

## **Governance Committee**

**15 November 2021**

### **Report of the Member Development Group**

#### **Report by Chairman, Member Development Group**

**Electoral division: Not applicable**

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#### **Summary**

The Member Development Group (MDG) is an advisory body to the Governance Committee on all aspects of member roles and the training and development needed by members to undertake their work on the County Council. MDG provides regular reports to the Committee on its work and on member development activities.

#### **Recommendation**

That the report be noted.

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#### **Proposal**

##### **1. Background and context**

1.1 This report provides an update from the MDG meeting held in October 2021 and on recent member development activities, including the post-election member induction programme, as well as setting out the schedule of future member development sessions for 2021/22. A key performance indicator in Our Council Plan is for all member training and development needs to be identified within 12 months of the 2021 election (through completion of a Training Needs Analysis) and for all mandatory training to be completed within the same timescale. MDG is responsible for monitoring this indicator and will set targets and measures for future years).

##### **2. Member Development Group (MDG) Meeting October 2021**

2.1 The Vice-Chairman of the Council, Councillor Sujan Wickremaratchi, was elected as Chairman of MDG at its first meeting of the new administration. Key issues discussed at this meeting were:

- The 2021 induction programme.
- The ongoing member development programme 2021/22.
- Feedback on member development sessions held during September.
- Mandatory training.

##### **3. Member Induction Programme 2021**

3.1 MDG assessed the core induction programme delivered during May to July

2021, including the sessions held and information provided. It reviewed feedback from the member survey and considered what had worked well or less well to identify learning for the future. Although the survey response rate was disappointing (at 25%), feedback was broadly positive, with most respondents finding induction sessions and information provided useful. Inevitably, the fact that most of the induction programme had to be delivered remotely had an impact, with several members commenting on the fact that it was difficult to interact and get to know each other. MDG felt it might be useful to aim some sessions specifically at new members, rather than being for both new and returning members, to enable more focused questioning and debate. It was suggested that members of district/borough councils elected to the County Council may already have received training in some aspects of the core induction programme, so further liaison with these councils was recommended when planning the programme to avoid any unnecessary duplication.

### 3.2 Other key lessons for the future identified by MDG were:

- Events and information provided during the pre-election period, including the ['Be a Councillor'](#) programme, were useful and should be continued.
- Ideally, more sessions would be face-to-face but virtual sessions can also be beneficial (particularly where these are about imparting information). It was recognised that face-to-face sessions are important in terms of helping members get to know each other/officers, are better for engagement (e.g. where discussion groups are required) and are more likely to stimulate discussion.
- Members should be reminded that informal training/induction sessions are not intended for political debate.
- Providing more informal networking opportunities would be helpful for new members.
- The Democratic Services 'buddies' were useful for new members to help navigate Council systems and processes and to provide general IT support.
- Where held, virtual sessions should be kept as short as possible with more breaks built in.
- The timing of sessions can be difficult for members who work full-time or who have caring responsibilities.
- The information provided as part of the induction programme was useful, including the new Councillor Guide and the films/animations on Council services and processes. The Mine and the Bulletin are seen as useful ongoing sources of information.
- Having recordings of sessions available is useful to those unable to attend, enabling them to watch these at a later date and for future reference.
- The Locality Sessions should not be combined with a public Question and Answer session.
- A market-place type event would be useful, possibly on a directorate-by-directorate basis, to include questioning opportunities.

3.3 Overall, it was felt that the induction programme had delivered in terms of giving members a broad understanding of the role and responsibilities of a county councillor and will help members fulfil their roles as county councillors.

## 4. **Planning for future member development – the ongoing programme**

4.4 From September 2021, the induction programme moves into the ongoing member development programme, which may include skills/refresher training sessions as well as service-type briefings. Monthly member development

sessions are in the member calendar (as virtual sessions), but other briefings or training sessions may be held. As the pandemic situation improves, it may be possible to hold some in-person events and arrange visits. MDG reviewed the member development schedule for 2021/22 as set out in the table below. The content of some sessions is still to be determined and will be reviewed again by MDG at its next meeting in December.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
08/09/21	Member Development Session (Training)	Scrutiny Training and Development (provided by Centre for Governance and Scrutiny)	34
22/09/21	Mandatory Training	Corporate Parenting	36
30/09/21	Member Briefing	Waste induction session	39
30/09/21	External organisation briefing	Gatwick Airport Limited: consultation on northern runway	22
15/10/21	Member Development Session	The role of the Highway Authority in the planning process, to include the Council's role and approach, key policies and guidance, the assessment process, impacts and mitigation	32
03/11/21	Member Development Session	Our Council Plan and 2022/23 Budget	44
12/11/21	Member Briefing (one hour snapshot session)	NHS	
17/11/21	Member Briefing	Highways maintenance service standards and how members can report issues	
08/12/21 (morning)	Member Development Session	Public Health	
08/12/21 (afternoon)	Member Briefing	Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan	
25/01/22	Member Development Session	Budget Session	
09/02/22	Mandatory Training	Safeguarding (Adults and Children)	
23/03/22	Member Development Session	To be confirmed	

- 4.5 MDG will continue to review proposals for future member briefings, training, guidance and visits. A priority for the future will be training and advice for members on their health and wellbeing and personal safety, to include guidance

on lone working and dealing with malicious communications. Other proposals due to be considered include:

- Market-place events showcasing the range of Council Services.
- One-hour snapshot sessions with partner organisations (e.g. Police, National Park, Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations).
- Visits to the Record Office.
- The impact of Covid on Children and Young People’s emotional health and wellbeing.
- Adult Social Care funding and implications of national announcements.
- Highways, Transport and Planning training events, including highways schemes and their delivery, car parking, road safety and highways network management.
- The work of Trading Standards.
- Customer Service at the County Council.
- A briefing on the National waste strategy when this comes forward.
- Visits to the Records Office by small groups of members, Mondays only (service suggestion).

4.6 All councillors are carrying out a Training Needs Analysis, supported by Democratic Services which is likely to identify further specific development needs. This information will be collated and shared with MDG, including an update on the overall process, in December 2021.

## 5. **Feedback on development sessions held in September**

5.1 At the time of the MDG meeting, evaluation of member development sessions was only available for the scrutiny training session (8 September) and corporate parenting training (22 September). Only four members (of 34) completed the scrutiny session evaluation, so it is difficult to draw conclusions from this. Those who gave feedback provided a range of views, with one saying they didn’t gain much from it and another saying it was very useful. MDG felt that the breakout group discussions held during this session were difficult for new members, as they do not yet have enough experience of scrutiny at the County council to discuss what works well and less well.

5.2 Feedback on the corporate parenting training was very positive, with members impressed with the session and the external trainer. A film of the session has been made available on the mine and a further session is being considered for spring 2022.

## 6. **Mandatory Training**

6.1 MDG is responsible (along with political Group Leaders) for reviewing the uptake by members of training identified by Governance Committee as mandatory. MDG welcomed the completion rates as at the beginning of October 2021, set out in the table below:

<b>Mandatory training completion rates</b>	<b>Number of members</b>	<b>% of members</b>
Code of Conduct	68	97%
Safeguarding Adults	59	84%
Safeguarding Children	58	83%
Corporate Parenting	60	85%
IT Security and Data Protection	38	54%

<b>Mandatory training completion rates</b>	<b>Number of members</b>	<b>% of members</b>
Equalities and Public Sector Equality Duty	60	86%

6.2 MDG highlighted the importance of the IT Security and Data Protection training, particularly given the significant risks these issues present to the Council. It was agreed that there should be a strong reminder of the need to complete this training.

## 7. **Other options considered**

7.1 Other options will be considered within the Committee's debate.

## 8. **Consultation, engagement and advice**

8.1 All members were invited to complete an online survey to give feedback on the 2021 induction programme. The survey opened on 6 August and closed on 26 September 2021. Seventeen members gave feedback (a response rate of 25%), with ten of these being returning members and seven newly elected. In addition, all members attending member development sessions are invited to complete an evaluation survey, the analysis of which is reported to MDG to inform future plans.

8.2 MDG reviewed survey feedback at its meeting in October and took account of the views expressed, including relating to the methodology for gathering such feedback and the low response rates. MDG agreed that for the induction programme in 2025 there should be short evaluations of each session, rather than carrying out an overarching survey at the end of the three-month programme. It also agreed that the evaluations for future member development sessions should be through a short poll rather than an online survey, to be followed up by the opportunity for members to email any further comments or suggestions.

## 9. **Finance**

9.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from the content of this report. Plans for member development and induction can be met from within existing resources. The budget for member training and development is £12,700 per year and will be reviewed at year end by MDG.

## 10. **Risk implications and mitigations**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigating Action (in place or planned)</b>
County councillors are unable to fulfil their roles	The member development and induction programmes provide training and information tailored to their needs and overseen by the Member Development Group

## 11. **Policy alignment and compliance**

11.1 There are no legal, Crime and Disorder Act, human rights, climate change or public health implications directly arising from this report. The member development programme aims to meet the Equality Duty through providing fair opportunities for learning and development to all members. Social value is provided by ensuring members receive support and training to be able to fulfil their roles effectively and therefore help the council to achieve its aims and objectives.

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**Background Papers**

None