

Committee: **Governance Committee**

Date: **7 November 2023**

Title: **Member Training and Development Update**

By: **Assistant Chief Executive**

Purpose of report: **To provide an update on the training and development activities offered to Members.**

RECOMMENDATION:

The Governance Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the programme of training and development activities offered to Members.

1. Background

1.1. Member Services is responsible for devising and maintaining a programme of Member training and development activities in response to Member needs and requests.

1.2. As part of this offer a comprehensive induction programme was delivered for newly elected and returning Members following the County Council elections in May 2021. A summary of the courses delivered during the induction phase is provided at Appendix 1. After the completion of the induction phase, an ongoing programme of training commenced with new courses being added regularly. The programme has provided Members with access to both internal and external training to support the development of key skills as well as the provision of further topic-specific sessions.

1.3. The programme is developed with input from Members. Members' views are primarily collated via surveys circulated to all Members, feedback from the Member Reference Group who regularly review the training programme at its meetings and requests made by Members on an individual basis.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 Courses delivered to Members cover a wide range of topics. For example, courses have been delivered on support with practical matters such as getting the most out of Microsoft Outlook, Member wellbeing, committee focused courses, scrutiny-related training and sessions that provide Members with useful information about the county (such as briefings on the latest Census outcomes). Following earlier effective scrutiny training, scrutiny committees are now exploring topics for 'bitesize' briefings, with an initial session offering a refresher on questioning skills. A summary of the training sessions delivered as part of the ongoing programme is provided at Appendix 2. The current version of the training programme is provided at Appendix 3. The training for this period includes sessions on treasury management and landscape and planning.

2.2 Following feedback from Members, the majority of training courses are now delivered remotely via Microsoft Teams. This method of delivery makes it easier for Members to attend, is more time efficient and helps reduce travel across the county. Whilst the majority of courses are delivered via remote means, where appropriate some courses have been delivered in person (for example, with the training relates to the specific functions of a committee and the training can take place before a meeting).

2.3 It should also be noted that for those courses delivered remotely, a recording of the session together with the slides used in the session are made available on the Councillors' Area of the intranet. This enables Members who were not able to attend the session to still benefit from the course and also other Members who did attend, to refresh their memory and review the slides when convenient.

2.4 The Member Reference Group has a key role in reviewing the training programme and suggesting new topics that would benefit Members. The group is comprised of a representative from each of the political groups. The group meets on a quarterly basis.

2.5 The most recent survey of Member training needs was conducted in March 2023. This resulted in two responses which asked for training on a number of topics. This included, for example, a request for training on the role of public health in local government. At its meeting in June 2023, the Member Reference Group discussed the survey outcomes and provided feedback on the survey process itself. This feedback will be used by the Member Services team to inform how the next survey is conducted.

2.6 To further enhance the training opportunities available to Members, a list of external training sessions delivered by the Local Government Association, South-East Employers and other external bodies is updated regularly and is available to Members via the intranet and the Members' Room.

2.7 The Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) found that the Council has a continuous member training programme which is reviewed regularly and any improvements needed are taken into account via member feedback and emerging issues. The CPC considered that in the current financial climate it would be prudent to review member training on budget/finances, audit and risk management.

2.8 Members have received training on the Council's budget-setting and monitoring processes and recordings of those remain available for members to refresh their understanding if they wish to. Training has also been delivered to members on the fiduciary duties of the Council and a training session on treasury management is scheduled for November. Members of the Audit Committee also receive a series of specific training sessions to support them in their role. Members are also invited to Whole Council Forums at key points in the annual budget setting and business planning cycle. This area of training will continue to be kept under review and refreshed.

3. Conclusion and recommendations

3.1 The programme of training activities offered to Members is primarily informed by feedback from Members and input from the Member Reference Group. The Governance Committee is asked to consider and comment on the training opportunities offered to Members.

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Background Documents

None