

REPORT OF:

DIRECTOR OF HR, GOVERNANCE & ENGAGEMENT

TO: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

ON: 21 July 2021

SUBJECT: Member Training – 2021/22

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To review the Member Training 2020/21 and consider the programme for 2021/22

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Standards Committee is asked to:

1. Endorse the continuation of the expectation into 2021/22 that all Members undertake the e-learning packages:
 - Civil Contingencies for Elected Members
 - DOJO Cyber Security Awareness
 - Information Governance for Elected Members
2. Confirm that the Equality & Diversity Training be arranged `in person` during the course of this municipal year, as restrictions are lifted.
3. Endorse a message to all members to take the opportunity to review the LGA elected member course portfolio now accessible direct to them via the MeLearning Portal and access the training and development which they consider would best assist their continued effectiveness as a councillor.
4. Approve an outline local programme of additional `on line` and `in person` training events to support elected members of the Borough to fulfil their duties and responsibilities in an effective and safe manner.

3. BACKGROUND

Members training and development is under the remit of the Standards Committee and the programme is agreed and updated each year. The programme includes items that this Committee consider mandatory and areas that the committee feel it necessary for members to be aware of in carrying out their duties as a Councillor.

4. RATIONALE

At their meeting in June 2019 the Committee received a presentation on the MeLearning e-learning solution and confirmed the move to e-training as part of a blended approach to learning, and noted the selection of courses now open and available to all members. The committee also discussed the identification of additional areas/courses that they would like to see covered/developed for the platform.

Given the pandemic the move to `on-line` training provided a vital method of ensuring members could be kept up to date with key aspects of their responsibilities.

In 2020/21 three key training courses were made available `on line` targeted directly at Councillors in their role with many more generic courses covering a range of subjects and personal skills also available for Councillors to access.

The 3 essential courses were:

- Civil Contingencies for Elected Members
- DOJO Cyber Security Awareness
- Information Governance for Elected Members

All elected members are expected to undertake and refresh their training each year in these 3 key areas.

Recommendation 1

The Standards Committee is asked to endorse the continuation of this expectation into 2021/22.

It had also been agreed by the Committee in the previous municipal year that all elected members should complete equality and diversity related training & workshop, but this externally arranged `in person` event had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 restrictions coming into place in March 2020.

Recommendation 2

The plans remain on hold under the current restrictions, however the Standards Committee is asked to confirm that this should be arranged during the course of this municipal year, as restrictions are lifted.

Although the lifting of restrictions will mean that the programme of training can include `in person` events once more, the e-training programme for members still provides the most accessible and effective way of delivering a large range of courses and information events, given councillors busy diaries.

Accordingly in addition to the current large number of generic e-courses available to elected members and staff, via the Council's own MeLearning Platform, the Council has been able to secure onto the Platform the following courses produced by the Local Government Association (LGA) specifically targeted at Councillors.

1. Commissioning of Services
2. Community Engagement & Leadership
3. Councillor Induction
4. Equality & Diversity
5. Facilitation & Conflict Resolution
6. Handling Complaints for Service Improvement
7. Handling Intimidation

8. Holding Council Meetings Online
9. Influencing Skills
10. Licensing & Regulation
11. Local Government Finance
12. Planning
13. Police & Crime Panels
14. Scrutiny for Councillors
15. Stress Management & Personal Resilience
16. Supporting Mentally Healthier Communities
17. Supporting your Constituents
18. The Effective Ward Councillor

These Courses can be accessed and undertaken by any Councillor at any time, day or night 7 days a weeks.

Recommendation 3

The Standards Committee is asked to endorse a message to all members to take the opportunity to review this course portfolio and access the training and development which they consider would best assist their effectiveness as a councillor.

Complementing the `e-learning` options, in addition to the Equality and Diversity Training, the Standards Committee may wish to recommend a programme of `in person` training events when the lifting of covid restrictions permits. Equally there is the option of `on-line` training and briefing events, where Councillors join a meeting `on line` to receive information and presentations and then engage directly with the presenters in respect of the learning. In March this year the annual safeguarding training was delivered via this methodology, as was the social media awareness training on the same evening.

It is suggested that to complement the e-learning training selections Members may make and their completion of the mandatory courses identified by the Standards Committee, additional events be considered to complete a `blended approach` to the programme throughout 2021/22.

The Committee is therefore now asked to consider its recommended programme for member training for the coming year. Officers have identified some options based on previous years and feedback to date (Appendix 1).

Not all the suggestions require direct input from officers locally, for example the Committee could consider recommending members undertake some training on climate change and the climate emergency. The LGA in this regard for example has produced a workbook for members that could form the basis of this training <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillors-workbook-local-pathway-net-zero> It is a free-to-use resource that can be worked through at the learner's own pace.

Recommendation 4

The Standards Committee are invited to comment, amend and endorse as appropriate a `blended` Training Plan for 2021/22.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct policy implications from the report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Most costs are contained within the existing activities and work of the HR and Governance Teams, and system contract costs. Should the external Equalities and Diversity Programme proceed this would include an additional cost, funding for which would come from the associated members training and allowances budget.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Members are expected to ensure they are regularly updated with key knowledge of key legislation relating to their work as Councillors. These courses assist the delivery of that objective. Attendance at mandatory courses whilst not being a legal requirement is seen as good practice.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Most courses have been developed to be delivered `on-line` and represent an effective and efficient use of digital technology supporting the work of elected members. Other courses more suited to `in person` engagement, require the investment of time and resources from senior officers.

9. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

The provision of all training to elected members incorporates elements which will enhance members understanding of equality aspects/implications in the development and delivery of Council services

10. CONSULTATIONS

The Standards Committee is being consulted through this report.

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Date: 9th July 2021