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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

To:	**Standards Committee**
Date:	**25 February 2019**
Report of:	**Monitoring Officer**
Title of Report:	**Member training**

Summary and recommendations

Purpose of report:	To evaluate the programme of training delivered to members in 2018, agree outline proposals for training in 2019-2020 and note the proposed approach for a new member development and training programme for the municipal years 2020-24.

Recommendations: That the Standards Committee resolves to:
1. Note the evaluation of the programme of training delivered to members in 2018;
2. Endorse the arrangements for the member training programme for 2019-20 based on the proposals set out in Appendix 2;
3. Endorse the proposed approach for the development of a new member development and training programme for the municipal years 2020-24.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Evaluation of induction and member training 2018
Appendix 2	Member training programme 2019-20
Appendix 3	Member development and training 2020-2024

Introduction and background

1. In November 2018 Council adopted a revised Constitution which included a change to broaden the remit of the Standards Committee to enable the committee to receive reports from and advise the Monitoring Officer on all member training, not just training on ethical issues.

2. The current arrangements for member training date from 2014 when a Cross Party Working Group agreed a four year programme of compulsory training in Code of Conduct, Licensing and Planning to ensure that all members were equipped with a

basic understanding of their duties as councillors and had a good general knowledge of their role and responsibilities. In 2016 those arrangements were amended so that planning training became compulsory only in an election year. At the same time greater emphasis was placed on providing a series of optional training courses on topics aimed at improving councillors' skills and knowledge.

3. In 2018 it was agreed based on feedback from members that the existing arrangements for member training should continue and that any plans for a more thorough review of the member training programme should coincide with the "all out elections" in May 2020.

4. The current member training programme is based on the following principles:

In election years (2018):
- All new members to attend compulsory code of conduct training before they attend any committee meeting and all existing/re-elected members to attend code of conduct training before 31 July.
- All new members of a licensing committee to attended compulsory licensing training before they attend a licensing sub-committee and all existing/re-elected members of the licensing committees to attend licensing training before 31 July.
- All new members to attend compulsory planning training before they attend a planning committee and all existing/re-elected members to attend planning training before 31 July.

In non-election years (2019):
- All members to attend compulsory code of conduct training before 31 July.
- All licensing committee members to attend compulsory licensing training before 31 July.
- All members to be invited to attend optional planning seminars during the year.

Induction 2018

5. All new and re-elected members were required to attend a formal induction session on either 8 May 2018 (morning) or 10 May 2018 (eve).

6. A new element in the formal induction programme was the introduction of a round table discussion session facilitated by the Chief Executive and Executive Directors which sought to capture the issues and concerns identified during campaigning and to explore the challenges facing the Council. This replaced the power-point presentations from the Chief Executive and Executive Directors which had been the mainstay of previous induction programmes.

7. A second initiative was to hold a lunch or supper reception at the end of the formal induction programme and invite directors and service heads to attend. These receptions proved a success and provided a good opportunity for members, directors and service heads to initiate a personal dialogue.

8. The formal induction programme lasted about 3 hours and covered:

- Code of Conduct training – necessary to ensure that all new and returning members could attend Annual Council

- an introduction to the principles of Ward Member spend and CIL

- an introduction to Committee & Member Services including an overview of the roles and responsibilities of members and the members' allowances scheme.

9. There was also a personal session for each member with their "buddy" (an officer in the Committee and Member Services Team who provides general support and acts as the members' first point of contact) to deal with the practical issues of becoming a councillor (e.g. signing of forms, ICT equipment issue and set up, passes, photos etc). As far as possible these sessions took place on the induction days and on average lasted about 2 hours.

10. In January 2019 the Committee & Member Service Manager contacted all of the councillors who had been newly elected in May 2018 to canvass their views about how the organisation supported them immediately after the election and into the municipal year.

11. Based on the responses received officers consider that the following elements might be included in future induction and member support programmes:

- Topical briefings on key issues (e.g. climate change) and the work of key services (e.g. Community Services) at an earlier stage of the municipal year so that all councillors are fully informed.

- Training on committee skills, including chairing and information about motion/debate procedures

- Providing "mental health" support and/or pastoral care for councillors dealing with casework

- Better and easier access to a directory of key staff and service contacts (a stand-alone document of "Key Contacts" was issued to supplement the phone and intranet directories, and this continues to be updated – but is no substitute for an effective on line search facility)

- A tour of St. Aldate's Chambers and a fuller tour of the Town Hall

- Doing more to encourage people to stand for election

Proposal: Include optional training on committee/chairing skills in 2019/20 and future programmes; explore scope to provide pastoral care for councillors; look at improving dissemination of key contact information; provide key topic briefings soon after elections; look at scope to improve democratic engagement.

Oath of Office

12. At the Chief Executive's request an appointment system was introduced so that all councillors were able to sign the oath of office in a more meaningful way in the days immediately after the election. The majority of these appointments were scheduled for the two induction days or in advance of the Annual Council meeting (members can't formally act as a councillor until they have signed the oath of

office). Although this represents a significant demand on the Chief Executive's time it is felt that this is justified in terms of the benefits afforded by creating an opportunity for the Chief Executive and councillors to meet privately at the start of the municipal year.

13. Equally important is the recognition that the signing of the oath of office is a significant step for a councillor and should be marked as a formal occasion. In future an officer will be available to photograph the occasion and a copy of the signed Oath of Office will be given to the councillor to keep.

   Proposal: Schedule individual appointment system for oath of office signing as part of 2020-2024 member development and training programme and offer to provide signed copy of the oath of office and a photograph to councillors.

Buddying

14. In previous years the Committee and Member Services team have operated an informal "buddying" arrangement with new councillors. This arrangement was formalised in 2018 and each new councillor was allocated a "buddy" from the Committee and Member Services team and encouraged to use that officer as their first point of contact. The "buddy" provided close support during the induction and the first few weeks particularly in relation to the ICT set up and to facilitate introductions to service areas and explain committee procedures.

15. The frequency and formality of the "buddy" meetings varied according to the needs and wishes of the individual councillors. Committee and Member Services use a checklist of key topics/issues as a prompt to ensure that new councillors have been briefed on the tools they need to operate effectively as a councillor.

16. Informal feedback from both the "buddy" and the "buddied" has been positive and in most cases the arrangements have continued throughout the year.

   Proposal: Retain the practice of "buddying" for new councillors and explore best practice for implementation as part of the 2020-2024 member development and training programme.

Service areas and casework

17. Understanding the work of the service areas and managing casework is a key area of training and support for new councillors. The challenge is to find an approach which balances the varied needs of councillors with the demands on the time of front line officers. Past experience is that offering service area presentations as part of the induction programme and running service area open days have limited impact and are poorly attended.

18. In 2018 members were offered an "introductory briefing" session for Oxford Direct Services, Housing Services and Community Services. The sessions were targeted at new councillors, but open to other councillors. Two dates were offered in June and July (one daytime and one evening) for a 2 hour introduction to each

service area. However, take up was very low, with just one or two councillors attending three separate sessions.

19. In practice it would seem that councillors find it easier to make direct contact with service area teams in relation to specific case work issues.

Proposal: Review other options and best practice as part of the 2020-2024 member development and training programme.

Compulsory training sessions 2018

20. Dates for the compulsory training sessions were scheduled for May, June and July as part of the annual calendar of meetings with members offered daytime or evening sessions for Code of Conduct and Planning training. Licensing training, which is compulsory for members appointed to licensing committees, was scheduled to coincide with meetings of those committees.

21. Detailed analysis of each of the three compulsory training subjects is set out in Appendix 1.

Optional training programme 2018-19

22. To complement the compulsory training programme a range of optional training has been offered to councillors:

2018		Attendees
24 September	Local Authority Finance & Budgets	8
30 October	Planning: NPPF and Policy	9
21 November	Safeguarding (2 daytime sessions)	13
28 November	Planning: interpreting reports and material considerations	5
2019		
9 January	Safeguarding (evening session)	7
31 January	Safeguarding (daytime session)	3
11 February	Planning: Key Urban Design Principles	8
14 March	Planning: Permitted Development and Enforcement	
20 March	Safeguarding	
4 April	Safeguarding	

23. These sessions targeted the needs of the new councillors but were open to all. Committee and Member Services reserve the right to cancel any training session with fewer than 6 confirmed attendees. All of the training courses are delivered by Council officers.

Proposal: Continue to offer optional member training sessions as required in 2019-20 and explore best practice for implementation as part of the 2020-2024 member development and training programme.

Briefing sessions 2018-19

24. Provisional dates for a member briefing session were scheduled monthly throughout 2018-19 and published as part of the annual calendar of meetings. Councillors are sent regular invitations and reminders about the different sessions

and encouraged to sign up to attend. To date the following sessions have taken place:

2018		Attendees
15 March	Housing and Homelessness	7
27 June	AirBnB	9
21 August	Housing Benefit and Universal Credit	6
20 Sept	Major Projects & Property work	10
8 Nov	Chief Constable and Police & Crime Commissioner	13
2019		
31 January	Housing Benefit and Universal Credit (repeat)	9
26 March	Housing and Homelessness	
17 April	*To be confirmed*	

25. Low attendance has been an issue in the past but this has improved slightly in recent years. Committee and Member Services reserve the right to cancel any briefing session with fewer than 6 confirmed attendees.

26. The briefings are delivered by Council officers and the City Executive Board Portfolio Holder is encouraged to attend to provide support and a political perspective. After the briefing the presentation material is published via the ModGov.app so that the information is available to those councillors who were unable to attend.

Proposal: Continue to offer member briefing sessions as required in 2019-20 and seek members' views and explore best practice for implementation as part of the 2020-2024 member development and training programme.

Resource Library

27. The Committee and Member Services team continue to build up an on-line "resource library" of briefing and training materials from within the Council. The "resource library" is available to councillors via the ModGov system. Content includes:

- Copies of presentation material from specific training or briefing sessions

- Links to publicly available material to support those training or briefing sessions

- Links to LGA Handbooks and other professional information to support those training or briefing sessions

Proposal: Continue to build up the on-line "resource library" with up to date information as required in 2019-20 and increase the profile with members.

Individual member attendance at external training courses 2018/19

28. Council has allocated £2.5k per year for external short course training for members and £3k for external conference attendance. Individual members can make requests to the Head of Law and Governance for external training or conference attendance with the support of their group leader. Recent uses of this funding include attendance at the following courses or events:
   a. A culture and tourism conference

b. A cycling conference
c. A conference on supporting women experiencing homelessness
d. Social media training for two councillors
e. Unconscious bias training for members of the Appointments Committee
f. Planning training for all members

Proposals for the member training programme for 2019/20

29. Proposals for the 2019-20 training programme are set out in Appendix 2.

Proposals for a member training programme for 2020-2024

30. Proposals for the 2020-24 training programme are set out in Appendix 3.

Conclusion

31. The Standards Committee continues to review the training programme on offer and encourages members to come forward with their views and suggestions for improvement.

Legal implications

32. This report has no direct legal implications for the Council.

Financial implications

33. This report has no direct financial implications for the Council. The development and delivery of specific training courses in future years will require appropriate budgetary provision (the current budget for member training is £2.5k).

Risk management

34. The provision of appropriate training and development courses for councillors is necessary to support good governance and decision making. Failure to do this places the Council at risk of reputational damage and legal challenge.

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