
Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities
Council

21 March 2022
22 March 2022

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities – Councillor AS Khan

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Law and Governance

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

One Coventry Elected Members Training and Development Strategy

Is this a key decision?

No - Although the proposals affect more than two electoral wards, the impact is not expected to be significant.

Executive Summary:

The environment in which Councillors' work is constantly changing. Ensuring that Councillors are properly supported to help them meet the high demands placed on them to carry out this challenging role effectively is increasingly important. Consultation with Members and officers suggest that the training offer has not kept pace with these demands and take up of what has been on offer has been low. With support from a Member Advisory Panel, improvements have been introduced over the last year and this report sets out a strategic approach to make sure that the member training offer meets current and future needs.

In 2020 consultation with Members and officers suggested that the then training offer for Members did not meet the needs of the cohort of Members and lacked Executive oversight and a strategic approach.

To address this gap, a One Coventry Elected Members Training and Development Strategy has been developed supported by a Member-led training and advisory Panel and dedicated officer time. The strategy covers:

- Purpose of the Strategy
- Assessing Need and Requesting Training
- Training Matrix
- Governance and Delivery

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities is requested to:

- 1) Recommend that Council approve the One Coventry Elected Members Training and Development Strategy as appended to the report
- 2) Recommend that Council approve the proposals for mandatory training for Members as identified in Section 3 and amend the Constitution accordingly

Council is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the One Coventry Elected Members Training and Development Strategy as appended to the report
- 2) Approve the proposals for mandatory training for Members as identified in Section 3. and agree that the Constitution be amended to include within the functions of each relevant Committee the requirement that all Members of those Committees shall have received appropriate training before carrying out any of the functions that are delegated to that Committee.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix A – The draft One Coventry Elected Members Training and Development Strategy
Appendix B – Data and Findings

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

Yes – 22 March 2022

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 The City Council provides a range of training and support for Councillors including induction for newly elected Members, specific training to support Members in roles such as being a member of Planning Committee or Licensing and Regulatory Committee and specific topical issues as they arise. Members are also able to attend training and events run by other organisations. However, the uptake of training by Members has been low.
- 1.2 The environment in which councillors work is constantly changing. Ensuring that councillors are properly supported to help them meet the high demands placed on them to carry out this challenging role effectively is increasingly important. Consultation with Members and officers suggest that the training offer has not kept pace with these demands and take up of what has been on offer has been low. With support from a Member Advisory Panel, improvements have been introduced over the last year and this report sets out a strategic approach to make sure that the member training offer meets current and future needs.
- 1.3 The Council's specific lead officer for Member Development, was deleted following a restructure in 2014. Officer time has recently been identified within the Members and Elections Team to further develop the training and development offer for Members. The training budget has also been transferred from Organisational Development to Members and Elections with the aim to be able to identify and deliver the specific requirements of Members in respect of their training and development.
- 1.4 This has enabled capacity to develop a strategy and liaise more closely with Members, including research to identify how to support Members training and development needs, to develop a comprehensive members' training programme and identify clear evidence-based recommendations for Council, in order to be able to support the development of an improved offer and more strategic approach to Members' development.
- 1.5 By analysing the information from questionnaires and interviews and assessing the training that has been offered to and attended by Members, it was clear that previous training programmes had not met the needs of those that it was designed for. If Members are to benefit from training to improve and refresh their skills and knowledge there needs to be an improved training offer, with a strategic approach, which Members want to attend and engage with.
- 1.6 In order to enable executive oversight and strategic approach to training as well as raising the profile of training with Members, a strategy has been developed to support the delivery and promotion of a members' training programme. The draft One Coventry Elected Members Training and Development Strategy can be found at Appendix A
- 1.7 The Covid-19 global pandemic has brought to the fore the important role that the Council and its Councillors play in supporting the local community. It has also provided increased opportunities for the use of technology as a communication tool. Members have risen to the challenge that meeting virtually has offered and this is an approach that could enhance and broaden the training offer to Members.
- 1.8 To oversee the governance and delivery of the strategy, a cross-party Cabinet Member Advisory Panel has been established to review Members training needs, recommend a training and development programme to the Cabinet Member, monitor delivery of, and evaluate the programme to inform future planning. This Panel has been in place since September 2021. The Terms of Reference for this Panel can be found in Appendix 1 of the draft strategy.

2. **Options considered and recommended proposal**

2.1 Option 1: Do nothing

2.2 Doing nothing would maintain the status quo with Members unable to access a comprehensive needs-assessed training programme. Currently uptake of training is low, which means that Members are not accessing training that meets their training needs.

2.3 Option 2: Support a One Coventry Elected Members Training and Development Strategy and mandatory training proposals for Members (recommended)

2.4 A comprehensive Elected Members Training and Development Strategy would enable a Member-led training needs assessment to be undertaken, to enable an offer that is attractive to Members and would support them in their role to deliver the ambitions set out in the One Coventry Plan.

2.5 The draft Strategy can be found at Appendix A. The Strategy covers:

- Purpose of the Strategy
- Assessing Need and Requesting Training
- Training Matrix
- Governance and Delivery

3. **Mandatory Training**

3.1 In order to ensure that a wide range of training and development is offered to Members, a training matrix will be developed and endorsed by the Members Training and Development Advisory Panel. The training matrix will be regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure it meets Members' training needs.

3.2 The training matrix will provide a programme of mandatory training which all Members will be required to complete throughout their term of office. In addition to this there will be role specific mandatory training for those Members with special responsibilities, or who sit on specific committees.

3.3 Mandatory training for all Members will include:

- Code of Conduct
- Fire Safety Awareness
- Safeguarding (Awareness) including Corporate Parenting
- Equality and Diversity
- Health and Safety in the Workplace
- Local Governance and Budget Setting
- Data Protection Law, Definitions and Principles with Information Security (annually)
- Mandatory induction programme for newly elected Members

3.4 Most of these training programmes are available through the Council's online learning portal, but preferred delivery style will be assessed through consultation with Members.

3.5 There will also be Mandatory training for specific roles, for those Members who sit on Licensing and Regulatory Committee, Planning Committee, Audit and Procurement Committee, Shareholders Panels and HR Appeals Panel. The Constitution will be amended to include within the functions of each relevant Committee the requirement that all members shall have received appropriate training before carrying out any of the functions that are delegated to that Committee.

3.6 This role specific training should take place on an annual basis to ensure that decision making by Members is based on the most up to date and relevant information, legislation, and guidance.

4. Supplementary Training and Development

4.1 There will also be a programme of regular in-house supplementary training, identified by regular training needs analysis through consultation with Members. This will be organised and arranged, but not necessarily delivered, internally by Council officers.

4.2 In addition to an in-house programme, Members may request to attend ad hoc one-off training requests delivered by external organisations, such as the Local Government Association (LGA). A training request pro-forma will be developed and managed by the Members Training and Development Co-ordinator. There will be a budget allocated to enable one-off requests.

4.3 Members will also be able to request additional training, where several Members have identified that a greater understanding of an issue is required and is not covered by the current offer. This will enable the training and development programme to be responsive and flexible to Members training needs.

5. Results of consultation undertaken

5.1 As part of the original research into training for Members, a questionnaire was circulated to all Members, as well as one-to-one interviews undertaken with both Members and senior officers. A summary of the research findings can be found at Appendix B.

5.2 There was also a Members' survey completed as part of the Reset and Recovery programme – "Leaders of Our Communities – Can we improve the service?" which covered several questions relating to Members' training. These are also included in Appendix B.

5.3 Part of the strategy requires regular consultation and engagement with Members as part of the planning and review process.

6. Timetable for implementing this decision

6.1 Recommendations can be implemented as soon as Council has approved the Strategy.

7. Comments from the Chief Operating Officer (Section 151 Officer) and the Director of Law and Governance

7.1 Financial implications

There is no cost of developing the strategy other than officer time as this will be delivered by existing officers. There is already a budget allocated for Members training and development. These proposals would be delivered within the existing budget allocation.

7.2 Legal implications

The provision of a training and development strategy and mandatory training will further the ability of Members to undertake their roles and make robust and informed decisions

8. Other implications

None

8.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan (www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/)?

By enabling a well-trained cohort of Members with the skills and knowledge to deliver the refreshed One Coventry Plan.

8.2 How is risk being managed?

By providing the opportunity for Members to have access to good quality training and development, the risk to the organisation is reduced. Members with appropriate skills and knowledge leads to good decision making. In Councils where poor decision making has taken place, this has led to poor management and significant risks to the organisation.

8.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

By delivering the strategy more Members will have access to training, meaning the Council will be better equipped to deliver the ambitions in the One Coventry Plan.

Responsibility for managing the One Coventry Elected Members Training and Development Strategy would become the responsibility of the Members Services Manager. This has been included in the new structure for Members Services.

8.4 Equality and Consultation Analysis (ECA)

The implementation of an Elected Members Training and Development Strategy will include needs assessment in terms of accessibility, to ensure that there are no negative impacts on any protected group.

8.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

There will be no implications or impact on climate change or the environment as a result of implementing the One Coventry Elected Members Training and Development Strategy

8.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None.

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