

Report to: Audit & Governance Committee Meeting 6 April 2023

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Report Summary	
Report Title	Councillor Induction Programme May 2023
Purpose of Report	To provide feedback from the Member Working Group established to have oversight of the Councillor induction process following the May 2023 District Council election
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the report be noted 2. That Councillor Learning and Development is included on the Committee's future work programme
Reason for Recommendation	To give the opportunity for all Councillors to develop the skills and knowledge to undertake their roles effectively; to reflect the Council's Community Plan values – always looking to improve and being professional.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 On 1 February 2023 Audit & Governance Committee considered the findings of a six-month review of the Council's executive governance arrangements, as adopted in May 2022.
- 1.2 One issue that came up during the review of governance was the importance of the new Member induction process following the elections on 4 May 2023. This was seen as an opportunity to drive engagement and inform Members as to the Council's decision-making processes. Democratic Services will work with service areas to create engaging induction content across all areas. Committee resolved for the proposed Member induction programme be reviewed by a working group of the Audit & Governance Committee to gain Member insight. This work should be completed in time for details of the induction programme to be shared in the candidate packs which are issued prior to the elections.

- 1.3 Each political group was invited to nominate Councillors to attend the Working Group (4 Conservative, 2 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat), which took place on 8 March. Initial proposals developed by Officers were presented to the group for comment, and the Group was asked for suggestions and ideas. Feedback is summarised below.

2.0 Feedback from the Member Working Group

2.1 Welcome arrangements

- The Group supported proposals to issue information regarding the induction programme with the candidate packs that will be issued in early April
- The Group welcomed the proposal for a 'Welcome Pack' to be issued to all elected candidates at the count on 5 May; suggestions for content included an organisation chart, an induction checklist and useful contacts
- The Group was keen for candidates/newly elected Councillors to be provided with information about the role of councillor

2.2 Induction Timetable

The Group reviewed an early draft of the proposed induction timetable and made some suggestions regarding prioritisation, bearing in mind the date for first Full Council after the election and first meeting of Cabinet (23 May and 6 June respectively). It was noted that bespoke training, similar to that offered when governance arrangements changed in May 2022, would be offered to any new Cabinet Members. This would sit outside the induction timetable.

2.3 ICT Kit

The Group supported the proposals for issue of ICT kit. Replacement ICT kit is to be issued to all Councillors, whether newly elected or returning (as approved by the Portfolio Holder for Organisational Development & Governance following a review by Policy and Performance Improvement Committee). Councillors will need to undertake their ICT security and data protection induction before the kit is issued (also approved by the Portfolio Holder).

2.4 Principles for induction sessions

- The Group's preference is for all induction to be delivered in person rather than on Teams or in a hybrid format
- All sessions should start at 6pm
- Two sessions could be provided for more in-depth subjects - an 'introduction' followed later by a 'masterclass'
- Where possible microphones should be used by those delivering sessions
- The induction programme should be essential for all new and returning Councillors, with particular emphasis on 'masterclass' training for those appointed to committees
- All sessions should be recorded

- 2.5 The Group also suggested that it would be helpful for some of the induction programme to be delivered from sites other than Castle House, for example the Civil War Centre and the Business Innovation Centre.

- 2.6 The Group suggested early consideration be given to plans for Councillors who do not return. As explained above, all Councillors will be required to return their current ICT kit, but those who do not return will also need to be aware of arrangements for closing their email accounts and return of confidential documents for example.
- 2.7 Finally, the Group agreed that an ongoing personal development programme for Councillors would be beneficial, after the initial induction programme is completed. Audit & Governance Committee could have oversight of this programme.

3.0 Proposal/Options Considered

- 3.1 In view of the short timescale, officers working on induction arrangements have already incorporated the Working Group's feedback and suggestions as far as possible. Outline information regarding the induction programme will be issued with candidate packs in early April. The final induction programme and welcome pack are still being refined and will be approved by the Council's Senior Leadership Team in April.
- 3.2 The induction programme will include the following sessions: -
- A welcome event – introduction to the Council
 - ICT, cyber security and data protection
 - Software for access to agendas, reports and decisions
 - Councillor Code of Conduct
 - Governance, Cabinet and Scrutiny
 - Communications
 - Safeguarding
 - Planning and Planning Committee
 - Licensing & General Purposes Committee
 - Audit & Governance Committee
 - Policy and Performance Improvement Committee
 - Financial Context
 - Housing Revenue Account and Housing
- 3.3 The principles for delivery of induction session as agreed by the Working Group at 2.4 above will be followed as far as possible. Rooms have been booked to enable some of the sessions to be delivered away from Castle House. Officers have also started to make arrangements for Councillors who will not be returning.
- 3.4 It is proposed to bring a further report to Audit & Governance Committee with feedback from the induction programme and proposals for an ongoing personal development programme for Councillors.

4.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations officers have considered the following implications; Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Financial Implications (FIN23-24/143)

- 4.1 For the 2023/24 financial year, £3,000 has been budgeted for in order to fund the cost of training for Members.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Members Digital Tools delegated decision 4 January 2023 – published –

<https://democracy.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=696>

Six Month Review of the Council's revised Governance Arrangements 1 February 2023 – published – Item 10 –

<https://democracy.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=298&MIId=817>