

Appendix 2 – Minutes of sub-group meeting (19/09/2024)

- An open discussion on the 7 Topics within the area of Learning and Development was held in a hybrid meeting with representatives from the Democracy Services Committee.
- Each area has been divided into themes and questions to encourage discussion on the procedures that are most suited to the Council within the available resources.
- The themes and questions are appended in this document. We considered:
 1. Is the area within the control of the Council (or an external body)
 2. Examples of work being achieved to answer the questions
 3. Any strengths of existing arrangements
 4. Areas that can be improved.

Following these considerations, it was considered whether the theme is a Low, Medium or High priority for the field's work programme.

Please see a summary of the specific discussions in this document.

Topic 1: Councillors' Development Strategy

Does the Council have an effective and defined approach to Councillor learning and development, contained in a published strategy, which includes responding to needs expressed by each Councillor and the needs of the organisation and the community?

This area is within the control of the Council.

Main issues arising from the discussion

Work that is already underway

- It was confirmed that a strategy is prepared and revised constantly, but is not officially published to the Members.
- It was explained that the heads of Council departments receive an annual request for their top training priorities to feed into the strategy. Councillors have also had the opportunity to identify topics of particular interest in a recent learning and development needs questionnaire.
- It was agreed that there was a high number of developmental opportunities available to Councillors.

Matters that can be considered for improvement

- Attention was drawn to the fact that some development opportunities are sent on e-mail and others by signing up on the self-service system. It was considered that it would be simpler to reconcile the registration system in order to encourage more councillors to attend.
 - After further discussion, it was confirmed that requests to register for events happen in the form of a meeting request / e-mail, however, if more than one date is offered, the only option is to direct Councillors to register for their preferred date using the self-service system.
- It was explained that the difference between the Core courses and the other training was possibly not clear enough to Councillors. Members felt it was important to emphasise this at the start of an election term.
- It was considered good practice to share information about the training available with the Political Assistant so that it can be shared in the Group meetings, and so they can draw the Members' attention to the core titles that everyone is required to complete.
- It was noted that some members had difficulty finding the Members' Intranet on their devices and it was noted that it is important to reconcile access to it for all members.

This area was considered a high priority for the Work programme.

Topic 2: Personal development reviews

Does the Council provide useful personal support to every Councillor and development reviews that are undertaken by people who are qualified to do so?

This area is within the control of the Council.

Main issues arising from the discussion

Work that is already underway

- Officers confirmed the open offer there is for every Councillor to make contact with Learning and Development Officers through the weekly Members' Bulletin that is shared via e-mail.
- It was noted that every Councillor is welcome to get in touch to discuss their personal development programme.
- They highlighted the further support that is available on the Members' Intranet for support such as coaching, mentoring and counselling.

Matters that can be considered for improvement

- It was considered that Councillors could have regular meetings with the Chair of their Political Group to discuss personal development before sharing the feedback with the Learning and Development Team.

This topic was considered a low priority for the Work programme.

Topic 3: Learning and Development programme

1. Does the Council have an annual learning and development programme that is promoted fully to Councillors?
2. Can all Councillors access the programme equally?
3. Is the programme monitored, evaluated and updated regularly?
4. Can Councillors identify positive outcomes from the training, such as improved understanding and performance and certain outcomes for the community?

This area is within the control of the Council.

Main issues arising from the discussion

Work that is already underway

- It was confirmed that the annual development programme is fully promoted and that members can access the programme equally through the weekly Members' Bulletin.
- It was emphasised that the programme is monitored, evaluated and updated regularly through the monthly meetings of Learning and Development and Democracy Services Officers, and also through reporting on learning and development in the Democracy Services Committee.
- The process of submitting a feedback form following each training session is promoted, but it was acknowledged that not every member does this.

Matters that can be considered for improvement

- It became apparent that Councillors are not likely to give feedback if they did not believe the training/event was beneficial. Officers emphasised the importance of providing feedback in order to develop or revise the provision for the future.
- It was highlighted that it can be difficult to access the feedback form at times, suggesting that more people would fill out the form if it was more easily accessible.
- It was recommended that an item on Learning and Development along with any feedback from training sessions be included as a standing item in the meetings of the political groups. It was considered that this would encourage more members to attend and would also be an opportunity to share an honest response about the sessions verbally. Political Assistants can share any feedback with the Learning and Development service.

This topic was considered to be of medium priority to the Work programme.

Topic 4: Induction Programme

Do all new or returning Councillors receive a comprehensive, multi-session, prioritised induction programme that enables Councillors to participate effectively during their first year in office?

This area is within the control of the Council.

Main issues arising from the discussion

Work that is already underway

- The learning and development programme for the first year following an election is very comprehensive, focusing (in the first few months) on core titles and introductions to services.
- Members receive induction sessions at the start of each period following an election.
- There is a bespoke programme for any member that starts during an election term, noting that these arrangements have recently been reviewed.

Matters that can be considered for improvement

- Receive feedback on induction arrangements from Councillors who are on their first term and those members who have been elected during the current election term.
- It was noted that the political groups had a responsibility to ensure that Councillors participate effectively during their first year in their role as Councillor.

This topic was considered a low priority for the Work programme.

Topic 5: Quality of development

1. Do Councillors believe that the learning activities are sufficiently stimulating, relevant and delivered in forward-thinking and appropriate styles?
2. Does the Council have a systematic and effective approach to commissioning, developing, delivering and evaluating its training and development activities?

This area is within the control of the Council.

Main issues arising from the discussion

Work that is already underway

- Work is ongoing to look at tendering WLGA with a provider list to develop, deliver and evaluate its training and development activities.
- It was felt that the opportunity to attend hybrid training was a great advantage and ensured equal opportunity.

Matters that can be considered for improvement

- Revise event feedback forms in order to receive input on whether the training is sufficiently stimulating, relevant and delivered in a forward-thinking and appropriate style.
- It was noted that some training titles needed to be revised to be more effective virtually, as they were originally being delivered face-to-face.

This topic was considered a low priority for the Work programme.

Topic 6: Participation

1. Are Councillors taking advantage of all the development opportunities that are relevant to them?
2. Is any lack of participation addressed?

This area is within the control of the Council.

Main issues arising from the discussion

Work that is already underway

- It was pointed out that some councillors attend training regularly and others do not attend at all.
- Lack of attendance in the core training is currently being addressed through meetings with the Political Group Leaders.
- It was emphasised that there are robust arrangements in place to provide training to members of the Planning Committee and Licensing Committee before the Councillors attend their first Committee meeting.
- It was noted that training is recorded in some cases in order to put it on the members' intranet so that anyone can view it and remind themselves of the content, or watch it for this first time if they were unable to attend the live session.

Matters that can be considered for improvement

- It was recognised that many Councillors find it challenging to respond to all the requirements of the role as well as additional responsibilities.
- It was explained that many Councillors are governors in the County's schools and undertake a number of the core titles in that role. It was noted that evidence of that training rather than requesting members to attend the training in their role as Councillor would be very effective.
 - Following the meeting, discussions were held between Officers and the Council's Assistant Head of Quality and Safeguarding. It was explained that it was not possible to allow people not to attend the core title 'Safeguarding of Children and Adults', as the focus of this session is different to the one delivered in their role as Governors and Designated Child Protection Governors.
- Recommended – to remind Group Leaders and the Political Assistants to remind members to complete core training, stating the importance of the titles.
- It was considered that induction arrangements need to be amended to ensure that the core modules are addressed.
- It was noted that training for staff and Councillors can be held together to be more effective and save money.
- Encourage Members to report if they are not attending training so that it can be cancelled or their place offered to someone else.

This topic was considered to be of medium priority to the Work programme.

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Topic 7: Learning from others
1. Do Councillors participate in shared regional and national development opportunities?
2. Are Councillors encouraged and supported to work with other councils and national bodies to act as political peers, mentors and in networks to share approaches to the role of councillor, identify good practice and contribute to sector-led improvement
<p>This area is within the control of the Council.</p> <p><u>Main issues arising from the discussion</u></p> <p><u>Work that is already underway</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Councillors take advantage of regional and national development opportunities. <p><u>Matters that can be considered for improvement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It was recognised that there was scope for joint-working with other Local Authorities and that this was more likely to happen as the election term progressed. <p>This topic was considered to be of medium priority to the Work programme.</p>