

Title of meeting: Governance & Audit & Standards

Date of meeting: 13th March 2015

Subject: Councillor training and development

Report by: Michael Lawther

Wards affected: N/A

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

To update members on the review of the councillor training programme and make recommendations based on the findings.

2. Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- I. Support an enhanced induction programme for new members (content based on consultation and designed to reduce risk) - (Appendix 1 - overview of content)
- II. Support the expectation that members (and standing deputies) receive training prior to committee membership or that appropriate records are kept to demonstrate that formal training is not required for an individual councillor
- III. Support improved partnership working between officers and Group Leaders regarding ongoing professional development training

3. Background

3.1. Induction training

- I. Induction training has been offered in a number of different formats and all new members over the last four years have received an induction
- II. Members receive training in the Code of Conduct directly via Michael Lawther
- III. Members receive on-going training in matters relating to the Constitution via officers in Democratic Services

3.1.1. There are areas of work (that are treated as mandatory by the organisation) not fully addressed in the induction for members which potentially expose us to risk, including:

- I. Health & Safety responsibilities including fire procedures (the H&S policy states that members should complete the H&S Induction e-learning for Councillors but there is currently one member who is compliant)
- II. Data Protection and Freedom of Information (we have an obligation to 'raise awareness')
- III. Obligations under the Equality Act and best practice around equalities (particularly relating to responsibilities around Equalities Impact Assessments)

3.2 Committee training

3.2.1. There is a lack of clarity around training that should be undertaken prior to committee membership (specifically relating to whether it is mandatory or not)

- I. Governance & Audit & Standards - annual training is offered, but is not mandatory. In 2006, at the creation of the Audit Committee it was agreed that "members to have skills and experience or being trained on....governance, risk management, internal control, accounting, regulation and compliance, the role of the committee and the role of internal / external audit"
- II. Governance & Audit & Standards sub-committees - undertaken by Michael Lawther
- III. Planning Committee - the lead officer reports that it is 'good practice' to ensure that committee members receive training prior to membership and that this should include deputies. Ideally they would like all members to receive training on planning matters
- IV. According to the Planning Advisory Service it is not mandatory to receive training prior to sitting on the Planning Committee, although they note that it is good practice and that some Local Authorities make training compulsory
- V. Licensing Committee - the lead officer reports that "it's not mandatory, but it is certainly expected that members receive training to membership"

3.2.2. There are a number of potential risks identified including:

- I. If a committee decision is challenged, would we be able to demonstrate that members have received training or have been assessed as possessing the required skills and experience?
- II. Would we be open to challenge if deputies (without training) had contributed to the decision made?

3.3. Ongoing professional development

3.3.1. There is an inconsistent approach to supporting continuing professional development (e.g. not all councillors are made aware of opportunities)

3.3.2. There are under-utilised opportunities available from external bodies (e.g. the Local Government Association) that could directly meet expressed areas of need (e.g. Social Media training)

3.4. Feedback

- 3.4.1. Councillor training provision has been assessed by external review and improvements have been identified (e.g. the Peer Review recommendations to improve robustness and identify champions)
- 3.4.2. Councillors were invited to respond to a Member Services Questionnaire and results indicate that:
- I. Councillors were unclear about what constituted 'mandatory' training (either for newly elected councillors or relating to committee responsibilities)
 - II. There were variable responses as to whether the training undertaken had been of value
 - III. Councillors were unclear about how to access training opportunities
 - IV. There are expressed development needs that are currently unmet (e.g. leadership, time management, IT, social media, presentation skills, chairing meetings and conflict management)
- 3.4.3. Councillors elected in May 2014 were invited to provide feedback to improve the training provision:
- I. The induction session carried out by the Chief Executive made them feel valued and welcomed to PCC but did not act as a 'training session'
 - II. Participation in formal meetings can feel 'over-whelming' at first and training should be provided that covers: meeting protocols, public speaking, decision making, conduct at meetings, asking questions, Notices of Motion, Standing Orders, Deputations, Exempt items, pecuniary interests etc. Ideally this would include 'live' practice in the Guildhall. Members felt that this should be facilitated by officers. Parts of this session were piloted in February 2015 with members elected in 2014 and received very favourable feedback (except "this should have been offered much sooner")
 - III. It would be helpful to have a better understanding of 'who's-who' within services (e.g. a contact guide for frequent issues)
 - IV. An IT skills assessment and on-going training would be helpful
 - V. Ongoing training opportunities would be welcome to develop skills (e.g. time management, social media)
 - VI. Ongoing ad-hoc training provided by Officers in Democratic Service is welcome and helpful
- 3.4.4. Members of G&A&S provided verbal feedback as part of discussions at the last committee meeting:
- I. Training sessions are offered at times that are un-suitable for councillors (evenings or weekends would be preferable, or to utilise a full-day session that covered all areas)
 - II. Up-to-date officer contact details would be helpful
 - III. PCC could seek to generate income by providing training for councillors for other Local Authorities
 - IV. Involvement of the Group Leaders is important

- V. Clarity is needed on what training is mandatory (does this also apply to standing deputies - would this for example, leave us open to challenge on planning decisions?)
- VI. It would be helpful to provide the Members Handbook to all members

4. Reasons for recommendations

- I. It is essential to bring clarity to the question of 'mandatory' committee training, as it is unclear for members and potentially exposes us to risk
- II. It is essential to better meet the needs of newly elected councillors
- III. There are un-met training needs that have been expressed by councillors. There is a need to develop / commission training that is valuable to councillors and better meets their needs

5. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

A preliminary EIA has been completed and a full EIA is not required.

6. Legal implications

The City Solicitor is satisfied there are no legal implications arising from the report.

7. Finance comments

There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

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Signed by:

Appendices:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
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The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/
rejected by on

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Signed by:

Appendix 1 - Moving forwards

Induction training

Apply the feedback from members to refresh the induction programme ready for May 2015, to include:

- Conduct and protocol at Council meetings
- Committee chairing
- Submitting questions to Council - time limits and content
- Notices of Motion
- Standing Orders
- Decision making across Council (e.g. the difference between the various committees in terms of remit and powers)
- Overview of committees (including what members need to know about the planning issues)
- How to make a deputation at various committees
- Exempt items and implications/responsibilities
- Conduct / Constitution / Pecuniary interests / member officer relations etc.
- Invitation to on-going training as offered by Democratic Services / Training
- Supported by the Member Handbook and who's who guide
- General training - EIAs / dealing with information / H&S / Safeguarding / Corporate Parenting / Finance etc.

Practicalities

- Facilitated by the CX / Michael Lawther / Democratic Services / Training
- Offered as afternoon and evening sessions
- Evaluation of the impact of the session and follow-up discussions with the individual councillor to identify what else may be needed
- All councillors can be invited to attend all or part of this day

Committee training

- Training prior to committee membership remains good practice and will be offered to all members of committees and their deputies
- Records to be kept to provide evidence that councillors had the required skills and experience if formal training is not undertaken

Ongoing training

- Commission / deliver training in the areas expressed as training needs (e.g. time management, social media etc.)
- Offer the training to other authorities as a potential income stream
- Officers in Democratic Services / Training to work with Group Leaders around ongoing training (to identify needs and communicate about opportunities) - training can be offered within groups
- Ensure that training is offered at times suitable for councillors (e.g. evenings)