

ANNUAL REPORT ON MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Executive Summary

Each year the Council puts in place an extensive programme to support the learning and development of Elected Members. This report seeks to give a comprehensive picture of the activities of the past year, as well as looking forward to the coming Municipal Year.

In addition, the Policy for Member learning and development is reviewed annually by the Lead Members responsible for promoting learning and development amongst Councillors, and is now before the Council for approval.

Recommendations

The Council is requested to:

RESOLVE That

- (i) the Elected Member learning and development activities of 2023/24 be noted; and
- (ii) the Policy for Elected Member Learning and Development, as set out in Appendix 2 to this report, be noted.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendations set out above.

Background Papers:	None.
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide an overview of the learning and development opportunities provided for Elected Members over the past Municipal Year.

2.0 The Lead Member

- 2.1 Councillor Leach acts as Lead Member for Woking Borough Council on Elected Member learning and development.
- 2.2 A protocol for the Lead Member has been previously adopted by the Council to set out the roles and responsibilities of those Members appointed to the position.
- 2.3 A copy of the protocol is attached at Appendix 1.

3.0 The Council's Learning and Development Policy

- 3.1 The Council's Learning and Development Policy for elected Members was comprehensively reviewed in 2015 by the Member Development Panel, before being agreed at Council. At the time, it was agreed that the Policy would be presented to Council annually in order to ensure that it remains relevant and continues to underpin the Council's approach to Member learning and development.
- 3.2 In their discussions on the policy, the Member Development Group highlighted the need to raise and maintain awareness of the policy. Towards this end, the policy has been integrated in induction sessions for new Councillors and forms part of the new Members' pack. A copy of the updated Policy is attached at Appendix 2 to this report; no substantial changes are proposed.

4.0 Member Learning and Development Programme 2023/24

- 4.1 Each year a programme of training events, briefings and engagement sessions is arranged for Borough Councillors and typically involves Council Officers, external trainers and other agencies and bodies. This section summarises the events held over the past Municipal Year.
- 4.2 The majority of these events were led by Council Officers and were thus free of cost to the Council. The number of those attending has not been recorded in all cases, largely in cases where the event was held online.

Session	Date	Attendance
CLT Induction	10/05/23	5
ICT & Dem Services Induction	11/05/23	8
Equality and Diversity	17/05/23	7
Code of Conduct / Probity in Planning	23/05/23	10
Planning Cttee Induction	25/05/23	8
O&S Induction	30/05/23	9
Member Briefing: Section 114 Notice	07/06/24	<i>Figure not available</i>
Member Briefing: Section 114 Notice	08/06/24	<i>Figure not available</i>
Licensing Cttee Induction	19/06/23	4
Health and Safety	22/06/23	5

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Member Briefing: MTFS	04/07/24	<i>Figure not available</i>
Finance	27/07/23	8
Member Briefing: Fibre Installation	01/08/24	12
Member Briefing: MTFS	06/09/24	<i>Figure not available</i>
Member Briefing: Grant Thornton	21/09/24	<i>Figure not available</i>
Member Briefing: Public Consultation	02/10/24	<i>Figure not available</i>
Member Briefing: IRP Update	15/11/24	<i>Figure not available</i>
White Ribbon & Violence Against Women	27/11/23	9
Member Visioning Workshop	07/12/24	<i>Figure not available</i>
Member Briefing: MTFS	11/12/24	<i>Figure not available</i>
Member Briefing: MTFS	11/01/24	<i>Figure not available</i>
Member Briefing: Budget	17/01/24	17
O&S Committee Informal Finance Workshop	17/01/24	12
CfGS/LGA O&S Member Workshop	25/01/24	14
Member Briefing: Meet the Commissioners	13/02/24	<i>Figure not available</i>
Safeguarding	21/02/24	11
Member Briefing: Budget	28/02/24	19
Member Briefing: Council Meeting Restructure	29/02/24	9
Member Briefing: Council Meeting Restructure	07/03/24	14

- 4.3 The Council holds membership to the Local Government Association which provides a comprehensive programme of training sessions at no additional cost. Officers routinely identify and promote such training as may be of interest to Members. Members are able to review and book these briefings themselves and this facility is also promoted by Officers.

Annual Budget

- 4.4 As part of gateway savings, the Member Development budget was identified and approved for elimination. Consequently, there has been no expenditure on training for 2023/24.

5.0 Member Learning and Development Programme 2024/25

- 5.1 The programme for the coming Municipal Year is being developed and currently includes the following:

Event	Date
Members Induction (CLT)	08/05/24
Members Induction (ICT & Dem Services)	09/05/24
Equality and Diversity	13/05/24
Planning Cttee	21/05/24
O&S	23/05/24
Code of Conduct / Probity in Planning	28/05/24

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Finance	05/06/24
Licensing Cttee	06/06/24
Health and Safety	10/06/24
Safeguarding	18/06/24
White Ribbon & Violence Against Women	TBC

5.2 During the coming months and the year itself, additional briefings and training events will be arranged. These may include briefing sessions involving partners (for example Police, ThamesWey, Surrey County Council departments, etc). As in past years, briefing sessions on current issues will be arranged as necessary.

5.3 In the meantime, all Members of the Council are encouraged to submit suggestions for future training or briefing opportunities which could help them in their roles. Officers will be proactive in seeking these suggestions, communicating regularly with Members.

6.0 Mandatory Training

6.1 At its meeting in October 2017, the Council resolved to introduce a programme of mandatory training for Elected Members be introduced as part of the Council's Learning and Development Programme for Councillors from May 2018. The training for each committee was mandatory for those members sitting on it however other members were able to attend the training if it were of interest to them.

6.2 Topics included in the programme are:

- Code of Conduct
- Diversity and Equalities
- Finance Training
- Health and Safety
- Induction Training
- Licensing Training (for members of the Licensing Committee)
- Planning (for members of the Planning Committee)
- Safeguarding
- Scrutiny (for members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee)

6.3 At its meeting on 10 February 2022 Council resolved that the Council host annual awareness training for Members on White Ribbon.

6.4 Group Leaders will be encouraged to monitor the attendance of their Members and if necessary review their membership of Committees if they have not attended the relevant mandatory training.

7.0 Corporate Strategy

7.1 Woking Borough Council's Corporate Plan is a document about values and how these shape the future of the Borough. Ensuring that Elected Members have the skills and knowledge to serve the Borough to the best of their abilities is key to ensuring the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan.

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8.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The Council allocated a budget (£7,500) for Member learning and development over the past year which is used to employ external trainers and enable Members to attend events away from the Borough. Going forward, the budget has been removed in light of the financial position of the Council. In-house training will continue to be provided, together with free online opportunities provided by agencies such as the Local Government Association.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 8.2 This report sets out the extent of the Council's programme of learning and development offered to Councillors and provides an update on the Authority's policy for Member learning and development.
- 8.3 There are no equalities issues arising from this report.

Legal

- 8.4 This report has been reviewed by Legal Services who have not raised any issues.

REPORT ENDS



Protocol for Cross Party Engagement in the Development of the Learning and Development Programme for Elected Members.

2024/25

This Protocol has been drawn up to define the role of the Lead Member and put in place measures to ensure that a cross-party approach is maintained. Expectations of the roles played by Group Leaders are also referred to in the Protocol. Officers will work with the Lead Member for Elected Member Development over the year on managing and further developing the Council's approach to Member Learning and Development.

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- The Lead Member to work with Officers in developing and taking forward new initiatives and approaches in Member learning and development.
 - The Lead Member to lead on the annual review of the Member Learning and Development Policy and to present the Policy to Council on an annual basis.
 - The Lead Member to oversee the continuing development of the Member Learning and Development Framework, presenting the Framework to the Executive and/or Council if necessary.
 - The Lead Member to champion Member learning and development across the authority, including opposition Members.
 - Cross-party support to be sought for all elements of the Council's Learning and Development Policy.
 - The Lead Member to ensure that opportunities for learning and development are available to all elected Members, regardless of political affiliation.
 - The Lead Member to ensure that the Council ensures the equality of the Learning and Development Programme, with timing of events to take into account cultural and personal circumstances.
 - The Lead Member to champion a wide range of delivery methods to meet the learning styles of Councillors.
 - Opposition Groups to be consulted on new learning and development initiatives before their introduction.

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- Group Leaders to be consulted on specific requests or proposals for training opportunities received from elected Members, the Lead Member or Officers.
- The Lead Member to review the feedback received from post event questionnaires, the Member Surveys, the surveys of newly elected Councillors and the surveys of recently retired Councillors.
- Group Leaders to promote learning and development opportunities amongst the Members of their political group.
- Group Leaders to review the learning and development needs within their political group and identify any gaps in the programme of events.
- Group Leaders to promote the Council's Learning and Development Framework and the Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors to the Members within their political group.
- The Lead Member to promote and support the 'Could You Be A Councillor' event targeting individuals interested in seeking office as a Borough Councillor.
- The Lead Member to monitor Member attendance at the learning and development events, raising any concerns with the relevant Group Leaders if necessary.

Member Learning and Development

Contact Details

The Council's Learning and Development Programme is managed by the Democratic Services Officer, Telephone 01483 743012 or email member.services@woking.gov.uk



Woking Borough Council

Member Learning and Development Policy 2024/25

Reviewed March 2024

Introduction

Woking Borough Council is committed to the training, development and learning of the elected Members throughout their terms of office, from the point at which they first express an interest in standing as a Borough Councillor to their retirement from public office. Elected Members are integral to achieving the Council's aims and strategic objectives and to the delivery of high quality services.

The Council recognises that Members have different skills and expertise gained through employment and life which can all be used for the benefit of the Council and the community as a whole. As such, Woking Borough Council is keen to enable Members to access as many development opportunities as possible to make them effective in their ever changing role as a Councillor.

Member development can have a significant impact on the performance of the organisation. Well-equipped Members are able to contribute to the running of the Borough, and can deal with the challenges and changes faced by the organisation.

The Member Development Policy applies to all elected Members. It also applies to any co-opted Members, including the Independent Co-Opted Member of the Standards and Audit Committee and the Council's Independent Person. The implementation of this Policy is being led by the Lead Members for Member learning and development.

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The Role of Members

The locally elected Councillor has a key role in achieving improved outcomes in the community. As Elected Members (Members) of the Council they have to perform a multi-faceted role of Community Leader, Community Representative and Community Champion.

In these roles Members have a key part to play in achieving the Council's Service and Performance Plan and in helping it make its contribution to the Community Strategy. The participation by Members in learning will help them reach their full potential and equip them to fully contribute to the delivery of the Council's objectives and key priorities.

The purpose of the Member Development programme is to provide a supportive environment to enhance the knowledge, capabilities, and experiences which individual Members identify are required to enable them to perform the Members' role.

All Members have individual responsibility to:

- Identify their own learning and development needs and to seek opportunities to improve their effectiveness and increase their potential.
- Share their knowledge and skills with the peers.
- Review and evaluate learning and development activities so as to apply increased knowledge, skills and personal qualities developed through those activities.

Group Leaders are responsible for ensuring that their Members have the necessary skills, knowledge and competencies to carry out their Council and community responsibilities. They are primarily responsible for ensuring that Members participate in the training and development activities which are necessary to enable them to do so, and to achieve the Council's aims and objectives.

The Council's Commitment to Member Development

The Council has a clear commitment to improving and sustaining the standards of Member development within the Council. In support of the development of all its elected Councillors to ensure that they are able to meet all the challenges that face them through the wide range of roles and responsibilities they hold, Woking Borough Council is committed to ensuring that:

- all Councillors have access to appropriate learning and development activities to enable them to acquire the skills and knowledge required to be an effective elected Member.
- a planned and structured approach to elected Member learning and development is taken.
- access to learning and development activities is equitable to all.
- learning and development should be linked, wherever possible, to the roles and responsibilities of Members.
- Members are supported in developing their roles as Ward Representatives and as Community Leaders.
- Members' capacity is developed to formulate and keep under review the Council's Policies and Strategies.
- a Member led strategic approach to development is adopted through the Lead Members for learning and development.

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- citizenship and a good work-life balance is promoted.
- Member learning and development activities should be adequately resourced and within available budgets.
- Members should be encouraged to identify their own development needs and participate fully in learning and development activities.
- all Members are provided with a development framework to help identify learning and development needs.

In furthering these objectives the Council will ensure that:-

- Member development will take place within a structured process, having regard to the needs of the individual and to corporate objectives;
- Members will be offered equal access to development opportunities regardless of their physical circumstances, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, age or religion;
- Member development will be provided and monitored in a way that is respectful to the dignity and privacy of individual Members;
- Member development opportunities will promote work/life balance, community engagement and good citizenship;
- development resources, activities and processes will give Members the knowledge, capabilities, opportunities, networks and experiences they need to fulfil their role as effectively as possible; and
- development resources, activities and processes will be regularly monitored by Members and officers to ensure effectiveness.

Mandatory Training for Elected Members

In October 2017 the Council agreed to introduce a programme of mandatory training for Elected Members, to be made available online where possible. Topics identified for the programme, together with their frequency and the target Members, are outlined below.

Training	Code of Conduct
Frequency	Once during each four year term of office.
Required	All Members.
Delivery format	In-house training session.

Training	Diversity and Equalities
Frequency	Once during each four year term of office.
Required	All Members.
Delivery format	In-house training session.

Training	Finance Training
Frequency	Once during each four year term of office.
Required	All Members.

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Delivery format	In-house training session.
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Training	General Data Protection Regulation
Frequency	Once, at the start of the Councillor's first term of office.
Required	All Members.
Delivery format	Online.

Training	Health and Safety
Frequency	Once during each four year term of office.
Required	All Members.
Delivery format	In-house and/or external training provider.

Training	Induction Training
Frequency	Once.
Required	Newly elected Members. Re-elected Members to be encouraged to attend.
Delivery format	In-house training.

Training	Licensing Training
Frequency	Annual, as part of the agenda for the first meeting of the Committee.
Required	All Members of the Licensing Committee and Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder for Licensing Services.
Delivery format	In-house and/ or external training provider.

Training	Planning
Frequency	Annual.
Required	All Members of the Planning Committee, Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder for Planning Services.
Delivery format	In-house and/or external training provider.

Training	Safeguarding
Frequency	Once during each four year term of office.
Required	All Members.
Delivery format	In-house and/or external training provider.

Training	Scrutiny
Frequency	Annual, as part of the agenda for the first meeting of the Committee.
Required	All Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
Delivery format	In-house and/or external training provider.

Policy Implementation

The Council has appointed Elected Members to take forward the Council's programme of Member learning and development. These Lead Members for Member Learning and Development are charged with the responsibility of undertaking and maintaining a self-assessment and developing and keeping under review a Learning and Development Plan for Members.

Support for the Lead Members is provided by the Council's Democratic Services Team.

The Lead Members are responsible for monitoring the Council's Member Development programme and identifying any new development opportunities. The Lead Members promote Member Development amongst the political groups. Furthermore, any feedback received on the development programme, whether from serving Councillors, newly elected Councillors or recently retired Councillors, is reported to the Lead Members, with any matters of concern or improvement highlighted. The majority of the work on Member Development is undertaken in consultation with the Lead Members by email or telephone; however, meetings would be arranged when necessary.

The responsibilities of the Lead Members include:

- Helping their peers to identify and find opportunities to meet their learning and development needs.
- Creating an environment that encourages self-development and continuous learning and the sharing of knowledge and skills amongst the Members in the political groups.
- Evaluating investment in learning and development and participation by Members.
- Monitor feedback from Members on the learning and development programmes provided by the Council.
- Regularly review the Council's Member Development Policy.

Member Development Support and Resources

Core support for the Member Development programmes of the Council is provided by the Officers within the Council's Democratic Services Team, in consultation with the Lead Members.

The Democratic Services Team is responsible for:

- supporting the Lead Members for learning and development.
- preparing the annual Learning and Development Programme and report as required by the Lead Members for learning and development.
- organising, and in some cases providing, learning and development as identified in the Learning and Development Plan.
- maintaining the Councillors role descriptions and responsibilities, the Councillors Development Framework and the Council's 'Could You be a Councillor' document.
- making the necessary arrangements for the booking of courses and other development events.
- liaising with Corporate Management Group and Business Managers to identify future development topics.