

Report to Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee

9 November 2021

Subject:	Member Development and Portal Update
Director:	Surjit Tour, Director - Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
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1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the update report be noted.
- 1.2 That the Ethical Standards Working Group be invited to review and refresh the Council's approach to Member Development.
- 1.3 That an additional committee member is appointed to the Ethical Standards Working Group.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The report is primarily an update report outlining progress to date on the member portal and member development activity.
- 2.2 The Council's approach to member development is led by Councillors. A 2-phase programme was agreed and implemented following the LGA peer review and the Council is now within the second phase of that programme. A member led review of the programme will inform the Council's future approach.



2.3 The Ethical Standards Working Group consists of the Chair and Vice Chair plus three other committee members. Members were appointed to the Working Group at the meeting held on 11 June 2021 (minute no. 15/21(3)), however, there is still one vacancy. The Committee is therefore invited to appoint a further member to the Working Group (in addition to the Chair, Vice Chair and Councillors Akhter and Z Hussain).

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

		<p>An effective and targeted member development programme supports achievement of all corporate plan priorities. The MyCouncillor portal, as a platform for service requests, underpins delivery of corporate objectives.</p>
		
		

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 MyCouncillor Portal

The MyCouncillor portal was introduced in March 2021 as a platform hosting a range of tools and information to support elected members in their roles. Governance arrangements and a phased implementation plan were agreed by the Committee in March and the implementation concluded in June 2021, following the local elections. As part of the planned roll-out, Members participated in 35 group and individual guided workshops on use and functionality of the portal. 67 Members actively engaged in the sessions. Further targeted sessions have been provided to members on request

Member usage of the portal has increased in line with the roll-out. The member enquiry mechanism is proving popular with a total of 3650 enquiries routed through the casework (2789 enquiries) and report it (861 enquiries) functions up to 3rd October 2021. Average rating of the system, as scored by Councillors is at 4.74 out of 5.



To ensure that the platform continues to evolve in line with Member needs, feedback is actively sought on its functionality and wherever possible, mechanisms will be enhanced in line with member identified preferences. Work is ongoing to incorporate a series of changes, with a view to implementation later in the Municipal Year. As with the initial development phase, a group of Members will be invited to test new or enhanced functionality prior to introduction.

4.2 Elected Member Development Programme

In recognition of the changing environment that Councillors operate within, the Council has in place a programme of learning and development interventions, targeted toward supporting members in their various roles. The member development programme is informed by current and emerging needs identified by members, alongside key corporate priorities.

Following the 2018/19 Local Government Association Peer Review, a 2-phase programme was developed and implemented. This programme is due for completion at the end of the 2021/22 Municipal Year.

The programme for the current year, offers a range of development activity, delivered through a number of avenues, including e-learning modules, MS Teams workshops, bespoke one to one interventions and, following the lifting of national restrictions, in person themed events. The programme comprises of a corporate induction for newly elected members, topic or role specific and committee focused themes.

Set out below are the workshops delivered from the start of the Municipal Year and associated attendance.

Theme of workshop	Attendance
Committee Specific (committee members invited)	
Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing	11
Premises Licensing	10
Audit & Risk	12
Planning	10
Scrutiny	16



Themed workshops (all Councillors invited)	
Ethical Standards	60
Corporate Parenting	34
Climate Change	18
Covid Vaccination	17
Alcohol and Drug Screening	12
Sandwell Adult and Family Learning (SAFL)	19
Role Specific	
Members appointed to outside organisations	9
Commissioned workshops	
Council Procedure Rules (conservative group)	6

Overall, attendance at each of the sessions and feedback on the content, usefulness and delivery of workshops has been positive.

To ensure that appropriate support remains in place for future years, it is proposed that a review of the member development programme is undertaken, led by the working group, as the body with delegated responsibility. The review would look to engage with elected members, providing an assessment of the effectiveness of existing arrangements and developing proposals for consideration in line with best practice, by the Committee prior to the end of the current municipal year.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Committee could collectively undertake the review of member development activity as part of its work programme.



6 Implications

Resources:	The 2 phase programme has been delivered from within existing budgets. A direction on future years' programme delivery would assist in budget planning activity.
Legal and Governance:	The Member Development programme aims to offer support to Members in fulfilling their many obligations. As such, an element of the programme considers a variety of legal and governance related subject matters.
Risk:	The member development programme aims to support members across the breadth of their roles. A review and refresh of the programme and associated activities will ensure that the Council continues to provide an appropriate development offer.
Equality:	All Members are able to participate in development activity and are actively encouraged to use the MyCouncillor portal. Where individual needs are identified, the Council will tailor its resources to meet specific member requirements
Health and Wellbeing:	Key components of the member development programme focus on health and wellbeing related topics
Social Value	Wherever possible, learning providers are sourced locally

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

None

