

**Focus group outputs to  
Inform the Elected Member Development  
Programme 2019/20**



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## Introduction

A focus group was held on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2019 and consisted mainly 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. 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?**

ICT capability both basic and possibilities of Office 365 and using this on own devices

Personal safety/lone working/managing violence and aggression

Safeguarding and Child Sexual Exploitation

Planning law

Serving Licensing committee

Communicating effectively and appropriately with the public/each other

Employment Law

Data Protection/GDPR

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

Displaying the right behaviours, challenging/critiquing the report not the person

Councillors key role as educators

Code of Conduct including proper use of Council resources, respect for officers and fellow Members

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

A buddy system from their own group

An overarching 'map' of how all the Council Directorates fit together including which Directorate, Service and Team does what and where to go for help

A physical map of the Council House/Town Hall, the zones and who sits where

Skills around managing confrontation and social media abuse and negativity

Nurturing of new Elected Members – a supportive culture

Consideration of a 'freshers' week

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

Topics, dates and learning outcomes publicised in advance

Mentoring from those within our group

An indication of what is mandatory and what is not

Consideration of sanctions if the 12 hours learning per annum not met and also thoughts on how we incentivise Members to attend

Regular drop in sessions with key people

Align learning to what is in the municipal calendar in terms of what is timely and contemporary/maximise attendance on Council premises

Share presentations/notes with colleagues if they cannot attend the dates

Let others attend even if not supporting a particular committee at that point in time

Join up with others ie CCG for joint training in relevant issues

Put the training on the Members weekly list

A list of FAQs (frequently asked questions) based on questions most frequently asked by the public and the outline council response

Signposting for Members who deals with what

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

Lack of flexibility with regards to dates and times

When just e-learning on offer

### **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.

Discipline around answering the telephone/being connected into a 'hunt group'

Still want 121 support from Democratic Services as required

Consistent approaches

### **6. Additional suggestions**

Consideration of putting Members training attendance on CMIS

Elected Members to be protected from vexatious and threatening members of the public generally but not exclusively experienced via social media

Members to regularly share their experiences

Rationale for what learning might sit in individual groups and what might be best done more broadly across parties  
Central co-ordination of training and learning opportunities

**Next Steps**

The suggestions received will be used to inform the Elected Member Learning and Development Programme 2019/20.