

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Standards Committee – 21 March 2019

Subject: Member Development Strategy

Report of: The City Solicitor

Summary

To seek the views of the Standards Committee on the proposed Member Development Strategy, to provide an update on proposals for the induction programme for new Councillors for May 2019 and report on training delivered in the current municipal year.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee note the report.
 2. The views of the Standards Committee are sought on the proposed Member Development Strategy.
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Wards Affected: All

Financial Consequences – Revenue: None

Financial Consequences – Capital: None

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

Standards Committee – 14 June 2018 – Member Development

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Standards Committee on the proposed Member Development Strategy. The Strategy 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 respective Group Officers. It also details the key tasks and terms of reference for the MDWG. These include providing strategic direction to formulate, implement and evaluate member development, promoting development opportunities, being responsive to training needs and to review budget, attendance and feedback as standard agenda items. It also aligns Member development with the successful delivery of the Our Manchester Strategy.

2.0 Background

Members will recall the report of 14 June 2018 to Standards Committee which set out a high level strategy for Member Development. The Committee requested a more detailed strategy to include reporting lines, roles and responsibilities, terms of reference, available resources and opportunities for increasing attendance levels.

2.1 The Our Manchester Strategy sets out a vision for Manchester to be in the top flight of world class cities by 2025. Members lie at the heart of achieving this vision. To enable them to meet the challenges this presents, alongside the other priorities that a modern Manchester Councillors faces, it is essential that they have the necessary skills, knowledge and expertise.

2.2 The Council is committed to supporting the identification of training and development needs of Councillors and providing opportunities for those needs to be met. To achieve this, a planned and strategic approach to Member development is required. The proposed Strategy has been drawn up in consultation with the Council's Monitoring officer and the Member Development Working Group.

3.0 Member Development Working Group

3.1 The Member Development Working Group (MDWG) provides strategic direction to formulate, implement and evaluate Member development.

3.2 Following a suggestion made at the June 2018 meeting of the Standards Committee, the MDWG has been enhanced with an additional 2 Councillors, neither of whom hold group office. The MDWG now comprises 4 Councillors, including the Deputy Leader who chairs the group and officers from Legal Services (Governance), HROD, Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit with Support provided by Member Services.

3.3 The MDWG has met 5 times since June 2018, including a dedicated meeting on planning for the 2019 Member induction (see section 6 below). In addition to looking at standard items such as training feedback, proposals for future

training and budget it has also considered effective mechanisms for communicating with Members, leading to the creation of a dedicated MDWG email account for training and development so that members can easily identify correspondence relating to training. It has reviewed and simplified the evaluation form which members complete at the end of training (the new form will be reviewed again at a future meeting), reviewed and contributed to the content of the new Members Handbook and contributed to the development of a shared training calendar.

4.0 Member Development Strategy

4.1 The Member Development Strategy 2019 – 21, (Appendix A), 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.

4.2 The Strategy 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. It also details the key tasks and terms of reference for the MDWG. These include providing strategic direction to formulate, implement and evaluate member development, promoting development opportunities, being responsive to training needs and to review the Member Development budget, attendance and feedback as standard agenda items. It also sets out that the MDWG will regularly review the quality of training and overall attendance levels.

- 4.3 The strategy considers how learning and development needs are identified and breaks down these needs into 3 areas – Knowledge (including workings of the Council/Strategy), Skills (including negotiating, influencing, social media, IT etc.) and Role Specific (related to individual role on committees and other groups).
- 4.4 Members will be encouraged to complete and return to their respective Group Officers a training needs assessment. It is proposed that anonymised information from these forms will be shared by respective Group officers with the MDWG providing valuable information to inform development and learning proposals. It will also help identify those members who are willing to mentor and share their skills and knowledge with colleagues.
- 4.5 The Strategy then considers how training will be delivered for both new and existing Members. An annual training programme will be produced by the MDWG and distributed to all Members so they are aware of forthcoming development and training opportunities. This will allow training to be spread more evenly throughout the year but also allow members to highlight any needs gaps for the forthcoming year at the earliest opportunity. The programme will be informed by needs identified by committees, group officers and individual members. News regarding courses will be communicated to Members via email from a dedicated MDWG address. This will assist Members in easily identifying communications relating to development opportunities. Members will also be given the opportunity to access an electronic Member Development calendar which will automatically populate training events in their own personal calendar.
- 4.6 The Strategy identifies a variety of delivery methods for development including formal sessions, e-learning, on-line resources, drop-in sessions, briefings and mentoring. Where possible, Member preference will be taken into account.
- 4.7 Feedback from training will be recorded and reviewed by the MDWG as a quality control measure and Members will be asked to commit to providing feedback as part of the enrolment process.
- 4.8 Attendance at courses will be monitored and reviewed. Members who fail to attend training which they had signed up for will be asked to provide the reason for non-attendance. Group officers for each Group will be asked to address any themes that come to light. Respective Group Officers, will also be informed of non-attendance and Members will be advised of the financial costs to the Council of non-attendance on booked courses at the time of confirmation of a booking. Group officers for each Group will be asked to support good attendance in their Group and will be informed of any members who persistently fail to attend training events they have booked on to.

5.0 Use of sanctions for non-attendance at training

- 5.1 As requested by this Committee at its meeting on 14 June 2018 the issue of sanctions for those members who do not attend training has also been considered. Poor attendance at training appears to be a common issue across

many Councils and some have adopted 'sanctions' to try to ensure Councillors attend training.

- 5.2 The most common sanction appears to be exclusion from membership of a committee, primarily regulatory ones e.g. Licensing, Planning and Highways. This however would be a matter for respective groups.
- 5.3 Other Councils have considered publishing Members attendance training records on their websites or preventing members from attending any further training unless they have achieved a specified level of attendance. The latter option might however be seen as counterproductive.
- 5.4 A number of Councils have considered an approach whereby Councillors' Basic Allowance is split into 12 with the 12th instalment being awarded only if Councillors have met an annual training objective. As Members will be aware member allowances are set by full Council following recommendations by its Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP). 2 Councils have been identified as having considered this option. One did so as part of a wider performance framework. They decided not to include training in the framework on the basis that training was to receive greater focus and where members did not attend relevant training they would be asked to step down from the relevant committee. However, the situation would be kept under review. The other Council has retained this option although its IRP recommended that provision to withhold the 12th instalment of the Basic Allowance be discontinued as the training for Members had been revamped in recent years with more training events being provided and it has become embedded in the working culture of Members. The IRP took the view that withholding the 12th instalment of the Basic Allowance is now a blunt instrument that has in all likelihood outlived its usefulness in light of the changed environment.
- 5.5 At the heart of the Strategy is the expectation that Members take responsibility for their own development and work with Group Officers and the MDWG to ensure their needs are identified and discover the most effective means of delivering development opportunities.
- 5.6 As members will be aware certain training has been agreed as mandatory – Induction, Licensing and Planning and Highways for members of those committees and relevant members do attend this training.
- 5.7 As indicated elsewhere in this report Member Development has already been strengthened and as shown at Appendix B generally attendance has been good. The proposed strategy with the support of respective Group Officers should mean more improvements. It is the Monitoring Officer's view that it would be appropriate to continue to monitor the situation over the next municipal year before considering sanctions further.

6.0 New Member Induction Programme 2019

- 6.1 The New Member Induction programme 2018 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.

- 6.2 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. Training for Councillors and e-learning opportunities. There was also a presentation on casework. The first part was delivered by a neighbourhood team strategic leader 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. There has been positive feedback in relation to last year's induction from attendees.
- 6.3 As last year was an 'all out' election both sessions were repeated with an evening option for session 2 to give Members greater choice about when to attend.
- 6.4 The MDWG has held a special meeting to discuss the programme for 2019, taking into account member feedback provided from 2018. It was agreed that the format of the 2 sessions had been successful and should therefore be repeated in 2019 and that newly elected and returning Councillors should be asked to attend.
- 6.5 Whilst Session 1 was spread over a whole day, Session 2 was restricted to 1 ½ hours. Taking into account Member feedback from 2018 it is intended to extend session 2 to 2 hours, allowing greater focus on key topics such as the budget, key strategies and casework.
- 6.6 The group also agreed that Session 1 would only be held once but that session 2 would be repeated and held in the late afternoon, two weeks after Session 1. Group officers for each Group have been informed of the dates so that they can notify candidates well in advance, to ensure attendance. Consideration is also being given to a market place event, to be held later in the year, based around some of the topics featuring in session 2, which will be open to all members.
- 6.7 New members will also be 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 Councillors to the appropriate contact in the Council, where further information can be obtained. The handbook is a digital document which will be held on a team drive accessible by all members. This will allow it to be regularly refreshed and updated. Members will also have access to a key contacts lists via the drive.

7.0 Member training May 2018 – February 2019

- 7.1 A record of member training delivered May 2018 – February 2019, including attendance levels, can be found in appendix B.
- 7.2 There were 23 different training and development opportunities in the period 1 May 2018 – 12 February 2019 with a total of 140 attendees. This is a significant increase on the same period for 2017/18 which saw 9 events held with a total of 26 attendees.
- 7.3 This reflects the increase in focus on member development which has translated into more regular meetings of the MDWG, a greater number of training opportunities being offered, improvements in communications sent to members highlighting training opportunities and reminders sent prior to training.
- 7.4 Where Councillors have not attended training that they were booked onto the reason for non-attendance has been requested. A range of reasons for non-attendance have been received and include – ill health, clash with other work commitment, 'on holiday and overlooked cancelling place', 'family medical emergency' and 'no ward advice surgery cover'. Apologies are also being received more regularly in advance suggesting a heightened awareness amongst members of the impact of non-attendance.
- 7.5 In addition to the opportunities highlighted in 7.2 above, there has also been new member induction training and specialist training for new members of licensing and highways and planning committees. Scrutiny chairs have also been offered the opportunity of one to one training with the scrutiny team leader. There is also on-going e-learning available for Information Governance and e-learning combined with 1 day training on Carbon Literacy. A Google drop-in session was also held during scrutiny week in September 2018.
- 7.6 At its June 2018 meeting, Standards Committee suggested that some of the presentations delivered at induction, such as Budget and Key Strategies should be open to all.
- 7.7 A budget briefing was delivered by the City Treasurer on 16th October 2018. 10 Members booked on with 7 of them attending on the day. A further 4 attended who had not booked on in advance. An externally delivered session on Local Government Finance was held in January 2019. 16 Members booked on with 10 attending on the day.
- 7.8 In relation to key strategies, the MDWG will continue to promote attendance at the 'Our Manchester' Experience and 'listening in action' events. Members will also be able to benefit from the market place event proposed as part of the 2019 induction programme.

8.0 Recommendations

1. That the Committee note the report

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2. That the views of the Standards Committee are sought on the proposed Member Development Strategy.