



MEMBERS' SKILLS AUDIT TASK AND FINISH GROUP

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek nominations for the Members' Skills Audit Task and Finish Group

2 LINKS TO COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 This links to the Council's priorities of Economy and Growth.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the Committee sets up a Members' Skills Audit Task and Finish Group.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Terms of Reference for the Committee were refreshed as part of the new Constitution for the Council adopted in May 2024.

- 4.2 The Terms of Reference include the following:

- Advising, training or arranging to train Councillors and co-opted members on matters relating to the Councillor Code of Conduct;
- Advising the Council upon the contents of, and requirements for codes/protocols/other procedures relating to standards of conduct throughout the Council; and
- To consider, review and advise on arrangements for new Councillor Induction and training programmes for all Councillors.

- 4.3 Following the Borough elections in May 2024, a number of new members were inducted into the Council and experienced a significant amount of bespoke training, which was also open to previous serving members. This was a new programme of induction and officers are keen to understand member feedback as to its success.

- 4.4 The comprehensive member training induction programme for 2024/25 included the following training:

- Committee Management Information System (CMIS) – software used for publication of Council meeting agendas and information relating to elected members
- Standing Orders/Rules of Procedure
- Chairing Meetings
- Data Protection
- Overview of Local Government Finance
- Code of Conduct/Standards
- Scrutiny (2 sessions)
- Role of the Civic Head (for Mayor and Deputy Mayor)
- Dealing with the Press
- Taxi Licensing
- Premises Licensing
- Development Management Committee (3 sessions)
- Role of the Audit Committee Member

4.5 Feedback forms were sent out to all Councillors who had attended training. The range of feedback received is summarised below:

- Over 2.5 hours for training is too long in the evening.
- A GDPR fact sheet of what is acceptable or not acceptable in sharing with other councillors would be helpful.
- It would be helpful to have knowledge of how to put GDPR into action in different forms of communication.
- Breaking off into small groups is useful.
- Training on questioning skills is useful.
- It can be difficult to engage on Teams.
- Training on the powers of scrutiny would be useful.
- It would be useful to have some videos of effective questioning in action.
- Some pre-briefing on the Council's particular audit situation would allow for further tailoring of training.
- Licensing and Planning training should be provided at least once a year or when the regulations change.

4.6 This feedback should be used and reviewed by the Committee in order to shape future arrangements for new councillor induction and training programmes. This is particularly important in the context of a 4 year electoral

term as it will be necessary to sustain and develop member knowledge on an annual basis, notwithstanding that there will be no formal induction linked to an annual election cycle.

- 4.7 In addition to learning new skills, members bring with them their experiences and learnings from their own lives which can be used to support decision making and improve understanding across the Council. Strong councils have members with a mix of professional skills, personal experiences and different perspectives. In particular, members' knowledge can be used to support the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Audit & Governance Committee in undertaking their scrutiny functions or supporting the work of the Cabinet in informal Member Working Groups.
- 4.8 It is suggested, therefore, that the Committee should lead on the undertaking of a skills audit of members' skills to understand what skills they already have and what skills they would like to develop. This will enable the Committee to meet its Terms of Reference as set out above.
- 4.9 A skills audit can help the Committee to:
- Understand members' current mix of skills and experience;
 - Identify the gaps in their skills and highlight the skills which they need to develop or support; and
 - Commission the training programmes necessary to ensure continuous improvement.
- 4.10 It is suggested that the Committee sets up a Task and Finish Group of 3-4 members of the Committee to undertake this work. The suggested terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group is:

To engage with elected members to carry out an audit of their skills and experiences; to identify gaps in their development and opportunities for improving the performance of the member role to support and promote the Council.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are none.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are none.

7 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are none.

8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed as no relevant decision is being made.



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Background Papers:-

None.

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