

# Standards Committee – 30<sup>th</sup> January 2017

## Elected Member Training

### Summary of report:

The report is to provide information to Elected Members in respect of training that has been delivered to Elected Members over the past twelve months, levels of attendance and any feedback from the training sessions themselves.

### Background papers:

Appendix 1 - List of Training Events and Attendance at the same; proposed future training.

### Recommendation:

1. To note the content of the report and Appendices

## 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 every employee at every level of the organisation. Training is seen as a necessary investment in order to provide the excellent services the Council demands.
- 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 It is unlikely that any individual will become a councillor (or cabinet member) already having all the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to be effective in that role. They will need some training and development not only to acquire those abilities but to keep them current and relevant to the changing environment and context. The House of Commons committee report *Councillors on the Frontline* also highlights the importance of training and

development not only to support councillors but also, by demonstrating that support is available, to encourage others to come forward to stand for election. The report also highlighted the importance of developing the “soft skills” councillors need (e.g. communication and influencing skills) as well as providing effective induction programmes for newly elected councillors.

- 1.5 As a consequence the council is currently engaged in a project involving our Organisational and Development Team from HRD and we are reviewing our entire offering for member training with a view to re-launching a comprehensive training programme to meet elected members needs. We are producing a training matrix that will look at training on a needs basis. Training will be delivered through different mediums such as face to face; online; and through briefing notes. Some training will be mandatory such as training in Planning Law which elected members will have to complete before sitting on planning committee. Some training will be repeated on an annual basis for example training in relation to the Elected Member code of conduct and disclosable pecuniary interests. This training will be supported by other courses to assist members in fulfilling their roles as councillors. Part of this review will be the scheduling of training around council meetings to try and ensure maximum opportunity for elected members to attend.
- 1.6 The council will continue to provide an induction course for newly elected members to assist them in adapting to their role.
- 1.7 Elected Members will be consulted about the training programme to ensure that it will meet their needs.
- 1.8 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 There will be consultation with elected members in respect of the proposed training programme.

#### **Author:**

Tony Cox  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services  
☎ 01922 654822  
✉ coxt@walsall.gov.uk