

Governance Committee

23 November 2020

Report of the Member Development Group

Report by Chairman, Member Development Group

Electoral division: Not applicable

Summary

This report by the Member Development Group (MDG) provides an update on member development activities and feedback from the last meeting of the MDG on 19 October 2020. Two key areas of focus for MDG currently are the Council's application to South East Employers for the Charter for Elected Member Development and planning for member induction after the Council elections in May 2021.

Recommendation

That the update on member development activities be noted.

Proposal

1. Background and context

- 1.1 The Member Development Group (MDG) is the custodian of all aspects of the member role and has responsibility for managing all aspects of the member development process. It is a sub-group of the Governance Committee.
- 1.2 This report provides feedback from the last MDG meeting and on member development activities undertaken during 2020/21 as well as plans for the future.

2. Member Development Activity, April 2020 to October 2020

- 2.1 The COVID-19 public health emergency had a significant impact on member development activity planned at the start of the municipal year. Member development days were paused in the spring, and some activities were postponed or cancelled. However, members were encouraged to complete online training available, provided by the Council and by external bodies (e.g. Local Government Association, Centre for Governance and Scrutiny). The first virtual member development sessions was held in July and four more have been held since then and at the time of writing this report.
- 2.2 The table below sets out Member Day sessions and training sessions held so far during 2020/21.

Date	Topics	Attendance
08/07/20	Member Day Session: Good Governance project outcomes: plenary session	47
08/07/20	Training: Good Governance: two interactive workshops: being an effective member: roles, relationships and responsibilities	32 in total
24/07/20	Training: Scrutiny skills, two sessions provided by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (since then renamed the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the Children & Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee • For scrutiny committee chairmen and vice chairmen 	11 7
31/07/20	Member Day Session: Budget Reset - Financial Planning in uncertain times	42
03/09/20	All Member Briefing: Commissioner Update on Children First Improvement Programme	39
22/10/20	Member Day Session: Proposed Budget 2021/22: Financial Planning in Uncertain Times	37
22/10/20	Training: Chairmanship skills, provided by South East Employers	16 (max number)
12/11/20	Member Day Session: West Sussex Reset Plan	35
17/11/20	Training: Children's and Adults' Safeguarding Training	TBC

- 2.3 Attendance rates have been encouraging, with overall attendance rates of 59% for Member Day sessions held so far during 2020/21, compared with 35% for all sessions held during 2019/20. Response rates to evaluation feedback on Member Days have been low since this moved to an online rather than paper-based survey. Feedback received on the events held to date has been positive, with comments on the importance of the provision of supporting papers/ presentation slides in advance and that question and answer sessions are useful. The introduction of Microsoft Teams seems to have improved members' experience of the technical quality of sessions. The use of external trainers and presenters has been welcomed.
- 2.4 Seven members attended external online training courses and webinars. These have included Local Government Association leadership training and Local Government Information Unit skills training (strategic thinking, questioning skills for scrutiny).
- 2.5 All members have been invited to complete e-learning courses available on the Council's Corporate Learning and Development website. The completion rates for these are due to be monitored by MDG at its next meeting. These courses are:
- Safeguarding Adults – Basic Awareness
 - Safeguarding Children
 - Cyber Security and GDPR Matters
 - Data Protection

- Social Media
- Public Sector Equality Duty
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Unconscious Bias

2.6 Plans for future Member Days are set out below. MDG considers all proposals for Member Day topics, taking account of member needs, priorities and service requirements. No sessions are planned after January because of the proximity to the County Council elections in May 2020.

Date	Topic
02/12/20	Member Day Session: TBC
14/01/20	Member Day Session: Budget/Local Government Finance
26/01/20	Member Day Session: TBC

3. Member Development Group Update

3.1 Updates on key issues considered by MDG at its meeting on 19 October are set out below.

- Good Governance Project and the Local Member Role:** The Chief Executive discussed with members the outcomes of the Good Governance project. She highlighted aspects to be addressed through member training and development, including clarity on the different roles and responsibilities of members and officers. A key issue raised was the local member role, which MDG will be reviewing this further at its next meeting. Members welcomed a new checklist developed to assist county councillors deal with local highways matters and agreed that similar checklists for other aspects of the Council's areas of responsibility should be developed.
- Reflection on Covid-19 learning and lessons for the future:** MDG discussed the impact on members of virtual/remote working during the public health emergency. Whilst many benefits of virtual working were recognised, it was felt that some meetings work better face-to-face. Members supported informal meetings continuing to be virtual in future but felt that most formal meetings would ideally be held face-to-face, although the potential for hybrid meetings should be explored. There was also support for member training and development sessions to continue to be virtual in future, possibly using a webinar-type format. The information for members provided through the weekly Bulletin (members' newsletter) and on the Members' Information Network (the Mine) was welcomed. This includes up-to-date information on COVID-19 and support available for members.
- Plans for member induction 2021:** Pre-election activities are underway, including a 'Be a Councillor' event held on 21 October and a Candidates' event planned for February 2021. The 'Be a Councillor' website is being kept updated and a new film of county councillors has been provided. The MDG working group, chaired by Cllr Janet Duncton, is leading the work to develop the member induction programme for 2021. The programme will be planned with the safety and wellbeing of members in mind, reflecting COVID-19 restrictions. MDG is developing a survey to go out to all members during November to gather feedback on induction plans, including the local member role. MDG discussed the Notice of Motion on Hate Crime (put to County

Council in December 2019) and agreed that training on dealing with malicious communication should be included in the support/ training available to members during induction. It was also agreed that members should be signposted to the existing information and policies relating to this.

d) Charter for Elected Member Development: As part of the Council's bid for Charter status, an assessment will be carried out by South East Employers during November. An update on the outcomes of this, and whether the Council has succeeded in gaining the Charter, will be provided to Governance Committee at its next meeting.

4. **Other options considered**

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

5. **Consultation, engagement and advice**

5.1 All members attending Member Day sessions are invited to complete an evaluation survey, the analysis of which is reported to MDG to inform future plans. MDG is planning to carry out a survey of all members during November to gather feedback to help plan the induction programme for after the Council elections in 2021.

6. **Finance**

6.1 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.

7. **Risk implications and mitigations**

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
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

8. **Policy alignment and compliance**

8.1 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

Appendices: None