

Standards Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	17 November 2020
Report Title	Annual Report on Member Training and Development 2019/20
Portfolio Holder	Leader
SMT Lead	David Clifford, Monitoring Officer
Lead Officer	Jo Millard, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendation	1. To consider and note the Annual Report on Member Training and Development 2019/20

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

1.1 The annual report is submitted to the Standards Committee in accordance with the Member Training and Development Strategy. The report provides an update on progress with Member Training and Development since November 2019, outlining actions taken by the Member Development Working Group to-date and their future work programme. Due to the Covid pandemic, and other priorities, the Member Development Working Group meetings and subsequent training sessions have been limited.

2 Background

2.1 Member Training and Development

2.1.1 The Council's cross-party Member Development Working Group (MDWG) monitors and develops the Council's Member Training and Development Programme. The Working Group is supported by the Senior Democratic Services Officer and usually the Chief Executive, and met regularly up to the beginning of the Covid crisis in March 2020.

2.1.2 The MDWG is made up of a member from each political party on the Council, who is encouraged to seek views from their respective members and feedback to the working group. The Chairman of the MDWG for 2019/20 was Councillor Monique Bonney.

2.1.3 Since the last annual report the Member Development Working Group's work programme has included:

- Evaluating the training provided in 2019/2020
- Setting the 2019/20 Member Training Programme
- Continued discussions on training needs for newly-elected Members and re-elected Members

2.2 Member Training Sessions and Attendance

- 2.2.1 A Member training programme is developed at the start of each civic year and reviewed during the year. Ideas of future training sessions are sought from Members and Officers, and Members of the Member Development Working Group agree relevant topics. The MDWG regularly review the training programme to ensure it is deliverable and within budget. It also strongly recommends that Members take up shadowing opportunities as a way to learn more about the services that the Council provides. Given the number of new members elected in May 2019, the training programme continued to focus on equipping new members for their various roles such as membership of the planning committee but unfortunately, due to the Covid pandemic, training sessions were suspended. The MDWG are due to meet at the end of November 2020 to set the training sessions for the rest of the municipal year once again.
- 2.2.4 The table below sets out Councillor training and briefing sessions which have been arranged through the Democratic Services Team since the last Annual Report in January 2020 to March 2020. Parish Councillors are invited to planning briefings. Members will note that there whilst there were only 3 sessions, briefings covered a variety of topics. In response to Members' feedback previously, sessions were held at varying times on various days of the week

Title of Training/Briefing session	Date
Community Safety (including the Police)	4.2.20
Faversham Bridge briefing	19.2.20
Affordable Housing through the Planning System	3.3.20

2.3 Future Work

- 2.3.1 The MDWG's main focus over the coming months will be setting the schedule of training and briefing sessions for the rest of the municipal year. The sessions will be held remotely and the first remote training session is scheduled to take place in November 2020.
- 2.3.2 The MDWG are keen to increase the number and variety of learning opportunities available to Members, and will continue to share relevant training dates in the future with Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils. Members will also continue to receive the opportunity to carry out to e-learning using the Elms Learning Programme.

3 Proposal

- 3.1 The Standards Committee is asked to review and comment on the annual report.
- 3.2 The Member Development Working Group is keen to reinforce the need for Members to understand their statutory responsibilities; such as Health and Safety,

Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding and GDPR. These sessions will be covered within the training programme and information is also available on the Elms Learning programme. It is recognised that some Members may receive relevant training through their paid or voluntary work, or their involvement in other organisations. However past sessions have often shown that attendance figures at sessions related to statutory duties are often lower than average and the report therefore welcomes the Standards Committee's support and the support of Group Leaders in promoting the importance of these sessions to Councillors.

4 Alternative Options

4.1 N/A

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 The report is submitted on behalf of the Member Development Working Group, who have approved the content and recommendations.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	Members need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge to help deliver the Council's priorities and to effectively represent their ward constituents.
Financial, Resource and Property	Provision of £10,000 is made within the budget for Member Training and Development for 2020/21.
Legal and Statutory	<p>Local authorities are complicated organisations that are heavily regulated and must act lawfully when discharging their functions. They can only act where there is a legal power or duty and decisions taken by them must comply with administrative law principles. Members are often required to take complex decisions or to follow prescribed procedures and they can be challenged by individuals or organisations who disagree with decisions taken.</p> <p>Knowledge of the relevant legal frameworks is vital to support them in their roles as community leaders, advocates and policy makers. It also protects the Council from the costs and bad publicity that is likely to result from legal challenges.</p> <p>Members of the Planning and Licensing Committees sit in a quasi-judicial capacity and training is therefore a mandatory requirement. All Members should be fully aware of their statutory duties and the requirement to have sufficient knowledge on these matters to properly exercise their responsibilities in-line with legislation.</p>
Crime and Disorder	None specific to this report.

Sustainability	None specific to this report.
Health and Wellbeing	None specific to this report.
Risk Management & Health and Safety	None specific to this report.
Equality & Diversity	Each individual Member will have differing backgrounds, and a differing range of knowledge and experience that they bring to the role of Councillor. Members as Community Leaders have a role to help identify equality and diversity barriers that prevent the Council from building more cohesive communities. Specific equality and diversity training, which included unconscious bias, has been rolled out to members.

7 Appendices

7.1 None

8 Background Papers

8.1 None