

ITEM:

REPORT TO CABINET

17 NOVEMBER 2022

**REPORT OF
DIRECTOR OF
CORPORATE
SERVICES**

CABINET DECISION

Leader of the Council – Councillor Bob Cook

MEMBER LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2023 – 2027 & INDUCTION PROGRAMME FOR ELECTED MEMBERS 2023

SUMMARY

The report presents Cabinet for consideration a proposed Member Learning and Development Strategy 2023-27, including Member Induction Programme, in readiness for the new Council post local elections in May 2023.

RECOMMENDED that the Council's Member Learning & Development Strategy 2023-27:& Induction Programme for Elected Members, be approved.

REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS/DECISION(S)

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

BACKGROUND

1. The Member Learning and Development Strategy outlines the Council's commitment to ensuring members understand their role and how they will be fully equipped with the skills required to carry it out to the highest standard throughout their term of office. In preparation for each local election, the strategy is reviewed taking into consideration best practice across the country and the principals of Charter Status for Elected Member Development.
2. Officers have subsequently consulted with both the LGA and local authorities within the north east and it is pleasing to report that our strategy and Member Development programme is considered best practice by the LGA, who continue to signpost other Authorities to this.

3. An integral part of the strategy is the Induction Programme, which is an important opportunity to provide Councillors with essential information to introduce them to their new role. It enables Councillors to quickly become familiar with how the Council works, the 'rules' under which a Council operates and the complexities of their role. The Induction Programme also provides an opportunity to set a positive tone, establish clear roles and responsibilities and to build positive working relationships from the outset.

DETAIL

4. The proposed Member Learning & Development Strategy for 2023-2027 (**Appendix 1**) reflects the Council's ongoing commitment to learning and development. The aims of the Strategy are:-

- To encourage a culture whereby Learning & Development is regarded as a component of the ongoing success of Stockton-on-Tees. Providing Members with the support that enables them to perform their vital, individual and joint roles in the democratic processes of local government to an excellent standard.
- To create a clear framework for the development of elected and co-opted members based upon their individual needs and the needs of the Council as a whole.
- To ensure that elected and co-opted members feel confident to undertake their roles.
- To ensure that all elected and co-opted members are fully aware of their responsibilities and accountabilities, the principles and standards of conduct in public life, legal requirements and matters of probity.
- To support the continued development of elected and co-opted members and help them prepare for the roles that they may fulfil in the future.
- To ensure a consistency of approach to elected and co-opted member development.
- To evaluate all Learning and Development opportunities to ensure our approach and delivery is cost effective and provides added value in terms of developing the contribution of Members.

5. In accordance with previous years, all confirmed electoral candidates will receive a copy of the approved Member Induction programme when their candidacy is declared. This ensures that candidates are aware of the support they would receive upon election and an indication of the diary commitment required for the first few months after election.

6. On the day of the Count, all Members elected will receive an induction pack containing all necessary documentation to complete as well as key administrative documents including:

- Getting you started booklet
- Xentrall forms for their personal and bank details
- Register of Interest Forms
- Member Development Programme
- Code of Conduct
- Learning and Development Strategy
- Member Role Guides
- Member Allowances Scheme, claim forms, and Gifts and Hospitality form

- Introduction to MyHR
- Joint/Outside Bodies Guidance
- Elected Member Mentoring
- Four-year Democracy Diary
- Meet Your Democratic Services Team

7. Member feedback obtained post Induction in 2019 and after the by-elections in May 2021 suggested the following:-

- Director presentations to be condensed into shorter summary sessions, delivered consecutively on the same day and immediately following the Managing Director's more detailed overview
- More eLearning material to address and improve member engagements
- More of the face-to-face sessions to use different styles in presenting the information e.g. videos, activities etc
- Discontinue the Market Place Event due to consistently poor attendance over last two programmes
- Discontinue the Tour of the Borough due to consistently poor attendance over last two programmes
- Induction programme to be listed in date order;
- A session to be included on iShare
- Equality & Diversity sessions to be mandatory for all members to complete virtually in their own time;
- In person sessions being preferable to Microsoft Teams for Induction;
- A two-stage approach with specific session at start to introduce the directors and their teams followed by a more detailed overview of differing remits of the directors with a gap between to allow members to settle.

8. This feedback has been incorporated within the proposed 2023 Member Induction Programme (**Appendix 2**). In addition, following further consultation with all Directorates, additions to the proposed programme were suggested including:-

- (i) separate session on the Member Code of Conduct;
- (ii) the need for members to be comfortable in the use of microphones at all public meetings where they are provided, and for all occasions when public speaking or addresses are to be delivered by the Mayor, Cabinet Member etc - This could be achieved relatively straightforwardly through either written advice/instruction provided on each occasion, a pre-meeting/event briefing or training on use of the equipment, and/or a procedure for each speaker to firstly establish that the audience could hear them clearly.
- (iii) in depth media training for members so as to acquaint all, and particularly those whose roles would require a more heightened level of skill, with the necessary familiarity and awareness of the skills and techniques required to engage with the media competently. The LGA currently provide a virtual Communication and Media Political Leadership Masterclass which could be utilised to fulfil any perceived need.

- (iv) The LGA's Improvement team is looking to continue its support work for its member councils around Economic Growth to provide political leadership support to councillors on this agenda and is offering two Leadership Essentials programmes for 2022/23 covering Economic Growth. This programme is aimed at Leaders, Deputy Leaders and relevant portfolio holders / committee chairs.
- (v) a new LGA leadership essentials programme is now also available entitled 'Decision making at licensing committee: how to run a good licensing committee' which is designed for licensing committee/ sub-committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, and for those councillors who were new and getting to grips with the role as well as for the more experienced licensing committee members as a refresher and update.
- (vi) Other LGA resources considered appropriate for inclusion as an optional resource to be offered to members should they identify such a need via their individual Personal Support Plan discussion, are:-
 - Planning Advisory Service - new training package for Planning Committee and Planning Officers;
 - LGA new suite of member development training for councillors around finance, which include different training session for all different Cllr roles e.g. Leaders, Portfolio Holders, Backbench Members, Audit and Scrutiny Members etc.;
 - LGA Personal safety for Councillors (virtual webinar) for councillors who are keen to improve their awareness of personal safety.
- (vii) Resources to be identified to assist members who are unable to attend sessions by providing follow up one to one sessions or a link to a pre-recorded training presentation;
- (viii) With officers & members working more and more remotely, it is therefore vital that members are fully aware of all the various means of contacting officers, whether that be by telephone, Teams or e-mail. Within the scheduled Induction programme session on the Internet/Intranet, time will be devoted to include how members navigate Outlook, Teams and the Intranet to be able to identify and contact staff through these means. Directors are also to remind staff to inform Members of the various means by which they should be able to contact them.

CONSULTATION

9. The views of the Members Advisory Panel (17th October 2022) were sought which were supportive of the overall strategy and their suggestions regarding the content of the Induction Programme have and will be incorporated (see updated Appendix 2).

Head of Democratic Services

Name of Contact Officer: Jonathan Nertney

Telephone No: 01642 526312

Email Jonathan.nertney@stockton.gov.uk