

**To:** Standards Committee  
**Date:** 21 October 2019  
**Report of:** Monitoring Officer  
**Title of Report:** Member training 2019/20 – Q2 review

<b>Summary and recommendations</b>	
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To review the programme of training delivered to members in Q2 2019/20.
<b>Recommendations: That the Standards Committee resolves to:</b>	
1.	Note the review of the programme of training delivered to members in Q2 2019/20.
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1	2019/20 training evaluation data

## 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 48 members have attended the compulsory Code of Conduct training sessions. The majority of members attended one of the three scheduled sessions and a further 2 sessions were arranged for the remaining 10 members:

6 June 2019	17.30 – 19.00hrs	14
18 June 2019	17.30 – 19.00hrs	15
4 July 2019	14.30 – 16.00hrs	9
10 July 2019	18.30 – 20.00hrs	9
17 July 2019	1:1 session	1

4. The training sessions were presented by the Monitoring Officer (for the June dates) and the Deputy Monitoring Officer (for the July dates). 79% of attendees completed an evaluation form and the feedback from each of the sessions was very positive. An analysis of the training feedback is set out at Appendix 1. The positive comments seem to reflect the fact that the content and format of the training sessions have been refreshed to include new case studies, an interactive quiz and allowing more time for discussion. Inevitably the feedback is highly subjective and some of the comments, for example around the time available for discussion, are diametrically opposed and may reflect differences in members' learning styles and preferences.

### **Licensing**

5. The sixteen 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. Eleven of those councillors attended one of the sessions which were held on 14 May 2019 and 8 July 2019 immediately after the licensing committee meetings. The remaining 5 members were expected to attend a final training session on 18 September; in the event only 2 members were present. Until they have completed the training members are unable to sit on a licensing sub-committee.

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

### **Unconscious Bias**

6. 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.
7. Seven members attended these two sessions. Three other councillors had booked to attend the sessions but sent apologies on the day. 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”.

8. If these sessions were to be repeated it would be prudent to secure a higher attendance rate in order to obtain better value for money.

### **Planning Viability Assessments**

9. 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.

### **Social Media**

10. 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

11. 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.
12. 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 autumn (dates to be confirmed).

### **Mental wellbeing**

13. 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. In addition the Scrutiny Committee has suggested that training on mental wellbeing should be made available to councillors. Committee and Member Services have canvassed councillors to establish the level of interest in this type of training. Only 2 councillors have expressed an interest. The Organisational Development Team has said that it would be possible for those councillors to join one of the staff training sessions rather than arrange a bespoke member course for such a small number of participants.

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

14. Committee and Member Services will facilitate individual members attending external training courses linked to the reasonable learning and skills of a councillor or their special responsibilities, if they have the agreement of their Group Leader. To date this year one member has attended the LGiU Seminar: An Introduction to Local Government Finance in London.

## Briefing sessions 2019-20

15. 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 have been held or are scheduled for 2019/20:

2019		Attendees	
		Booked	Present
31 January	Housing Benefit & Universal Credit (repeat session)	8	9
26 March	Housing & Homelessness	14	10
3 June	Oxford Waterways Project	9	8
17 June	A new approach to managing the capital programme	9	12
25 June	Oxford Living Wage	7	4
2 July	Acting on Climate Change	Cancelled – low attendance	
24 Sept	Climate Assembly	Cancelled – low attendance	
17 Oct	Beds in Sheds	3	
14 Nov	Housing and Homeless update		
20 Nov	Police Commissioner & Chief Constable		
2020			
18 March	Council Tax Reduction Scheme		

16. Low attendance has been an issue and so Committee and Member Services reserve the right to cancel any briefing session with fewer than 6 confirmed attendees. Although the overall numbers for booking and attendance 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

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

## Financial implications

18. 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

19. 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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