



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Governance Committee

Tuesday 15 July 2025

Annual Member Training & Development Review

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Zona Hannington - Cabinet Member: Finance, Governance & Customer Services
Lead Director:	Anthea Lowe - Director: Policy & Governance
Service Area:	Policy & Governance
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Wards Affected:	All Wards
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision
Forward Plan:	Not Applicable
Report considered by:	Governance Committee – 15 July 2025

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that the Governance Committee:

- 1.1 Notes the contents of the report, and
- 1.2 Provides comment on the overall effectiveness of the Member Learning and Development Programme and plans for the 2027-2031 Programme

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To provide Governance Committee with an annual update on the Member Learning and Development Programme as part of its role in evaluating the overall effectiveness of Member development and to assist in generating creative and innovative ideas for the advancement of the Member Development Programme, as set out in the Committee's Terms of Reference.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Member Learning and Development Programme 2023-2027 was updated and approved by the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) in March 2023 ahead of the May 2023 Local Elections. Governance Committee now has oversight and responsibility for Member Training and Development.
- 3.2 The programme outlined a comprehensive training and development package, with required and recommended sessions taking place throughout Member's term in office. All training included in the programme is designed to furnish Members with the required level of knowledge and skills, which is intended to be constantly evolving, taking into account the changing priorities of the organisation and Member's personal training needs.
- 3.3 The Member Learning & Development Programme is 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)
 - Continuing professional development (Year 2 and 3)

At the time of writing this report the Council is in the continuing professional development phase of the programme.

- 3.4 The updated Member Learning and Development Programme introduced several new initiatives following officer research on the Member induction programmes provided by other councils, guidance from the LGA and Member feedback. The updated programme included the introduction of a letter informing all candidates of the induction process that commenced immediately after the election, a two-day drop in event for essential registration, the named officer support offering, Member personal development plans and a directorate's showcase. All Councillors were also provided with a comprehensive induction pack on the night the election which included the following documents;
- Welcome letter
 - A comprehensive booklet outlining the programme and training sessions available
 - New Member starter form
 - New starter checklist for payroll purposes
 - A guide to completing the Register of Interests online
 - A guide to logging onto MyView for the first time
 - DBS application guide and list of documentation needed for DBS
 - A document outlining the officers on the Democracy Team
 - A document outlining the Senior Management structure to Service Delivery Manager level
 - The Councillor Code of Conduct

- The Member Allowances Scheme
- The protocol for the use of social media by Councillors
- The role of Telford & Wrekin Council Members as Corporate Parents

3.5 The Mayor & Member Support team have engaged with Members regarding their feedback at each stage of the development programme, including online surveys, written feedback forms at council meetings, discussions with group leaders and input from the Governance Committee during the regular Member Support Update items.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

4.1 The Member Learning & Development Programme aimed to provide a more well-rounded and accessible programme of learning and development for Members elected to Telford & Wrekin Council.

4.2 The programme is divided into four key phases to allow for learning to be tailored to a Councillor's journey during their term in office. The first phase focuses on provided Members with an understanding of the basic conduct standard and probity rules and understanding the quasi-judicial functions that the Council undertakes. This is of particular significance for Members assigned to sit on decision making Committees such as Licensing, Audit and Planning, where training is mandatory before sitting. During the second phase of the programme the focus shifted to wider issues and services that Councillors may encounter in their role, such as working with contractors and procurement essentials. Also included under this phase was a session designed to help Members manage stress. This phase of the programme features training sessions that aim to deepen Member's understanding of their role, looking at chairing skills, outside bodies and effective working within the community. The fourth and final stage, which is currently underway, focuses on continuing professional development.

4.3 Differentiating between each of the four themes and what they entail has allowed the Mayor and Member Support Team to prioritise required learning initially before focusing on other key topics. It is expected that these themes will remain the same for the Member Learning & Development strategy for 2027 to 2031.

Member Feedback

4.4 There are multiple different ways that Members can provide their feedback on the Member Learning & Development Programme, some of which are listed below;

- Through the Member Pre and Post Training Evaluation forms available in the Member Induction section of the Councillor Connect Portal
- Paper feedback forms provided to all Members at Full Council Meetings
- Feedback forms emailed to Members following required learning training sessions throughout the different phases of the Learning & Development Programme

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- Links to feedback forms which were emailed to all Members in March 2024 with their full training record
- Contacting the Mayor & Member Support Team directly

- 4.5 The team seeks to obtain feedback from Members in a variety of ways, including specific feedback on individual training sessions, the programme as a whole and the various methods in which the training is delivered. Members can access a feedback form relating to specific training sessions via Councillor Connect at any time, this form asks Members to rate the sessions on a numerical scale for 1 to 5, based on how strongly they agree with a set of statements. The responses from this form have shown that the training provided has been rated 4.5 out of 5 on average. It has also highlighted that Members felt their confidence in using the knowledge and/or skills gained from the sessions and the knowledge of the presenters themselves was very strong, noting trainers' ability to answer any questions Members may have on each session's key topic.
- 4.6 Another feedback form is available as a Microsoft form and focuses on the Learning & Development Programme as a whole. Those Members who did respond stated that they were very satisfied with the overall Member Learning & Development Programme and indicated that they have revisited training materials later via Councillor Connect. This form also provided Members with an opportunity to select which training sessions they have missed and would like to see repeated in the future.
- 4.7 The most recent feedback questionnaire that Members have been invited to complete resulted in the highest level of responses, with over half of Councillors providing the Mayor & Member Support Team with their views. Members were invited to give their views on the timing and delivery methods of the training sessions and how they fit into Member's busy workload. Most Members stated that evening training sessions were preferred, with a small proportion preferring daytime and others stating no preference. 48% of the total respondents stated that they preferred training to be delivered virtually, 15% stated that in-person sessions were preferred and 26% noted that like to see a mixture of both in-person and virtual options. A review carried out in January 2025 into Councillor working patterns showed that over 60% of Councillors worked on either a full or a part-time basis. Based on this, and the results of Member feedback, it would appear sensible to continue to host most training sessions in the evening, allowing the opportunity for the greatest number of Councillors to attend. These sessions will be hosted both virtually and in-person, dependent on the trainer's requirements.
- 4.8 The results feedback questionnaire provided to Members at Full in Council in November 2024 indicated that 85% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Member Support offer is sufficient in providing them with the support required to fulfil their role as Councillor, with the remaining 15% stating that they would mostly agree with this statement. Within this form there was also a section where Members could provide additional comments or recommendations for the future of the programme. Suggestions listed here included providing additional training on areas such as planning for all Members, not just those who sit on the Planning

Committee, allowing them to assist residents; hosting drop-in sessions with various council teams to help Members to understand the roles of different service areas; and finding a way that training courses could be accessed online at any time. Officers are now in the process of developing proposals in respect of these suggestions.

- 4.9 In addition to the feedback received directly from Members through feedback forms, the Governance Committee also serves as key setting for Officers to be provided with direct feedback from Councillors. Previously, Committee Members have noted that it would be helpful if Councillors could access training in their own time, whether that be through recordings of training sessions or modules available through the Council's online learning platform Ollie.

Lessons Learnt

- 4.10 There has been a steady decline in attendance at training sessions over the past two years. Whilst not all courses are required learning and some drop off in numbers is to be expected as Members become more confident in their roles, Officers are determined to make training and development as accessible as possible in future. To rectify this for the Member Learning & Development Strategy 2027-2031, Officers propose that essential training, including Code of Conduct be held in person during the initial two-day registration events. This expectation would be set out in the letter sent to all candidates prior to the election. Further 'mopping-up' sessions would then take place over the first six months of the next term of office.
- 4.11 Through Member feedback Officers have identified that there is a desire from Members to be able to access training in their own time. In response to this future virtual training sessions will be recorded and uploaded to the Councillor Connect portal for ease of access. Officers are also currently looking into future drop-in sessions that can be offered, provisionally taking place before full council meetings to allow for greater footfall. There is a planned drop-in session to allow Members to ask any questions they may have regarding the Councillor Pride Fund which is due to take place before the November Full Council meeting that will be advertised to Members in due course. Officers are also reviewing the sessions currently offered as part of the programme, and the inclusion of additional sessions, such as planning basics for all Councillors.
- 4.12 Having the dates listed in the training booklet given to all Members as part of their induction pack, especially those for the first phase of the programme worked very well. The team has received feedback about the need to consider the dates and times of Town and Parish Council meetings and will do so in future, in order to maximise opportunities for Councillors to attend.
- 4.13 All Members have had the opportunity to complete a Personal Development Plan (PDP) which have been designed to offer Members with an opportunity to assess their skills, knowledge and experience in order establish personal goals and areas of development. Although all Members have been directly emailed a copy of the PDP self-assessment document, the uptake of this offer has been lower than

hoped. Given this, a paper copy of the PDP self-assessment will be included in all Member's induction packs on election night to allow them to complete this ahead of the initial registration days, along with explanatory notes. In addition, the team are currently seeking a volunteer Member to film a video/some publicity about the benefits of the PDP process which will be displayed on the Councillor Connect portal.

- 4.14 Obtaining feedback is crucial to ensuring the training offer is suitable, appropriate, tailored to Members' needs and covers everything which they need to excel in their roles. As a result, given Officers know that in-person feedback provides a higher rate of response, the team will move to this being the default in future. As well as developing options for feedback to be given immediately after the conclusion of remote/virtual training sessions. It is hoped these two changes will ensure quality feedback is provided which will feed into making sure the programme is fit for purpose.

The future of the Member Learning & Development Programme

- 4.15 In preparation for the 2027 Local Elections, officers will be working to develop the Member Learning and Development Programme 2027-2031. Governance Committee will be provided with regular updates on the progress of this work and will be asked to formally approve the programme in mid to late 2026.
- 4.16 As the phased approach to training has been successful for the 2023-2027 period, it is expected that a similar approach will be continued for the 2027-2031 programme. However, as there has been a need to host multiple repeat sessions for required Committee learning, this will be the main priority following the elections and confirmation of new appointments to Council Committees.
- 4.17 The team is in the process of reviewing the options for recording and uploading training sessions to councillor connect and/or Ollie so that they can be reviewed at Members leisure. There are also ongoing discussions about if there are any training modules that would be more appropriate to be adapting into online learning that can be completed by Members through an online platform such as Ollie, rather than be delivered by a trainer.
- 4.18 The Directorate's Showcase was a very successful event when it was held in June 2023 as it allowed Members to familiarise themselves with the various service areas that the council operates and which Director would be responsible for that area. Provisional plans for using the Council Chamber for this event are currently being discussed and will be brought to the Committee for consideration.
- 4.19 Throughout the next 12 months there will be further training sessions offered for Members to attend that focus on chairing skills, using social media, the health & care landscape and council finances. Following the Annual Council Meeting (AGM) in May 2025, the initial priority has been training any Members who are sitting on a new Committee, such as planning, licensing, and audit. Officers have hosted four training sessions of this nature since the AGM and have trained the

majority of the newly appointed committee Members at the time of writing this report. Those who have not yet received essential Committee training for planning, licensing or audit have been contacted regarding their availability and additional sessions are in the process of being arranged. This will be followed by a focus on Code of Conduct training, especially in light of recent revisions to the Council Constitution.

- 4.20 Members will continue to be made aware of external training opportunities which they can express their interest in attending. Please note approval to attend paid training courses must be sought from group leaders based on their allocated budget.
- 4.21 The team is continuing to work towards meeting the criteria for the West Midland Employer Member Support Charter. At the time of writing this report there has been a draft proposal document prepared, mapping our current practices against the standards and it is envisaged that a further update will be brought to Committee shortly.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Governance Committee could decide to reduce the scope and ambition of the Member Learning and Development Programme. However, given the feedback Members has provided so far and the knowledge the induction process imbues, it may well be a retrograde step.

6.0 Key Risks

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

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 A community-focused, innovative council provided 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 or and HR implications arising from this report.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 There are no specific ward implication arising from this report.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

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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 specific equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

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

14.0 Background Papers

None.

15.0 Appendices

None.

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	03/07/2025	03/07/2025	RP