



Constitution and General Purposes Committee

12 October 2020

Title	Member Development Programme 2018 – 2022 Update
Report of	Head of Governance
Wards	All Wards
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix A – Delivered Sessions for Member Development Programme from October 2019 Appendix B – Members Training Needs Analysis Findings Appendix C – Member Development Planned Sessions 2020/21
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Summary

To support councillors to be effective in their various roles, it is essential that the Council has in place a comprehensive programme of briefings and other development activity. At its meeting in March 2018, the now decommissioned General Functions Committee received a report on the Member Development Programme. The report provided the details for the post-election induction of new and returning Members and set out an overarching strategic framework of Member Development for the next administration (2018 – 2022).

Since the Local Elections in May 2018, the Governance Service has coordinated and rolled out a programme of development covering a variety of Councillor responsibilities. The details of the sessions completed since the last report to this Committee are set out at Appendix A. Planned activity for the forthcoming period is set out in Appendix C.

Officers Recommendations

- 1. That the Committee note the sessions delivered since October 2019 as set out in Appendix A and provide feedback on sessions delivered to date.**
- 2. That the Committee note the findings from the Members Training Needs Analysis as set out in Appendix B.**
- 3. That the Committee agree the forward plan of Member Development sessions as set out in Appendix C.**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Councillors are responsible for setting the overall policy direction of the Council and overseeing the delivery of a range of services, many of which are complex or have a statutory basis. Expectations of councillors by residents are high – they want their Council to deliver high quality services and respond quickly to changing demands all within ever increasing financial constraints. To be effective councillors need to be able to:
 - Represent the views of their political party and constituents;
 - Contribute to the good governance of the Council;
 - Understand local government and the legal framework that it operates within; and
 - Be knowledgeable about local policy, services and communities.
- 1.2 In addition to serving on Council and committees, councillors may also be appointed to a range of outside bodies which have their own governance arrangements (e.g. school governing bodies, community organisations, charities, trusts and companies, etc).
- 1.3 To ensure that councillors are best supported as possible in their various roles, a comprehensive Member Development Programme was developed and agreed by the General Functions Committee in March 2018. In accordance with the decision of the Committee, a comprehensive induction programme for new and returning Members was delivered following the local election in May 2018. Additionally, numerous development sessions and training opportunities have been provided. These have been regularly reported to the Constitution and General Purposes Committee for Member oversight. Details of the sessions completed since the last report to Committee (in October 2019) are set out in Appendix A. Reporting to the Committee would have taken place earlier, but the April and July meetings were cancelled due to the pandemic.
- 1.4 As detailed in the report to the General Functions Committee in March 2018 officers have been working towards having the Programme externally accredited via the Charter for Member Development. The accreditation process is underway and officers have started submitting evidence to South East

Employers the accrediting organisation. The Committee are requested to note that a series of interviews with Members and senior officers will take place as the final part of the accreditation process.

- 1.5 The purpose of the Member Development programme is to ensure:
- The sessions meet the training and development needs and supports them to be effective councillors
 - There are clear expectations of Members in relation to training and development;
 - Sessions are commissioned well in advance; and
 - There is an understanding from Members about which sessions are mandatory, which are recommended and which are optional.
- 1.6 As such Member buy-in for the Programme is essential in ensuring that it meets their training and development needs and supports them to be effective councillors. To ensure that the Programme is Member-led, a Member Development Steering Group has been established and meets regularly. The membership of the group is made up of the Party Group Leaders, the Group Whips and Political Assistants.
- 1.7 The Group meets every quarter and agrees the member development priority areas and training requirements of the Councillors. Feedback from the meetings have been positive and Members have agreed to:
- Take Member Development as a standing item to Party Group meetings;
 - Presentation materials should be shared with the relevant chairman / lead member in advance to ensure that the pitch and tone of the materials is correct;
 - Development sessions should be introduced by the relevant chairman / lead member; and
 - Feedback would be requested after each session and reported back to the Member Steering Group;
 - Planned sessions should be advertised as far in advance as possible to improve attendance;
 - Text reminders would be used;
 - Propose development sessions where they felt that there were gaps in the programme;
 - Planned sessions for the forthcoming period; and
 - Continue work to towards achieving Member Development Charter status.
- 1.8 Appendix A provides Members with an update of the sessions that have taken place from October 2019 to date, details the Members who have attended and notes whether the sessions were mandatory, recommended or optional. *Note: The Committee are requested to note that there are no formal sanctions available if Members do not attend sessions prescribed as mandatory other than via the Political Groups.*

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To ensure that Members have appropriate knowledge and skills to discharge their roles of taking decisions and monitoring the Council's work.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 The Committee could choose not to develop and implement a Member Development and Induction Programme. This approach is not recommended as it could leave the Council at risk of some decisions being successfully appealed by judicial review or other appeal mechanisms (e.g. Planning Inspectorate). In addition, failing to develop and deliver a development programme could result in Members serving on committees or other bodies when they do not have the requisite knowledge and skills to be effective (e.g. treasury management, pensions, etc).

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Officers are working on a comprehensive Member Learning and Development Programme for the 2020-21 and this will be reported to the Member Development Steering Group for Member oversight before sessions proceed.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 Providing a framework to enable Members to be effective councillors supports delivery of all Corporate Plan priorities.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2.1 As part of the Member Allowances budget, a proportion is available to support Member Development.

5.3 Social Value

- 5.3.1 N/A

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.4.1 Council Constitution, Article 7 (Committees, Sub-Committees, Forums and Working Groups and Partnerships) – the Constitution and General Purposes Committee has specific responsibility for Member Development.

5.5 Risk Management

- 5.5.1 As set out in section 3.1 above. Furthermore, not engaging the Committee in the development of the programme would risk Members not being able to shape their own development.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.6.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010 advance equality of opportunity

between people from different groups and foster good relations between people from different groups.

- 5.6.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day to day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

5.7 Corporate Parenting

- 5.7.1 Councillors are corporate parents to looked after children and children in care. In recognition of the seriousness of this responsibility, the Member Development Programme includes mandatory sessions on corporate parenting and safeguarding children in order that Members are clear on their duties and obligations in this regard.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.8.1 Councillors, Chief Officers, senior managers and political groups have been consulted on the Member Development Programme and comments and amendments made have been taking into account in the drafting and delivery of the programme.

5.8 Insight

- 5.8.1 N/A

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 General Functions Committee, 19 March 2018, Item 7 (Member Development Programme):
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=9287&Ver=4>
- 6.2 Constitution & General Purposes Committee, 22 October 2018, Item 12 (Member Development Programme):
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=9502&Ver=4>
- 6.3 Constitution & General Purposes Committee, 7 October 2019, Item 9 (Member Development Programme):
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=174&MId=9855&Ver=4>