



Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 21st May 2021

To the Chair and Members of the COUNCIL

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2021/22 – 2024/25

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides details of the 2021/22 – 2024/25 member training and development programme.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. Not exempt

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. That Council endorse:-
 - a. The programme of Member Development activities and seminars scheduled for 2021/22 at Appendix A, including the list of training deemed to be mandatory for all Members and for specific groups of Members;
 - b. The approach to a four year Member Development Programme outlined at paragraphs 16 to 17.
 - c. The further development of Members as digitally enabled Councillors and continuation of remote and face-to-face sessions to encourage Member attendance and engagement in training and development.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER

4. Ensuring the Council has a robust Training and Development programme in place will assist Councillors in effectively understanding their key roles and responsibilities. In turn, this will enable them to more effectively support and represent all citizens in the Borough through effective decision-making and community leadership.

BACKGROUND

5. A planned and co-ordinated approach to Member Development is helpful in supporting Councillors to fulfil their roles effectively. It also helps support good

governance by ensuring Councillors fully understand their roles and responsibilities and how they can support the delivery of Council and Borough wide priorities. This report sets out the Council's training and development programme for 2021/2022 (attached at Appendix A) and its approach to Member Training for the period 2021/22 – 2024/25.

Evaluation of Member Development Activities 2020/21

6. During 2020/21 the Member Development Working Group (MDWG), which includes the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and representatives from each political group, regularly reviewed and monitored the effectiveness of Member Development and progress against the annual training programme agreed by Council. The MDWG help raise awareness of training and development within their groups and encourage attendance at events. Attendance details are published on the Council's website.
7. Evaluation forms are used to feedback to those delivering training to ensure any necessary improvements can be made to future events and any good practice can continue. These forms are also analysed by the MDWG. Training is delivered mainly in-house whilst some training is commissioned and delivered by external providers where this provides better value for money or requires specific expertise.
8. Over the last 12 months, the training focus has been supporting Councillors to work remotely and this has involved both group and individual support. Members have adapted well to using digital devices to attend and engage in meetings and online training. Using digital technology to engage in meetings has now become an essential element of the Councillors role. This shift has enabled Members to benefit from more flexible working, effective time management, better use of resources and improved work life balance.
9. A number of seminars and briefing sessions have been held this year to ensure Members have remained up to date on the delivery of services as well as other important policy matters including Localities, the model Code of Conduct, Environment Strategy and Planning White Paper Consultation.

Member Induction Arrangements for 2021

10. Following the election a two-week induction programme has taken place. The Induction programme is mandatory for all new Councillors and returning Councillors were invited to attend any session as a refresher.
11. Due to current social distancing requirements all newly elected Councillors have been issued with a laptop to support them in their role and have received a digital induction. It is recommended that moving forward the Council will encourage greater use of digital technology to help Members engage with their communities, carry out their roles effectively as well as attend briefing sessions and meetings remotely. During the last year, laptops have been essential in ensuring Members can engage in remote meetings and training. Supporting the issuing of a single device to Councillors has benefits in providing more uniformed training and support for Councillors.
12. The second phase of the induction focussed on Councillors understanding their roles and responsibilities and how the Council operates. The induction

programme has been delivered digitally with sessions being short and focused, to avoid information overload. Presentations will be made available to Councillors after the sessions and they are encouraged to put forward suggestions for further issues to be considered as part of the Members seminar and briefing programme.

13. Induction will continue over the course of the year as Members attend mandatory training sessions, briefings and seminars, which are all essential to their role, ensuring they are aware of key policy developments. Scheduling mandatory training over the period up to September will help manage “training fatigue”.
14. Members will also be advised and encouraged to attend the LGA event for new Councillors – this will be held virtually following the election and provide an external perspective and opportunity to network regionally. Provisional arrangements have been made with the LGA to provide a dedicated session to Members later in the year potentially around the Councillors community leadership role following COVID. This will be considered by the MDWG before taking forward later in 2021.
15. A further session for new Councillors will be held in the Autumn with the Governance and Member Services Manager to allow Members to feedback on their induction experience and identify areas where they need further information help and support.

Approach to Member Training 2021/2022 and onwards

16. All out elections provides an opportunity to plan a 4-year training and development programme to meet the needs of all Councillors as they develop into their role. The following approach is proposed;
 - **Year 1 Understanding the Councillors Role** - This will include Induction, promotion of digital working, mandatory training on areas considered essential to the Councillors role, specific training for Members serving on Committees and a seminar programme to ensure Members are kept up to speed on important policy issues. Embedding the use of digital technology.

Year 2 - The Developing Councillor - Committee specific training following changes at Annual Council, a seminar programme and a focus on developing skills to support Councillors in their role, particularly developing their digital technology skills.
 - **Year 3 and 4: Consolidating and Future Planning.** In addition to the mandatory training and a seminar programme, further work will take place to respond to Member training requirements, identify and encourage best practice and develop Councillors as Community Leaders. This will also include a Members seminar programme.
17. The content of each subsequent year’s training programme will be developed by the MDWG following an annual consultation with Members and officers to gauge their views, feedback and suggestions on training and development needs.

Mandatory Training

18. During the 4 year period 2017/2018 to 2020/21 achieving a 100% attendance of Members undertaking mandatory training (as agreed by Council) presented a number of challenges. Moving forward it is expected that all mandatory training will be undertaken during 2021/22. As the topics that make up the mandatory training modules are essential to the Councillors role, these are scheduled early in the Municipal year. Once Councillors have completed these modules, they will not need repeating unless updates or refreshers are required. These modules will be held using MS Teams as it is envisaged this approach will accommodate those Members who have difficulty attending training sessions due to travel, work, caring or other responsibilities. A face to face session on each of the mandatory modules can be arranged later in the year when social distancing arrangements allow and to accommodate those Members who have been unable to attend.

Additional Training and Development Activities

19. Other key areas that will be considered as part of the Council's Member Development offer moving forward include:
- Continuing to explore how Officers and Councillors can work together to deliver and ensure effective community outcomes. This concept is wider than training and development and will take account of such issues as identifying effective behaviours, use of equipment and technology, building up networks and contacts as well as understanding communities.
 - Continuing to support Councillors to become more digitally enabled by providing further support and training as well as the development of applications that will support remote and flexible working. Significant work has taken place by the Digital Council Team to support and engage with Councillors and support them in the use of new technology.
 - Identify best practice nationally and locally and ensure this is disseminated to Councillors e.g. through LGA bulletins.
 - Establish more training materials and resources to assist Councillors and explore the opportunities for e-learning.

Monitoring and Review

20. The above plan outlines the direction for Member training over the next 4 years and will be subject to regular review by the MDWG and presented to council for information. Once the programme begins an annual assessment of development need will be undertaken by the MDWG who can advise of the relevant topics to be included within the programme. The programme will be presented to Council on an annual basis to ensure there is elected Member buy in and awareness.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

21. To develop a stand-alone one-year training and development programme

would not provide a planned co-ordinated approach to Member Training and Development.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

22. Endorsing an initial training programme and agreeing the principles of future training and development for the current cohort of Councillors will help establish a planned and co-ordinated programme of development activities.
23. The MDWG will continue to review the programme regularly to ensure it is relevant and stays on track. The programme is a planned approach aimed at meeting the development needs of Members now and in the future. Identifying mandatory training serves to support Members in their role ensuring clarity and identifying any risks or corporate/personal liabilities.
24. Members should attend mandatory training regardless of whether they have previously undertaken the sessions to ensure a consistent approach. Unless there are any significant updates or legislative changes, this would remain valid for their four-year term of office. Other mandatory courses e.g. Licensing, Planning, Charing skills would still need to be run annually to take account of any changes following Council's annual review of committee memberships.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

25. Ensuring Members receive the necessary training and development to undertake their duties effectively will impact on all of the priority outcomes through effective decision making and community engagement.

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

26. Mandatory training for all Members on areas such as Data Protection, Equalities and Health and Safety will ensure Members have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are aware of any significant risks including any corporate or personal liabilities. There is a risk to the Council and the individual Member if they do not engage with this training and do not fully understand their responsibilities. The MDWG and officers will work with Members and Groups to ensure attendance at these sessions.
27. The MDWG will continue to monitor development activities including attendance, feedback and evaluation from events. This will provide the opportunity to further encourage participation within political groups and review the effectiveness of courses.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials NC Date 5/5/21]

28. The Council has the legal power to arrange training for Members by virtue of both S111 Local Government Act 1972 (which gives Local Authorities the power to do anything "which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions" and S1 Localism Act 2011 (the general power of competence): "a local authority has power to do anything that individuals generally may do unless restricted by law.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials...PH Date 29/04/2021]

29. A budget of £7k exists to support Member Training and Development, which will mainly be used to support external provision. This budget has been sufficient in previous years and is expected to be for the indicative 2021/2022 programme.

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials RH Date 30/4/21]

30. There are no specific HR implications associated with this report, HR will assist where required in terms of training for Councillors. Where the need for external training is identified due regard must be given to the Councils Contract Procedure Rules for the procurement of works, supplies and services.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials PW Date 29/04/21]

31. Technology is an essential enabler to assist Councillors in undertaking their roles and duties. As outlined in the body of the report, all newly elected Councillors have been issued with a laptop to support them in their role and received a digital induction. Embedding the use of digital technology for Councillors and developing their digital technology skills are key components of the proposed approach in years 1 and 2. Digital Strategy and Solutions will continue to work closely with colleagues in Governance Services to support Councillors in the use of new technology and to become more digitally enabled by providing further support and training and identifying opportunities for technology that will further support remote and flexible working, as needed.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials...RS.....Date ...29/04/21]

32. Good governance combined with effective training and member development is essential to protect and improve the health of the public. The programme covers issues that have direct health effects including health and safety as well as safeguarding. Effective training on licensing and planning will support effective decision making on the wider determinants of health that have a more indirect impact on health. Advice on specific public health updates, development and training can be requested from the Director of Public Health.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS (Officer Initials...CM...Date.....05/04/21)

33. To ensure Members are aware of the Council's responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 mandatory training is provided to all Members. Officers in the Governance Services team are available to support and make suitable arrangements for Members who may not be able to access training because they have a protected characteristic e.g. due to disability.

CONSULTATION

34. The MDWG has been consulted in the development of the programme of training scheduled shown in Appendix A.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

35. There are no specific background papers associated with this report.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- MDWG Member Development Working Group
- LGA – Local Government Association

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

Andrew Sercombe, Governance & Member Services Manager
01302 734354 andrew.sercombe@doncaster.gov.uk

Caroline Martin, Senior Governance Officer
01302 734941

Scott Fawcus
Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services