

Report to Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

4th July 2023

Subject:	Member Development Update
Director:	Director of Law and Governance, Surjit Tour
Contact Officer:	Service Manager – Democracy Elaine Newsome Elaine_newsome@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations


- 1.1 That the detail of elected member learning and development activity that has been delivered since the beginning of the Municipal Year be noted and Member views on the effectiveness of the initial programme be provided.

2 Reasons for Recommendations






- 2.1 The Committee is mandated to have oversight of Member Development activity, with the aim of ensuring Councillors are appropriately supported in their roles.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

- 3.1 Targeted Member Development activity aims to support all ambitions and objectives in the Corporate Plan.

	Best start in life for children and young people
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	People live well and age well
	Strong resilient communities
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 The Member Development Programme aims to offer learning and development in support of Member effectiveness and confidence in their roles. A new and revised programme was implemented in 2022 that reflected the issues identified across external reviews and associated improvement plan whilst aiming to build on the programme developed over the previous 4 years. This programme was reviewed at the end of the last municipal year and refreshed to meet the identified and emerging needs of elected members and the wider organisation

Training and Member induction to date

4.2 External reviews at the beginning of 2022 identified a series of recommendations and areas of focus to move the organisation forward. These have influenced the content of the member development activities offered to date.

Whilst a number of programmed events are initially targeted toward newly elected Councillors as part of the induction programme, attendance is widened to include all Members, to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experience. The learning and development events are offered over a variety of medians and the use of external facilitators is incorporated where possible. In addition, Members are encouraged to access national programmes with the aim of networking and benchmarking with colleagues from other local authorities.



4.3 Learning and Development May 2022 to date:

Learning & Development Activity	Date(s)	No. Attendees (* denotes limited spaces)
16/05/23	Ethical Framework - Code of Conduct	26
17/05/23	New Municipal year, a welcome event for all Elected Members	51
07/06/23	Neighbourhood Support Session (North)	16
08/06/23	Neighbourhood Support Session (South)	9 (tbc)
12/06/23	Introduction to Scrutiny	21
14/06/23	Taxi Licensing and General Licensing	19
19/06/23	MyCllr portal	3*
20/06/23	MyCllr portal	5*
*new members only invited		

4.4 Feedback generally is that the programmed events to date have been well received, Members attending development activities have welcomed the in-person sessions as a conduit, particularly for new Councillors, to meet and build effective working relationships with officers.

4.5 Included in the ongoing review of learning, development and support offered to members, personal development plans (PDPs) continue to take place in order that the offer for the 2023/24 programme is tailored toward the identified needs of Councillors. PDPs provide a platform for confidential one to one conversations on member achievements, aspirations and associated support going forward. The PDP's also capture skills, knowledge, experience and learning outside of the Council environment, to avoid duplication of learning and development activity



The approach to Member Development 2023/24

4.6 There are a number of factors that influenced the development of the member programme for 2023/24. These included:

- Member induction: building on the successes of the last programme and bridging any identified gaps. All Councillors elected in 2022 were invited to participate in information gathering sessions that aim to understand their experience of the member induction programme and consolidate the offer going forward. Whilst generally, all Members who participated welcomed the comprehensive nature of the induction programme, they suggested that an early meet and greet event with all officers who provide support on a town footprint, would be beneficial. This was incorporated into the programme
- New member intake and changes in positions of responsibility. As with any annual election, the Council prepares for its intake of newly elected Councillors and also those who may hold first time or new positions of responsibility. Alongside the induction and main development programme, this year will see the introduction of individual learning pathways that identify core development activities and tailored support for members in positions of responsibility
- Consolidating understanding of corporate governance responsibilities: the previous programme set out, across a number of committee based strands, governance development activities. These have now been consolidated into an identifiable single corporate governance strand for all elected members, with additional enhanced activities for those members with specific governance related roles and responsibilities. This
- PDP identified learning and development need: There was limited uptake of member PDP's to date. This has impacted on the ability to undertake a wholly informed assessment of members learning and development needs. The PDP process this year will be revised and commence earlier in the year to offer as much opportunity for members to engage in the process. The PDP documentation will incorporate a skills audit and capture external learning that members may have undertaken in a personal or professional capacity in addition to the Council Officer



4.7 In accordance with the resolution at the last meeting of the Committee the final Member Development Programme (attached at appendix 1) was approved by the Chair of the Committee. The programme however, remains a live document that aims to meet any evolving development need and regular updates will continue to be presented to the committee throughout the year.

4.8 Alongside the Council’s development offer, we also encourage Members to access the offer from partner organisations including the Local Government Association and Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. This includes a range of on-line resources, workbooks, webinars and in-person development activities and programmes that complement the Councils programme. <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development/highlighting-political-leadership>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/leadership-workforce-and-communications/councillor-development-resources>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development/councillor-hub>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development/councillor-workbooks>

5 Implications

Resources:	Training that forms the member development programme 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.
Legal and Governance:	An effective Member Development Programme will help ensure the council make informed decisions and empower Members in undertaking their various roles.



	<p>Members in relation to regulatory matters/functions are required to undertake specific kinds of training such as planning, licensing, standards, safeguarding.</p> <p>Supporting Members in their development, training and support needs strengthens the council's governance arrangements.</p>
Risk:	Where engagement in learning and development is limited, there are risks associated with Members being insufficiently supported, particularly when undertaking statutory roles
Equality:	The revised Member Development Programme will address any Equality Act implications and issues arising.
Health and Wellbeing:	None in relation to this report
Social Value	The Member Development Programme has recently been reviewed and revised to ensure Elected Members have the requisite skills, support and knowledge necessary to undertake their various roles.

6 Appendices

Member Development Programme (to follow)

7. Background Papers

None

