

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date of Meeting 4 January 2023

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Member Development Working Party update

Report summary:

At the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 2 December 2021, the Portfolio Holder for Democracy and Transparency presented an update on progress with the Member Development Working Party (MDWP). At its meetings the MDWP had considered post-election induction training, refresher training for new and existing elected members, information for prospective Councillors and current and future Member Development needs.

At the meeting discussion included the following points:

- Members needed to be aware that some Committees are statutory and require Members to be fully trained before participating e.g. Planning and Licensing.
- Group Leaders needed to take into account whether Members had attended mandatory training when making appointments to statutory committees.
- Attendance at training which is mandatory could be published on the website.
- That various methods of delivering training could be offered.

Moving forward it was planned to develop a Members' Training Survey and a Training & Development Plan which would set out the training needed for members to fulfil their roles.

The Portfolio Holder for Democracy and Transparency, Cllr Jackson agreed to provide a further update report to the Scrutiny Committee towards the end of 2022, and following meetings of the Member Development Working Party during the year, to present a report to Cabinet in January 2023.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Cabinet considers the content of the report and the draft Member Development Plan and agrees the recommendations set out in paragraphs 1 to 7 below.

- (1) To adopt a Member Development Plan specifying mandatory elements of training which all members have to undertake.
- (2) The draft Member Development Plan, including the identified mandatory training elements, be recommended for adoption with such amendments / changes as the Cabinet consider appropriate.

- (3) That the Member Code of Conduct be revised so that paragraph 5.8.1 incorporates reference to 'the mandatory training identified as part of the adopted Member Development Plan' in place of 'Code of Conduct' (assuming Code of Conduct training remains identified as mandatory) to ensure that any failure to attend mandatory training would constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct. This will require a recommendation to Council as it is amending the Constitution. It is further considered that if this is agreed that paragraph 5.8.5.3 should be deleted as the penalty for not attending mandatory training would now be dealt with through Code of Conduct complaints.
- (4) That if the above is agreed, attendance at mandatory training would be uploaded to Member's Profiles on the EDDC website in September following an election, and would also be included as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) on the Council's Performance Management system (SPAR) and monitored on an ongoing basis as part of the Quarterly Reviews, as a percentage of Councillors who had received training on mandatory topics.
- (5) That Members note a budget of £10k is available to deliver a phased Member Development Programme which would include mandatory and recommended elements.
- (6) That wherever possible, training should be interactive and include practical examples and case-studies, and be made available in-person and/or online and a variety of formats to suit different learning styles.
- (7) To review and update content available on the website for prospective Council members, to include information about training expectations and support available.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that existing and newly elected members are offered a range of development and training opportunities after elections and on an ongoing basis, which enables them to be fully equipped to fulfil their Council duties.

Officer: Sue Howl, Democratic Services Manager

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; .

Links to background information

[Member Development Working Party minutes of 27 October 2022](#)

[Members' Training Development survey Results](#)

[Link to **Council Plan**](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
 - A greener East Devon
 - A resilient economy
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Report in full

1. Introduction

The Member Development Working Party (MDWP) is a Panel within the terms of the Constitution, which can operate on a permanent or ad hoc basis, to assist Cabinet or any of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on an advisory basis. It has met on a number of occasions when required, to consider and assist in the preparation for a forthcoming election and the training of new and returning Elected Members, but it may continue to have a role in monitoring and review or if further work was considered helpful on Member Development issues in general.

2. Members' Training Survey

Over recent months, the MDWP developed a Members' Training Survey which has been circulated to all EDDC members, covering all aspects of training and development, including induction and training post-election, ongoing training throughout the civic year if required, and to consider what might be helpful for those Cllrs elected mid-term via by-elections.

3. 20 out of 60 Cllrs completed the Survey or 33% of the total membership, but although limited to some extent by timescale and numbers participating, there was a lot of useful information collated. What seemed clear for more recently elected Cllrs was the sheer scale, variety and nature of what was involved in becoming a Cllr for the first time, and this provided challenges for a more diverse group of people who had commitments ranging widely from full-time employment and child-care amongst others as well as the practical logistics of travelling across a large rural district to undertake their Council duties.
4. It also seemed clear that greater demographic diversity meant that different types of training or development opportunities for Cllrs were required, and this had been highlighted throughout the pandemic when attending meetings and performing the role of a Cllr was necessarily undertaken more online and in a remote manner.
5. Many respondents of the Survey found induction training immediately after the last election was invaluable and that both formal and informal sessions where Cllrs could meet collectively with each other and with officers was helpful and informative. Although some referred to the Induction and Training Programme as their main guide or 'bible' for the first few weeks, the amount of information and time commitment required was also overwhelming at times and so a phased approach in future would be considered helpful.
6. For some respondents who had already served as Cllrs before the last election, training and development seemed to be regarded as marginal, with an existing knowledge and awareness of issues combined with other commitments and travelling regarded as having a major impact on their ability to attend sessions. However, those who did attend found the experience worthwhile, informative and enjoyable in terms of meeting colleagues, officers

and refreshing their knowledge. The benefits of updating previously learned knowledge or skills should be made clearer in future.

7. Methods of delivering training in future were considered, with a preference generally for more interactive sessions when possible, using practical examples, case-studies and 'what-if' scenarios, but acknowledging that delivery might be dependent on the subject. The use of recordings of sessions was considered helpful as a reference for those unable to attend sessions, as were hard copies to accompany the topic under consideration to enable members to read about what could be complex topics in advance, as well as a reference guide after the event.
8. Flexibility in whether training sessions would take place in person or be held virtually was considered possible and desirable, whilst acknowledging that some messages were best heard in person, for example, there would be clear benefits for Cllrs to meet Senior Management Team members to talk about the roles and responsibilities of Cllrs and for Cllrs to come together as a collective early on.

9. Mandatory training

In the run up to the 2019 elections, there was a clear expectation around Cllrs undertaking mandatory training, which included Code of Conduct issues and Equalities, with a further expectation that Council would consider not putting people onto committees if they had not done the relevant training. For example, it was expected that training on Planning and Licensing issues, would be undertaken before Cllrs could take their seat on these committees due to their regulatory functions and requirements. More recently Safeguarding has been added to the list of mandatory training.

10. However, the Monitoring Officer has clarified that the new Code of Conduct adopted in 2022 has introduced a requirement that Cllrs undertake the Code of Conduct training and if it was not done a Cllr would be in breach of the Code of Conduct. So the Constitution could be amended effectively to say that Cllrs should undertake any mandatory training that formed part of the Member Development Programme that the Council had agreed, and if they did not they would be in breach of the Code of Conduct.
11. Further to this, advice to the MDWP from the Monitoring Officer was that if considering how to progress the issue by making recommendations to Cabinet, and then on to Council, it would be sensible when adopting a Member Development Training Programme, to stipulate that the mandatory elements have to be undertaken and it would be a breach of the Code of Conduct if they were not, and that an amendment to the Code of Conduct would also be made to reflect this.
12. There were also various ways of reporting on the take up of mandatory training, as introduced with Licensing Training this year, such as including it in the SPAR performance management reviews as a KPI (key performance indicator) showing up thereafter as a percentage of Cllrs who had been trained on mandatory topics, on a quarterly basis. Attendance at training which is mandatory could also be published in Member profiles on the website.
13. A structured Member Induction and Training Programme would soon be developed for the forthcoming elections and future candidates should be told that they needed to do some preparatory work themselves, such as observing meetings and participating in local activities.
Mandatory training would continue to be offered in the first few weeks after elections, for example, covering issues such as Code of Conduct, Data Protection, Standards in Public Life, Safeguarding and Equalities, alongside an understanding of how the Council

framework works and who everyone is in the Senior Management Team (SMT). In line with points raised already, this would be offered in a phased manner with other recommended training over a longer period of time, with several opportunities to do it and via different methods when possible.

14. Resource requirements

It is difficult to assess the resources required for this work. It would be important not to overload the programme in the early days after an election due to the cost implications, time commitments and for some of the reasons already identified above,

15. Based on previous experience but mindful of training costs rising as with all things, the impact of member training and level of budget required is dependent largely on the form of delivery employed. For example, forthcoming Safeguarding sessions with an external expert including the production of bespoke materials for EDDC will cost an amount approaching £2K, while the request for a QC who is a recognised expert in Licensing law to deliver training could amount to a figure approaching £3k+. There is some training which is expertly provided in-house, such as Planning issues, and ongoing training throughout the year that can be offered at a lesser cost but more easily accommodated via webinars online where interaction, and question and answer sessions can prove informative and engaging. It is, therefore suggested that a notional budget of £10k is made available as a starting point to deliver a phased Member Development Programme which could include mandatory and recommended elements.
16. Accompanying this report (Appendix 1) is a Member Development Plan as agreed by the MDWP at its meeting on 1 September 2022, amended slightly to emphasise the mandatory elements of it, how often they would need to be undertaken, and an indication of what would be included in a training timetable over the first two weeks following the forthcoming elections.

Financial implications:

Financial implications are included in the report.

Legal implications:

It is for Cabinet to adopt a Member Development Training programme. Any changes to the Member's Code of Conduct would require Council's approval. Otherwise there are no legal implications requiring comment.