

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

Minutes of a meeting of the Member Development Steering Group held on 9 February at 6.00pm in Telford Room, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT

Present: Councillors K Blundell (Chair), A McClements, T Nelson.

In Attendance: L Gordon (Member Support Officer), A Lowe (Director: Policy & Governance), R Phillips (Service Delivery Manager, Legal & Democracy), A Plummer (Democracy Team Leader), P Starkey (Member Support Officer) and M Wallace (Member Support Officer)

Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received from Councillors S P Burrell, T L B Janke and K Middleton.

Notes of the Last Meeting:

Committee agreed minutes were a true representation of the last meeting and had no further comments.

Member Learning & Development Programme 2023 - 2027

The Service Delivery Manager: Legal & Democracy formally introduced the item and referred Committee Members to the update report contained within the agenda pack. The report detailed the final version of the Councillor Connect portal, the proposed Member Learning & Development Programme and the updated skills discussion.

The Democracy Manager updated Members of the changes that had been made to the Councillor Connect Portal following feedback from the Committee at the last meeting. Members heard that additional information related to demographic data and health inequalities across the Borough was to be added as soon as it was available. The Committee were assured that as further developments in data were made they would be added to the Councillor Connect Portal. This included.

Members welcomed the changes and amendments made to the Councillor Connect Portal and requested that they continue to be informed as additional developments were made.

The Democracy Manager directed Members to Appendix D; the Learning & Development Programme 2023 – 2027, which included the 2023 Induction Plan, containing a variety of modules and resources offered to both newly elected and returning members to assist them in their roles as elected officials. Members heard that the refreshed programmed was based upon

research undertaken to explore alternative approaches used by a wide range of local authorities.

The new Member Learning & Development Programme 2023 – 2027 incorporated a combination of key initiatives as part of the Member Development & Support Strategy, alongside successful elements of the 2019 programme, which was extended to cover the on-going developmental needs of elected members throughout their four year term in office. Members heard that new initiatives included; access to the Named Support Officer offer including an initial introductory meeting and optional quarterly meetings thereafter; the Member Personal Development plan in year 1 and year 3; and access to the live Councillor Connect portal to act as an online central repository of training resources and materials.

The first two weeks of the induction plan had been broadened to incorporate a Directorates' service showcase which will see a number of information stands from other key service areas across the council such as planning, public protection, safeguarding, highways, culture and leisure. Experience from other local authorities demonstrated that having almost an 'expo' like experience is beneficial for both elected members and employees. Members also had the opportunity to attend a welcome event hosted by the Chief Executive which provided an overview of the Council, its structures and a 'who does what' guide.

Members were assured that the training delivery sought to accommodate Member's commitments outside of their role as an elected official such as personal responsibilities and employment arrangements. Therefore, a mix of both day and evening sessions were available, held as a variety of methods of delivery including a mix of in-person workshops, e-learning modules, external providers and Microsoft Teams sessions. Previous experience had indicated that the use of hybrid methods had increased Member attendance. At the close of the formal nomination process, candidates also received letters to inform them of programme timetable in order to keep the relevant dates free.

Following the appointments made at the Annual Council meeting scheduled for Thursday, May 2023 further training provision was to be made for some committee specific training.

The Committee agreed that the proposed plan was constructive and drew on knowledge from other local authorities. Members noted the importance of continuous development for both new and returning Councillors following the election and agreed that the named support offer allowed a more personal approach that was welcomed. Members expressed concerns that the Member Personal Development plan outlined in Appendix E may be subject to Councillor's personal interpretations of their confidence rather than their competence. The Director: Policy & Governance agreed that the language used was to be reviewed and circulated for the Committee's comment.

The meeting ended at 6.37pm

Chairman:

Date: Thursday 16 March 2023