

## **Elected Member Training**

### **Summary of report:**

The report is to provide an update to Elected Members in respect of the review of elected member training that has been taking place as part of a joint project between Human Resources and Development; Legal Services and Democratic Services. This matter was last before the Standards Committee on the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

### **Background papers:**

Appendix - Focus group outputs to inform the Elected Member Development Programme 2017/18

### **Recommendation:**

To note the content of the Report and Appendix 1

## **1.0 Background**

1.1 The purpose of training is to equip people with the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to meet the organisation's needs in relation to its objectives. By investing in people through their training we ensure we harness their full potential and focus their energies on the needs of the organisation while fulfilling their need for personal development and job satisfaction.

1.2 The Council recognise that such development is a continuing process for both employees and elected members to equip them with the necessary skills to fulfil their roles, and help them manage the changes facing the council going forward in delivering its aims and objectives as outlined in the Corporate Plan as approved at council on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017.

1.3 Training and development for Councillors should be based on individual needs and organisational requirements. Councillors have a key role in meeting these challenges both as the strategic leaders of the council as an organisation and also in providing leadership to their local communities and places. Meeting these challenges at the local level will require councillors to transform both their organisations and change the way they relate to their communities and places both individually and collectively. Yet if councillors are to play their part they need to be effective in their roles. The council's processes supporting them also need to be appropriate and relevant to their needs.

1.4 The council has formed a project team comprising of officers from HRD and Legal and Democratic Services with the objective of reviewing the current offering in respect of elected member training to ensure that it is fit for purpose, and supports the council's transformation programme. It is important that the training offered is relevant to councillors in enabling them to be effective in their role. In carrying out this review elected members were invited to attend a focus group in order that the

council could ascertain views about training. The focus group was well attended and elected members made an invaluable contribution to the meeting that will assist the council in developing its Elected Member Development programme.

1.5 The council is at present trying to set up a focus group comprising of newly appointed elected members to obtain their views in relation to the induction offered and training and development in general. At present it has proved difficult to arrange dates for this to take place. Failing this the council will carry out a survey of newly appointed elected members.

1.6 As part of this process the project group is liaising with officers involved in the council's transformation project to ensure that elected members are fully equipped to deal with the changes and challenges that the council is facing.

1.7 It will be proposed that the Standards Committee review the training programme for elected members on an annual basis to ensure that it is relevant to the role and of value to elected members. Training should also help the council in achieving its corporate objectives and improve governance.

## **2.0 Resource and legal considerations:**

2.1 None directly related to this report. On occasions the council will commission external training but this cost will be met from existing budgets.

## **3.0 Performance and Risk Management issues:**

3.1 Performance and risk management is a feature of all council functions. An adequate training programme should aim to improve elected member performance and improve governance.

3.2 Training should also increase elected members understanding of the complexity of their role and improve their ability to fulfil the role. This in turn may further reduce the level of complaints that are submitted under the code of conduct.

## **4.0 Equality Implications:**

4.1 In maintaining up to date policies and procedures the council will ensure that services are delivered fairly in an open and transparent manner. There are specific requirements in both codes that elected members and officers observe equalities. Training will be made available to all elected members.

## **5.0 Consultation:**

5.1 Consultation has already commenced with elected members.

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**Focus group outputs to  
Inform the Elected Member Development  
Programme 2017/18**



**Lisa Koc**

**Learning and Development Manager**

**March, 2017**

## Introduction

A focus group was held on 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2017 and consisted of some of the more long standing Elected Members. These Members were selected as it was felt they had the ability to champion learning and would be able to reflect on previous Elected Member Learning and Development Programmes (what had worked well and what not so well) and would have an in-depth understanding of the issues facing the Council and therefore how they could be better supported to undertake their role as effective community leaders. The focus group lasted 90 minutes and was facilitated by Lisa Koc, Learning and Development Manager and Lucy Truman, Transformation Lead. Context was provided i.e., to gather the views of Elected Members to inform the content of the Elected Member Development Programme and delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan 2017-2020.

**The Ground Rules were shared as follows:**



- We want **you** to do the talking
- We would like **you** to participate
- **Everyone's** view is valid and valuable
- There are **no** right or wrong answers
- We want to hear a **wide** range of opinions
- We want to capture **everything** you want to say
- We **don't** identify anyone by name in our report, you **will** remain anonymous
- We want to **conclude** in 90 minutes

**1. What do you consider to be the skills, knowledge and support required by existing Elected Members?**

Chairing meetings

ICT capability

Strategic planning and thinking

Safeguarding and Child Sexual Exploitation

Planning law

Social Media

Media

Communicating effectively and appropriately with the public

Employment Law

Equality and Diversity

Data Protection

Briefings on the constitution, understanding the rules and protocols of the Council Chamber

Assertiveness

Confidence

Code of Conduct including proper use of Council resources, respect for officers and the role of the Mayor

The Council's finances

Effective casework

Effective partnership working

**2. What do you consider to be the skills, knowledge and support required by new Elected Members?**

Shadowing

A buddy system

Expectation should be set even before individuals become Elected Members so they are aware of their responsibilities

Nurturing of new Elected Members – a supportive culture

Basics including how to use the microphones etc

Should be read in conjunction with all the above

### **3. What has worked well in the past/what might work well in future?**

Having choices over times/dates

Roundtable talks such as today

Undertaking a skills scan of new and existing Members to understand what they have already and what they might be able to share

Access to regular CPD via e-learning – might even suggest recommended number of hours per year to be undertaken

### **4. What has not worked so well in the past?**

Lack of flexibility with regards to dates and times

### **5. What skills, knowledge and behaviours do the workforce need?**

As members we need to be able to tap into all the knowledge and experience which exists at all levels ie both staff and managers.

Due diligence – a recent experience whereby preparation of papers for employment appeals was not accurate causing delay and frustration for the Committee.

We need honesty and transparency – if I ask a question but perhaps do not phrase it correctly, officers sometimes don't provide the right or required answer which only partially answers the question.

We have lost much of the historical experience and in certain areas we have cut too far in the operational areas

### **6. Additional suggestions**

Information Governance arrangements are often unclear

Some issues with ICT compatibility of devices

Need to have more cross party collegiate working  
Need to engage better with the public and ensure we are representing them correctly – scrutinising the things they would want us to  
Need to horizon scan/benchmark with others – no need to re-invent the wheel – less navel gazing  
Need to be flexible  
Need to set out the expectation to all Members ie to have read papers in advance and to have conducted necessary research  
Need to re-set scrutiny and overview – needs more overview  
Need to see what opportunities we can draw down from the LGA and hold cross Council learning events whereby we can share our approaches and knowledge  
Need to set the expectation of self-directed learning – ie undertake reading and research  
Need to split the casework from the strategy  
Delivery of the corporate plan should be project managed to achieve outcomes and budget savings – corporate plan should be a live document and scrutinised at every meeting  
We need to engage the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector more  
Scrutiny is too adversarial and we should prioritise for overview the big issues which are causing concern like the rising number of Looked After Children  
We are too reactive and do not plan ahead enough  
We need to see buildings such as libraries as community assets which provide more than books ie reduces social isolation  
Prevention is really important as investment in this whether it be health or social care/childrens will avoid cost further down the line

### **Next Steps**

A further focus group will be held early May for new Elected Members. The suggestions received will be used to inform the Elected Member Learning and Development Programme 2017/18.