

To: Standards Committee
Date: 2 March 2020
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Member training and development

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To seek the endorsement of the Standards Committee of the new member training and development scheme for the municipal years 2020-24.
Recommendations: That the Standards Committee resolves to:	
1.	Endorse the Draft Member Training and Development Scheme (Appendix 1)
2.	Note the arrangements for buddying (para. 6f & Appendix 2)
3.	Note the arrangements for offering personal safety training and guidance to members and election candidates (paras. 8-9)

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Member training and development scheme 2020
Appendix 2	Buddying checklist
Appendix 3	Personal safety guidelines - updated Jan 2020
Appendix 4	Extract from the Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 21 October 2019

Introduction and background

1. The provision of a comprehensive member training programme is a fundamental element of good governance. It ensures that all members are properly equipped to undertake their duties as councillors and protects the integrity of Council decision making by minimising the risk of successful challenge.
2. The Standards Committee has responsibility for advising the Monitoring Officer on training for members and is asked to endorse the proposed Member Training and Development Scheme for 2020-24 which is detailed in this report.

Training and development scheme 2020-24

3. The proposed training and development scheme (Appendix 1) has been informed by input from the Standards Committee, the cross-party Constitution Review Group and officers across all of the relevant Council service areas.
4. The Standards Committee, when considering the principles for a revised training and development scheme (see Appendix 4), expressed a range of views but generally accepted that newer members should receive finance, safeguarding and values and behaviours training. The Committee also proposed that the frequency of compulsory Code of Conduct training should be reduced. The Committee suggested that recognition should also be given to those councillors who bring transferrable skills and experience from their professional life or other roles. The proposed scheme incorporates these principles.
5. Officers have generally been keen to see the scope of compulsory training expanded to cover more topics, including overviews of key services.
6. The proposed training and development scheme largely builds and expands upon the Council's previous scheme. The key changes are that the proposed scheme:
 - a. Aims to equip members for the period of their term of office.
 - b. Reduces the frequency of compulsory Code of Conduct training from annual to biennial.
 - c. Includes training on finance, safeguarding and values and behaviours within the induction programme (compulsory for new members).
 - d. Formalises the wider training offer including training on personal safety, unconscious bias and audit skills. Previously training on such topics has been offered on an ad hoc basis or not at all.
 - e. Grants discretion to the Head of Law and Governance to agree that a member does not need to attend compulsory training where special circumstances apply.
 - f. Formalises the arrangements for buddying whereby Committee and Member Services act as "buddies" for newly elected members with reference to a buddying checklist (Appendix 2) and members of the senior management structure act as buddies for any new Cabinet Members.

Personal safety

7. Personal safety is unfortunately a significant issue for members at present. The Council has offered conflict awareness training to elected members in March ahead of the May 2020 local elections for which they will be canvassing. This will be delivered to groups of up to 15 members over half a day (minimum 3 hours) at a cost of c. £500 per session. The proposed training scheme (Appendix 1) includes an offer of further personal safety training post-elections in 2020 and then subsequently each March prior to City Council elections.
8. This offer will also be made to all candidates standing in the May elections (c. 200 individuals) and 2 April 2020 has been identified as a provisional date for that training session. This will be advertised imminently to election agents.

9. The Council has also refreshed and reissued its guidance for members on personal safety and lone working principles, which was previously issued in 2016. This guidance (Appendix 3) was circulated to members in parallel with the offer of training due to take place on 25 March 2020.

Values and behaviours

10. The Council has previously offered training on unconscious bias to all members and specifically to members of the Appointments Committee. The Standards Committee has previously indicated that it wishes members to receiving training on equality and diversity issues.
11. It is proposed that training on equality and diversity will be included in a wider training course on values and behaviours which will encompass aspects such as the Public Sector Equality Duty as well as unconscious bias. That training will be delivered at least in part by an external trainer and the aim will be to equip members with a broad understanding of what an inclusive council looks like and how individually members contribute to that.

Legal issues

10. There is no legal requirement for the Council to adopt a scheme for member training but doing so is considered good corporate governance and member support practice.

Financial issues

11. The majority of member training is delivered by officers of the Council in the Town Hall. Services are responsible for service-based training (e.g. planning, licensing), and may use external trainers where service budgets allows.
12. There is a small budget for member training held by Committee and Member Services which has been used to pay for one or two external trainers per year as required to meet members' training and development needs in particular areas that the Council cannot deliver (e.g. chairing skills training, unconscious bias). This budget is also used to fund individual members' attendance at external training courses that are relevant to their special responsibilities or the reasonable learning and development of a councillor.
13. Any move away from the provision of in-house training or an increase in the number of specialist external training courses would result in an additional financial cost to the Council which has not been budgeted for.

Risk

14. There is a risk that if members undertaking regulatory functions are not equipped to undertake those roles then the Council's decision making could be undermined and subject to an increased risk of challenge, which, if successful, could be very costly for the Council. Similarly if members are not trained on the Code of Conduct there is a risk of an increase in the number of complaints against members.

Equalities

15. All newly elected councillors are invited to declare any special requirements relating to the provision of training and Committee and Member Services will work with the individual to ensure that those needs are met.

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