

**REPORT OF GROUP MANAGER, LEGAL, DEMOCRATIC AND INFORMATION
GOVERNANCE****COUNCILLOR INDUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, 2021 TO
2025****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report asks the Committee to approve the indicative Councillor induction and development plan (**Appendix A**) for implementation, following the election on 6 May 2021.

Information

2. At its meeting on 25 November 2020, the Governance and Ethics Committee agreed to establish a working group to look at Member training and development. This work was tasked to the Member Communication and Engagement Programme Working Group; its terms of reference included the following aspects of Member training:
 - Developing an initial internal programme of training and development
 - The launch of the Members' learning and development landing page on the 'My Learning' portal
 - To explore and develop options for external training within available budgets
 - To launch a blended programme of training and development tools and techniques
 - To develop and roll out a comprehensive Member induction and mandatory training programme for implementation after the May 2021 County Council elections
 - To develop a rolling programme of events, workshops, guidance, toolkits, online, interactive and face-to-face training and development opportunities to meet Members' needs within available budgets
3. When the working group met on 15 December 2020, it considered an initial draft of the Councillor Induction and Development Programme. It was proposed that, where possible, training sessions would be developed and provided in-house. **Table 1** sets out the feedback provided by the working group and how this influenced the draft plan.

Table 1**a Social Media Training**

In the initial draft, social media training was listed as mandatory. The working group recommended that this should be optional; this was adjusted in the draft plan.

b Equality, Diversity and Unconscious Bias training

The working group felt that it would be helpful if information was available to help Councillors better engage with their communities; including religious festivals, customs and practices. A series of 'Knowledge Boosters' containing this kind of information will be made available through the Members Hub.

c Virtual meetings

Members of the working group requested that this training session should also capture behaviour within virtual meetings. This will be built into the content of these sessions.

d Local Government Finance and Audit training

Members of the working group suggested that these sessions should be mandatory, rather than recommended however officers recognise that some Members have many years' experience of working in the Council and are very familiar with Council financing and the budget setting process. As a result, it is proposed that these sessions be mandatory for new Members and optional for other Members as refresher training.

e Refresher training

For complex and regulatory matters, the working group requested that refresher training should be included in the plan. This has been reflected within the plan recognising the balance between ensuring Councillors have the skills and knowledge they need to enable them to carry out their roles and avoiding frequent repetition.

f Mixed delivery methods

Members agreed that a mix of mediums should be used. They also recognised the impact that training had on Members' time, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the election. This was taken into account when identifying proposed training methods, as was the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions. Some sessions will be delivered either as virtual meetings or, if possible, in-person sessions (restrictions permitting). Other sessions will be available through an online platform so that Members can complete them at a time that suits them. Knowledge Boosters include workbooks produced by the Local Government Association, which provides another learning format that Members can access at a time that suits them.

g Monitoring of online training

There was strong feeling amongst Members that training needed to be monitored to ensure that mandatory online training was completed. This was noted and can be achieved through the 'My Learning' portal.

h Knowing who to contact

A priority for newly elected Members was knowing who to contact. Key numbers will be provided to all Councillors following the election. A new session has also been added to the plan with Customer Services, which will assist Members in dealing with requests from their constituents.

i Governance and Ethics Committee

A request was made that the training for the Governance and Ethics Committee was made mandatory. This was not adopted, with training instead being listed as recommended, as the Constitution did not provide for mandatory training for this Committee.

j The Role of Groups

There was recognition that the political groups play a role in Member development. This will be co-ordinated directly by each group.

4. The updated draft induction programme was re-presented to the working group meeting on 11 February 2021. The comments raised are addressed in **Table 2**.

Table 2

- | | |
|---|---|
| a | Virtual meetings
In addition to the previous requests of Members about including behaviour at virtual meetings, specific requests were made about including voting etiquette and when cameras needed to be turned on. This will be incorporated within the relevant training session. |
| b | Committee-specific training for substitutes and other Members
Members of the working group were keen that any committee-specific training should be made available to substitute members as well as the wider Council membership. Where it is mandatory for a Councillor to have completed training before sitting on a Committee, the training will also be mandatory for substitute Members. So long as capacity permits, this training will also be open for all Members of the Council to attend. |
| c | Highways training
The working group reported that one of the most frequent matters addressed to them related to highways. Members requested that the planned highways session should be a priority. If possible, this will be linked with an induction session on the Council's approach to Customer Services to provide Councillors with clarity over the most appropriate procedure to follow when handling constituency concerns. This may include using the Customer Services Centre, the My Notts App or another appropriate route to resolving issues raised by constituents. |
| d | ICT Training
Different formats for ICT training were discussed. Different options that were considered were drop-in sessions scheduled around meetings and lunch and learn sessions. Support would also be available through the Office 365 Hub and the Smartphone Hub. Based on this feedback, an offer covering a range of options and formats has been developed by the ICT Team. |
| e | Making contacts
During the meeting the importance for Members of knowing key officers was particularly highlighted. It was anticipated that the marketplace event would provide a forum to allow Members to build up initial contacts. Key contacts will also be included within induction materials, which will be available through the Members' Hub. |
5. The draft programme was then shared with officers to refine the detail. Further suggestions were made, which were reported to the Members' Communication and Engagement Working Group on Thursday 11 March 2021.
6. At this meeting, the working group recommended the draft programme to the Governance and Ethics Committee for approval. Councillors articulated their support for the draft programme and indicated that they were comfortable with the sessions that were proposed and the indicative phasing. At this meeting, Members were advised that a matrix would also be developed to assist Councillors map out their training journey. The matrix would set out different roles and the required training for each, including whether it is mandatory, recommended or optional.
7. During the meeting on 11 March 2021, Members were also given the opportunity to view the 'My Learning' portal, through which Members can access online training, knowledge boosters and personal development content. Again, feedback from Members was positive, both in terms of presentation and accessibility.

8. The draft programme, which is attached as **Appendix A** to this report, sets out indicative dates; once the Committee has agreed it can be implemented, dates will be programmed and content developed.

The Members' Hub and IT Support and Training

9. A working group meeting was held on 21 January 2021. The focus of this meeting was the development of the Members' Hub when colleagues from ICT shared sample content. Councillors were asked to test the usability of the hub and provide any feedback at subsequent meetings of the working group. At the meetings on both 11 February 2021 and 11 March 2021, Members indicated that they had found the hub easy to navigate and indicated that it would be a useful tool. Members are reminded that the Hub is available for any member to use as a "Beta" version and feedback is welcomed. The content of this initial Hub design will be finalised to include ICT support information as referenced below, ready for induction after the election.
10. On 21 January 2021, time was also spent discussing arrangements for supplying equipment for those Councillors elected on 6 May 2021, together with ICT induction arrangements.
11. While equipment is being issued, colleagues from the ICT Team will give Councillors a brief introduction to their new devices, including Smartphones. Officers will also be available during that session to help Councillors with any specific questions that they have. A quick start guide will also be distributed with the equipment.
12. Ongoing support will be available through the Members' VIP number the Members Hub ICT Support tile and the Office 365 and Smartphone hubs. Members indicated that they found the pop-up sessions held on full Council days helpful. This observation will help inform the ongoing training offer. The working group also supported use of pop-in sessions and lunch and learn sessions covering specific topics; these would be short virtual groups featuring a demonstration and opportunities for asking questions.

Other Options Considered

13. The Council could choose to outsource all training, however this would carry significant cost particularly noting that for most sessions appropriate expertise and knowledge was available in-house.
14. Rather than adopt a programme, the Council could choose simply to run *ad hoc* training. This would make it difficult for Members' to plan and risk not equipping Councillors with the skills they need to carry out their roles. While an element of training will be required to reflect the changing environment, adopting a plan should provide a framework in which these can be incorporated and more effectively structure Members' learning and development.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

15. The election scheduled for 6 May 2021 will bring a new cohort of Councillors, a proportion of whom will be new to the County Council. Adopting a training programme will provide the framework for all newly elected Members to effectively carry out their roles as community leaders, advocates for their constituents and playing an active role in Council decision-making.

16. The Councillor Induction and Development Programme 2021 is a living document and will need to reflect the changing landscape locally and nationally. It may therefore be necessary to add further training modules, to ensure Members have the requisite skills and knowledge to support them in their roles.

Statutory and Policy Implications

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Data Protection and Information Governance

18. To ensure Councillors handle data in a secure way, the Councillor Induction and Training Programme incorporates sessions on data protection and information governance.

Financial Implications

19. As far as possible, training sessions will be run in-house however it may be necessary for some specific training to secure the assistance of external providers. A small budget is available to cover the costs associated with delivering the plan.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

20. Newly elected Councillors will receive training on the Public Sector Equality duty as part of their induction.

21. Reasonable adjustments will be made to support Councillors complete their training as necessary.

Smarter Working Implications

22. Councillors will have access to a Yoga device and Smartphone to support them in their work. By training Members on how to get best use of their equipment, it will provide new options to work with their constituents and Council officers.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

23. All newly elected Members will have access to training on both Children and Adults Safeguarding, recognising the role of the Councillor as a Corporate Parent.

Implications for Sustainability and the Environment

24. While driven by the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, using alternative methods of delivering training, including virtual groups and online training modules will reduce the number of journeys that Councillors are making to County Hall. As well as providing a cost benefit from reduced travel claims, it also has a positive environmental impact.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Governance and Ethics Committee:

- 1) Approves the indicative Councillor Induction and Development Programme 2021 to 2025 for implementation.
- 2) Gives authority to the Monitoring Officer to make any additions to the plan as she considers necessary to ensure the delivery of good governance.

**Heather Dickinson, Group Manager
Legal, Democratic and Information Governance**

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Jo Toomey, Advanced Democratic Services Officer

Tel: 0115 977 4506

E-mail: jo.toomey@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments (HD – 09/03/2021)

25. The recommendations within the report fall within the remit of Governance and Ethics Committee

Financial Comments [RWK 10/03/2021]

26. The report sets out proposals for the Councillor Induction and Development programme for 2021 to 2025. It is anticipated that any costs incurred will be met from within existing budgets for members support and training.

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.

- Governance and Ethics Committee, 25 November 2020 – [Committee Report](#)
- Governance and Ethics Committee, 25 November 2020 – [Minutes](#)

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All