

To: Standards Committee
Date: 14 November 2024
Report of: Head of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)
Title of Report: Member Training Update

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update the Standards Committee on the delivery of Member training in 2022 and 2023 and the arrangements for member training in 2024.
Recommendation: That the Standards Committee resolves to:	
1.	Note the delivery of member induction training and development in 2024
2.	Approve the continuation of the delivery programme for 2025.

Background

1. The Standards Committee has responsibility in the Council's Constitution for receiving reports from, and advising the Monitoring Officer on, training for members.

Member training and development scheme 2020-24

2. At its meeting on 2 March 2020 the Standards Committee endorsed a Member Training and Development Scheme for 2020-24. That Training Scheme was subsequently approved by the Monitoring Officer and is attached as Appendix 1.
3. The Training Scheme builds on the rules relating to compulsory member training set out in the Councillors' Allowances Scheme which forms Part 26 of the Council's Constitution. The Allowances Scheme requires that members who fail to attend the following training will have a reduction applied to their basic allowances:
 - i. Induction for newly elected members (new members only)
 - ii. Compulsory planning training
 - iii. Compulsory code of conduct training
 - iv. Compulsory licensing training (members of licensing committees only)
4. The Training Scheme articulates an expanded induction programme for newly elected members which includes training on safeguarding awareness, finance, and inclusive behaviours. It also sets out an indicative offer of wider skills-based training

and development opportunities for members beyond the compulsory training that all members are required to attend.

5. The Training Scheme reduced the frequency of compulsory Code of Conduct training from annually, as it was previously, to every other year for all members. Compulsory Planning training is also due take place every two years, with the intention being that these training requirements will apply in election years only.

Review of Member training and development in 2022/2023

Compulsory training

Code of Conduct

44 of the 48 elected members attended the compulsory Code of Conduct training sessions held in 2022 and 2023. The majority of members attended one of the two scheduled sessions and a further session was arranged as a mop-up session. A further date was offered to members who had not yet completed the training, following the by-elections in March and a further mop-up session in September 2023.

Table 1: Code of Conduct Training held since the Local Election in May 2022.

17 May 2022	18.00 – 19.00	23
7 June 2022	10.00 – 11.30	12
20 September 2023	18:00 – 19:00	9

6. The training sessions were presented by the Monitoring Officer and the Committee and Member Services Manager. Although no quantitative data had been sought following this training, qualitative data has indicated that the training was received positively, and most members found the content, which had been refreshed previously to include case studies and more time for discussion, to be helpful and informative.
7. Of the remaining members who did not completed their training to date, the Committee and Member Services Manager organised a reduction in their allowance as per the Constitution Part 26.2(c).

Licensing

8. The fifteen councillors who are members of both Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee and the General Purposes Licensing Committee were required to attend a training session before 31 July. Eleven of those councillors attended one of the sessions which were held on 19 May 2022 immediately before the licensing committee meeting. Five Members There remained one member who had yet to undertake training, and subsequently unable to sit on a Licensing Sub-Committee. The Member eventually stepped down from the Committee, and a substitute completed a training session on 31 August. The amend to the Committee was confirmed at Council on 2 October.

Review of Member Induction Period 2024

9. The Member Induction Period was reviewed ahead of the May 2024 Local Election, which included the addition of the Members' Market Stall event on the 15 May 2024, and the 'Members Guide to Services' booklet.
10. The Market Stall Event saw newly elected and current Members attend the Town Hall to meet with staff from the across the Council and Oxford Direct Services and OX Place, the Council's two Companies. While attendance numbers were not noted, the event was well attended and positive verbal feedback was received from Members in attendance, both during and after the event.
11. The 'Members Guide to Services' was a booklet designed for all Members to provide an understanding of the different services and departments of the Council. Members received a copy during the Market Stall event on the 15 May and Annual Council on the 16 May.

Planning

12. All members were invited to three training sessions on 13 May, 14 May and 15 May. An additional session was held on 8 July 2024, all sessions were led by the Team Leader for Planning Policy, the Development Management Team Leader, the Planning Policy and Place Manager and a Planning Lawyer. below is a breakdown of attendance.

Table 2: Planning Training held since the Local Election in May 2024.

13 May 2024	10.00 – 12.00	7
14 May 2024	18.00 – 20.00	23
15 May 2024	14:00 – 16:00	7
8 July 2024	18:00 – 20:00	10

13. All sessions were led by the Team Leader for Planning Policy, the Development Management Team Leader, the Planning Policy and Place Manager and a Planning Lawyer. While no quantitative data has been received, verbal feedback has been received and will be reviewed ahead of the 2026 Member Induction.
14. Of the remaining member who did not complete their training to date, the Committee and Member Services Manager is in the process of organising a reduction in their allowance as per the Constitution Part 26.2(c).

Compulsory training

Code of Conduct

13. 39 of the 48 elected members attended the compulsory Code of Conduct training sessions held in 2024. The majority of members attended one of the two scheduled sessions and a further session was arranged as a mop-up session. A further date was offered to members who had not yet completed the training,

following the by-elections in March and a further mop-up session in September 2023.

Table 3: Code of Conduct Training held since the Local Election in May 2022.

13 May 2024	18.00 – 19.00	19
5 September 2024	18.00 – 19.00	20

15. The training sessions were presented by the Monitoring Officer and the Committee and Member Services Manager. Although no quantitative data had been sought following this training, qualitative data has indicated that the training was received positively, and most members found the content, which had been refreshed previously to include case studies and more time for discussion, to be helpful and informative.

Licensing

16. The fifteen councillors who are members of one or both Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee and the General Purposes Licensing Committee were required to attend an in-person training sessions before 31 July. Eleven of those councillors attended the sessions which were held on 20 May 2024 immediately before and after the General Purposes Licensing Committee and Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee. Four of the five members who hadn't attend in May attended a 'washup' session on 25 June 2024, allowing them to attend the sub-committees. The remaining member will not be able to attend a training session until the change in committee in May 2025 ahead of Annual Council.

Non-Compulsory Training Sessions and Briefings

17. Table 4 sets out the additional (non-compulsory) training sessions and briefings that have been scheduled to date in 2022, 2023 and 2024 together with attendance figures where these have already taken place. Where fewer than six members register for a session officers will consider whether it should go ahead but attendance has generally been quite high and no sessions have been cancelled due to low take up.

Table 4: Additional training and briefings offered in 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 to date.

Topic	Date	# of attendees
Housing Services	29 June 2022	14
Motions and Council's Procedure Rules	01 September 2022	6
Community Services	13 September 2022	9
OX Place	21 September 2022	10
Oxpens-OXWED	05 October 2022	5

Media and Social Media	12 October 2022	3
Chief Constable's Annual Address	14 November 2022	11
Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	22 November 2022	10
Elections Act 2022	9 February 2023	11
Visitor Economy	21 February 2023	6
Landlord Services Transformation	27 March 2023	4
Thames Water Q&A	27 March 2023	17
Police Briefing	11 July 2023	8
Decide & Provide (County organised)	11 September 2023	No attendance collected
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	11 September 2023	8
Housing Revenue Budget	26 September 2023	9
Leisure Briefing	11 October 2023	12
Annual Address by the PCC and Chief Constable	09 November 2023	13
Energy Efficiency Measures	14 November 2023	11
Members Enquiry Form Demonstration	8 February 2024	10
Members Enquiry Form (Member Induction)	23 May 2024	6
Member Enquiry Form (Member Induction)	29 May 2024	12
Bus Shelter Briefing	3 June 2024	14
Local Government Finance (Member Induction)	6 June 2024	11
Audit and Governance (Member Induction)	11 June 2024	6
Member Enquiry Form (Member Induction)	19 June 2024	3
Feasibility study re Accommodation Business Improvement District (ABID)	23 July 2024	9
Empty Properties Briefing	12 September	20
Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance/Domestic Abuse Awareness	3 October 2024	7

Online Training

18. The Council has recently implemented online training to meet the current requirements for the Council, and to ensure Members were equipped with current knowledge and
14. A six-module course on Cyber-Awareness Training was circulated in May 2024. It is crucial that all Members stay informed and vigilant against potential cyber security threats. The modules include keeping safe online, learning best practices for protecting personal and professional information while using the internet and Recognising Phishing Attempts. It will also develop skills to identify and avoid phishing scams, which are a common method used by cybercriminals to steal sensitive information. These are needed to keep the Council safe, but also for our cyber accreditations.
19. While the primary goal of this training is to enhance the Council's workplace security and to learn valuable skills that can help protect your Councillors' personal information. This training was an opportunity to improve all Members' overall cyber security awareness, which is increasingly important in an increasingly digital world.
20. The Health and Safety Training was circulated to all Members in September 2024; under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, the Council has a responsibility to provide sufficient training and instruction for employees, volunteers and others who undertake work on the Council's behalf.
21. The Council's Health and Safety Policy sets out the roles and responsibilities for elected members which include their own personal health and safety; understanding sources of help and support; and leading by example. Also for members with specific cabinet or committee responsibilities they need to ensure there are suitable resources and strategic direction for the Council to discharge its health and safety responsibilities; they need to consider health and safety within the context of their decision-making and monitor the Council's health and safety performance.

Member Training and Development in 2024/2025

22. Officers will also look at ways to improve the level and quality of information provided to members about the work and priorities of different Council services, to make it easier for newly elected members to understand how the organisation is structured and what work is already underway.
23. A number of suggestions have been received for briefing topics in 2024/25 and these are listed below. Senior officers may also suggest briefing topics. Feedback was received from members that holding fewer, high quality briefings would be preferable to holding lots of briefings that are of less interest. In formulating a programme of member briefings for 2024, officers will consider which of the suggested topics are best addressed through member briefings and which could be addressed in other ways:
 - Housing needs
 - Community Services
 - Benefits and Welfare
 - Council communications

- Food poverty (particularly child food poverty)
- Littering and street cleaning services
- Noise nuisance from licensed premises
- Oxford West End Development Ltd.
- Anti-social behaviour
- Zero Emissions Zone
- Traffic, transport and parking
- Street maintenance
- Rent repayment orders (whereby private sector tenants can reclaim their rent if landlords have committed certain offences)

Legal issues

15. 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.
16. Council has collectively agreed that members who fail to attend the applicable compulsory induction and training (detailed in paragraph 3) will forego a portion of their allowances, as set out in Part 26.2 of the Council's Constitution.

Financial issues

17. 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 allow.
18. 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, inclusive behaviours). 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, with the agreement of their Group Leader.
19. 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

20. 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 that members have breached the Code of Conduct.

Equalities

21. 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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