

## Wiltshire Council

### Cabinet

18 June 2013

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**Subject:** Councillor Induction Programme 2013

**Cabinet member:** Cllr Stuart Wheeler, Hubs, Heritage and Arts, Governance and Support Services

**Key decision:** No

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#### Executive Summary

On 2 May 2013 Wiltshire Council unitary elections and town and parish council elections were held. Results for unitary elections were confirmed on 3 May and saw the election of 98 councillors, including 27 candidates who had not held elected office at unitary level before.

A councillor induction programme designed to assist all new and returning councillors to gain knowledge, information and an understanding of the council was launched on 7 May. The programme content reflected the experience of previously elected councillors (input from the councillor development group) and was organised by democratic services and communications. The programme aimed to;

- Provide an opportunity for councillors to meet key staff from across the council
- Provide councillors with a comprehensive introduction to key services and an overarching view of the council's work
- Ensure councillors completed the relevant administrative processes and had the IT equipment to allow them to undertake their elected role
- Set the foundations for further training and development, as appropriate, for councillors

All newly elected councillors have experienced the induction programme including the provision of a guide and the completion of their acceptance of office, welcome sessions and IT support and the provision of key equipment.

Other sessions have been run on an optional attendance basis including introductory sessions to key council services. A service fair, hosted by the corporate directors, provided an opportunity to find out more about the range of services the council provides and to meet senior officers.

This report provides an update on the councillor induction programme 2013.

## **Proposal**

**Cabinet is asked to note:**

- a) **the support provided to all newly elected councillors in their role as community leaders through the councillor induction programme 2013;**
- b) **that this work will continue through ongoing councillor training and development, as required and**
- c) **the opportunities for further engagement through networking events to allow councillors and officers to build strong working relationships.**

## **Reason for Proposal**

To update the cabinet on the councillor induction programme 2013, the success of the programme and the opportunities for the provision of future development sessions and training events.

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. This report requests that cabinet notes the activities that have taken place as part of the Councillor Induction Programme 2013, how this work has helped to provide vital support and information to newly-elected and returning councillors and how this programme of workshops and events will provide a foundation for ongoing councillor development.

### **Background**

2. On 3 May, 98 councillors were elected to represent divisions across the council and the 500,000 people who live in Wiltshire. A programme of induction was designed to support newly-elected unitary councillors. Since Wiltshire became one unitary authority in 2009 a significant programme of transformation and change in key areas of central government legislation and local delivery has taken place. The induction programme was designed to provide new councillors with the support required to carry out their elected role as well as an update for re-elected councillors. All elected councillors were provided with an information pack including a guide, programme and other key information.

76 councillors attended a welcome event on 7 May at Trowbridge's Civic Centre where they undertook acceptance of office, received IT support and had the opportunity to meet the council's corporate directors. All acceptances of office forms were signed within the first four days and all councillors were operational with Wiltshire Council IT equipment within the first day, many more have since connected their mobile devices to the Wiltshire Council system.

Induction sessions took place over five weeks in Trowbridge, Salisbury and Chippenham. A wide range of workshops were offered covering key service areas including law and governance, safeguarding, overview and scrutiny, housing, public health, planning, licensing and schools and learning.

A service fair also took place in the atrium at County Hall involving forty services, which was extremely well attended and interactive introducing councillors to the diverse range of services that the council delivers.

The focus throughout the programme has been to ensure councillors understand how the council works, how Councillors are supported in their role and how they are able to represent their constituents as effectively as possible. Attendance has been very good at all events and the feedback has been extremely positive. In the first week workshops averaged 72% attendance, overall attendance has been around 55%.

The feedback has highlighted requests for further development and training in some areas including housing provision, safeguarding, transformation, communications and media management. Further sessions will be scheduled.

### **Main Considerations for the Cabinet**

#### **3. Induction Programme – design and content**

The programme was designed in collaboration with the previous councillor development group, ensuring that elected councillors were able to input into the schedule and content. The programme was reviewed by the locality task group and endorsed by full council on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013. The input, support and engagement of the corporate leadership team and extended leadership team was critical to the successful design and delivery of the programme.

The programme was designed to reduce the pressure and time commitments on elected councillors following the election, whilst offering support and opportunities for networking between officers and councillors.

A model of first day, first week, first month and first year was adopted.

- The first day aimed to fulfil administrative tasks, IT equipment distribution and training and official acceptance of office.
- The first week comprised of essential training for councillors including legal and democratic, safeguarding, communications, planning and licensing and an interactive service fair.
- The first month fulfilled key areas of the council's service portfolio including public health, corporate vision and the transformation programme, housing and schools and education.
- The first year incorporates a series of skills based training courses including electronic speed reading, chairing skills, media management and public speaking.

#### **4. Geography and timescale of the programme**

The programme repeated key workshops at hub locations, at different times of day, to enable as many councillors as possible to attend induction sessions.

- The first week of induction alternated workshops between Salisbury and Chippenham, increasing the opportunity to attend.
- The remaining workshops took place in Trowbridge on an average of two workshops per week.

## 5. Support during the induction programme

Support has been offered to councillors throughout the induction period via a buddy scheme operated by democratic and IT services.

- Newly elected councillors have been assigned a democratic services officer for the first three months.
- A team of IT support officers have been available at a number of induction events throughout the first month assisting new and returning councillors with IT matters, including own device setup and IT training.
- All councillors have been encouraged to discuss their on-going training and development requirements. A programme of workshops and events will be scheduled to reflect the need.

## 6. Involvement of council officers

Presentations and workshops were delivered by the council's corporate directors, service directors and other senior council officers. The programme was managed and administered by democratic services and communications.

Councillors were provided with the opportunity to meet and ask questions of senior staff from a wide range of services. The induction programme has allowed councillors to build effective working relationships with officers and other councillors, which will enable them to carry out their role as community leaders more effectively.

## 7. Feedback and learning

For future councillor induction programmes it is vital to listen to feedback and assess where improvements can be made. The corporate leadership team following an assessment will provide their views to the councillor development group for future consideration.

Cabinet members have informally provided their initial views and have suggested that future programmes could be condensed and split to target the training and sessions for new members and returning members. It was also suggested that whilst the published guides and handouts were useful, for future these should be electronic to minimise cost.

## **Environmental Impact of the Proposal**

8. Delivering a successful programme of councillor induction will allow unitary councillors to be more effective in representing their constituents, strengthening their local community and protecting the county's most vulnerable residents.

## **Equality and Diversity Impact of the Proposal**

9. All newly elected councillors received a copy of the council's behaviours framework. The core values of the framework, of leadership, simplicity, trust and respect, excellence, working together and responsibility have underpinned the programme of sessions run to support and inform new councillors.

## **Risk Assessment**

10. The key risk identified in resourcing an induction programme was the uncertainty of the level of new member engagement and attendance, particularly for sessions that were fundamental in their new role; such as safeguarding. The programme was promoted at every opportunity; including packs to nominated candidates. Attendance at most of the sessions was high and feedback from councillors was extremely positive. Having successfully completed this initial induction stage it will be vital to supplement this early training with a programme of ongoing training and development.

## **Financial Implications**

11. On 3rd October 2012 a budget of £30,000 was approved to cover the costs of venue hire, catering, printing and the cost of external facilitators. The final cost will be approximately £20,000.

## **Legal Implications**

12. There are no legal implications aligned to this report or the proposals.

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## **Background Papers**

None

## **Appendices**

- A. The councillor induction 2013 schedule
- B. Nominated and new councillor guides