

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Audit and Governance Committee

Date: 14 March 2022

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Subject: REVIEW OF MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

SUMMARY

The Audit and Governance Committee is charged with monitoring and reviewing the arrangements for members' training and development to ensure that the capacity of members to provide effective governance and community leadership continues to develop. This report outlines the position regarding member training and briefing sessions in 2020/21 and considers the draft training programme for 2021/22. This report also presents the New Member Induction Booklet for approval, with the opportunity for Members to make suggestions on items for inclusion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is RECOMMENDED that the Audit and Governance Committee-

- (a) notes the Schedule of Training and Development for 2020/21 at Appendix A;
- (b) notes the contents of the member's training and development schedule for 2021/22, at Appendix B;
- (c) considers and makes any suggestions for additional training items to be added to the draft training programme for the municipal year 2022/23, at Appendix C; and
- (d) notes the draft New Members' Induction Booklet 2022 as set out in Appendix D.

INTRODUCTION

1. In November 2003 the Standards Committee Terms of Reference were revised to include responsibility for monitoring Members' training and development and it was agreed that the Committee would review the proposed programme of training annually to ensure it met Members' needs as well as undertaking an annual review of the range and quality of training and development.
2. In March 2013, the Audit and Governance committee agreed that a new approach to new member induction training be approved in a modular form to provide on-going support to new members.

THE STRATEGY

3. The committee is reminded of the main provisions of the Council's training and development strategy which contributes to the Council's aims and objectives and underpins good practice.
4. The strategy aims to provide members with opportunities for developing a range of skills and a depth of knowledge which will equip them to fulfil their roles and provide effective community governance. It recognises that these skills and knowledge are developed through a variety of means, not just through formal training events. Thus, members' skills and knowledge may be equally developed through informal arrangements such as personal reading and research, newsletters and briefing reports; interaction with other members, officers, constituents, joint working with other authorities and with partners; shadowing, coaching and mentoring.
5. The strategy recognises that in the main, members' development can be managed by the individual members themselves; but to establish a development framework, an annual programme of training events which reflects more precisely the needs of all Councillors would be established. The individual needs of Councillors will be addressed wherever possible, and a variety of development methods offered to suit the individual member.
6. The majority of knowledge-based training can be delivered in-house within existing budgets. Where externally led training does need to be provided, priority will be given to those topics which benefit several members but, budget permitting, lower priority items will be delivered. Where external trainers are used, they are chosen for their knowledge of the subject as well as experience in training delivery.
7. Members are informed of training opportunities by way of the Member's newsletter and/or by email/calendar invitation which enables the Member to accept or decline and allows the session to automatically populate in their calendar. The additional benefit of inviting members via calendar invitation is it enables the Committee team to see the proposed attendance and manage the session to ensure effective use of meeting rooms.
8. Dates for Member forthcoming training and briefing sessions are also included on the Members' Monthly newsletter.

2020/21

9. As report to the Committee in March 2021 outlined, the UK was still experiencing challenges to the Coronavirus pandemic.
10. Section 60 of the Government's Coronavirus Act 2020 provided for the postponement of elections due to be held on 07 May 2020 and, as such, gave provision for an extension to their term of office until May 2021.
11. As a result of the uncertainty and guidelines around social distancing some training sessions were not held. In the main these were those scheduled for newly Elected Councillors.

2021/22

12. At the time the Audit and Governance Committee did receive their annual report in 2021, the UK was still experiencing a National Lockdown due to the Pandemic and the Committee was advised that the Local Elections remained scheduled for 06 May 2021. This Election took place and the new Councillors received scheduled training sessions as outlined in the Appendix presented and agreed by the Committee, and as attached at Appendix A.
13. The Committee is reminded that whilst these sessions are for new Members, any existing Councillor is welcome to attend as a refresher session.
14. During the year some of the sessions were held virtually in line with Government guidelines for social distancing. Whilst it is envisaged most training sessions will be face-to-face, there is provision to hold some briefings virtually following Executive approval on the future of virtual meetings.
15. It should be noted that at the commencement of each municipal year, a skeleton schedule of training sessions is prepared, and this is expanded throughout the year with topics relevant to current issues and projects as the Council works to deliver its priorities and these items will also, most certainly, have an interest to Borough residents, hence the need for Councillor awareness.
16. The Council offers Safeguarding training to all new Councillors, as well as an annual refresher session at some point during the municipal year.
17. Attached at appendix C is the draft Schedule of Training and Development for 2022/23. Members are invited to comment on this and make recommendations for training items for inclusion.

NEW MEMBER TRAINING MODULES

18. All new Members receive a Member Induction booklet as part of an introduction package distributed after the election results are declared. This was introduced following feedback from Members during previous consultations.
19. Included within the introduction package is a booklet which sets out training modules for new Councillors in their first six months.

20. Due to the Elections being held on the 5 May 2022 and the first Council meeting on the 12 May 2022, there is a tight timescale for the initial modules which introduce new Members to the Council, as well as covering essential procedural information for the Annual Council meeting and administrative tasks.

21. The draft Member Induction booklet is included at Appendix D.

RISK ASSESSMENT

22. The decisions the committee is being asked to make presents minimal risk, but it gives Members of the Committee an opportunity to influence the training provided to new and existing Councillors, based on their experiences and knowledge.

23. It is important to adopt a programme of training and development which is responsive to Members' needs and without this, it could possibly restrict the capacity of the Council to fulfil its responsibilities of community leadership and local governance.

CONCLUSION

24. Members are asked to consider the contents of this report and to suggest any additional training sessions which they feel may benefit Councillors in the next municipal year.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Members' Training and Briefing Schedule 2020/21

Appendix B – Members' Training and Briefing Schedule 2021/22

Appendix C - Draft Members' Training and Briefing Schedule 2022/23

Appendix D - Draft New Members' Induction Booklet 2022

Background Papers:

Training attendance records

Reference Papers:

Minutes of the Standards Committee 26 November 2003.

Report to the Audit and Governance Committee on Member training & development and revised New Member Induction package 11 March 2013.

Report to the Audit and Governance Committee 23 March 2020.

Report to the Audit and Governance Committee 15 March 2021.

Report to the Executive 07 December 2021.

Coronavirus Act 2020.

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Leigh Usher, ext. 4553.