note the current combined training record and make any suggestions to officers at the meeting.

Questions to prompt discussion:

- 4.19. Alongside the questions posed at paragraphs 4.8, 4.15 and 4.18, the member Development Group is asked to consider:
- What does good engagement in training look like?
 - What is it realistic to expect of Councillors?
 - What can be done to increase engagement – especially in mandatory and essential areas?
 - Is it necessary to introduce sanctions?
 - What can we do now to improve training engagement post 2023 induction?

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Background papers available for Inspection:	Councillors Learning and Development Policy – July 2021 Internal Audit Report – Governance Scrutiny Group – November 2021
List of appendices:	Appendix One – current combined Councillor training record