Wiltshire Council

Council

26 FEBRUARY 2013

Councillor Induction Programme 2013

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to raise awareness of the work that has been done so far on the 2013 Councillor Induction Programme; what has been agreed by the Councillor Development Group and the areas that are still being developed.

It is also proposed that Council endorses the programme thereby ensuring that the Council has ownership of the programme.

2.0 Outline of Programme agreed by the Councillor Development Group.

The Induction programme has been separated in to three individual strands – an online e-guide which replaces the traditional hardcopy 'A Handbook for Members', a small publication called the 'Councillors Quickstart Guide' and the programme of workshops that make up the induction programme itself.

2.1 The online e-guide is embedded within the Elected Wire and utilises existing pages from partner organisation websites, The Wire and the Wiltshire Council website. The benefits and drivers for this approach include the ability to temporarily update information, encourage councillor interaction with Council IT and to support the Council's paperless vision.

2.2 The Councillors Quickstart Guide is a small A5 sized publication of up to 20 pages, small enough to be carried around in a pocket or handbag. The publication is essentially for the benefit of newly elected councillors and contains information that is considered essential during those first few weeks in office.

2.3 The induction programme
- The programme runs from the 7th May 2013 to the 10th June 2013 (five weeks) and is arranged on the principles of first day importance, first week importance and first month importance.
- Some of the first week importance workshops are duplicated North and South of the authority on differing days; and some of the 'key sessions' are duplicated in the daytime and evening to allow for variation of councillors work/personal circumstances.

- The programme is arranged so that sessions do not clash with Council committee meetings once the Council diary recommences with full council on the 14th May. Further to this, each session takes place prior to the first meeting of any committee that is associated with the training of a particular session. For example, the first Area Planning Committee meeting takes place after the Planning sessions; and the first Health Select Committee meeting meets after both Overview and Scrutiny training and Public Health training.
- Further complications of the itinerary have been accounting for two bank holiday weekends, half term week and the relatively short period of time between the first day of induction and the first full council/resuming of committee meetings.

2.4 Attached as an appendix to this report is an indicative draft of the current programme. The programme represents work in progress and further discussions are needed around the balance between day and evening sessions and the length of the overall programme.

3.0 How did we get here?

A number of drivers have shaped the induction programme including:
- A review into the effectiveness of the induction programme in 2009.
- Informal canvassing of councillors reflecting back on their 2009 experiences.
- Canvassing of all service directors.
- Identification of the necessary requirements of particular committee members in collaboration with committee chairs
- The view of the Corporate Leadership Team that the programme should include the statutory responsibilities of the Council.

3.1 Surveying of councillors following the 2009 induction identified three points which have impacted on the delivery and structure of the programme in 2013. These are:
- The programme sought to include too much too soon.
- The sessions were not easily accessible.
- A greater emphasis on opportunities for councillor networking and socialising.

In response:
- The programme takes place over five weeks as opposed to two.
- 'Key sessions' are duplicated geographically north and south and on differing days during the first two weeks of the induction period to make sessions more accessible to councillors. After which sessions are held in Trowbridge on average twice a week.
- The first event of the induction programme, to be held on the 7th May 2012 is the initial opportunity for councillors to liaise with one another. The

workshops held after the first full council then reflect the networking request, being centred in Trowbridge alongside social lunches.

3.2   Informal canvassing took place with councillors during Local Democracy Week which identified two points:
- The importance and insight that was provided by the 'departmental marketplace'.
- The constant use of PowerPoint Presentations and the dry nature of sessions.

In response:
- The 2013 Programme has included three 'Services Fairs', giving an opportunity for service areas to showcase their work and position within the council whole.
- The sessions are being developed with a mix of delivery styles, including presentations, discussions and participative elements.

4.0   Reflecting the culture of the council.

There has been a strong desire from within the Councillor Development Group and the Corporate Leadership Team to embed a number of council wide cultures in to the delivery of the induction programme, such as:
- The paperless vision being reflected in the e-guide
- Opportunities to express elements of the council's one culture aspiration and behaviours framework - to be embedded in to session delivery.
- Expressing the methodology of a systems thinking approach in to the delivery of individual sessions.

5.0   Creating an induction for the future.

In addition to the embedding of behaviours and culture, the programme seeks to learn from the experiences of the previous four years and improve councillor engagement and development throughout the four year council term.

5.1   The final event of the programme acts as a showcase for further councillor development. A suggested programme of learning that stretches out across the remaining first year and beyond is being created to assist in the continuous development of elected councillors, committee members and committee chairs. A councillor learner log and development portfolio accompanies this skill and knowledge based training.

6.0 Where are we still developing?

Together with the election itself, the first day event, the swearing-in process and the induction programme there is a great deal that needs to be taken in by newly elected and returning councillors.

6.1 A series of information packs are being developed following on from the Local Democracy Week events which go some way to explaining what councillors can expect through the election and in to the induction period and what they can do to prepare.

7.0 Mandatory training for Councillors.

As part of the discussion on the councillors induction programme the views of Council are sought on whether some training for councillors should be mandatory.

7.1 Group Leaders at their meeting on 18th September 2012 discussed this issue. Whilst it was accepted that there may be issues of enforceability, they felt that a decision of the Council to this effect would provide a clear statement of intent and promote best practice. It was agreed therefore that Council should be asked to consider this issue.

7.2 There are clearly areas of council activity where mandatory training is appropriate in the interests of efficient and effective decision making. These areas are where the council has a quasi-judicial role, such as licensing or appeals or where there are rights of appeal against the council's decision, for example, planning. A clear steer from the council that all councillors (and substitutes) appointed to such committees should undertake mandatory training before serving on such committees would assist. This should not only protect the Council's interests but also its reputation.

7.3 There are also other areas of council activity where all councillors have important duties and responsibilities. This mainly focuses on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and the corporate parenting role of councillors. Again the ability of councillors to fulfil this role effectively is vital and requirements should be put in place to ensure all councillors undertake training in this area.

7.4 Experience and knowledge of all services provided by the council and the way the council functions is the preferred level of knowledge for all councillors. However, councillors will have preferences about which areas they wish to specialise in and therefore may only wish to undertake training in these areas. Likewise this would apply to service on specific committees, and councillors would be expected to undertake some form of training relating to these committees whether on a formal or informal basis (such as a briefing session with the lead officer). Learning and development logs will provide an indication of the training and skills required for each particular committee.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **To endorse the actions taken so far in the preparation of the proposed induction programme for 2103, noting that further discussions will take place between Group Leaders and the Corporate Leadership Team before the programme is finalised.**

2. **To confirm that for those areas where the Council has a quasi judicial role or where there are rights of appeals where costs are incurred, all Councillors and Substitute Members are required to undergo training before serving on those Committees and it shall be the responsibility of their Group Leader for ensuring that this happens.**

3. **To confirm that all Councillors should undergo training in respect of their responsibilities for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.**

4. **To encourage Councillors to undertake specific training in relation to the Committees to which they are appointed.**

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Unpublished documents relied upon in the production of this report: NONE

Environmental impact of the recommendations contained in this report: NONE

Appendices
Appendix 1 – Draft Councillor Induction Programme 2013