

Standards Committee – 30th January 2024

Update to Member Learning and Development programme

Aim:

To seek approval for Audit Committee training to be extended to all Elected Members and for the Member Learning and Development Programme for 2023/24 to be updated accordingly to include such training requirements as standard.

Summary:

At its meeting on 25th September 2023, Audit Committee considered a report entitled 'Review of the Effectiveness of the Audit Committee' (attached as Appendix 1). Arising from discussions on this item, Audit Committee Members recommended that Standards Committee consider extending the Member Learning and Development Programme for 2023/24 to include Audit training for all Members.

Recommendation:

That Standards Committee approve the inclusion of Audit training for all Members being added to the Member Learning and Development Programme for 2023/24.

1.0 Report Detail - Know

- 1.1 At its meeting on 25th September 2023, the Audit Committee considered a report entitled 'Review of the Effectiveness of the Audit Committee'. Arising from discussions on this report, Members expressed their concern in relation to the continuity of Membership on the Audit Committee, in the context of the breadth of knowledge, skills and experience Audit Members are required to have in order to effectively serve on the Committee.
- 1.2 In recent years, Group Leaders have made a commitment to ensure that, as far as practicable, Audit Members are maintained on the Committee from year to year to enable a continuity of experience and knowledge on the Committee.
- 1.3 It is generally accepted that Audit Committee is a difficult Committee for new Members to swiftly acclimatise to, given the breadth of specialist issues covered under its remit. Audit Committee is also an important Committee given the nature and complexity of business which falls under its remit. In view of this, in recent years a robust training programme has been put in place to train Members who sit on Audit Committee in order that they can effectively and competently participate, challenge and seek assurance on the systems of the control environment. Currently, this training is only offered to Members of the Audit Committee.
- 1.4 At the meeting on 25th September, Members raised a concern around succession planning, specifically in the context of Local Elections; i.e. it is possible that current

serving Members on the Audit Committee might possibly not be re-elected, and subsequently that knowledge base / experience would be lost.

1.5 In view of 1.4, Members were concerned that, in order to maintain a good level of skill, knowledge and experience on the Audit Committee for succession planning purposes, Audit training ought to be included in the highly recommended Elected Member training programme as a matter of course to help mitigate this risk.

1.6 Accordingly, Audit Committee Members requested that Standards Committee consider adding Audit training to the Member Learning and Development Programme for 2023/24.

2.0 Financial information

2.1 None directly related to this report. However, on occasion the council will commission external training, but this cost would be met from within existing budgets.

3.0 Legal implications

3.1 An effective training programme should aim to improve elected member performance and improve governance. Training should also increase elected members understanding of the complexity of their role and improve their ability to fulfil the role.

4.0 Decide

4.1 Subject to any feedback Members may wish to provide, the Member Learning and Development Programme will be delivered during the Municipal Year.

5.0 Respond

5.1 Additions to the Member Learning and Development Programme will be made mid-year, as required.

6.0 Review

6.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer will liaise with the Member Learning Champions to work with all elected members to ensure that they have the opportunity to attend at least 12 hours of learning and development each municipal year.

6.2 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.

7.0 Background papers:

7.1 Audit Committee report 'Review of the Effectiveness of the Audit Committee' from the Audit Committee meeting held on 25/09/23 (appendix 1).

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