

<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	8	 <b>ASHFORD</b> BOROUGH COUNCIL
<b>Report To:</b>	Cabinet	
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	
<b>Report Title:</b>	Member Training Panel – Annual Report 2021/22	
<b>Report Author &amp; Job Title:</b>	Danny Sheppard – Member Services Manager	
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Kirsty Morland – Senior Member Services Officer	
<b>Portfolio Holder for:</b>	Cllr. Alan Pickering – Portfolio Holder for Human Resources and Customer Services	

<b>Summary:</b>	The report introduces the Annual Report of the Member Training Panel for 2021/22.
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**Key Decision:** NO

**Significantly Affected Wards:** None specifically

**Recommendations:** **The Cabinet is asked to receive and note the Annual Report of Member Training Panel for 2021/22.**

**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:** Any spend met from within the allocated Member Training Budget.

**Legal Implications:** Members' skills, capacity and experience are important considerations in terms of effective decision making and good governance.

**Equalities Impact Assessment:** N/A

**Data Protection Impact Assessment:** N/A

**Risk Assessment (Risk Appetite Statement):** N/A

**Sustainability Implications:** N/A

**Other Material Implications:** None

**Exempt from  
Publication:**

**NO**

**Background  
Papers:**

**None**

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## Member Training Panel Annual Report 2021/22

### Introduction and Background

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 2021/22 and expenditure from the Council's Member Training Budget as well as commenting on plans for the future.
3. The Member Training Panel has been constituted to gain feedback from Members on training and development and to steer induction/training programmes. The Panel has been formally constituted within the Council's Constitution and meets as regularly as allows, as well as producing an annual report to review training and induction issues. The Portfolio Holder for Human Resources and Customer Services also meets regularly with the Member Services Manager and Senior Member Services Officer to discuss training issues.
4. Before detailing the training undertaken during 2021/22, this report will briefly touch on the training undertaken during the previous year (2020/21). It should be noted that due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, training was increasingly limited and more virtually driven than in previous years.

### 2020/21

5. During 2020/21 the Panel met virtually to debate and approve the 2019/2020 Annual Report. The Panel had considered that the training held during that period had been impressive and welcomed.
6. Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic the Member Training Programme was derailed and training for the period 2020/21 was limited. There were a number of virtual pre-committee briefings, which were open to all Members to attend.
7. For the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 the following training events/briefings were held:
  - Safeguarding (06.10.20)
  - PREVENT (29.10.20).
  - Port Health/Brexit Preparations/Kent Covid-19 Position (21.11.20)
  - Planning Viability (13.01.21)
  - Anti-Social Behaviour (28.01.21)
  - Section 106 Obligations, Conditions and Developer Contributions (03.02.21)
  - New Housing Member Enquiry Form (25.2.21)

## Planning Committee

11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 – Members Development Briefing on Stodmarsh

17 December 2020 – Members Development Briefing on Oakleigh House

### **8. *In addition, the following individual/group training took place***

- Councillor Burgess attended an LGiU Charing Virtual Meetings Training Session in his role as Chairman of the Planning Committee – June 2020
- Councillor Webb attended Taxi Licensing Training as Chairman of Licensing/Regulatory Committees – Institute of Licensing – August 2020
- Councillor Webb attended Institute of Licensing Training Day as Chairman of Licensing/Regulatory Committees – October 2020
- Planning Refresher Training for 3 expiring Members – October 2020
- 6 Members attended Licensing Committee Training – Institute of Licensing – January 2021

## **2021/22**

9. For the period covered by this report the Member Training Panel had eight Members, representing the three largest Political Groups on the Council. All Members are welcome to attend the meetings.
10. For the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 the following training events have been held:

Accounts Training – 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### ***In addition, the following individual/group training took place***

- Councillor Michael attended Licensing/Regulatory Committee Training – Institute of Licensing – June 2021
  - Planning Committee Training for 2 Newly Elected Members – October 2021
11. 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 have been held virtually and in line with the virtual meetings, and subsequent hybrid meetings, held by the Council. These have included major planning applications and many other issues. These sessions are mainly held before Planning, Audit Committee, Full Council, or Cabinet meetings. They are open to all Members and during 2021/22 the following have taken place: -

## **Planning Committee**

29 July 2021 – Eureka Park

2 September 2021 – Chilmington Secondary School  
13 October 2021 – New Aldi Store  
2 November 2021 – Elwick Road Phase 2 (Reserved Matters)  
10 November 2021 – Flour Mills, East Hill  
8 December 2021 – Conningbrook Residential Phase 2  
16 March 2022 – Project Green

### **Cabinet**

24 June 2021 – Stodmarsh (Cabinet only)

### **All Members**

15 April 2021 Stour Centre Refurbishment  
21 July 2021 – Looking Back on an Extraordinary Year  
9 September 2021 – Stodmarsh  
23 September 2021 – An Introduction to Port Health  
24 February 2022 – Project Green

### **Audit Committee**

14 October 2021 – Grant Thornton – Value for Money

12. Also during 2021/22 we have continued to send out weekly e-newsletters from both ourselves, KCC and the LGiU. These are provided to all Councillors as a summary of the previous week's developments, an outline of what is coming up 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 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 the Leader issued 125 briefings (to 27/1), Portfolio Holders can also issue personal notes on matters of more specialist importance.

Another element perhaps worth mentioning for 2021/22 is the work the Council has undertaken on attempting to address intimidating behaviour towards Elected Councillors. This was brought about following an increase in this type of behaviour in the Borough and following the tragic incident with David Amess MP. In response a small Officer Working Group was set up and generated a number of outcomes: - Members were offered the opportunity to have a personal alarm (pebble), which a number took up. We also directed Members towards the Council's e-learning system, Learning Nexus, which has a bespoke training package on conflict resolution, designed especially for Members. This was particularly good and gave examples and scenarios that would be very relevant to Members. Members who were unfortunate enough to be the victim of threatening and/or intimidating behaviour in their role as a Councillor, were asked to report it the Council so it could be logged in the same way as threats to staff, to help identify trends and patterns. Attention was also re-directed to useful guidance documents produced by the LGA. Finally Groups were encouraged to review any Risk Assessments that they had for their Members with guidance from the HSE website.

### **Audit Findings (2020/21)**

13. A Member Development Audit was undertaken by the Councils Internal Audit Service during 2021 and covered the municipal year 2020/21. It was

reassuring to receive a 'Sound' level of assurance, but there were four minor recommendations which needed to be brought to the attention of the Member Training Panel. The full audit is appended to this report.

14. The four recommendations are as follows:

<b>01 - Amend Constitution to reflect changes from the decommissioning of the Licensing and Health and Safety Committee.</b>	<b>Low (Priority 4)</b>
<p><b>Finding Description:</b> The Licensing and Health and Safety Committee was decommissioned in November 2020 and the responsibilities from this Committee split across a Licensing Committee and a Regulatory Committee.</p> <p>However, this change is not reflected in the published version of the Constitution on the Council's website.</p> <p><b>Cause:</b> A number of staffing changes within the Member Services team means that changes to the Constitution have not been prioritised.</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> The Constitution does not reflect the Council's current committee structure.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> The Constitution should be amended to reflect the decommissioning of the Licensing and Health and Safety Committee and replacement Licensing and Regulatory Committees.</p>	
<b>Management Response</b>	
<p><b>Response Type:</b> Noted and agreed</p> <p><b>Response Comments:</b> Noted and agreed</p>	
<b>Agreed Action</b>	
<p><b>Will update on-line version of constitution asap.</b></p>	
<p><b>Responsible officer:</b> Danny Sheppard</p>	<p><b>Implementation date:</b> 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021</p>

<b>02 - Amend Planning and Licensing Committee Terms of Reference.</b>	<b>Low (Priority 4)</b>
<p><b>Finding Description:</b> It is noted that the requirement for refresher training (to maintain current knowledge) is not something which is set out as a requirement within the terms of reference to the Licensing (Licensing and Regulatory) and Planning Committees.</p> <p><b>Cause:</b> The terms of reference for the committees are passive on the requirement for attendance of refresher training.</p> <p><b>Effect:</b> Members may be participating in Licensing and Planning decisions without a current knowledge and understanding of these areas.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b> Amend terms of reference to the Planning and Licensing Committees to make refresher training a requirement.</p>	
<b>Management Response</b>	
<p><b>Response Type:</b> Noted and agreed.</p> <p><b>Response Comments:</b> Will require an element of consultation with Members</p>	

<b>Agreed Action</b>	
<b>Clarify matter with Members and make amendments to Constitution if/when agreed.</b>	
<b>Responsible officer:</b> Danny Sheppard	<b>Implementation date:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2022

<b>03 - Proactive identification of Planning and Licensing Training</b>	<b>Low (Priority 4)</b>
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**Finding Description:** The approach to identifying and programming training for the Licensing and Planning committees is solely reactive. Officers from Licensing and Planning, do not for example, attend the Member Training Panel where suggested areas of training and development could be discussed, agreed and planned in advance.

**Cause:** The basis of the arrangements for identifying Licensing and Planning training operate reactively.

**Effect:** The training needs of Members of the Licensing and Planning Committees may not be identified.

**Recommendation:**

- Coordinate Licensing and Planning committee training through officer and Member discussion via the Member Training Panel.
- Explore the options for having other Committee training and officer participation through the Member Training Panel (i.e. finance, audit and scrutiny)

<b>Management Response</b>
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**Response Type:** Noted and agreed.

**Response Comments:** Will require discussion with Chairman of Member Training Panel.

<b>Agreed Action</b>
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**Will discuss with Chairman of Member Training Panel with a view to inviting relevant Officers to future Panel meetings to allow them the pro-actively identify training opportunities.**

<b>Responsible officer:</b> Danny Sheppard	<b>Implementation date:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> January 2022
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<b>04 - Publish Member Training attendance</b>	<b>Low (Priority 4)</b>
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**Finding Description:** Member training (and training attendance) is not published on the Councils website this facility is available on through modern.gov and can be easily constructed using the existing attendance records maintained by the service.

**Cause:** The publication of Member Training attendance does not form part of the current arrangements.

**Effect:** Publication of Member training attendance would promote transparency and may indirectly encourage take up rates for training.

**Recommendation:** Publish details of member training and attendance.

<b>Management Response</b>
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**Response Type: Noted and agreed**

**Response Comments: Will require Member agreement. Hasn't been accepted in the past, but agree it would promote better transparency.**

**Agreed Action**

**Will put a proposal to the Member Training Panel and in turn the Cabinet for approval.**

**Responsible officer:**

Danny Sheppard

**Implementation date:**

1<sup>st</sup> January 2022

15. Recommendation 1 is an administrative change required following the decommissioning of the Licensing and Health and Safety Committee and has been completed.
16. Recommendation 2 is highlighting the requirement for refresher training to be carried out for those Members who sit on the Planning and Licensing (Licensing and Regulatory) Committees. These Committees require mandatory training prior to sitting on the Committees, such as is detailed within the Constitution.
  - a. *Members should undertake training/refresher training at least once every four years to remain 'eligible' to sit on this committee*

The Constitution is also clear on the need for refresher training to be undertaken every four years. This Recommendation is linked to Recommendation 3 and areas of training that may be overlooked, through a set session of training.

17. Recommendation 3 draws attention to potential areas of training that may be overlooked. Whilst those Members sitting on the Licensing and Planning Committees are required to undertake training every four years, there may be training that would be necessary to their work that could be provided during the year that may not be brought to their attention. It is suggested that pro-actively identifying training opportunities for these Committees and others, including Audit, Scrutiny etc, be promoted through the Member Training Panel with relevant Officers being invited to future meetings to identify training opportunities.
18. Recommendation 4 notes that Member training (and therefore training attendance) is not published on the Councils website. The publication of such training would promote transparency and in turn encourage take up rates for training. Such records can be updated via Modern.Gov and would be displayed as such:



- Councillor Anne Ambridge
- Councillor Carolyn Heaps
- Councillor John Lawrence
- Councillor Darren Owen
- Councillor Andrew Smith

Centre Only

Other councillors representing this Ward:

- Councillor Tony Baxter
- Parish: Anwick Parish Council  
Sub-Parish: New Sub Parish

#### More information about this councillor

- Attendance record
- Declarations at meetings
- Register of interests
- Voting record
- Gifts and hospitalities
- Timesheets
- Training
- Call-in request history
- My blog

## Training Information

Date range:  ◀ Earlier - Later ▶

Councillor:  ▼

#### Registered training

- 12/06/2018 - Finance Training offered by Finance Company Ltd; Finance Training for Councillors ; Value £150
- 24/05/2018 - Health and Safety Training offered by Health and Safety Officer; Health and Safety awareness for Councillors ; Value £100
- 23/05/2018 - Neighbourhood Planning offered by Local Government Association; To learn about Neighbourhood Planning in order to implement within the ward and look at funding opportunities ; Value £120

19. These records would be administered by the Member Services Team and could be updated as and when training has been completed. It should be noted that this is separate from the publication of Member Attendance at meetings, which has historically been resisted by Members.
20. The Member Training Panel felt that it was the role of the Officers supporting Member Training to pro-actively identify any training needs and opportunities and it would not be the most efficient use of Officer time to request Senior Officers to attend the Panel to discuss potential training. In respect of the publication of attendance at training sessions, the Panel felt that the attendance of Councillors on Committees where training was mandatory, such as Planning and Licensing, should be published and available to view on the Council's website.
21. The Member Training Panel considered that cyber security training was of utmost importance and consideration was given as to whether such training should be made mandatory. It was agreed that all Councillors be reminded of their requirement to undertake such training and detailed instructions on how to access this training would be provided.

## Focus for 2022/23

22. Given that the Covid-19 pandemic has derailed the Member Training programme somewhat since March 2020, we are now looking ahead to what

the focus should be for the 2022/23 Municipal Year, the fourth year of the term. This is traditionally the quieter of the four years due to most training needs having been met during the previous three years. This year is an exception to that rule and we would like to ensure that as much training, as is deemed necessary, is carried out and undertaken by Members. An outline of initial plans is therefore outlined below: -

- Local Government Finance
- Social Media Use – Possibilities and Pitfalls (Externally Provided)
- Cyber Security (including GDPR and Freedom of Information)
- Safeguarding, PREVENT and Domestic Abuse
- Dementia Awareness
- Further Planning Training (as outlined in Planning Advisory Service's recent review)
- Important renewal of compulsory Licensing and Planning Training for newly appointed Committee Members or those whose existing training is expiring.
- Virtual Meetings? (Officers and Members have reacted well to deal with these quickly and get them up and running when we had no other choice. Perhaps now we can look to see how to take advantage of the other opportunities such systems present).
- In response to the increasing number of complaints received by the Monitoring Officer, the Standards Committee has asked the Panel to look in to options for offering further Code of Conduct training for Parish Councils (particularly aimed at Proper Officers). For information we do offer a session at the start of each 4 year Council term. It is perhaps worth discussing how much further ABC should go in this regard, or if this is more an issue for KALC or individual Local Councils?

23. The list above is not exhaustive and Members are encouraged to make any other suggestions they may have.

## **Budget**

24. The Member Training Budget is £18,800 rolling over the four year life of the Council. Expenditure during the Council term can be broken down as follows:

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### **2019/20**

Councillor Burgess to attend LGA Planning Chairmen Training Residential = £335

Overview and Scrutiny Training = £1147

Code of Conduct Training for ABC and Parish Councillors = £1019.10

Coach Hire for Members Tour = £335

Planning Viability Training = £625

Councillor Gideon to attend County Lines Conference = £205

Councillors Michael and Ovenden to attend O&S Chairmanship Training = £413.54

Councillor Lyn Suddards to attend NHS Inequalities Session = £295.62

Planning Decision Making Training = £1051.75

Councillor Lyn Suddards to attend Annual Licensing Conference = £199

Councillor Pickering to attend ACAS Course = £175

Charing Meetings Training = £985.99

Modern.Gov Training = £750

**Total for 2019/20 = £7537**

### **2020/21**

Councillor Burgess to attend Charing Virtual Meetings training course = £70  
6 Members to attend Licensing Committee Training – Institute of Licensing = £990

Councillor Webb to attend Taxi Licensing Training as Chairman of Licensing/Regulatory Committees – Institute of Licensing = £125

Councillor Webb to attend Institute of Licensing Training Day as Chairman of Licensing/Regulatory Committees = £40

**Total for 2020/21 = £1225**

### **2021/22 (so far)**

Councillors Michael to attend Licensing/Regulatory Committee Training – Institute of Licensing = £198

*£25 refund from KCC – for a previous overcharge*

**Total for 2020/21 = £173**

**Budget Remaining = £9865**

## **Conclusion**

25. This report details the training undertaken during 2021/22 and the aims for training during 2022/23. Looking ahead to the next meeting of this Panel at the start of the municipal year 2022/23 the Panel will start to look at arrangements for the Induction of the new Council.
26. The discussions between Officers and the Portfolio Holder (also Chairman of this Panel) have been helpful and productive and it is hoped that this will continue and develop with the new Member Training Panel. We would like to thank Councillors for their help, support and enthusiasm this year.

## **Portfolio Holder's Views**

27. "I welcome this all-encompassing report reflecting on the levels of training undertaken during a most difficult time with Covid. Our levels of training has shown on-going resilience and commitment to this most important aspect of our service as Councillors."

**Contact:**      **Danny Sheppard – Member Services Manager**  
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