

CABINET DECISION

Leader – Lead Cabinet Member – **Councillor Bob Cook**

DRAFT MEMBER LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2019-2023: SUPPORTING ELECTED MEMBERS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN STOCKTON ON TEES

1. Summary

The report presents for Members consideration a revised Learning and Development Strategy for Members, including Member Development Programme, in readiness for the new Council post local elections in May 2019.

In keeping with the previous engagement strategy encouraging people to Be a Councillor and Make a Difference, the Council's Member Learning & Development Strategy 2019-23 – Supporting Elected Members to Make a Difference in Stockton on Tees, is presented for comment.

2. Recommendations

The draft Council's Member Learning & Development Strategy 2019-23: Supporting Elected Members to Make a Difference in Stockton on Tees, be approved.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

To have an appropriate refreshed Member Learning & Development Strategy in place for implementation post elections.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code).

AGENDA ITEM

**REPORT TO
CABINET**

14 FEBRUARY 2019

**REPORT OF
SENIOR
MANAGEMENT
TEAM**

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SUMMARY

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RECOMMENDATION

The draft Council's Member Learning & Development Strategy 2019-23: Supporting Elected Members to Make a Difference in Stockton on Tees, be approved.

BACKGROUND

1. The Council recognises that Elected Member Learning and Development is integral to achieving the Authorities strategic objectives and plays an important role in ensuring the delivery of high quality services to the public. It's importance is also recognised within the Council's Constitution which provides that in order for members to be eligible to sit as representatives on regulatory or quasi-judicial committees, sub-committees or panels (including the Standards Panel), all Councillors (whether appointed by full Council or as substitutes) must have received formal training in relevant procedures and law either within the preceding twelve months or within their first year of service on the regulatory or quasi-judicial committee, sub-committee or panel concerned and thereafter on an annual basis.
2. In order to ensure that the Authority continues to build upon its successful approach to Member Development and seeks to continually improve, we have sought to revise our approach to reflect the strands of the previous engagement strategy encouraging people to Be a Councillor and Make a Difference, and to reflect the investment made the refresh of Member

information and ICT provision. This revised approach has been endorsed by the LGA who have advised that it is in accordance with existing best practice nationally. A copy of the draft Strategy is attached at **Appendix 1**.

3. The Strategy highlights a variety of Learning and Development opportunities, whilst recognising that members have numerous demands on their time which result in the need for flexible learning opportunities tailored to their specific circumstances. The emphasis on personal support planning means that individual needs and preferences are also addressed, building on existing skills and knowledge.

DETAIL

4. The Council achieved its first Charter Status recognising our approach to Member Development in 2006, and went on to achieve Charter Plus Status in 2012 which was subsequently re-accredited in 2016. This award/status is recognised by NEREO & the LGA as the benchmark of excellence for local authority support for elected members and its achievement is testimony to the support given to members to ensure that they are fully equipped to carry out their roles.
5. The Learning and Development strategy will continue to be delivered within the main themes of:
 - a comprehensive induction programme,
 - corporate training needs arising from Central Government requirements and local policies which will be delivered primarily via the annual Members Learning & Development Programme, supplemented by the Members Briefing Programme,
 - Mandatory annual training for members serving on regulatory and other committees
 - Community leadership support,
 - Role of members / identification and delivery of personal support needs.

Refreshed Areas of Strategy

(i) Refresh of Members ICT Equipment

6. A refresh of Members ICT equipment is taking place which will see all members offered the use of for example a Lenovo hybrid tablet device. Roll out and training regarding use of this new equipment is currently taking place and members will be migrated to these over time. This refresh of ICT equipment eliminates current performance and connection issues experienced by members and allows for their future working in a more mobile and flexible way, enabling them to better fulfil their duties.

(ii) Access to Specific Members Information via the Intranet

7. As a result of the equipment refresh, members will have increased access to information held on the Council's intranet. Following consultation with the Members ICT Task & Finish Panel, members have had the opportunity to specify the type of information that they wish to find on the intranet and this has led to the member's pages currently being updated to reflect the outcomes of this. The information requested included staff directories, service structure charts, committee structure, detailed ward profile information, and press releases, each presented in a concise and easily identified way with links provided to other areas of the intranet and website to ensure that

information is not duplicated. Once the new pages have been published, members will be signposted to use the intranet to find the information they need, which they can access 24/7 once they have been provided with their new ICT kit.

8. A brief demonstration of the refreshed Members Intranet pages will be given at the meeting.

(iii) E-Learning

9. The Council are developing an E-Learning platform for both officer and member use. Phase 1 of this development insofar as member access to E-Learning, has already been achieved with LGA courses specific to elected members already hosted on this platform. These courses include Councillor Induction, Community Engagement and Leadership skills, and Facilitation and Conflict Resolution etc.
10. Plans are also in place to host further content within the Members Intranet section regarding ICT Security, Data Protection and Equality & Diversity, which will add to links already in place making available Adult & Children's Safeguarding videos.
11. Discussions are also taking place with the current Licensing Training provider, James Button, to develop a mandatory Licensing E-learning course for members of the Committee and named substitutes. This will be supplemented with a full day in person session during the Induction Programme introducing members to their role on the Licensing Committee.

(iv) Members Casework System

12. In response to requests from members, and with leadership given by the Members ICT Task & Finish Group, the strategy includes the proposed acquisition of a Members Casework System that will assist members in recording, tracking and resolving issues brought to their attention by their constituents, thereby offering assistance to fulfilment of their community leadership role.
13. The system will also assist members in meeting their obligations as Data Controllers for the management of personal information.

(v) Member Development Programme – Be the Difference

14. A major element of the Learning and Development Strategy is the revised Development Programme for members which will commence following the Local Government Elections in May 2019. A copy of the proposed Development Programme is attached at **Appendix 2**.
15. **Member Induction** is an important opportunity to provide new Members with essential information to introduce them to their new role. It enables them to quickly become familiar with how the Council works, the 'rules' under which a Council operates and the complexities of their role.
16. This familiarisation will begin on the night of the elections when all elected Councillors will receive their Be the Difference programme. This programme includes:-

1. Getting Started – Member Top Tips (including essential housekeeping);
 2. Invitation to Annual Council Meeting;
 3. Learning & Development Strategy;
 4. Be the Difference Programme;
 5. LGA Councillors Guide;
 6. Code of Conduct
 7. Members Interest Forms;
 8. Diary of Meetings;
 9. Members Allowance Scheme;
 10. SBC Member Role Guides.
17. Similar to previous Inductions, the draft Induction Programme begins with a drop-in event with Democratic Services on 7 May followed by a full programme of events including for example Introductions held by Service Directorates and a Market Place event. A copy of the draft Programme is attached at **Appendix 2**.
18. It is acknowledged that it's never possible to attract all members to every Induction event, and therefore the opportunity is taken to host each induction content where possible on the Members Intranet pages so that all members have an opportunity to view the content retrospectively.
19. In addition to the Service Directorate sessions and Market Place event, the followings sessions are also to be held as part of the Induction -:
- Democratic Services Drop-In
 - Mandatory Constitution
 - Mandatory Children's Safeguarding & Corporate Parenting
 - Mandatory Adults Safeguarding
 - Mandatory Local Government Finance & Strategic Planning
 - Health & Safety for Members
 - GIS/Ward Profiles
 - Data Protection Workshop
 - Media for Members
20. The Democratic Services Drop-In will have officers from ICT present and Stockton Learning & Skills to offer access to free ICT courses and will now also include a demonstration by officers within Xentrall HR of the new module for payment of Councillors Allowances, Subsistence & Expenses on-line via the My HR portal.
21. A Tour of the Borough is scheduled to take place on Friday 10th May 2019 (pm) of key strategic sites.
22. Following Annual Council Meeting (22nd May), when all appointments to Cabinet, Committees, and Panel are made, **mandatory training** will be held for all regulatory Committees. Following Council's expected approval on the 12th December of the new Constitution to be implemented from the 2019/20 Municipal Year, the full list of mandatory training will now be as follows with new sessions identified in bold:-
- Planning Committee
 - Licensing Committee
 - Employee Appeal Panel
 - **Appeals & Complaints**

- **Investigation & Disciplinary Panel**
- **Appointments Panel**
- **Corporate Parenting Board**

23. Dates for the new mandatory sessions have therefore been added to the Development Programme (Appendix 2 – Section B).
24. For members appointed to Cabinet, Scrutiny and other Committees, a series of **Committee related** development sessions have been arranged (Appendix 2 – Section C); and to reflect the refresh of ICT provision, a number of **ICT Training Sessions** have been scheduled for Members (Appendix 2 – Section D)*

*(Members need to attend only one of six sessions provided)

25. Finally, members will be encouraged to discuss their Personal Support Planning needs with relevant officers and a schedule of appointments have been arranged over a 3 week period (detailed at Appendix 2 - Section E).

Any member elected mid-term as a result of a by-election, will be offered a bespoke induction catered to their specific role as a Council Member.

CONSULTATION

26. Following consideration by MAP, the Strategy will be presented to Cabinet for approval.

CONCLUSION

27. Following the Local Government Elections in May 2019, it is expected that there will be a number of new Councillors. It is therefore important that there is a robust and appropriate Learning and Development Strategy for Elected Members which details the Councils commitment to providing appropriate learning and development opportunities for all Councillors and sets out the Councils approach to this.
28. The attached strategy aims will provide members with the opportunity to gain a firmer understanding of both their roles and the functions of the Council and the opportunity to engage in their on-going personal development.
29. This Strategy and its commitment to Elected Member Learning and Development will be re-evaluated in August 2019 when we submit our reassessment for Charter Plus status to NEREO.

COUNCIL PLAN

30. Effective local democracy-manage and deliver the Member Learning and Development Programme.

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Background Papers: None
Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: Not Ward Specific
Property Implications: None