

Annual Update Elected Member Development 2019/20

AIM

The report is to provide information to Elected Members in respect of implementation of the refreshed learning and development programme offered to Elected Members 2019/20, including data relating to attendance on training and at development events for the period 1.4.19 – 31.8.19.

Background papers:

Relevant Appendices 1-3

1. The output from the focus group we held with elected members earlier this year
2. A copy of the learning champions role for Elected Members
3. The record for member training attendance from 1.4.19 – 31.8.19

Recommendation:

1. To note the content of the report and associated Appendices.

1.0 KNOWLEDGE

- 1.1 It is important that Elected Members help shape their learning and development based on self-reflection and assessment. In 2017/18 the approach to Member Development was refreshed commencing with a focus group to undertake an overarching learning needs analysis. The 2017/18 Programme was subsequently launched and engagement encouraging.
- 1.2 An annual review of the 2017/18 was undertaken and the positive feedback received led to the programme being 'rolled over' to cover the 2018/19 period. On 30 January 2019, a further focus group was held, comprising, in the main, longer standing Elected Members across the various political parties with the aim of identifying Elected Member learning and development needs going forward (2019/20 period). The programme was subsequently refreshed and it will be kept under annual review; being monitored through the Standards Committee. Training/access to wider development opportunities is a vital component in upholding standards followed by elected members.
- 1.3 The Programme includes provision of face to face learning events delivered by external and internal trainers with opportunities for self-directed and e-learning to supplement this. There is also funding to support Elected Member attendance at external learning events/conferences etc. Learning Champions have been identified from within each political group to support their fellow group members.

- 1.4 Training attendance data is provided against the 2019/20 programme for the period 1.4.19 – 31.8.19. This also includes e-learning data. Further updates will be provided throughout the year.
- 1.5 The Council also provides a mandatory induction for all newly Elected Members. At present the main mandatory learning is in relation to planning committee and employment appeals committees where elected members are required to attend training before they sit on the said committees. Other mandatory training includes Information Governance which has to be completed on an annual basis.
- 1.6 The importance of learning and development for elected members has been recognised by the Committee for Standards in Public Life in their Local Government Ethical Standards, Recommendation 25 states: “Councillors should be required to attend formal induction training by their political groups. National parties should add such a requirement to their model group rules.” Training is also recognised as a sanction for breaches of the Elected Member Code of Conduct. The report also recognises the importance of political groups in fostering a strong ethical culture among councillors and encouraging training and development. The report states as follows:- “local authorities should see political groups as a semi-formal institution in the ‘layered’ model. We heard that group whips will often see mentoring new councillors and supporting existing councillors as an important part of their role.
- 1.7 “When it comes to training, local authorities should value and utilise the informal mentoring and support within political groups that can complement the formal training offered by the local authority and advice from officers. Senior officers should regularly engage with group whips and group members to understand the training needs of members and to ensure that the right expectations are set for how councillors act in the chamber, on committees, with officers, and on outside bodies.”

2.0 Resource and legal considerations:

- 2.1 None directly related to this report. Under s27 Localism Act 2011 local authorities are required to uphold and promote standards of elected members. There are, however, resource implications in terms of organising, designing and delivering the programme, both from HR and Legal and Democratic Services.

3.0 Performance and Risk Management issues:

- 3.1 Performance and risk management are a feature of all council functions. It is important that Council policies and procedures are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. If the council fails to do this there is an increased risk that the council will be subject to legal challenge or litigation.
- 3.2 In terms of performance it is important that Elected Members both have a clear framework of standards to follow in delivering services to the community, and training to support them in effectively fulfilling their roles as community leaders. The Council, at Annual Council on 23rd May, 2018, at the request of Elected

Members approved an amended Code of Conduct for Elected Members, which is set out as follows at 1.8:

“Providing leadership through behaving in accordance with these principles when championing the interests of the community with other organisations as well as within the authority. This will require Members to have the relevant knowledge to carry out their role which is why there is an expectation that Members will attend a minimum of 12 hours training each municipal year. The Council has developed a training and professional development programme to support Members. Members sitting on certain licensing, planning, employment committees are required to undertake mandatory training prior to sitting on the same.”

- 3.3 As the programme was only refreshed 17/18 and the requirement that Elected Members attend a certain level of training per municipal year it was decided to allow a period of ‘bedding in’ and to monitor training levels commencing 2019.

4.0 Equality Implications:

- 4.1 In maintaining an up to date programme of learning for Members which includes knowledge and awareness of equality legislation and public sector duties 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 legislation and best practice. This also supports the Council’s Public Sector Equalities duty under the Equality Act 2010.

5.0 Consultation:

- 5.1 There is no requirement to consult on this report.

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