

**To:** Standards Committee  
**Date:** 24 June 2019  
**Report of:** Monitoring Officer  
**Title of Report:** Member training 2019/20 – Q1 review

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To review the programme of training delivered to members in Q1 2019/20.
<b>Recommendations: That the Standards Committee resolves to:</b>	
1.	Note the review of the programme of training delivered to members in Q1 2019/20.

## 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 aspects of member training, not just training on ethical issues.
2. As 2019/20 is a non-election year the current member training programme is based on the following principles:

In non-election years:

- 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.

## Compulsory training

### Code of Conduct

3. All members have signed up to attend one of the three training sessions that have been scheduled:

6 June 2019	17.30 – 19.00hrs	14
18 June 2019	17.30 – 19.00hrs	25
4 July 2019	14.30 – 16.00hrs	9

- Feedback from the first of these sessions has been very positive. The training material has been refreshed to include new case studies, a quiz and more time for discussion.

### **Licensing**

- The fifteen councillors who are members of one or both of the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee and the General Purposes Licensing Committee are required to attend a training session before 31 July. A training session was held on 14 May 2019 immediately after the first licensing committee meetings. It had been hoped that all the licensing committee members could be trained at that time but unfortunately only seven members were able attend. A second training session is being scheduled for July. If possible this will coincide with a special meeting of the General Purposes Licensing Committee.

### **Unconscious Bias**

- Two training sessions on Unconscious Bias, facilitated by Inclusive Employers were held on 22 May 2019. Inclusive Employers were recommended by the Organisational Development Manager, as they had been engaged previously to provide the unconscious bias training for Council line managers and for those elected members serving on the Council’s Appointments Committee.
- Seven members attended these two sessions. Three other councillors had booked to attend the sessions but sent apologies on the day. The training was badged as optional and details were circulated by email to all councillors on three occasions (1/5/19; 15/5/19; 20/5/19). This low attendance was in part due to the relatively short notice given for these sessions (3 weeks) and the choice of a date that turned out to be so close to the European Election.
- Feedback was generally positive and there was recognition that the course had promoted some personal reflection and “suggestions and practical ways we can improve our decision making and remove/mitigate bias”.
- If we were to repeat these sessions we would wish to secure a higher attendance rate in order to obtain better value for money.

### **Optional training programme 2019-20**

#### **Planning Viability Assessments**

- Twenty members attended the training session on Planning Viability Assessments held on 16 May 2019. The training was delivered by a consultant, who works regularly with the Council’s planning officers on applications for developments which require a viability assessment. The session covered viability in the national planning policy context, key features of a development viability assessment and site value.

11. The training on this complex topic was well received and a repeat session will be scheduled over the summer. These sessions are intended to set the scene so that members are familiar with the concepts when they are considering the specifics of the viability assessments for large planning developments.

**Social Media**

12. Following the introduction of the Social Media Protocol in early 2019 councillors were invited to participate in a short questionnaire about their use of social media and any related training needs. The responses are summarised below:

33 responses	
5	Do not use social media – do not require training
2	Do not use social media – require training to start
11	Use social media – do not require training
15	Use social media – require training

13. The specified training needs included getting started on social media, building engagement and two-way dialogue and guidance on the legalities of using social media.
14. To meet this training need a couple of social media workshop for groups of 5 or 6 councillors, facilitated by Tom Jennings, Senior Communications Officer, will be scheduled over the summer (dates to be confirmed).

**Mental wellbeing**

15. The Member Mental Health Challenge Panel has fed back on the need for mental health and wellbeing support to be made available to councillors. In response, councillors have been given access to the Employee Assistance Programme (a helpline) and to the corporate Mental Health First Aiders; officers who have undertaken a two day training course. The Scrutiny Committee has suggested that training on mental wellbeing should be made available to councillors. Committee and Member Services will canvas councillors’ interest in this as it would be possible for a condensed version of the two-day Mental Health First Aid course to be delivered to councillors by the Organisational Development Team.

**Individual member attendance at external training courses 2019/20**

16. The Deputy Leader is scheduled to attend the LGiU Seminar: An Introduction to Local Government Finance on 21 June 2019 in London.

**Briefing sessions 2019-20**

17. Provisional dates for a member briefing session have been scheduled monthly throughout 2019-20 and published as part of the annual calendar of meetings. Councillors are sent regular invitations and reminders about the different sessions. The following sessions are scheduled to take place in Q1:

2019		Attendees	
		Booked	Present
31 January	Housing Benefit & Universal	8	9

	Credit (repeat session)		
26 March	Housing & Homelessness	14	10
3 June	Oxford Waterways Project	9	8
17 June	A new approach to managing the capital programme		
25 June	Oxford Living Wage		
2 July	Acting on Climate Change		

18. 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. Although the overall numbers may be close there is not always a direct correlation between those members who book to attend a session and those members who turn up on the day.

### Legal implications

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

### Financial implications

20. 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.

### Risk management

21. 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.

<b>Report author</b>	Catherine Phythian
Job title	Committee and Member Services
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252402
e-mail	<a href="mailto:cphythian@oxford.gov.uk">cphythian@oxford.gov.uk</a>