

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

**DATE OF MEETING: 16 FEBURARY 2020**

**TITLE OF REPORT: MEMBER TRAINING – A REVIEW**

**Report of: Joint Chief Executive**

**Cabinet Member: Leader of the Council**

### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the council's member training to enable a discussion around the support and requirements for Members moving forwards.

### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the report and the training undertaken
- 2.2 For any areas of concern; that Overview and Scrutiny make a recommendation to Cabinet for consideration

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Hart District Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a Peer Review in March 2018. A Peer Review is improvement-focused and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. It is not an inspection. Peer Reviews are delivered by experienced member and officer peers and consider the following questions which form the core components look at by all Peer Reviews;
1. Understanding of the local place and priority setting
  2. Leadership of Place
  3. Organisational Leadership and governance
  4. Financial planning and viability
  5. Capacity to deliver
- 3.2 In addition Hart District Council asked the Peer Review team to explore the councils' approach to commercialisation and member development.
- 3.3 The Peer Review Team spent three days in Hart. The process involved speaking to over 65 people including Councillors, staff, external partners and key stakeholders. They attended 30 different meetings and with additional research and reading spend collectively over 150 hours in determining their findings.

3.4 The findings of the Peer Review Team were formally considered by Cabinet in June 2018, and the Peer Review Action plan was adopted which included the objective to establish a Member Development programme with a clear timetable for delivery.

#### 4 **CONSIDERATIONS**

4.1 The scale of the challenges that councils are currently facing requires strong, responsive and resilient leadership, to support their vital community leadership role.

4.2 To address this and provide Members with the tools, knowledge and expertise necessary, Member Development can be considered in four separate areas;

1. Areas where Councillors have statutory responsibilities, to themselves and to their communities ensuring they have the right information to hand, should issues or concerns arise. This grouping includes; Safeguarding, Equalities, GDPR and FOI (including cyber security), Fraud/Bribery and Corruption and Health and Safety
2. Areas where Councillors have statutory responsibilities, subject to their membership on a committee. This includes for those Members or anticipated Deputies on Planning and Licensing Committee's
3. Areas where Councillors may appreciate a deeper understanding of topics, to enable more informed decision making. This includes topics such as commercialisation, budgets/finances, understanding of how our services are provided etc.
4. Soft skills appropriate to the role of the Member, such as Chairship skills, Use of IT, Community Engagement and Negotiation skills.

4.3 To ensure that the Member Development programme would best fit Members needs in terms of knowledge and understanding, and soft skills, a questionnaire was sent to all Members asking them to tick those topics they would find of most use.

4.4 Whilst reminders were sent, only a small proportion of Councillors responded to this call, the results are shown in Appendix 1.

4.5 Based on this limited feedback, and recognising the need to put in place the statutory training, a programme of training was put together and shared with all Councillors (see Appendix 2). The final two sessions on this appendix (public speaking and communications skills) had not been arranged when the Covid-19 pandemic began to impact the Council, as were postponed as a result.

4.6 To help Member attend sessions, recognising that many work or have other commitments, Members were provided options for attending the sessions. Often the Council were able to offer both daytime and evening sessions, sometimes also opening these up to Parish and Town Councils. On occasion,

for effective delivery and use of resources, these sessions were staff training sessions, open to Members to attend, as the principles are the same whether Member or member of staff.

## **5 LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

5.1 Clearly the Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on all parts of our lives. The election in May 2020 was postponed until May 2021, and as such, we retained the same Councillors as in previous years (reducing the need to re-run statutory or induction training for Members who had completed the training in 2019)

5.2 Whilst not officially arranged as Member Development sessions, the recent seminars on Vaccinations and the more recent Covid-19 update with Simon Bryant, Director of Public Health and Hampshire County Council, will have helped inform members in their role as community leader, the current picture on Covid-19 cases, the delivery model of vaccinations and lateral flow tests which hopefully councillors have found helpful.

5.3 Members have also been invited to the following development events this year.

- Hampshire Homes Hubs events (facilitated externally)
- Urban Design/Building for a Healthy Life (August)
- Understanding the Statement of Accounts (September)
- IT Security and Fraud (October)
- Budget Briefing (October)
- Understanding Treasury Management (December)

and planning is already underway for new-look Safeguarding Training, from April onwards.

5.4 Looking to the future, and recognising that the Council will once again, see elections this year, it seems an appropriate time to reflect on the Member training provided and the topics that Members may find helpful to be covered in future sessions.

## **6 ACTION**

6.1 Subject to the views of Overview and Scrutiny Committee, that a recommendation be made to Cabinet on the topics to be covered in future refresh of the Member Development programme

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Government Association Peer Review and Action Plan [Cabinet June 2018](#)

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Analysis of Member responses

Appendix 2 – Member Development Programme 2019/20

**Analysis of Member responses when asked about the topics they would like to see on a Member Development Programme**

(noting there was free text boxes for Councillors to propose their own topics)

Are there any particular aspects of your Council work that you have a keen interest in?

health and wellbeing	2
Environment	4
Community Engagement	3
Planning	8
Environmental Health	1
Conservation Areas	1
Heritage	1
Finance	2
Licensing	1
Planning enforcement	1
Planning Policy	3
Strategy	1
Housing	1

Considering your ambition for your ward and for the Council in general, what are your priorities and goals for the next 12 months?

local plan	4
regeneration	3
green space/countryside	1
leisure centre	1
improved member/officer relationship	1
improved public perception of the work of the Council	1
improved sharing of ideas and updates between officers/members and members/members	1
New or refurbished Harlington	2
Increased community transport	1
increased sustainability programmes EV use/greater recycling	1
redevelopment of the civic quarter	2
any new settlement is well thought through and has the requisite infrastructure and a sense of community	3
setting a balanced budget	1
commercialisation	2
comprehensive review of North Fleet Conservation Area	1
Flytipping	1
Greater community engagement	1

Delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan	3
Provision of suitable "affordable" housing in Yateley	1
To make sure the Council deals with residents concerns speedily and effectively	2
Make sure the Council is future proofed so it can meet the needs of the Local Plan and Strategic Corporate Plan	1
Find ways to stop people wasting Council resources without achieving anything	1
IT development	1

What Skills and Knowledge would help you achieve these priorities and goals?

Local Government finance	1
Community engagement	1
Bid writing (for grants)	1
Marketing and communications	1
Bullying at work	1
Improving teamwork	1
Business planning	1
Negotiation skills	1
financial modelling	1
strategic thinking	1
Commercialisation (including governance)	1
Garden village principles	1
Conservation area training (including heritage assets)	1
Planning law	1
Greater understanding of Council processes and procedures	1
case management	1
Rules for speaking and debate at full council	1
IT skills	1