

## CABINET

14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2019

### INDUCTION ARRANGEMENTS 2019

As Members will be aware, work has been ongoing to devise an Induction Programme for the new Council from May 2019. With the new Borough boundaries coming into effect there will be an overall increase from 43 to 47 Councillors and there is likely to be a fairly significant number of newly elected Members. The contents of this report have been supported by the Member Training Panel who considered it at their meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019 (the Chairman's Report of that meeting is attached at Appendix A to this report). The programme is intended to follow the successful induction arrangements in the past but also seek to build on these and make improvements where we can.

Following initial discussions with Members, the Member Training Panel and with Management Team we are now in a position to outline a draft of the arrangements and comment on some other emerging issues. Final details and firm dates of the sessions will be made available to Members both prior to, and immediately after, the Elections and further details will be circulated to all Members when finalised.

The current timetable is as follows: -

#### **Induction Phase 1**

##### **Election Day – Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019**

##### **The Count – Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2019**

Once elected, successful candidates will be met by Member Services Officers at the Count, given a welcome pack containing some important information and some of the immediate forms they will need to complete, as well as being taken to sign their Declaration of Acceptance of Office and having their photographs taken.

##### **Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May – Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019 – Collection of iPads and Set-Up**

As Members will be aware, following the Elections all successful candidates will be provided with an Apple iPad device which will be loaded with the Modern.Gov App to allow them to view all Committee Agendas and Minutes. In addition, the iPad will be loaded with: - Outlook 365 for emails; Microsoft Office; internet access; the App Store; and will be connected to the govroam WiFi network. The device will also come provided with a detachable keyboard, hard case and stylus pen. Members will also be allocated an @ashford.gov.uk email address. All Councillors, whether returning or newly elected, will be given an appointment between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> May 2019 to meet with Officers from the Member Services and IT teams to be given their iPad

device, sign the Terms of Use Agreement and set up the relevant passwords to ensure the device and contents are secure.

**Modern.Gov Training - Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019 (afternoon and evening sessions)**

Members will be provided with some bespoke training on using the Modern.Gov Committee Management System. This will be offered twice as an afternoon and an evening session, and facilitated by Ricky Clarke from Modern.Gov with assistance from Officers.

**Planning Committee Training**

**Session 1 – Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019 – 6-8pm – Council Chamber**

**Session 2 – July 2019 TBC**

**THE FIRST OF THESE SESSIONS IS COMPULSORY FOR MEMBERS WISHING TO SIT OR SUBSTITUTE ON PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

**Session 1**

The main purpose of this session will be to get Members up to speed to start dealing with planning applications in time for the first Planning Committee meeting of the year on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019. The evening will therefore focus on Development Management and include a role play session/mock Planning Committee and the Legal Officers will discuss probity in planning. The session will also introduce Planning Policy as well as outlining web access and explain how to use the planning part of the ABC website. Key staff within the Unit will also be introduced.

**Session 2**

This will include a more general introduction to Planning Policy, Building Control, Enforcement and Listed Buildings etc. with some more discussion on the Local Plan and the key DPDs and SPDs.

**Service Market Stalls – mid May – Date TBC**

The Member Training Panel particularly requested a return to the ‘Market Stalls’ session previously offered in 2007 and 2011. This will involve the Committee Rooms being opened up to house a display table for each service area with some handouts and key personnel present. The format of the 2016 Staff Expo event provides a good template to repeat. This will provide an early opportunity for newly elected Members to put “names to faces” and ask initial questions. **A Briefing Note giving further details of a proposed way forward is attached at Appendix B to this report.**

**Code of Conduct/Legal Issues Training – late May/early June – Date TBC**

The Monitoring Officer will arrange for Code of Conduct training for both Borough Councillors and Parish Councils to be given, in conjunction with external advisors. The session will offer a basic introduction to the Code as well as the principles of public life and the rules on interests and will include some real life scenarios to work through. All Borough Councillors will be

invited to this event as well as the Clerks and up to two Councillors from each Parish Council.

### **Licensing Committee Training – late May/early June – Date TBC**

#### **COMPULSORY FOR MEMBERS APPOINTED TO THE LICENSING & HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Whilst compulsory to Members appointed to the Committee it will also be open to other interested Members. The session will be given an experienced external provider, with input from the Council's Licensing Team. Training will get Members up to speed on the Licensing Act 2003 to enable them to start sitting on licensing hearings and this will include a full mock hearing session. It will also cover key legislation and recent changes, the applications and hearings process and how the Committee and Sub-Committees operate. The session will also introduce the Council's Licensing Department, what it covers and key contacts.

### **Audit Committee Training – Early/Mid-June 2019 – Date TBC but before first meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019.**

The session will cover the structure of Audit at Ashford including the roles and responsibilities of Internal and External Audit, key pieces of audit work coming up in the year and the role of the Audit Committee itself.

### **Overview & Scrutiny Training – Early/Mid-June 2019 – Date TBC but before first meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019.**

Some specialist 'effective scrutiny' training will be provided by an external provider. This will be a highly participative and practical workshop which will take place in time for the first meeting of the new Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019. The aim of the session will be to provide Members involved in Overview and Scrutiny with the necessary skills and strategies to carry out effective scrutiny on Council related issues and engage effectively within the Council and the community. Whilst particularly relevant to Members appointed to the Committee, all Members (including Portfolio Holders) will be encouraged to attend.

## **Induction Phase 2**

Following the initial flurry of essential and important induction and training in the opening weeks of the new Council, it is intended to move to the next stage of training sessions. This will include more service based and topic specific sessions which, whilst still important, are not quite as urgent and can hopefully be delivered over the remainder of 2019. It is recognised that there is a lot to cram in initially, so Officers will not try to do all of this in the first couple of months. An outline of some initial suggested areas is detailed below, including the Council's more 'outward' facing Services, and it is considered that perhaps one of these sessions could take place per month up to December 2019 (the proposed content is not exclusive, but areas which Members and Officers have previously recommended be covered):-

### **Local Government Finance**

With the importance of the Council's financial position, budget and income and expenditure, a dedicated Member training session on the Council's finances has been proposed. This would cover: -

- The budget and what it covers in simple terms.
- How the Council is funded?
- A summary of income and expenditure.
- Commercial investment.
- The position on grants the Council receives and the shortfalls due to cuts.
- Borrowing/Investments/Assets
- Council Tax.
- Benefits and debt recovery.
- HRA/Housing Finance
- Key contact points and where to go with questions.

### **Housing**

- The Housing team and its functions.
- The housing problem.
- The housing list and how it works.
- Explanation of Affordable and Local Needs Housing and Council House Building Programme
- Social Services (and how ABC Housing fits in).
- Tenants Complaints Panel.
- Site inspections.
- Involvement in major housing projects with Planning.
- Key contact points and where to go with questions (including outline of Area Managers).

### **Cultural Services**

- An outline of the Service and its aims/functions.
- Sports Centres and Facilities.
- Cultural/Arts Events and Festivals.
- Tourism.
- Parks and Open Spaces.
- Nature Conservation.
- Local Heritage and History.
- Liaison with the Voluntary Sector.
- Key contact points and where to go with questions.

### **Environment and Land Management**

- Waste and Recycling.
- Aspire Landscape Management.
- Street Cleansing.
- Cemeteries.
- Allotments.
- Dog Warden
- Community litter picking.
- Key contact points and where to go with questions.

### **Community Safety and Wellbeing**

- Emergency Planning and Business Continuity
- Highways and Parking (including relationship with KCC and role of the Joint Transportation Board).
- Community Safety and the Community Safety Partnership
- Health and Wellbeing

### **Other**

The following sessions have also been suggested to be delivered to Councillors in the first year of the new term.

- Social Media Use - Possibilities and Pitfalls (Externally Provided).
- Data Protection/GDPR/Freedom of Information/Cyber Security.
- Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse.
- Dementia Awareness.
- Diversity

At all sessions offered, the emphasis will be on stripping information down to the bare bones and presenting it as concisely and simply as possible, so as to not bombard new Members and to send clear messages. It would be useful to invite Portfolio Holders or key Members to be part of the training team for relevant sessions.

It is recognised that a lot of induction/familiarisation occurs within Political Groups and it is not the intention of Officers to “tell Members how to be a Councillor”, but we do have to bear in mind that not all Elected Members will have that Group support. The induction process is intended to be more about arming Councillors with the necessary tools to enable them to do their jobs effectively and let Members find their way – either individually or within their Political Groups.

### **Other Matters for Consideration**

#### **On-Line Training/Training Library (including alternative methods of delivery)**

As always we are looking at ways to modernise the way we deliver our training. There are already options to undertake e-learning modules through the Learning Nexus platform. We will also be establishing a ‘training area’ for Members to access via Modern.Gov within the Council’s website. It is accepted that not every Members can attend every training session, so this would enable us to place training materials in a library/archive type format which Members can dip in to and access throughout their time as a Councillor. It will also, along with the Framework Documents mentioned below, remain ‘live’ and be updated and added to when needed. We will also explore opportunity to record the live training sessions so that this can possibly be viewed back in video or audio format.

## **Other Induction Materials**

Members have requested that they be provided with a map of the building showing the location of each Service area and that the staff phone directory be extended to also include the part of the offices where they sat. It is also intended that all newly elected Members will, as usual, be provided with a copy of the LGA Guide for New Councillors.

## **Framework Documents**

In addition to the training and induction sessions mentioned, it is also proposed that as part of the Induction Arrangements Members again be provided with Framework Documents. A folder of printed documents was issued in 2015 and was well received. These documents were either Service or topic specific and a particular 'What to Expect as an Ashford Borough Councillor' one which was popular. There is an appetite to repeat this and work has already begun on their production, however there was a significant amount of work involved in producing, compiling and printing these so the feeling is that they should be delivered on-line and housed in the aforementioned training library (in accordance with the wider Digital Transformation work). Members previously suggested that it would be useful to receive 'mug-shots' to enable them to put names to faces for key personnel in their early days as a Councillor. It is therefore proposed that the service specific Framework Documents contain these and we will also attempt to get a Councillor photo gallery produced and circulated as soon as possible after election day.

## **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

It has been suggested that some sort of simple FAQs document be put together and distributed to new Councillors. Initial suggestions for inclusion in this are: - how to dress for meetings; and standing for the Mayor at Full Council meetings etc. If Members have any suggestions as to the sort of information that should be included or would have been useful for you, this would be welcomed by Member Services.

## **Buddy System**

It has also been suggested that we should consider implementing some sort of 'Buddy System' whereby an experienced Councillor is paired up with a new one to show them the ropes and be able to provide them with advice should they need it. It is accepted that this may well be done within Political Groups anyway, but a more informal arrangement, also involving Members from the smaller groups or individuals, may be the way forward. Members views on this arrangement are sought.

## **Recommendations:**

**That the Cabinet comment on and endorse the content of the proposed Member Induction Programme for 2019.**

# Ashford Borough Council

## Report of the Chairman of the Member Training Panel – 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019

### 1 Introduction

1.1 A meeting of the Member Training Panel was held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019.

The Members present were:-

Councillor Feacey (Chairman);  
Councillor Mrs Bell (Vice-Chairman);  
Councillors W Howard, Krause, Link.

**Apologies: -**

Councillors Farrell, A Howard.

**Also Present:-**

Councillor Shorter,  
Member Services Manager (Operational).

### 2 Chairman's Report – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016

2.1 **Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

### 3 Draft Induction Arrangements 2019

3.1 A draft programme for the events to be included within the Induction for the new Council from May 2019 was presented to the Panel. The Member Services Manager (Operational) ran through the draft programme and said that he hoped it covered the majority of the points previously made by both Members and Management Team. It was based largely around the successful model of previous years with some relevant additions. Once the draft programme had been endorsed by this Panel it would need to be discussed with Management Team and the Officers who would be involved in the sessions, and firm dates and times could be put to each session. It would go to the Cabinet for final endorsement in March. Even once agreed, the programme was not exhaustive and would evolve as time went on. Member Services would always be receptive to any ideas and suggestions.

3.2 The Chairman said that he had been involved in the compilation of the report and supported the contents. He had been keen to promote alternative methods of delivering training, including web based options and the possibility of recording sessions to store and watch back at a later date.

3.3 The Chairman opened the report up to the Panel and the following points were made: -

- Whilst the complexities around making Member training ‘compulsory’ were well understood, the Panel considered that training in both GDPR and Safeguarding should be badged as compulsory. Both areas were a potential threat to the finances and reputation of individual Elected Members, as well as the Council as a whole, and the Panel would support any recommendation coming forward on this from Overview and Scrutiny. Members asked that any learning on these subjects undertaken in other roles could also be recognised to avoid duplication.
- A Member said that the e-learning opportunities available through Learning Nexus were very good and easy to use. He asked if the new Member iPads could be pre-loaded with easy access to this training programme and if its ease of use could again be promoted to Members.
- The Panel asked if the previous ‘Market Stalls’ approach could again be pursued. This had been a session that had taken place following the 2007 and 2011 Elections and involved the Committee Rooms being opened up to house a display table for each service area with some handouts and key personnel present. The format of the recent Staff Expo event provided a good template to repeat. This would provide an early opportunity for newly elected Members to put “names to faces” and ask initial questions. This idea would be pursued with Management Team.
- It was also suggested that Members be provided with a map of the building showing the location of each Service area and that the staff phone directory also include the part of the offices where they sat.
- The Panel was supportive of the content of the induction programme as drafted. It was suggested that a couple of areas be added, namely Diversity and some externally provided Social Media training. Councillor Mrs Bell advised that KCC Members had recently received some particularly good Social Media training and she would pass on the name of the provider.
- The concept of a training library was welcomed, particularly as it was recognised that not every Member could attend every session and it would also be useful for Members elected in by-elections. Such a library was also considered the best place to house the new Framework Documents.
- There was also support for the proposed informal Buddy System and it was considered that a pool of more experienced Members who were willing to help should be sourced prior to the Elections. It was accepted that such an arrangement may happen within Political Groups anyway, but a more informal arrangement, that was non-Political, would be useful, particularly for Members in small groups or those not in a group at all.

### **3.4 Resolved:**

**That**

- (i) subject to the addition of diversity training and some externally provided social media training, the content of the proposed Member Induction timetable for 2019 be endorsed.**
- (ii) the possibility of holding a 'market stalls' type session, with a chance to be introduced to key staff from each Service, be investigated with Management Team.**
- (iii) The Panel is supportive of any recommendation to make GDPR training and Safeguarding training compulsory for all Elected Members.**
- (iv) the other matters for consideration, namely: - on-line training; the training library; framework documents; FAQs; and a buddy system all be supported.**

Councillor P Feacey  
Chairman – Member Training Panel

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