

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Audit and Governance Committee

Date: 11 March 2024

Report of: Assistant Director (Democracy)

Subject: Member Training Programme

SUMMARY

The Council Elected Member Training Programme has been refreshed to identify training sessions and opportunities to support and benefit elected members carry out their role effectively.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Audit and Governance Committee:

- (a) notes the content of this report;
- (b) recommends any additional training to be added to the draft Programme at Appendix A; and
- (c) approves the draft Elected Member Training Programme at Appendix A.

INTRODUCTION

1. As part of the Council Strategic Framework, the Council's Corporate Strategy outlines our visions, values and priorities for the Council.
2. It is important that the Council supports Elected Members with a programme of training, to enhance their skills and knowledge enabling them to carry out their role effectively to work towards these priorities.
3. It should be noted that training does not include Member Briefings.
4. The Council has refreshed its training programme for 2024/25 and proposes it for this municipal year, and as a basis for training going forward.

REFRESHING THE PROGRAMME

5. When considering the Programme, the past modules were reviewed to look at up-take and the merit of these within the programme. These were all considered to be beneficial to Councillors, but it was recognised that some fell under the same theme, so the draft Programme has been refreshed to reflect those more appropriately.
6. The majority of training has been offered to new Councillors and it is recognised that with an 'all-out' election taking place this year, this was an opportunity to reconsider how the programme looked.

CAPTURING ATTENDEES

7. For existing Councillors who are re-elected in May 2024, it is very likely that the information contained within our new councillor training sessions will never have been delivered to that cohort of Councillors, at all, or for many years.
8. Therefore, to avoid missing crucial changes to legislation and processes, all returning Councillors elected at the May 2024 elections are highly recommended and encouraged to attend all new Councillor training sessions, as well as other training offered.
9. In recognition of the short timeframe between the election and the first training session, a document will be circulated to all Candidates for the May 2024 elections. The purpose of this document is to provide those Candidates with key training and meeting dates within the first month, by way of advance notice. This information is also provided to winning Candidates via the Member Induction Booklet distributed on Election night.

ASSESSING THE PROGRAMME

10. Acknowledging that the Council may lose Councillors who bring with them a wealth of experience, invitations are being extended to all Councillors asking them to complete a survey in respect of their experiences of training.
11. Councillors may also opt to speak to the Assistant Director (Democracy) instead of/alongside the survey to give a fuller overview of their training experiences.

12. Officers who have delivered training in the past will also be surveyed to gauge their views on that training and were asked to make suggestions for the future.
13. New topics have been suggested within the new Programme and these reflect changes to legislation in some areas as well as large projects being undertaken by the Council.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

14. New sessions included within the programme are:

“Introduction to the Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team”: this will give an opportunity to deliver an overview of Portfolios, the Corporate Strategy, priorities and objectives.

“Skills to navigate being a Councillor”: this all-day session will include an overview of the introduction of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman Joint Complaint Handling Code.

“Looking After Yourself and Others-the Council’s approach to the environment”.

“Looking After Yourself and Others-IT awareness and support”.

15. Some of the previously offered sessions have been amended to better reflect the differing aspect of services.
16. Councillors may also make suggestions for training throughout the municipal year where it is identified it may assist them in their role.

COST

17. The majority of training is delivered in-house by Council Officers, and some of the training is delivered via the Southampton Legal Partnership, which is costed to the Council.
18. With the proposed training programme as it stands at Appendix A, additional costs over-and-above those incurred previously would come from Chairman and Vice-Chairman training where this is delivered externally. Whilst this has been offered previously, with the potential for new Councillors, it is envisaged this may be delivered to more Councillors than previously.

RISK ASSESSMENT

19. Recognising that some Councillors may not be re-elected, there is a risk from losing experienced and knowledgeable Councillors, it is hoped the Member survey, together with input from the Audit and Governance Committee, will result in capturing some feedback from Councillors as to the previous delivery of training within the Council and understanding what Members found useful to their role.
20. Without a training programme in place for elected members, they will not be in possession of important information to help and support them as a Councillor.

As some of the training includes legal responsibilities for Councillors, it is important training sessions are attended to give relevant, key and up-to-date information.

CONCLUSION

21. Members benefit from training to help them carry out their role effectively, and to have a broader understanding of legal requirements and implications.
22. If approved, the Council's refreshed programme will give Members a framework for training to be delivered.

Appendix A:

Draft Member Training Programme

Background Papers:

Election Night Induction booklet May and October 2022.

Reference Papers:

Key Dates for Election Candidates 2024

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Samantha Wightman 01329 824594.