

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Standards Committee – 18 March 2021
Subject: Member Development and Training
Report of: City Solicitor

Summary

To update Standards Committee on the operation and efficacy of the Member Development Strategy and training delivered since May 2019.

This report is divided into 2 parts. The first part reflects Member Development and Training delivered between May 2019 and February 2020, in line with our Member Development Strategy. The second part reflects training held since the start of the Covid pandemic between February 2020 and January 2021 and proposals for the induction programme for new Councillors for May 2021.

Recommendation

That the Committee note the report.

Wards Affected All

Financial Consequences – Revenue None

Financial Consequences – Capital None

Contact Officers:

Name: Fiona Ledden
Position: City Solicitor
Telephone: 0161 234 3087
E-mail: Fiona.ledden@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Jonathan Kershner
Position: Head of Business Support and Development (Legal Services)
Telephone: 0161 600 8599
E-mail: j.kershner@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents

are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

Standards Committee – 21 March 2019 – Member Development Strategy

1.0 Background

1.1 The Member Development Strategy 2019 – 21 was approved by Standards Committee at its meeting of 21 March 2019.

1.2 The strategy sets out a clear direction for delivering on Member development - focusing on the following key objectives:

- Ensure all Members are well equipped with the skills, knowledge and behaviours to enable them to fulfil their various roles effectively and to the best of their ability.
- Ensure that all members have equal access to training and development opportunities, providing extra resources to accommodate those with special requirements.
- Support a consistent approach to learning and development for Members
- Ensure that new Members are fully supported during induction and beyond to allow them to carry out their duties effectively, as quickly as possible.
- Broaden knowledge around Council business and areas of changing priorities.
- Encourage a supportive environment where Members help to develop their colleagues.
- Ensure that the learning and development of Members is recognised as crucial to the Council's success and to the success of the Our Manchester Strategy.
- Facilitate regular assessment of training needs and the learning and development programme by members.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the training programme and the Member Development strategy.
- Facilitate a planned and strategic approach to member development
- Establish an effective Member Development Group
- Develop and deliver (with Member involvement and engagement) an effective Member Learning and Development Programme.

1.3 The Strategy (a copy of which is at Appendix C) also sets out the roles of the Monitoring Officer, Standards Committee and Member Development Working Group (MDWG) in relation to Member development and training as well as setting out the role of individual Members and group officers for each Group. This report sets out progress in relation to implementation of these objectives to date. Due to the continuing impact of the pandemic it is proposed to extend the period of operation of the Strategy until 2022 when a full review will be conducted.

1.4 This report is divided into 2 parts. The first part reflects Member Development and Training delivered between May 2019 and February 2020, in line with our Member Development Strategy. The second part reflects training held since the start of the Covid pandemic between February 2020 and January 2021 and proposals for the induction programme for new Councillors for May 2021.

2.0 Part 1 (May 2019 – February 2020) – Member Development and Training

- 2.1 The MDWG is tasked with providing strategic direction to formulate, implement and evaluate the quality of training, promoting development opportunities, being responsive to training needs and to review the Member Development budget, attendance and feedback as standard agenda items.
- 2.2 The MDWG met 3 times in the municipal year 2019/20 and in addition to considering the standard items above contributed to the production of a training programme for 2019/20, reviewed feedback from the new member Induction of 2019 and began discussions on the new member induction proposals for 2020.
- 2.3 At its February 2020 meeting the MDWG reviewed progress made against the strategy, with specific focus on the variety of training provided in 2019/20, attendance levels, evaluation feedback and the training programme. The group was encouraged by the levels of attendance (set out in paragraph 7.0 below) and positive feedback (see 8.0 below) but agreed to a small change to the in-house evaluation form (paragraph 8.2 below). There were also discussions around training which members may be undertaking as part of other roles they may hold and how the group could be better sighted on this.

3.0 New Member Induction 2019

- 3.1 The New Member Induction programme 2019 was split into 2 sessions. The first session focused on legal and constitutional matters, including code of conduct for members, gifts and hospitality guidance, data protection, member / officer relations, access to information/need to know, use of Council resources guidance, Social Media guidance and governance and decision making. There was also an interactive session where members worked through a case study. The afternoon focused on an introduction to Members Services, a tour of members' facilities, general housekeeping and the allocation of devices by ICT. Session 1 was offered to all new and returning members. All 6 new members plus 3 returning members attended the morning part of this session.
- 3.2 The second session, held three weeks later, focused on key information, including 'Our Manchester', 'listening in action' events and an invitation to attend the 'Our Manchester Experience', Budget and key strategies, Equality, Health and Safety and training for Councillors. There was also a presentation on casework. The first part was delivered by a neighbourhood team strategic lead focusing on their service and how they can support members. The second part was delivered by an experienced Councillor and focused on practical advice and tips. This session was opened up to all members and repeated to increase opportunities to attend. All 6 new members, plus 3 returning members and 3 current members attended session 2.
- 3.3 New members and other attendees were also provided with a Member Handbook. This guide covers basic information on how the Council is organised, decision making, the role of officers and directorate responsibilities

as well as more practical matters such as claiming allowances and health and safety. Each section signposts members to the appropriate contact in the Council, where further information can be obtained. The handbook is a digital document which is held on a team drive and can be accessed by all members. This allows it to be regularly refreshed and updated.

4.0 Induction Feedback

- 4.1 A feedback evaluation form was sent out to all Members who attended Sessions 1 and 2. 5 responses were received. 4 out of 5 responses were from new members. 100% rated the induction programme with an overall satisfaction rating of 4 out of 5. Positive comments included – ‘excellent on both days’, ‘there was lot of useful information’. 3 out of 4 of the new members rated it as 4 out of 5 in terms of relevance to their role. The 4th one gave a score of 3 out of 5.
- 4.2 In relation to session 1, all who responded felt that the level of information provided on the following was just right - code of conduct, member/officer protocol, interactive session, data protection and freedom of information.
- 4.3 In relation to session 2, all 5 respondents felt the level of information provided on the following was just right - finance, key strategies, equality.
- 4.4 2 Members commented that there was a lot of information to cover during sessions 1 and 2.

5.0 Proposals for New Member Induction 2020

- 5.1 The MDWG considered the feedback from 2019. The content of Session 1 relates to legal matters which need to be shared with members from the outset. On that basis it was not felt appropriate to reduce the content provided in 2019.
- 5.2 It was therefore proposed that Session 1 would mirror what was provided in 2019 – see 3.1 above.
- 5.3 However, the group felt that there was scope in relation to session 2 to spread the content out and hold a further session.
- 5.4 It was proposed to hold a session covering casework, member safety and member development – allowing members to focus on these related topics. With a separate session covering the more varied topics of ‘Our Manchester’ Finance, Key Strategies and Equality.
- 5.5 It was proposed to spread the 3 sessions over a four-week period. The sessions would again be offered to all new and returning members. There would also be discussions with Group Officers regarding opportunities for mentoring for new members by existing members.

6.0 Member training May 2019 – Feb 2020

- 6.1 A record of member training delivered May 2019 – Feb 2020, including attendance levels, can be found in appendix A.
- 6.2 The Member Development Strategy determined that training and development would be classified as follows
- Mandatory.
 - General - suitable for all, to ensure members are able to fulfil their roles.
 - Specific - promoted to further develop skills/knowledge in a particular area.

The mix of training provided against these categories can be found in Appendix A

- 6.3 29 different, non-mandatory, training and development opportunities were offered and attended in the period 1 May 2019 – 11 February 2020, compared to 23 for a similar period in the previous municipal year.
- 6.4 In addition to the training highlighted in paragraph 6.3 above, and the new member induction training discussed above, there was specialist training for new members of licensing, highways and planning committees and employee appeal panels. Drop-in sessions were offered to support members with their 'register of interests' and the 'Caseworker' case management system. 5 members have attended the 'Our Manchester' experience and 8 participated in the 5 'Listening in Action' sessions held during this municipal year. E-learning was also made available on Information Governance, Equality and Diversity, Health and Safety and a wide variety of courses on softer skills such as effective communication, handling difficult situations etc. As members will be aware Ethical Guidance Newsletters are circulated to members twice a year.
- 6.5 All members had access to the 'Our Members' team drive. The drive hosted a variety of information - content included Code of Conduct, Gifts and Hospitality, Member/Officer relations, Members Handbook, Key contacts, GDPR guidance, use of council resources, Social Media guidance, scrutiny guides, Member Development (including the Member Development Strategy and training programme), Personal safety and Members updates on Ethical Governance from 2016 onwards. Members were notified as new content was added.
- 6.6 A variety of approaches have been used to deliver training including formal sessions, e-learning, drop-in and one on one sessions.
- 6.7 A training programme for September 2019 - May 2020 was agreed by the MDWG and circulated to all members in September 2019, to highlight the training opportunities available to them for the remainder of the municipal year. A copy of the programme can be found at Appendix B.

7.0 Attendance

- 7.1 Attendance levels at non-mandatory training events compared to the number

who booked on, remained relatively high at 81%. This compares to 88% for a similar period in the previous municipal year.

- 7.2 One specific training event (a budget briefing held early evening in June) was particularly poorly attended with only 2 out of 11 attending. This has impacted the overall figures and if removed would see the figures adjusted towards 86% for the remaining events. There does not appear to be a specific reason why this event was so poorly attended – late apologies were received from 6 members. The morning session saw 3 out of 3 attend. An LGIU event on Local Government finance, held in November, saw 6 out of 7 attend.
- 7.3 In line with the Member Development Strategy, email reminders were sent to members 7 days prior to training events. Members were also able to utilise a training calendar which allows them to view training events as part of their own calendars. Where possible training is provided in afternoon/early evening sessions to suit member preferences and encourage attendance.
- 7.4 Where there has been non-appearance by members to training which they were expected to attend, they have been contacted in order to understand the reasons for non-attendance. Reasons given were varied and included 'illness', 'urgent ward matter', 'pressing work commitments'. Group officers have also been informed of non-attendance of members of their groups, which allows them to focus on any who are regularly not attending. Attendance at training is also considered by the MDWG at each meeting.
- 7.5 Use of sanctions for non-attendance at training was considered in the March 2019 report to Standards Committee on member training. It was agreed at that meeting not to impose sanctions but to keep the situation under review. As attendance levels remained generally good, the Monitoring Officer did not feel that further consideration of sanctions was necessary at the time of this report. It would appear that the measures being utilised are encouraging regular attendance. However, attendance levels will continue to be closely monitored. Should levels deteriorate then further consideration will be given to asking the committee to reconsider this option.

8.0 Evaluation of training

- 8.1 Feedback from members is a crucial element in evaluating the quality of training being provided. For in-house training we used the evaluation form agreed by the group and adopted as part of the Member Development strategy. Where possible, members are encouraged to complete an evaluation form. Where training is provided externally e.g. Local Government Association, we request a copy of their evaluation. Analysis of feedback provided using our in-house form shows. 98% felt that the training had met the aims and objectives whilst 100% would recommend the training to others.
- 8.2 The MDWG agreed to amend the in-house training form to add a further question with an 'overall satisfaction rating' (eg. score out of 5). This aligns the feedback more closely to the overall satisfaction rating obtained from the

induction feedback which uses a more detailed form due to the variety of topics covered.

- 8.3 The MDWG continued to work closely with internal and external training providers to maximise the rate of return.
- 8.4 Analysis has shown that 60% of members have attended one or more of the training events referred to in 6.1 above. The MDWG was keen to ensure that the varied needs of members are reflected in the training being offered.

9.0 Part 2 (February 2020 – January 2021) Member Development and Training

- 9.1 The Covid pandemic impacted significantly on the training programme planned for 2020 and beyond, with most training initially cancelled and then, where possible, migrated to a virtual on-line offer. There was also no new Member induction in 2020 following the cancellation of the local elections.
- 9.2 The primary effort has been focused on supporting members with the challenges of working remotely, especially in relation to participation in virtual meetings and with the move to Microsoft 365. The training offered has included separate sessions in the use of Zoom and Teams meeting platforms and an externally delivered session on hosting on-line surgeries and community meetings. There have also been sessions to support Members in key areas such as budget and Covid support packages for residents and businesses. Cyber Security and Unconscious bias e-learning modules have also recently been rolled out to all Members.
- 9.3 The MDWG formally reconvened in November 2020 and met again in January 2021. The group has worked alongside colleagues in ICT to support members with their migration from Google to Microsoft products, offering virtual group training sessions and also one to ones for any requiring more focused support.
- 9.4 Officers have reviewed the Member Development Strategy 2019 – 2021 and made minor changes to the section, including new Member induction and the training list, highlighted in bold italics in the Strategy.

10.0 Proposals for New Member Induction 2021

- 10.1 At its January 2021 meeting, the MDWG decided to implement the proposals agreed in 2020 (see 5.0 above) for the new member induction 2021. In line with current restrictions, plans are being made for both socially distanced sessions to be held in the Council chamber or alternatively virtual sessions held remotely. Due to the uncertainty around this, the sessions will not be opened up to all members this year. It was also agreed that new members should be encouraged to complete cyber security and unconscious bias e-learning modules as part of their induction.

11.0 Member training Feb. 2020 – Jan. 2021

- 11.1 Training opportunities have been limited during this period. A record of training held can be found in Appendix D. Attendance levels at non-mandatory training events compared to the number who booked on is 63%. This reflects a significant drop compared to 81% in 2019/20. However due to the small number of training events held the attendance figures are inevitably skewed as one or two less well attended events will have a significant impact on the overall figure.
- 11.2 The virtual nature of these events has also made obtaining feedback more challenging as there is no opportunity to provide a physical form at the end of the session which can be easily completed and handed in. Despite this, the submission of feedback has been encouraged in electronic form where possible.

12.0 Training Programme - May 2021- April 22

- 12.1 Work is now taking place to produce a training programme for the 2021/22 municipal year. The programme will be considered by the MDWG before being circulated to members and chief officers. It is likely that this programme will continue to be restricted to virtual on-line sessions which may limit the appeal.
- 12.2 Consideration will be given to ensure that the mix of training reflects the mandatory, general and specific categories as referred to in paragraph 6.2 above. It is also intended to include subjects which have not been offered since 2018/19, such as Social Media and Media skills, the Voluntary Sector and Mental Health awareness.
- 12.3 The MDWG will also continue to promote attendance at the 'Our Manchester' experience and 'listening in action' events and participation in Carbon literacy training, subject to availability.
- 12.4 The MDWG is mindful that members may be undertaking relevant training as part of their external roles which may be similar to that being offered by the Council. The MDWG proposes to write out to all members in the next municipal year to better understand what training they may be receiving elsewhere and also any skills and knowledge they may be willing to share with others.

13.0 Recommendation

The committee is asked to note this report