

Elected Member Training

Summary of report:

This report provides an update to Elected Members in respect of progress towards reviewing the elected member learning and development for 23/24.

Recommendation:

1. To note the content of the report and Appendix 1;
2. To advise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services of topics which would be particularly useful for inclusion in the 23/24 Programme'
3. To note the current Mandatory, Highly Recommended and Optional learning items and advise of any changes.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The purpose of training is to equip individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to meet the organisation's needs in relation to its strategic priorities. 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/role satisfaction.
- 1.2 The Council recognise that such development is a continuing process for both employees and elected members in order to equip them with the necessary skills to fulfil their roles as community leaders, and to help them manage the changes facing the council going forward in delivering its aims and objectives as outlined in the Council Plan 2022-25.
- 1.3 Training and development for Councillors should be based on individual needs as well as 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 formed a project team comprising officers from HRD and Legal and Democratic Services with the objective of reviewing approaches to and

content of elected member training, to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and supports the council's transformation ambitions. It is important that the training offered is relevant to councillors in enabling them to be effective in their role. In keeping the training programme for elected members under review we have sought to hear the Member voice via feedback received during focus groups and through other routes. The focus groups have been well attended since 2017 with elected members making an invaluable contribution to their programme. We are hoping to run a focus after the Elections to shape the 23/24 Programme. The current programme is appended to this report to support thinking.

- 1.5 It is planned to work with the Learning Champions to obtain their views in relation to the induction offered and training and development in general. Subject to their views further work may arise such as a member focus group or survey.
- 1.6 In addition to Member views on the content of the development programme, Directors are also being consulted to ensure some triangulation thereby ensuring our elected members are fully equipped to deal with the changes and challenges that the council is facing.
- 1.7 It is also proposed that the Standards Committee continue to review the content and effectiveness of 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 maintain and improve governance and standards.

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 within existing budgets. The Learning and Development Programme is part of maintaining standards and good governance.

3.0 Performance and Risk Management issues:

- 3.1 Performance and risk management is a feature of all council functions. An effective 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 requirements for equalities, diversity and inclusion. EDI training will be made available to all elected members as part of this programme.

5.0 Consultation:

5.1 Consultation has already commenced with elected members.

Author:

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