


Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

4 October 2019

Subject:	Update on the Member Development Programme
Director:	Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer – Surjit Tour
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer:	Phil Challoner phil_challoner@sandwell.gov.uk

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee:

1. Notes the continued progress of the Member Development Programme to date, including plans to review future content and scope with Elected Members to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 For the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee to note the progress of the Member Development Programme to date, including plans to review future content and scope to ensure it remains a programme designed by Members that is fit for purpose to meet their ongoing needs.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR SANDWELL'S VISION

- 2.1 Elected Members with the requisite skills, knowledge and understanding of subject matters impacting upon their role will result in positive implications for each Vision 2030 ambition.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The Elected Member Development Programme ('MDP') has been designed and led by Members.
- 3.2 In January 2019, the Local Government Association Peer Review team participated in a follow up visit to Sandwell and were briefed on the progress relating to the Member Development Programme. Feedback was outstanding describing the progress relating to the MDP as 'phenomenal' adding the programme was an 'exemplar' relating to the approach taken and delivery to date. A brief snapshot of activity to date, relating to the MDP, is attached as appendix one.
- 3.3 They were also updated on development of bulletins which have been circulated to Elected Members which contains key information on forthcoming training, as well as updates related to the digital agenda as part of the MDP. The latest bulletin is attached as appendix two for information.
- 3.4 In total 38 sessions have been delivered as part of the MDP. These are related to the following interventions:
- Universal Credit Briefing Sessions
 - A Focus Group on Members' ICT needs
 - "The Big Conversation" - a partnership marketplace event
 - Corporate Parenting
 - Safeguarding and Vulnerabilities Awareness Raising
 - Understanding Council Finance
 - Understanding Overview and Scrutiny Training
 - Planning related Training
 - Licensing related Training (Taxi, Alcohol and Gambling)
 - Members' Code of Conduct
 - Data Protection
 - Procurement Training
 - Child Trafficking, Exploitation, Modern Slavery Training
 - Overview and Scrutiny Review – Member engagement sessions
 - Understanding Dementia
- 3.5 Turnout at these sessions has remained encouragingly high amongst Members with, for example, over 60% attending Corporate Parenting training. The average attendance rate ranges from 45 – 50% which compares favourably with levels prior to the new programme that averaged only 22%. It should be noted that this follows a period of change which included the introduction of 11 newly elected members.

3.6 Member feedback following sessions held to date is also very positive and comments include:

“I felt comfortable and able to listen.”, “Very good presentation.”

“Member Participation was very good. A very keen interest was shown by all members in the Chamber.”, “Very Good training and well delivered.”

“Trainer spoke well and made the topic engaging and easy to understand.”

Members have also given constructive comments as to how some sessions can improve on certain aspects such as:

“prior knowledge of subject matter would have been useful”,

“the technology could not be viewed by some delegates which was frustrating”

In those instances, an immediate review is undertaken between Civic and Member Services and the facilitator to ensure these issues are rectified or mitigated at future sessions.

3.7 Further sessions are scheduled to take place from September to December and includes many more of the interventions Members requested when designing the programme last year. These are to be delivered in-house unless stated otherwise:

- Empowering Communities (8 & 17 October – delivered jointly in-house with West Midlands Employers)
- Audit and Risk (16 & 24 October)
- The previously postponed Social Media Training (29 October – delivered via the Local Government Association)
- Mop-up sessions for Data Protection (7, 10 October & 7 November)
- Personal Safety for Elected Members Training (19 & 28 November)
- Being an effective Councillor: ways of strengthening and sustaining personal resilience (2 & 3 December – delivered by the Local Government Information Unit)
- Mop-up sessions for Members’ Code of Conduct (TBA)

Other training sessions are currently in the process of being sourced and will be communicated via MDP bulletins in due course.

3.8 Following this year’s Municipal Election, newly elected Members received their induction which included information on the MDP. In addition, a key message, aimed at newly elected Members, was released in the June bulletin from both Cllr Geoff Lewis, as Chair of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee, and Phil Challoner - Civic and Member Services Manager to encourage their attendance at future sessions.

3.9 The new MDP is more than just training, advice and guidance. As part of the initial programme design Members identified, via workshops held, 26 key requirements a new Councillor Portal needed to meet. These included:

- A directory of key service areas/contacts to avoid unnecessary searching
- The facility for councillors to access what is key to them personally
- An enquiries section with the ability to escalate
- Latest news and updates
- Learning menus/a training directory
- Links to Council websites and much more

Following on from the last report to this committee, the Digital Solution Working Group have explored how the 26 key requirements can be met. A report was presented to a Digital Solution Board meeting where it was agreed the Firmstep's Councillor Portal met all the requirements enabling the Council to digitise their processes for Councillors through a dedicated self-service portal. This portal will allow Councillors to transact online for a broad range of member and constituent services. The portal can be branded differently to the Council's main website and be used to provide Councillor specific information as well as a one stop shop for all member services.

This portal will look to include links to council meetings, agendas and minutes, Councillor notifications/communications and a range of specific processes which allows Councillors to log, track and escalate requests reported on behalf of constituents. This is an exciting, key element of the MDP and addresses all aspects associated with creating a sustainable digital solution for all 72 Elected Members.

Work has commenced and will include officers working alongside Members in ensuring the final solution is fit for purpose to meet all 26 requirements. Alongside the design and launch of the new portal, Elected Member training and upskilling requirements will be discussed via Personal Development Plan (PDP) meetings and addressed via the MDP to ensure the portal is confidently utilised by all 72 Councillors with support consistently at hand as required.

It is anticipated an early demonstration of the new portal will be available for this Committee to view and give feedback on late Autumn.

- 3.10 A further example of support via the new MDP relates to Member Wellbeing, Resilience and Personal Safety. The role of an Elected Member is fast changing, with numerous relentless demands placed upon an individual's time and resources. Latest links to LGA workbooks on stress management and personal resilience have been circulated to all 72 Members via the 2018 – 2020 MDP booklet. Personal resilience training for Elected Members has been sourced via the LGiU (Local Government Information Unit) and is scheduled to take place later this year. It will be a very practical session that will provide each participant with methods and helpful ideas to manage the pressures they face and enable them to be able to maximise the positive aspects of being an elected member. This will be an interactive session with plenty of opportunity for discussion and sharing experiences. A separate report relating to Personal Safety for Elected Members is submitted at this Committee for approval.
- 3.11 A full review of the MDP, to consolidate areas of strength and establish areas for improvement, will be held late 2019 and reported back to this Committee early 2020. Outputs from individual PDP meetings to be held around Autumn this year will continue to influence future MDP content and this will be consolidated at planned workshops to be held as part the overall review process.

4 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 4.1 Elected Members have been consulted at key stages of the process, feeding into the design and delivery of the Member Development Programme via workshops and PDP's. Elected Members are also represented on both the Digital Solution Working Group and Board.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1 Alternative options have not been considered as the MDP has been developed with Members and the purpose of the MDP is to deliver development, learning and support requirements designed and/or requested by Members themselves.

6 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The MDP will involve a range of providers and support being utilised to ensure effective development and learning. The costs of such support will be met from existing approved budgets.

7 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 An effective Member Development Programme will help ensure the council make informed decisions and empower Members in undertaking their various roles.
- 7.2 Members in relation to regulatory matters/functions are required to undertake specific kinds of training such as planning, licensing, standards and safeguarding.
- 7.3 Supporting Members in their development, training and support needs strengthens the council's governance arrangements.

8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The Members Development Programme will address any Equality Act implications and issues arising.

9 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Personal Development Plans remain confidential and any discussion concerning the same would be held in confidence.

10 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

- 10.1 There are no such implications arising.

11 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

- 11.1 The Member Development Programme is a two-year initiative designed to ensure Elected Members have the requisite skills, support and knowledge necessary to undertake their various roles.

12 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

- 12.1 There are no such implications arising.

13 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

- 13.1 There are no such implications arising.

14 **CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

14.1 Designed to inform Members of MDP progress, this report will act as an update in relation to the progress of the programme.

15 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

15.1 None.

16 **APPENDICES:**

16.1 One A Snapshot of MDP activity over recent months

16.2 Two Latest MDP Bulletin