

Ashford Borough Council

Report of the Chairman of the Member Training Panel – 18th October 2022

1 Introduction

- 1.1 A virtual meeting of the Member Training Panel was held on the 18th October 2022

The Members present were:-

Councillor Pickering (Chairman);
Councillor Mrs Bell (Vice-Chair);

Councillors Blanford, Howard, Pauley, Spain, Wright.

Apologies: -

Councillor Smith.

Also Present:-

Member Services Manager, Senior Member Services Officer, Member Services Officer.

2 Minutes

- 2.1 **Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Panel held on 23 February 2022 be received and noted.

3 Member Induction Programme 2023

- 3.1 The Senior Member Services Officer ran through the draft Member Induction Programme 2023. This had been formulated following feedback from the Panel and a recent survey to Members on the previous induction programme. The previous programme had been well received and it felt prudent to follow a similar theme for 2023. Officers from the Member Services Team would be present at the Count to meet successful candidates, complete their Declaration of Acceptance of Office and issue any immediate forms for completion, in addition to booking an appointment for the following week to collect the necessary IT equipment. The training sessions would then follow, starting with Code of Conduct training, which as with previous induction programmes would be opened up to representatives from Parish Councils. Additionally, the Market Stalls event would take place to highlight the different departments that formed the Council and the work undertaken by them. There were a number of other training/information sessions that would be scheduled in, including a focus on the Council's arms length companies, Ward Member Community Grants and equalities training.

3.2 The Chairman opened the item up to the Panel and the following points were made: -

- Basic IT training, including how to use TEAMS would be beneficial to Members. It was agreed that this would be factored into the Induction Programme.
- Guidance for Members on how to ask questions at Council, put forward motions and general etiquette would be welcomed. The Senior Member Services Officer confirmed that this was already in hand, and acknowledged that this would be valuable to new and returning Members alike.
- The quality of the training sessions that had been undertaken throughout the year was discussed in great detail. Members felt that a recent Officer led training session had resulted in 'death by PowerPoint' and it was felt this should be avoided again in future. Officers undertook to raise this matter with the Council's HR Team to ascertain what training was offered to Officers to support them in training others. Further, following discussions with the Chair of the Member Training Panel it had been agreed to have sight of any such training sessions before them being given to Members to alleviate such issues occurring again. **Post Meeting Note: It has been confirmed that presentation skills training was offered by the Council.**
- Aside from the main induction programme, Members questioned the offer to those Members elected at a by-election. The Senior Member Services Officer advised that the offer over the last term had been impacted, in no small part, by Covid. It had been encouraging to note that many providers were now able to run online courses, and they had successfully trained a number of Members this way. Further work was needed to ensure that Members elected at a by-election were not disadvantaged and the Senior Member Services Officer undertook to formalise and strengthen this offer.

3.3 Resolved:

- (i) That Members Induction Programme 2023 be endorsed and presented to Management Tea, for oversight, and Cabinet, for approval.**
- (ii) An Induction Programme for Members elected through By-Elections be formalised.**

4 Members IT Provision – Post May 2023

4.1 The Senior Member Services Officer introduced the item and advised that since the 2019 election, many things had changed and therefore it was only right that the IT provision for Members was adjusted accordingly. iPads had been beneficial with the move to Modern.Gov and paperless agendas, however the move to virtual and hybrid meetings had highlighted some weaknesses. It was therefore proposed that from May 2023 that Members be issued with Windows laptops. The move to Windows would allow for greater functionality and support from the Council's IT Team and wider Officer group. She highlighted the devices that were proposed, which could be used as both a laptop and tablet depending on the desire of the user.

4.2 Members welcomed the move to Windows and it was acknowledged that some Members had struggled with iPads and there was limited support available to them. It was questioned how the process of 'onboarding' Members to the new devices would work and what would happen to the iPads currently in circulation. The Senior Member Services Officer advised that they would hold sessions the week after the election to hand over IT equipment and get Members set up with their necessary passwords and access. Following from the previous item, they would also look to run additional sessions for those Members who required additional support, this would continue for as long as necessary. In respect of the iPads, in previous years IT equipment had been required to be returned to the Council for secure disposal and removal of data. The Senior Member Services Officer would liaise with the relevant Officers and report back to the Member Training Panel in the new year, with a guide to be issued to all Members prior to the May 2023 election.

4.4 Resolved:

That the move to Windows laptops be endorsed.

Councillor A Pickering
Chairman – Member Training Panel

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