

Corporate Governance and Standards Committee Report

Ward(s) affected: n/a

Report of the Strategic Services Director

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Councillor Training and Development Annual Report 2021-22

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 17 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 2021-22 as follows, plus one nominated substitute per appointee:

Councillor Pauline Searle (Chairman),
Councillor Colin Cross,
Councillor Angela Gunning,
Councillor Jo Randall,
Councillor Catherine Young

Since the last annual report, it was noted how the coronavirus pandemic had changed the way in which the Council was 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 had necessarily had to change to virtual sessions using online platforms such as Microsoft Teams. The benefits of being able to offer training online has offered greater flexibility to councillors and officers, avoiding the need for them having to spend time travelling to and from Guildford. Since the lifting of lockdown restrictions, we are looking to offer a blend of both online as well as in person training as appropriate.

Recommendation to the Committee:

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.

Reason for Recommendation:

To recognise the important and ongoing work of the Councillor Development 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 five 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 were reviewed by this Committee at its meeting on 17 June and the following amendment was made:

*"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 Corporate Priorities of the Council.** ~~to the fundamental themes that support the vision of the Corporate Plan: Place-making, Community and Innovation.~~"*

3.4 The Steering Group normally meets on a quarterly basis 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 (or are planned to be held by the end of September 2021):

DATE	TITLE OF TRAINING
8 Sept 20	New Licensing Standards Training – QC Philip Kolvin
17 Sept 20	Planning Appeals and Decision Making –Craig Howell-Williams QC and Conor Fegan
5 Nov 20	Councillor and Officer Relationships : Working Effectively Together – Mark Palmer (South East Employers)
12 Nov 20	Ethical Standards Training for Parish Councillors – Sarah White (Monitoring Officer) and Diane Owens (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
19 Nov 20	Overview and Introduction to Investment and Strategy – David Green (ArlingClose)
3 Dec 20	Ethical Standards Training for Parish Councillors (repeat of 12 November session) – Sarah White (Monitoring Officer) and Diane Owens (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
11 Mar 21	New Modern.gov App Training – Martha Clampitt (Civica)
10 Jun 21	Code of Conduct Training – Diane Owens (Monitoring Officer) and Bridget Peplow (Deputy Monitoring Officer)
19 July 21	Equality and Diversity Refresher Training – Munira Thobani (LGiU)
27 July 21	Unauthorised encampments briefing – Stuart Craggs (GBC Enforcement Officer)
2 Sept 21	Recruitment and selection training for members of the recently appointed Joint Appointments Committee (with Waverley BC) – David Maycock (South East Employers)
7 Sept 21	Chairing Meetings Refresher Training – Mark Palmer (South East Employers)
13 Sept 21	Overview of Local Government Financial Reporting and Guide to the Accounting Statements – David Ellis (CIPFA)
29 Sept 21	Licensing Act 2003 Refresher Training – Mike Smith (Senior Specialist Licensing and Community Safety)

3.6 All of the above training has and is planned to be held online, apart from the Licensing Act 2003 Refresher training which will be held after the Licensing Committee meeting which has a light agenda. Since the lifting of restrictions we are therefore able to offer training in person and would look to do so where it was appropriate such as when councillors would already be in attendance for a committee meeting. The Coronavirus pandemic has caused the Council to look at new ways of working which provides flexibility and adaptability in the way we do things in future.

3.7 The provision of planning training is currently under review with the Development Management Lead and will look to host this online separate to Planning Committee meetings, bi-monthly. Online training can be held for longer than the 45 minutes previously allocated for bite-sized training that was traditionally held prior to a planning committee meeting which could become

difficult to manage when also welcoming public speakers and showing them where to speak from in the limited fifteen minute run up to a meeting. Topics have already been identified in the work currently being undertaken by the Planning Committee Review Working Group and will be taken forward shortly.

3.8 The Steering Group has been sharing training opportunities where possible with neighbouring authorities such as Waverley; however, uptake to date has been limited. Further work will be undertaken in this area to ensure that both councils, where practicable, share resources and opportunities for councillor training and development in future.

3.9 The 2021-22 Councillor Training Programme is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Dedicated Learning and Development section of Guildford Borough Council website

3.10 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

3.11 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.

3.12 Guildford achieved full accreditation under the Charter initially in 2013 and achieved reaccreditation by demonstrating that we continued to meet the standards required 2016 and 2020.

3.13 The future priorities for the Councillor Development Steering Group, identified following the last reaccreditation, a large proportion of which have been met, are detailed in **Appendix 2**.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 The Councillors' Training and Development budget is currently £14,000 per annum. The Steering Group oversees and monitors how this is spent throughout the year.

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.