



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Governance Committee

Wednesday 17 January 2024

Member Development Update

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Nathan England - Cabinet Member: Finance, Customer Services & Governance
Lead Director:	Anthea Lowe - Director: Policy & Governance
Service Area:	Policy & Governance
Report Author:	Lorna Gordon – Mayor and Member Support Officer
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Governance Committee – 17 January 2023

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that the Governance Committee:

- 1.1 Note the contents of this report, and
- 1.2 Endorses the approach set out within the report for the Council to attain the Local Government Association's Member Development Charter and Charter Plus.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Governance Committee with an update on the Member Learning and Development Programme and an overview of the next stages and future of the programme.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 At a meeting of the Member Development Steering Committee on Thursday, 16 March 2023, Members agreed to the updated Member Learning & Development Programme 2023 – 2027 that was to be rolled out following the election on Thursday, 04 May 2023.
- 3.2 The Member Development Programme offers a variety of modules and resources for both newly elected and returning Members to assist them in their roles as elected officials and to enable them to hit the ground running.
- 3.3 All training included in the programme is designed to furnish Members with the required level of knowledge, skills, learning and development, which is intended to be constantly 'evolving', taking into account the changing priorities of the organisation and Members' personal training needs throughout their term in office.
- 3.4 The Member Development Programme was split into four themes;
 - Hit the ground running (May to mid-July 2023)
 - Operating as an effective councillor (September to early November 2023)
 - Roles and responsibilities (Late November 2023 to February 2024)
 - Continued professional development (Year 2 and 3)

At the time of writing this report phase three, the Roles and responsibilities theme is underway and is on schedule to be completed in February 2023 as planned.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

Member Learning & Development Programme Review

- 4.1 There had been several key changes made to the Member Learning & Development Programme for 2023 to 2027 in order to provide a more well-rounded and accessible programme of learning and development for Members. These changes were agreed at a meeting of the Member Development Steering Committee on Thursday, 16 March 2023 and included the introduction of a letter informing all candidates of the induction process that commences immediately after the election, a two-day drop-in event for essential registration and a directorates' showcase.
- 4.2 The first theme: hit the ground running, was designed to provide Members with an understanding of the basic conduct standards and probity rules, as well as an understanding of the quasi-judicial functions that the council undertakes. Provision was made for Committee specific training to take place during this phase, with records indicating that Member attendance was higher for those sessions designated as required learning.

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- 4.3 From mid-September the training entered the second theme: operating as an effective councillor. The modules within this theme focussed on the underpinning statutory issues and other key skills to assist Members in their role. Sessions within this theme included stress management essentials, the fundamentals of procurement and working with contractors, and who makes decisions and what decisions can they make. Similarly to during the first training theme, Member attendance was significantly higher for required learning session.
- 4.4 At the time of writing this report the Member Learning & Development Programme is currently holding sessions part of the third theme: Roles and Responsibilities. The sessions that take place during this theme are designed to set out the decision-making powers and responsibilities councillors have. These sessions include what does it take to be an effective chair, becoming a community champion and the world of outside bodies.
- 4.5 It has been noted that some Members have expressed a preference for remote learning and others for in person sessions. As a result of these findings, the Member Support Team will continue to provide a variety of both in person and online training for future sessions and any repeat sessions arranged, to cater to the different preferences of Members, as well as circulating details of upcoming training courses on the Councillor Connect portal and in the Councillor Connect newsletter which is sent to Members on a regular basis.
- 4.6 There have been four repeat sessions held for committee specific training for those unable to attend the first time at the time of writing this report. The Member Support Team will continue to hold repeat sessions as we go into the next phase from February 2024 for all required learning. Other modules may be repeated based upon feedback from Members and officers as required.
- 4.7 Member feedback form responses have shown that the training provided has been rated 4.5 out of 5 on average. Members have notably highly rated their confidence in using the knowledge and/or skills gained from the sessions and the knowledge of the presenters themselves, highlighting their ability to answer any questions they may have on those sessions key topics.
- 4.8 After each training session any slides that were used are added to the Councillor Connect portal for Members to revisit in their own time, or to review if they have missed a session.

Named Support & Personal Development Plans

- 4.9 As part of the updated Member Learning and Development Programme all Members (excluding Cabinet Members) will be assigned a dedicated named support officer from the Council's Democracy Team. Following the election in May

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2024, all Councillors (excluding Cabinet) received an email introducing them to their named support officer and providing them with an overview of the support that they can provide. Any changes to nominated support officers are communicated directly with Members and introductory meetings arranged.

- 4.10 Member Personal Development Plans have been designed to offer Members with an opportunity to assess their skills, knowledge and experience in order to establish personal goals and areas of development. This is an optional offering and is to be undertaken by each Member's allocated named support officer.
- 4.11 Following the approval of the Personal Development Plan (PDP) template by the Member Development Steering Committee on Thursday 16 March 2023, Members received emails inviting them to complete a PDP if they wished to. We have, so far, had responses from ten Councillors expressing that they wish to take part. Those Members have been sent the self-assessment document to complete, before being invited to meet with their Named Support Officer to discuss the available training and development opportunities to help achieve their personal goals. Members have responded positively to the introduction of the personal development plan, stating that it, combined with the named support offer allowed a more personal approach that was welcomed.

Plans for the next 12 months

- 4.12 As of February 2024, Members will enter into the final theme of the Member Learning & Development Programme: continued professional development. This stage will run throughout 2024 - 2026 and seeks to ensure Members continue to develop their skills and be confident in their role and responsibilities. This programme will be developed in accordance with identified development demands and seeks to provide information on key issues in the borough as they arise to help develop Members knowledge.
- 4.13 Those Members who have completed their self-assessment part of their personal development plan will meet with their named support officers in early 2024 to discuss suitable training and development opportunities. This will be followed up with scheduled meetings at regular intervals throughout the Councillors term in office to monitor progress and any additional steps to be taken. The offer for all other Councillors to take part in a PDP will continue to be extended.
- 4.14 The Member Support Team will continue to arrange update or refresher training sessions for key topics and areas where necessary.
- 4.15 The Member Support Team will be carrying out an in depth review of the successes and areas for improvement of the Member Development Programme

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and will report this back to the Governance Committee as appropriate. This review will include gathering additional feedback from all Members.

- 4.16 Members will receive regular communication regarding upcoming training opportunities, both from internal and external providers such as the LGA and Kings Fund.
- 4.17 Appendix A outlines examples of the training, seminars and further development opportunities available to Members in the next 12 months.

Local Government Association Member Development Charter

- 4.18 The LGA Member Development Charter and Charter Plus was created to provide councils with a robust framework to benchmark member development and to continuously improve. It supports this continuing professional development for councillors by creating a contract between the council and its councillors that it commits to invest in councillors' growth and development.
- 4.19 The LGA has outlined three essential criteria required to achieve the charter:
 - There is a clear commitment to councillor development and support;
 - The council has a strategic approach to councillor development; and
 - Learning and development is effective in building councillor capacity.
- 4.20 The Member support team have carried out an initial gap analysis that indicates that the council would be in a good position to apply for the Member Development Charter and are currently in the process of gathering evidence to support this application. This evidence will include meeting notes, feedback from councillors and officers, strategy and policy documents and details of development events.
- 4.21 The Member Support Team will continue to work towards Charter Plus accreditation and hope to update the Committee in the coming year about progress.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Council could choose not to seek LGA Charter accreditation, however given the robust framework it provides, it may be a missed opportunity to benchmark its learning and development offering against other Councils nationally.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 There are no risks directly associated with this report.

7.0 Council Priorities

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7.1 A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services.

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

9.1 There are no specific legal and HR implications arising from this report.

10.0 Ward Implications

10.1 There are no specific ward implications arising from this report.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

11.1 There are no specific health, social and economic implications arising from this report.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no climate change and environmental implications arising from this report.

14.0 Background Papers

None.

15.0 Appendices

A CPD Years 2, 3 and 4

B The LGA Councillor Development Charter (and Charter Plus)

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	02/01/2024	09/01/2024	RP