

Agenda Item No: 19
Report To: Cabinet
Date: 14th July 2016
Report Title: Member Training Panel Annual Report 2015/16
Report Author: Danny Sheppard - Senior Member Services Officer
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Clarkson - Leader of the Council
Cllr Knowles – Portfolio Holder for Information, Technology and Communications

Summary:	The report introduces the Annual Report of the Member Training Panel for 2015/16.
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Key Decision: NO

Affected Wards: None specifically

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is asked to receive and note the contents of the Annual Report of the Member Training Panel for 2015/16.**

Policy Overview: The Member Training Panel has been constituted to gain feedback from Members on training and development and to steer induction/training programmes. The Council's Constitution requires the Panel to make an Annual Report to the Cabinet.

Financial Implications: Spend met from within the allocated Member Training Budget

Risk Assessment: Members' skills, capacity and experience was covered within the Council's previous Strategic Risk Register (Risk 6) (applicable for part of 2015/16 year).

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Member Training Panel Annual Report

Purpose of the Report

1. The Council's Constitution requires the Member Training Panel to make an annual report to the Cabinet to review training issues.
2. This report will give an overview of member training from 2015/16 and expenditure from the Council's Member Training Budget as well as commenting on plans for the future.

Background

3. The Member Training Panel has been constituted to gain feedback from Members on training and development and to steer induction/training programmes. A re-focus of the Panel during 2012/13 aimed to raise its profile by formally constituting it within the Council's Constitution and by introducing an agreed programme of regular meetings and annual reports to review training issues.

2015/16

4. For the period covered by this report the Member Training Panel had eight Members, representing all Political Groups on the Council.
5. During 2015/16 the Member Training Panel did not meet formally. However there have been numerous informal meetings involving the Chairman and Officers and, on occasion, the Vice-Chairman. This was chiefly because the programme of work for Member Training and Induction for the new Council had already been set during 2014/15. The informal meetings were held to monitor how the induction process was progressing and to discuss ideas for the future.
6. A new Chairman and new Panel Members were appointed in May 2016 and a meeting will be held during the summer under the new Chairman to review the past Municipal Year and to look ahead to the forthcoming year.
7. The initial Training and Induction Programme took place between May 2015 and January 2016. The specific events that took place during this period are outlined below in Paragraph 8. This was supplemented by one to one appointments for new Members with the Chief Executive and the distribution of an information pack containing guidance and relevant information and a suite of *Framework Documents* including the '*What to Expect as an Ashford Borough Councillor*' document produced by this Panel.
8. For the year 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016 the following training events have been held: -

- Planning Committee (Part 1) – 19th May 2015 – Initial compulsory training for Planning Committee Members to which all Members were invited. – 21 Members attended.
- Code of Conduct – 27th May 2015 – Facilitated by an expert firm of Consultants, Paul Hoey and Associates - all Members and Parish Councils were invited – 14 Members and 33 Parish Council representatives attended.
- Licensing Committee Training – 28th May 2015 – Initial compulsory training for Licensing Committee Members run by the Institute of Licensing to which all Members were invited – 11 Members attended.
- Overview and Scrutiny Training – 5th June 2015 – Facilitated by Elaine Bolton of Beckwith Consulting – all Members invited – 8 Members attended.
- Audit Committee Training – 22nd June 2015 – All Members invited – 11 Members attended.
- Planning Committee (Part 2) – 8th July 2015 – All Members invited – 14 Members attended.
- Safeguarding Training – 28th July 2015 – Including updates on general safeguarding, child sexual exploitation and domestic abuse from external experts – All Members invited – 6 Members attended.
- An Introduction to Housing – 13th October 2015 – All Members invited – 11 Members attended.
- Local Government Finance Part 1 (including HRA) – 14th October 2015 – All Members invited – 8 Members attended.
- Planning Enforcement Workshop – 19th October 2015 – All Members invited – 17 Members attended.
- Local Government Finance Part 2 (including MTFP) – 22nd October 2015 – All Members invited – 6 Members attended.
- An Introduction to Cultural Services – 12th January 2016 – All Members invited – 10 Members attended.

Individual Events

- Councillor Miss Martin attended the LGiU Course ‘Using Social Media for Community Engagement and Community Leadership’ in London – 1st October 2015. Cost £149.95.
- Councillors Burgess and Hicks attended the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership’s Rivers and Land Management Workshop:

'Water Quality, Impacts and Solutions' in Headcorn – 24th November 2015. Cost Free.

- Councillors Burgess and Hicks attended the Westminster Briefing Course 'Gypsy and Traveller Policy Under the New Government' in London – 26th November 2015. Cost £175 each.
- Councillor Link attended a Development Day for Audit Committee Chairmen run by CIPFA in London – 20th January 2016. Cost £290.
- Councillor Miss Martin attended the LGiU Course 'An Introduction to Local Government Finance' in London – 8th March 2016. Cost £149.95.
- Councillors Bradford and Feacey attended Public Health England's 'Alcohol Licensing and Public Health 2016' Event in Maidstone – 10th March 2016. Cost Free.

9. Officers have also routinely offered numerous pre-Committee briefings in an attempt to cover issues of interest to Members and topical issues in a non-obtrusive and non-time consuming way. These included major planning issues, treasury management and guest speakers on topical issues such as superfast broadband, communications and the Local Government Boundary Commission's Electoral Review of Ashford. These are mainly held before Planning and Audit Committee meetings although there have also been sessions before Full Council and Cabinet Meetings. They are open to all Members and during 2015/16 the following have taken place: -

Audit Committee

29th September 2015 – Treasury Management from the Council's Advisors Arlingclose.

Planning Committee

29th July 2015 – Elwick Place Scheme

23rd September 2015 – AIMREC (Pre-Application Presentation)

18th November 2015 – Ashford Commercial Quarter Phase 1

17th February 2016 – Victoria Way East

11th March 2016 – Land at Willesborough Lees

Cabinet

14th January 2016 – Superfast Broadband

10th March 2016 – Communications Audit

Council

18th February 2016 – Local Government Boundary Commission – Ashford Electoral Review 2016/17

10. Also during 2015/16 we have continued to roll out weekly electronic newsletters and media updates which are provided to all Councillors and include links to enable Members to access relevant and up-to-date material. The Council has also continued regular written Leader Briefings to all Councillors. Between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016 the Leader issued 36 briefings. Portfolio Holders can also issue personal notes on matters of more specialist importance.

11. Feedback from Members about the Induction Programme has been largely positive. 84% of Members have undertaken some sort of training in 2015/16, including 93% of newly elected Members. Records show a generally good attendance and take up. 15 evaluation forms were received after events and all but one included positive ratings.
12. Following the wishes of the Panel last year, an on-line Members' Portal has been set up to house training material and general useful information for Members. Population of the Portal has been placed on hold for the time being though whilst Members and Officers investigate the possible introduction of a new externally hosted on-line Committee Management System, which could potentially provide significantly increased capability. On-line training (e-learning) has however been made available to all Members from October 2015 via the LGA and Learning Nexus.

Budget

13. The Member Training Budget is £15,000 rolling over the four year life of the Council. In 2015/16 expenditure was £3,172.80 which can be broken down as follows: -

Licensing Committee Training = £800

Overview & Scrutiny Training = £645

Code of Conduct Training for ABC and Parish Councillors = £787.90

Councillor Miss Martin to attend Social Media course = £149.95

Councillors Burgess and Hicks to attend Gypsy and Travellers Course = £350 (£175 each)

Councillor Link to attend Audit Committee Chairmen Day = £290

Councillor Miss Martin to attend Local Government Finance course = £149.95

Total for 2015/16 = £3,172.80

Conclusion

14. This report details the Induction arrangements for the new Council in 2015/16 and ongoing member training and recognises the desire for member training to be given a higher profile in the future at Ashford Borough Council. Work for 2015/16 was focused chiefly on the delivery of an Induction Programme for the new Council. It is considered that it has been a successful year in terms of the Induction and the production of the Framework Documents. The discussions between Officers and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Panel have been helpful and productive and it is hoped that this will continue and develop with the new Chairman and Vice-Chairman. I would like to thank Councillors Jane Martin and Larry Krause for their help, support and enthusiasm this year.

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