

To: Standards Committee
Date: 29 June 2020
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Member training 2020/21

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To seek the endorsement of the Standards Committee of the specific arrangements for member training in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the postponement of local authority elections until 2021.
Recommendation: That the Standards Committee resolves to:	
1. Endorse the arrangements for member training in 2020/21 as set out in this report	

Appendices
None

Member training and development 2020

1. The Standards Committee has responsibility for advising the Monitoring Officer on training for members. At its meeting on 2 March 2020 the Standards Committee endorsed a Member Training and Development Scheme for 2020-24.
2. Due to the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic the May 2020 local elections were postponed until 2021. The compulsory induction and training programme planned for 2020 will now commence in 2021 and it is proposed that 2020 is treated as a “non-election year” for the purposes of member training under the terms of the agreed member Training and Development Scheme 2020-24.

Code of Conduct

3. Code of Conduct training is a compulsory requirement for all members in election years and as such will not be delivered in 2020.
4. It should be noted that all of the serving councillors have attended annual Code of Conduct training during their term of office.

Planning

5. Planning training is a compulsory requirement for all members in election years and as such will not be delivered in 2020.
6. It should be noted that all of the serving councillors have attended compulsory planning training during their term of office.

Licensing

7. Annual training is a compulsory requirement imposed by the Council for all members of the Licensing Committees and it is intended that this training should take place in May before the first sub-committee hearings of the municipal year.
8. All members appointed to the two licencing committees in May 2020 last attended licencing training in 2019, so at this point in time there is no risk that any untrained members will consider any licensing applications.
9. The original intention had been to offer a training session in the Town Hall facilitated by an external provider in late May 2020 but this had to be cancelled. The provider did offer to deliver the training remotely via the web but this was not considered to be an optimum solution at that time and did not offer value for money. The provider has agreed to postpone the training until 2021 when it is hoped that it will be “in person delivery”.
10. Although it has not been possible to deliver the compulsory licensing training in the required timeframe or in the format originally planned it is feasible now for the licensing staff and legal officers to provide some essential training to members which focuses on any regulatory changes. That training could be delivered either in advance of or as part of the next scheduled licensing committee meetings.

Additional non-compulsory training offer

11. The Member Training and Development Scheme for 2020-24 establishes an indicative offer of non-compulsory training. The majority of this training was intended to be delivered following local elections which will no longer apply in 2020, with the following exceptions:
 - i. Where there are changes to councillor roles such as Lord Mayor (in November 2020), training will be offered to those councillors directly.
 - ii. Personal Safety training will be offered to candidates standing in the May 2021 local elections, subject to the availability of this training either on a face to face or online basis depending on the circumstances in early 2021.
 - iii. Briefings on topical issues will continue to be offered to councillors. A briefing on restart plans for Oxford City Centre and Localities Shopping Areas took place remotely on 10 June 2020. A further briefing is planned which will cover the broader economic recovery plan.
 - iv. Councillors may, with the agreement of their Group Leader, draw on the Member Training budget held by Committee and Member Services to access external training courses and events relevant to their special responsibilities or the reasonable learning and development of a councillor.
12. In addition, training, equipment and other support has been offered to all councillors in accessing meetings held remotely under new legislation passed in April 2020. The need for this training had not been anticipated in the Member

Training and Development Scheme for 2020-24. Feedback from councillors has been broadly very positive about the support provided by ICT and Committee and Member Services.

Legal issues

13. 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

14. Ordinarily 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.
15. 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. charring 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.
16. 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

17. 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

18. 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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