

# COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

## Member Development: Induction Review & Member Satisfaction Survey 30 May 2024

### Report of Senior Manager, Democratic Support and Elections

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the Committee on the implementation of the Members' Induction Programme following the 2023 local elections and report back on a Member Satisfaction Survey

**This report is public.**

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- (1) **Notes the progress of the Member Induction Programme**
- (2) **Notes and comments on the findings of the Member Satisfaction Survey**
- (3) **Takes a decision on commissioning extra training on equalities (non-protected characteristics) to complement the Learning Zone mandatory training module. (see paragraph 2.3 of the report).**

#### 1.0 Induction Training

1.1 In May 2023, 35 new members were elected to the City Council. Most were entirely new to Lancaster City Council, some were returning to the City Council after a break of four or more years. A range of induction events and training courses were offered and whilst Councillors were not requested to complete evaluation forms, they were invited to comment on the effectiveness of the training; more recently through a Member Satisfaction Survey.

1.2 39 Councillors attended one of the two Induction Events. Most of the training was provided in-house as detailed below and where possible initial training was delivered immediately prior to the initial meeting of each Committee to ensure that the training programme was not too congested.

#### 1.3 Mandatory Training

**Code of Conduct** - All but 6 Councillors attended one of the three training sessions which were provided by the Monitoring Officer (one session was held at Lancaster Town Hall, one at Morecambe Town Hall and one via Teams). 5 of the non-attendees were returning councillors so would have received code of conduct training previously.

*Arrangements are in hand for training for the two most recently elected members to receive this training and to chase up the newly elected non-attendee.*

**Equalities** - This is the only course which members are currently requested to undertake solely online. One Member has asked for a more inclusive face to face Equalities training session (See 2.3 for further details).

**General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** - This training was provided by the Information Governance Manager via Teams and was attended by 44 Councillors. This is also available via the Learning Zone and Members unable to have undertaken the Teams training need to have completed the online training.

**Safeguarding and Personal Safety**- 10 Members received this training in a face-to-face training session provided by the Resilience and Community Safety Officer. Those unable to attend that session will need to undertake the online training on this.

**Finance** – All but 9 Members, 8 of whom were returning councillors, attended one of the 3 Finance training sessions provided by the Chief Officer Resources (one session was held at Lancaster, another at Morecambe and the third via Teams). *Arrangements are in hand for the two recently elected members to receive this training.*

## 1.4 Committee Training

**Licensing** - All Members of the Licensing Committee have received training on relevant law and procedures.

**Planning** – Initial face to face training was delivered to Members with various subsequent training sessions delivered either face to face or via Teams. All members were invited to the majority of these sessions although several were specific to Planning Committee members and subs.

**People and Organisational Committee** - All Members have received the necessary training on relevant law and procedures provided by the Chief Officer People and Policy.

**Appeals** – Training was delivered to Members and subs by a Senior Solicitor via Teams.

**Audit** - Committee Members have received relevant training with additional training delivered ahead of each meeting covering areas such as Risk Management, The Role of Internal Audit, Audit Committee Effectiveness and the Statement of Accounts. All Members were invited to the hybrid Risk Management training session.

**Overview & Scrutiny** – Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee received face to face training prior to the initial meeting of the Committee.

**Budget & Performance Panel** – Training was provided to Panel Members by the Chief Officer Resources prior to the first meeting of the Panel. Further training has been delivered prior to meetings to consider Treasury Management and Capital Financing, Risk Management as well as a series of Service Introductions and Revenue and Capital Budgets.

**Standards** – 6 Members attended the Standards training which was delivered by one of the Deputy Monitoring Officers prior to the first meeting of the Committee.

## 1.5 Additional Induction Training

**Media** - 11 members attended this training delivered on Teams by the Communications and Media Relations Manager.

**Civil Contingencies** – Provided by the Resilience and Community Safety Officer this Teams session was attended by 13 members.

**Staff Wellbeing** - 11 members attended this briefing that was provided by officers within the People and Policy Team

**Carbon Literacy Training for Cabinet members** – 9 Cabinet members undertook this intensive online training which was provided by APSE.

**North West Employers – Local Government Association (LGA)** - Details of external training provided by LGA and North West Employers were circulated to all Members. At least two Members undertook the online Life as a Councillor training modules delivered by North West Employers and several Members attended the face to face 'Hitting the Ground Running' training provided by the LGA.

## 1.6 Learning Zone Online Training

A number of online courses are available to Councillors through the Learning Zone and guidance to accessing the Learning Zone is included in the Member Induction pack. The Learning Zone includes a number of mandatory training modules that members are required to undertake online if they were unable to attend the face-to-face training sessions. These include GDPR and Safeguarding Adults and Safeguarding Children. As referred to in 1.3 Equalities is currently the only mandatory training session which is provided solely online.

Looking at the training database maintained by Democratic Support together with a recent update from officers responsible for the Learning Zone it appears that a significant number of members have failed to complete all of the training that Council has decided should be compulsory for all Lancaster City Councillors. Democratic Support is in the process of contacting those members individually so that this can be addressed by them without delay. Completion of all mandatory training is a constitutional requirement.

## 1.7 Member Briefings

A number of Member Briefings have been delivered both as part of the induction process and as a means to disseminate topical information. Member briefings are now being delivered via Teams and whenever possible recorded so they can be viewed by any member unable to 'attend' the Teams briefing. There has been a significant increase in the number of attendees since using Teams.

## 2.0 Member Satisfaction Survey

2.1 In February this year Members were invited to respond to a Member Training and Support Satisfaction survey which sought thoughts on the induction and ongoing training in order that members could be more effectively supported in their role as a city councillor. The survey ran for approximately 6 weeks. Disappointingly only 10

members responded to the survey.

Responses are appended to this report. Looking at question 4 and the adequacy of training the responses suggest that rather than having a 'not applicable' box for members to click if they were not a member of that particular committee, they had been required to tick a 'not sure' box so this skewed the results!

- 2.2 From the responses it is clear that there is support for training with regard to a number of areas including Community Leadership, Questioning Skills, Negotiating Skills, Chairing Skills and IT.
- 2.3 As referred to in 1.3 above a Councillor has requested that in-person Equalities training be provided to all councillors since : *“the passive, online experience of the Learning Zone is not appropriate for such a sensitive topic, and councillors need to know how others feel and where to look to for peer support if they are in a position of having to challenge poor behaviour by another councillor in relation to an equalities issue, especially if the behaviour relates to something that is not a protected characteristic (e.g. non-binary gender identity)”*. Enquiries have been made with an external provider and we have been advised that the cost for a two hour in person training session will be in the region of £2250. Since this type of training is not mandatory, the Senior Manager, Democratic Support and Election asked Councillors (via email, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024 - whether they would be interested in attending such a session. One replied to say he would. With only the original requester and one other councillor expressing an interest in attending, it does not seem to justify the cost of engaging an external trainer, however the Committee is asked to decide whether this should go ahead.

### (3) Conclusion

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and consider whether an external trainer should be asked to provide further training on equalities to cover non-protected characteristics, given the cost and the likely attendance figures.

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications arising directly from the report.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

A member training budget of £6500 has been allocated for 2024/25.

#### **OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces**

none

#### **SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments to add to this report.

#### **MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and is of the view that any continued failure to

attend mandatory courses may become a standards issue for him to consider.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

none

**Contact Officer:** Liz Bateson

**Telephone:** 01524 582047

**Email:** [ebateson@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:ebateson@lancaster.gov.uk)