

To: Standards Committee
Date: 3 July 2025
Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer)
Title of Report: Member Training Update – July 2025

Summary and recommendations	
Decision being taken:	To update the Standards Committee on the delivery of Member training from February 2025 to July 2025.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	N/A
Corporate Priority:	A Well Run Council.
Policy Framework:	None

Recommendation(s): That the Standards Committee resolves to:
1. Note the contents of the report.

Information Exempt from Publication	
N/A	N/A

Appendix No.	Appendix Title	Exempt from Publication
N/A	N/A	N/A

Introduction and 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.
2. The rules relating to compulsory member training are 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 General Purposes Licensing Committee and Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee)

Compulsory Training: Code of Conduct

3. Two Code of Conduct training sessions were organised for 7 May 2025 and 19 May 2025, 39 Members were in attendance, as seen in Table 1. These were held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

Table 1: Code of Conduct Training held since May 2025.

7 May 2025	18:00 – 19:00	22
19 May 2025	18:00 – 19:00	17

4. The training was more interactive when compared to recent years, using Mentimeter to ask the attendees questions and to provide working examples of the different aspects of the Code of Conduct. Positive comments from Councillors were received following the sessions.
5. Following a request from the Oxfordshire Association of Local Council (OALC), the members of the parish councils of Oxford (Blackbird Leys, Littlemore, Old Marston & Risinghurst and Sandhills) were also invited to the latter session, with 15 parish councillors in attendance.
6. All attendees of the two sessions were sent a link to a Microsoft Forms questionnaire to provide feedback. The feedback received included comments relating to the helpful use of working examples, interactive features, and reminders of categories and terminology relating to declarable interests.
7. The Committee and Member Services Manager and Director of Law, Governance and Strategy will review the timetable for a further session for the remaining 9 Members and any further Parish Councillors who could not attend.

Non-Compulsory Training: Planning Committee Refresher

8. Two Planning Committee refresher training sessions were organised; while not compulsory this year, it was thought to be good practice for members to receive a refresher course to review the legislation and the councillors' role at Planning Committee. Attendance is listed in table 2 below. These sessions were held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

Table 2: Planning Committee Refresher Training held since May 2025.

8 May 2025	18:00 – 19:00	9
14 May 2025	18:00 – 19:00	19

9. As this was non-compulsory training, only those members who didn't attend last year, or who were elected between May 2024 and May 2025 were required to attend. The one Member that didn't attend the training in 2024 and two new Councillors attended one of the sessions, no reduction of allowances were required.
10. All attendees of the two sessions were sent a link to a Microsoft Forms questionnaire to provide feedback, this included comments relating to the usefulness of case studies used and the time spent responding to councillors' questions.
11. Members also requested that more interactive aspects be incorporated into future sessions.

Compulsory Training: Licensing Committees Training

12. Two separate training sessions were held for the two Licensing Committees, General Purposes Licensing Committee and Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee. They were organised to be in-person, at the request of the Licensing Team Manager, for all members appointed to the two committees, to ensure they could attend and determine applications at the General Purposes Licensing Casework Sub-Committee and Licensing and Gambling Acts Casework Sub-Committee. 10 Members were in attendance for both sessions, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3: General Purposes Licensing Committee and Licensing and Gambling Acts Training held since May 2025.

3 June 2025	Licensing and Gambling Acts	18:00 – 21:00	10
5 June 2025	General Purposes Licensing	18:00 – 21:00	10
12 June 2025	General Purposes Licensing & Licensing and Gambling Acts	10:00 – 16:00	4

13. A 'washup' session was held on 12 June 2025 and was attended by 4 Councillors who missed the previously scheduled sessions. The Committee and Member Services Manager and Director of Law, Governance and Strategy will review the circumstances surrounding the 1 Member who did not attend.
14. All attendees of the three sessions were sent a link to a Microsoft Forms questionnaire to provide feedback. This produced positive comments relating to the

interactive presentation format, the content covered, and the time allocated for members to ask questions to officers. Members also valued the explanations provided in relation to recent policy changes affecting casework at sub-committees, and all attendees who responded to the survey noted learning something new. The expertise of officers was praised alongside the use of real examples to support understanding.

15. Members requested that the timing of the sessions be considered in the future to better fit around the schedule of upcoming Sub-Committees following the confirmation of the Committees' new membership at full Council. It was also suggested that more time be spent explaining street trading licensing in future sessions.

Additional Non-Compulsory Training

16. Table 4 sets out the additional (non-compulsory) training sessions and briefings that have been scheduled since May 2025.
17. The Ward Member Budget and Community Infrastructure Levy Application session was delivered by the Grants and External Funding Officer and CIL & Monitoring Officer following further updates to the application process and templates.

Table 4: Additional training and briefings offered in 2025/2026 to date.

Topic	Date	# of attendees
Ward Member Budget and Community Infrastructure Levy Application	27 May 2025	11

18. All attendees for the session above were sent a link to a Microsoft Forms questionnaire to provide feedback. Responses positively referenced the scheduling of the session and the willingness of officers to take on board feedback and suggestions. Members also suggested that more time be allocated for asking questions to officers and for the presentation style of the session to be more interactive.
19. A session on Anti-Social Behaviour, led by the ASBIT Manager & DA Lead is scheduled for Tuesday, 29 July at 6pm via Microsoft Teams. An invitation to the briefing will be circulated to all Members in due course.

Member Training and Development for 2025/2026

20. Officers will continue to 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 all members to understand how the organisation is structured and what work is already underway.
21. The Committee and Member Services team conducted a survey for Members in March 2025, with 11 responses received.
22. Topics for Member Training were submitted as follows, as seen by the Standards Committee in March 2025, and have been updated once completed:
 - Legal developments and national policy changes which impact OCC

- Planning – Completed in May 2025
- Committee relevant training
- Oxford Direct Services (ODS) systems
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) expenditure applications, how to manage CIL – Completed in May 2025
- Use of IT systems and computers in Town Hall
- Case work and reporting/solving issues
- Rights of social and private tenants
- Budget
- Media training and public speaking
- Housing allocation systems

23. Topics for Member Briefings were submitted as follows:

- Planning, changes to national regulations which affect Oxford City Council
- Renter's rights bill
- Procurement, social value
- Community wealth building
- Property/estates/ODS
- CIL expenditure applications, how to manage CIL – Completed in May 2025

24. There was also a request to review the online training schemes, to make training more interactive and a preference for written briefing notes to compliment the sessions. Mentimeter was used for the Code of Conduct Training and was positively received.

25. The requests will be reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team for consideration and will be scheduled for the 2025/2026 schedule.

Member Development Strategy for 2026

26. In 2020, the Standards Committee approved a Member Training Strategy ahead of the local elections. Due to Coronavirus Pandemic, the elections were deferred until May 2021. While the Council has not had a strategy since it lapsed in May 2024, similar principles have been applied since.

27. The Committee and Member Services Manager has reviewed similar practices at other local authorities and will investigate a Member Development Scheme for the Standards Committee to review at a future meeting. This will include working with Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working and Inclusive Economic Growth who has responsibility for Democratic Services and Member Support.

28. While no timescale has been agreed, it is expected to be brought before the Committee ahead of the Local Elections scheduled for May 2026.

Financial implications

29. 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.

30. 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.
31. 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.

Legal issues

32. 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.
33. 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.

Level of risk

34. 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 impact

35. 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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Background Papers:	
1	Oxford City Council Constitution Part26Councillorsallowances.pdf
2	Oxford City Council Constitution Part24PlanningCodeofPractice.pdf