

Corporate Governance and Standards Committee Report

Ward(s) affected: n/a

Report of the Director of Resources

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## **Councillor Training and Development Annual Report 2020-21**

### **Executive Summary**

As agreed previously by the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee, the cross-party Councillor Development Steering Group will submit an annual report to consider matters relating to the ongoing councillor training and development programme.

This report outlines the work undertaken by the Steering Group to date.

At its meeting on 18 June, this Committee reviewed the task groups reporting to it, including the Councillor Development Steering Group and agreed that the Steering Group should continue with its work. The Committee approved the membership of the Steering Group for 2020-21 as follows:

Councillor Colin Cross (Chairman),  
Councillor Richard Billington,  
Councillor Angela Gunning,  
Councillor Pauline Searle,  
Councillor Catherine Young

Since that meeting, the Committee will be aware of the establishment of a new political group on the Council (the Conservative Independent Group). As it is vital that all political groups are represented on the Steering Group, and it was evident that the Conservative group was no longer represented, Councillor Jo Randall was nominated as the Conservative group's representative on the Steering Group. The Committee is asked to confirm this arrangement.

Since the last annual report, the Council was successfully re-accredited with the South East Employers Charter for Elected Member Development on 15 January 2020. The Assessment Team were impressed with the structure in place for member development and support. A number of recommendations were made for continuous improvement which will be referred to in greater detail in this report.

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the way in which the Council is able to offer training and development opportunities for councillors and staff. As with council and committee meetings, the councillor training sessions previously held in the Council

Chamber have necessarily had to change to virtual sessions using online platforms such as Microsoft Teams.

**Recommendation to the Committee:**

- (1) That the Committee notes the valuable work being undertaken by the Councillor Development Steering Group in developing a clear structured plan for councillor development that responds both to the Council's corporate priorities and councillors' individual training needs.
- (2) That the appointment of Councillor Jo Randall as the Conservative group representative on the Steering Group for 2020-21 be confirmed.

**Reasons for Recommendation:**

- To recognise the important and ongoing work of the Councillor Development Steering Group.
- To ensure that all political groups on the Council are represented on the Steering Group

**Is the report (or part of it) exempt from publication? No**

**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to ask the Committee to consider matters relating to the ongoing councillor training and development programme.

**2. Strategic Priorities**

- 2.1 The training and development of councillors to equip them with the knowledge and skills to enable them effectively to carry out the various roles that they are expected to perform is consistent with the principles of good corporate governance and is referenced in the Annual Governance Statement as part of the arrangements the Council has for delivering good governance. The processes and procedures put in place for councillors' training and development provide a robust framework for responding to future challenges and legislative changes, which, in turn, help the Council to deliver on all of its strategic priorities.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Any council that is serious about meeting the needs of its community through its corporate plan priorities must be committed to the ongoing training and development of its councillors. Most councils have some form of support programme in place. However, the approach and levels of commitment and effectiveness vary.

**Councillors' Development Steering Group**

- 3.2 It is essential that member development is member-led and, to that end, a small cross party steering group, currently comprising six councillors, supported by Committee Services officers, is responsible for overall co-ordination of member development at Guildford.
- 3.3 The Steering Group's current terms of reference are:

*“To continue to support councillors in their ongoing development and training needs through a clear, structured Action Plan for councillor development that responds to the fundamental themes that support the vision of the Corporate Plan: Place-making, Community and Innovation.”*

3.4 The Steering Group normally meets every three months and the standing items on each agenda include:

- Feedback from Councillor Training Events from the previous quarter
- The ongoing Councillors’ Training and Development Programme
- Monitoring of expenditure against the Councillors’ Training and Development Budget

Ongoing training and development programme

3.5 As stated in paragraph 3.4 above, the Steering Group considers the ongoing training and development programme for councillors at each of its meetings. The following training and development events for councillors have been held:

DATE	TITLE OF TRAINING
16 Sept 2019	Treasury Management Training by David Green of Arling Close Ltd
25 Nov 2019	Equality and Diversity Training by Munira Thobani LGiU
9 Dec 2019 (AM)	Broadcasting and Presenting Skills by Richard Uridge of ACM Training
9 Dec 2019 (PM)	Media Skills Training by Richard Uridge of ACM Training
16 Dec 2019	Mod.Gov App Training by Martha Clampitt of Civica Ltd
4 Jun 2020	In-Housing Chairing Virtual Team Meetings by Democratic Services Team
15 July 2020	Generic Overview of Chairing Virtual Meetings by Michelle Biggs of South East Employers (SEE).
6 Aug 2020	Planning and Probity by Conor Fegan and Craig Howell-Williams QC, Francis Taylor Building
10 Aug 2020	Planning Decisions and Appeals by Conor Fegan and Craig Howell-Williams QC, Francis Taylor Building
Sept 2020 (date TBC)	Philip Kolvin QC, New Statutory Standards for Licensing

3.6 Due to ongoing coronavirus pandemic, with both councillors and officers working remotely, it has not been possible to deliver training to councillors in person. A number of Council and committee meetings were cancelled during the first few weeks of the period of lockdown, largely during late March and early April.

3.7 Following the introduction of legislation permitting councils to hold formal meetings remotely, the Committee Services team used this time to deliver training to councillors – either in small groups or on a 1:1 basis – on how to use MS Teams for virtual meetings. Councillors and officers adapted quickly and effectively to this new way of working. In-house training was provided to the newly elected Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen, following the Selection Council meeting on 19 May 2020, on how to chair virtual meetings on MS

Teams. In addition, training was provided by South East Employers (SEE) on the more generic skill set required to chair meetings virtually.

- 3.8 Councillors and officers have found that virtual meetings are more tiring having to manage the meeting in an online forum. Holding “bite-sized” training prior to meetings such as Planning Committee has therefore not been pursued owing to the additional online time this would demand of councillors and officers. We have therefore sought to arrange training separately into smaller more manageable sessions of one hour.
- 3.9 The Steering Group is still keen to ing sharing training opportunities where possible with neighbouring authorities such as Waverley in relation to licensing but would be undertaken in an online format.
- 3.10 The 2020-21 Councillor Training Programme is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Dedicated Learning and Development section of Guildford Borough Council website

- 3.11 We have created a dedicated learning and development space on the Council’s website that is password protected for councillors. The site is live on the Council’s website and can be viewed here: <https://www.guildford.gov.uk/councillorspages>. Links to webcasts of training are listed here along with any learning materials such as powerpoint presentations. In addition, councillors can download copies of claim forms, find dates of forthcoming training, organisation charts as well as a list of key officer contact telephone numbers and other useful information.

The Charter for Elected Member Development

- 3.12 The Charter provides a robust, structured framework designed to help councils enhance and hone member development. The Charter is available for councils, police and fire authorities across the south-east region. To date, 18 councils in the South East (outside London) have achieved accreditation.
- 3.13 Guildford achieved full accreditation under the Charter initially in 2013 and 2016, and successfully completed the 18 month interim assessment on 11 June 2018. The Council was also successfully reaccredited with the Charter on 15 January 2020 and therefore demonstrated that we continue to meet the standards required.
- 3.14 The Assessment Team identified the following strengths of the Council’s approach to Member Development:
- There was clear evidence of political and managerial commitment to Member Development in the Council. It was evident to the Assessment Team that the new Leader of the Council’s style was one of collaboration and this was considered by the Assessment Team to be useful in progressing Member Development across the Council.
  - There was clear evidence to the Assessment Team of a culture of support for Councillor development.

- The Council had a sustainable budget for member development which had increased from £12,000 to £14,000 for year one following the election.
- The 'Be A Councillor' events organised by the Council had been highly valued and many of the newly elected Councillors had participated in one of these events.
- With 56% of the Councillors having participated in a Personal Development Planning programme this met the Charter Plus standard.
- It was evident that the Member Development Plan for Councillors was clearly linked to the corporate priorities for the Council.
- The Council had revised and updated the role profiles for Councillors.
- The Assessment Team saw evidence of a commitment to Leadership development and this should be further supported as a priority of the Councillor Development Steering Group.
- The Council had delivered a high-profile induction programme following the May 2019 election which had been evaluated
- The Council have an effective reporting structure for member development with the Councillor Development Steering Group reporting to the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee

3.15 The identified future priorities for the Councillor Development Steering Group to work towards are detailed in **Appendix 2**.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The Councillors' Training and Development budget is £12,000 per annum. The Steering Group oversees and monitors how this is spent throughout the year. We are currently within budget but may overspend slightly when incorporating all training to be scheduled for the rest of the financial year.
- 4.2 The cost to the Council for assessment under the Charter for Elected Member Development is £2,500, which covers a three-year period and the next payment is due in January 2021, for which separate budgetary provision has been made.

#### **5. Legal Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

#### **6. Human Resource Implications**

- 6.1 There are no HR implications arising from this report. All officer support for councillors' development is met through existing staffing resources.

**7. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications**

- 7.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report, although holding councillor training sessions remotely avoids the need for councillors to travel to Millmead House, thus making a marginal but positive impact on our carbon emissions.

**8. Background papers**

None

**9. Appendices**

Appendix 1: Current councillors' training and development programme

Appendix 2: Future priorities for the Councillor Development Steering Group.

Please ensure the following service areas have signed off your report. Please complete this box and do not delete.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Sign off date</b>
<i>Finance / S.151 Officer</i>	
<i>Legal / Governance</i>	
<i>HR</i>	
<i>Equalities</i>	
<i>Lead Councillor</i>	
<i>CMT</i>	<i>25.08.2020</i>
<i>Committee Services</i>	