

Guildford Borough Council

Report to: Corporate Governance and Standards Committee

Date: 16 November 2023

Ward(s) affected: All wards

Report of Director: Transformation and Governance

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Report Status: Open

Councillor Training and Development Annual Report 2023-24

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 As agreed previously by this Committee, the Councillor Development Steering Group will submit an annual report to consider matters relating to the ongoing councillor training and development programme.
- 1.2 This report outlines the work undertaken by the Steering Group to date, focussing on the Councillor Induction Programme following the local elections, which ran from May-July 2023, and feedback received.
- 1.3 Following the local elections, the following councillors were appointed to the Steering Group:
 - Councillor Bob Hughes
 - Councillor Patrick Oven

- Councillor Katie Steel
- Councillor James Walsh
- Councillor Catherine Young

1.4 The Chairperson, is to be elected at the first meeting of the Group scheduled on Monday 13 November 2023.

2. Recommendation to Committee

2.1 The Committee is asked to note 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.

3 Reason for Recommendation:

3.1 To recognise the important and ongoing work of the Councillor Development Steering Group.

4 Exemption from publication

None.

5. Purpose of report

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

6. Strategic Priorities

6.1 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 its strategic priorities.

7. Background

7.1 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

7.2 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 Democratic Services officers, is responsible for overall co-ordination of member development at Guildford.

7.3 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 corporate priorities of the Council."

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

- The ongoing Councillors' Training and Development Programme including feedback from councillors in respect of Training Events from the previous quarter
- Monitoring of expenditure against the Councillors' Training and Development Budget

7.5 In 2022, the Steering Group agreed that a comprehensive induction programme be put together for all newly elected councillors that ran from May-July 2023. Where possible, and in the spirit of our collaboration, we have tried to identify shared training and development opportunities with Waverley, particularly in respect of generic topic areas such as the regulatory functions like planning and licensing and in relation to ethical standards. In such cases,

Waverley councillors were invited to our training sessions and Guildford councillors invited to the Waverley sessions.

7.6 The following induction training and development events for councillors, including a number of briefings in respect of key projects and planning applications, were held:

Date	Training
9 May 23	Reception for Newly Elected Councillors
11 May 23	Licensing Act 2003 - Overview and Decision Making
15 May 23	Planning Basics Training @ Waverley AM and Guildford PM
16 May 23	Mock Council Meeting
18 May 23	ICT and Modern.gov Overview
22 May 23	Hackney Carriage Private Hire - Overview and Decision Making
23 May 23	Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny
24 May 23	Introduction to Local Government Finance @ Waverley
30 May 23	Briefing on PPM Governance
5 June 23	Chairing Meetings Training AM
5 June 23	Introduction to Local Government Finance @ Guildford
6 June 23	Overview and Scrutiny – Importance of the Work Programme
8 June 23	Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny Skills @ Waverley AM
8 June 23	Chairing Skills @Waverley (afternoon)
8 June 23	Briefing on the Weyside Urban Village (1)
12 June 23	Planning Basics Training (R) @ Waverley
13 June 23	North Street Briefing
14 June 23	Ethical Standards Training @ Waverley (afternoon) and Guildford PM
15 June 23	Scrutiny Skills @ Waverley PM
15 June 23	Overview of role of Corporate Governance and Standards (prior to meeting)
19 June 23	Other Licensing Training – (street trading, gambling, charity collections, animals, SEVs)
20 June 23	Planning Basics Training @Guildford (R)
26 June 23	Briefing on the Weyside Village (2)
27 June 23	Ethical Standards Training for Parish Councillors
28 June 23	How to use Social Media
29 June 23	Data Protection and Freedom of Information

Date	Training
3 July 23	Data Protection Training for Parish Councillors
4 July 23	Equalities and Inclusive Leadership Workshop
5 July 23	Ethical Standards @Waverley (R) PM
5 July 23	Briefing about Wisley
12 July 23	Gosden Hill Farm Briefing
13 July 23	Emergency Planning Training
17 July 23	Briefing on Ash Road Bridge
18 July 23	Briefing on Yvonne Arnaud Theatre (1)
19 July 23	Roles and Responsibilities – Overview in Planning
20 July 23	All Councillor Briefing – General Fund Budget Update
24 July 23	Briefing on Guildford Park Road
25 July 23	Health and Safety Briefing
31 July 23	Introduction to Local Authority Housing
Further Training	
3 August 23	Safeguarding Councillor Training
6 Sept 23	Executive Members: Interview Training and Working with the Media
11 Sept 23	Enforcement Overview
14 Sept 23	Planning Training for Parish Councillors
19 Sept 23	Briefing on the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre (2)
4 Oct 23	Viability in Planning Workshop
8 Nov 23	Roles and Responsibilities – Overview in Planning (2)

- 7.7 Feedback received following the training sessions was overall very positive.
- 7.8 In respect of the Reception evening immediately following the elections it was accepted by officers that there was a great deal of induction paperwork to process for councillors. This element will be reviewed for the next elections in 2027 and would be better dealt with by either starting the session earlier in the day or inviting smaller groups of councillors into the office on different days to process paperwork and answer questions more fully, particularly with regard to the registers of interest form, rather than trying to deal with it all together. The councillors were often left queuing and it was not the best use of time for all involved.
- 7.9 The planning training provided by PAS was scheduled in for longer than anticipated, a total of 2.5-3 hours and therefore the session

will be scheduled in earlier in the evening as a 7pm start was too late, particularly in light of the packed schedule overall.

- 7.10 The induction timetable was very busy, packed into three months from May-July. Owing to the significant influx of new councillors, it was necessary to schedule in additional briefings on Council projects and there was a sense that this needed to be undertaken as soon after the elections as possible to give councillors a proper overview.
- 7.11 As referenced in paragraph 7.5 above, to try and give more flexibility to Councillors, Guildford and Waverley hosted training on a range of key topics on different dates and times, offering both daytime and evening sessions as well as providing repeat sessions of regulatory functions such as planning. Both councils shared all training offered providing the option for councillors to attend either in person or online via MS Teams or Zoom as well as recording the sessions and sending a link the day after. This element worked well for councillors who then did not need to attend all sessions in person.
- 7.12 Following the next election, we would like to offer a better paced induction, with the regulatory training undertaken as soon as possible but with other elements scheduled in at a later date. This would make more effective use of councillor and officer time. In addition, other elements of training could be provided by signposting councillors to the online free training resources offered by the LGA such as data protection and freedom of information.
- 7.13 Councillors' completion of evaluation forms was sometimes low, and therefore it was difficult to ascertain feedback and learning points from the training offered. It was accepted that completion rates declined towards the end of the induction programme when councillors were probably growing tired of attending the many sessions scheduled. Councillors who attended online, rather than attending in person would often not send back the evaluation forms and therefore a better way of evaluating the induction programme is sought. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we did set up an online evaluation form for completion which could be used again and maybe easier for councillors to complete. This will be reviewed by the Councillor Development Steering Group. Copies

of evaluation forms received during the induction process are attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.

- 7.14 Executive members were offered the opportunity to attend the Leadership Academy which is a leadership development programme for leading councillors based on three two-day residential modules over a three-month period. Leading councillors from across the country and political spectrum have found the Leadership Academy helps to ensure they can effectively address modern challenges and make the most of new opportunities. Over 3,300 elected members from almost every council in the country have graduated from the main Leadership Academy programme since it was launched 22 years ago. To date, Councillor Catherine Houston has enrolled on the Leadership Academy.
- 7.15 A monthly planning training programme has been set-up which covers a range of key topics. These are outlined in the 2023-24 Councillor Training Programme which is attached at **Appendix 2**.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The Councillors' Training and Development budget is normally £14,000 per annum and was increased to £23,000 for 2023-24 to cover the additional spend anticipated following the intensive Councillor Induction programme. The Steering Group oversees and monitors how this is spent throughout the year. We are currently within budget.

9. Legal Implications

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

10. Human Resource Implications

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

11. Equality and Diversity Implications

11.1 There are no equalities and diversity implications arising directly from this report.

12. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

12.1 Councillors were able to attend the various induction training events remotely if they were unable to attend in person, which avoided several car journeys thereby reducing the Council's carbon emissions. Training for councillors on climate change will need to be included in the ongoing training and development programme. Democratic Services are currently looking at available options to provide some training to councillors in this regard.

12.2 There are no other climate change/sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

13. Background papers

None

14. Appendices

Appendix 1: Evaluation Forms from induction training

Appendix 2: Current councillors' training and development programme