

# Report to Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

**7<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

<b>Subject:</b>	Member Development Update
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, Surjit Tour
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Lead Officer for Mayoralty and Member Development - Ruth Darby <a href="mailto:ruth_darby@sandwell.gov.uk">ruth_darby@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the detail of elected member learning and development activity that has been delivered since the previous Committee/report (4<sup>th</sup> July 2023) be noted.







## 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
	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 (MDP) aims to offer learning and development in support of Member effectiveness and confidence in their roles. The MDP continues to build on the new and revised programme that was implemented in 2022 and is frequently reviewed to ensure it continues to meet the identified and emerging needs of elected members and the wider organisation.

#### Training and Member induction to date

4.2 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 from June 2023 to date:

Date(s)	Learning & Development Activity	No. Attendees (* denotes limited invitees/spaces)
27/06/23	Introduction to Planning	13
04/07/23	Taxi Licensing Training	11*
05/07/23	General Licensing Training	18*
06/07/23	Introduction to Local Government Finance	18
12/07/23	Decision making and Council Procedure Rules	23
19/07/23	Introduction to Audit	22
26/07/23	Houses of Multi Occupancy Training	19
31/07/23	Introduction to Overview & Scrutiny	15*
01/08/23	Public Speaking	16
03/08/23	Mod.gov training	15
09/08/23	The Ethical Framework, Code of Conduct	12
05/09/23	Equality Diversity and Inclusion	21
20/09/23	King's Honours & Awards	14
09/10/23	Prevent Awareness	5

4.4 Feedback to date indicates that programmed events have been well received. Newly elected/newer members have welcomed the opportunity of in-person interaction and to meet and build effective working relationships with officers.

4.5 The completion and return of evaluation forms at the close of training sessions can be problematic, therefore at present, the form is issued to councillors at the start of the session (when signing the attendance sheet) with the expectation that councillors take the opportunity to record effective and meaningful notes during the session enabling them to return the completed form at the end. This small change has shown an increase in the number of evaluation forms returned. However, to encourage an increased return of evaluation forms with more meaningful



and effective comments/suggestions, (which in turn are used to shape future sessions), work is near completion of a new Microsoft Office electronic evaluation form which is simpler to complete and will automatically collate feedback for statistical purposes with a view to this being implemented early 2024.

- 4.6 Interaction by Councillors with the e-learning package currently provided by Sandwell Learn is low, zero returns since May 2023, therefore, initiatives are being explored how to increase Councillor engagement with these sessions.
- 4.7 A number of member PDPs were undertaken by officers last year however, there was a low take up by elected members (below 50%). In order to enable members to identify their learning and development needs and to maximise levels of engagement, officers are exploring a range of options to engage with members including the use of workshops and surveys to gauge members opinions. A report on the outcome of this will be shared at a future meeting.
- 4.8 The MDP 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. 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 Council's programme. Where possible, opportunities for shared learning with other local authorities will also be explored to ensure best practice is shared and an opportunity to network with peers.

<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>



## The approach to Member Development Programme 2024/25

4.9 Whilst the Member Development Programme of 2023/24 is still current, with training sessions continuing to be arranged, the process for next year's programme has already commenced, having recognised this year, some changes that need to be made. These include:

- Earlier planning by officers: In conjunction with Democratic Services staff, training session dates will be implemented during the planning stages of the 2024/25 Committee calendar.
- New Member induction and all Councillor Sessions – May/June. It has been identified, and requested by Members, that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Personal Safety sessions are provided at the start of the municipal year, due to the content of the sessions.
- Member induction: building on the successes of the current programme and bridging any identified gaps. All Members who were elected in 2023 will be invited to participate in an information gathering session that will aim to understand their experience of the member induction programme and consolidate the offer going forward. This proved beneficial when forming the induction programme for 2023/24 and this session will be carried out in January 2024.
- A skills audit has been created, which is key to measuring performance of Members, in addition to supporting their learning needs for future roles. This will be implemented in the MDP for 2024/25, ensuring individual learning pathways are tailored to best support Member in positions of responsibility and those wishing to progress in specialised roles.
- The PDP process is under review to ensure higher participation takes place as the outcome of the PDPs identifies members learning and development needs. An update will be provided at a future Committee. The newly created skills audit will be incorporated into the process capturing any external learning that members may have undertaken in a personal or professional capacity.



## 5 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	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.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	An effective Member Development Programme will help ensure the council make informed decisions and empower Members in undertaking their various roles. Members in relation to regulatory matters/functions are required to undertake specific kinds of training such as planning, licensing, standards, safeguarding. Supporting Members in their development, training and support needs strengthens the council's governance arrangements.
<b>Risk:</b>	Where engagement in learning and development is limited, there are risks associated with Members being insufficiently supported, particularly when undertaking statutory roles.
<b>Equality:</b>	The revised Member Development Programme will address any Equality Act implications and issues arising.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	None in relation to this report
<b>Social Value:</b>	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.
<b>Climate Change:</b>	Targeted training on the Council's responsibilities for climate change and the environment will need to be incorporated into the member development programme.
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	Training on members corporate parenting responsibilities is delivered annually to ensure they are aware and are better able to conduct their role effectively.

## 6 Appendices

Latest version of Member Development Plan.



## 7. Background Papers

None

