



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and date of Committee	<b>AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 19 MARCH 2024</b>
Subject	<b>MEMBER TRAINING</b>
Wards affected	None
Accountable member	Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:Andy.Graham@westoxon.gov.uk">Andy.Graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Andrea McCaskie, Director of Governance Email: <a href="mailto:Andrea.McCaskie@westoxon.gov.uk">Andrea.McCaskie@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Report author	Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager Email: <a href="mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk">democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	To update the Committee on the plans for member training post-election.
Annexes	Annex A – Draft Member Induction and Training Programme 2024-25
Recommendation(s)	That the Audit and Governance Committee resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Note the report;</li><li>2. Provide feedback on how the Council may better engage members in member training and development.</li></ol>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Putting Residents First</li><li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li></ul>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	N/A

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report updates the Audit and Governance Committee on the plans for inducting new members post-election and wider plans for member training and development. It also seeks feedback from the Committee on how the Council may better engage members in member training and development so that sessions will be well attended going forwards.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Audit and Governance Committee has a responsibility to promote, maintain and assist the achievement of high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. This includes a responsibility to secure adequate and appropriate training of councillors and co-opted members on the Code of Conduct for Members.
- 2.2 The Audit and Governance Committee on 30 March 2023 received a report on Member training and resolved to agree that training on equality and diversity awareness, the use of social media, and the Members' Code of Conduct are strongly encouraged for all councillors and should be undertaken at least once in a councillor's term of office, within six months of their election. The Committee was not in favour of making training mandatory, and in practice mandatory attendance is not something that can be enforced by officers.
- 2.3 Member attendance at a number of training sessions over the last year has tended to be very low including at sessions that have been delivered by external trainers at a cost to the Council, e.g. equality and diversity and charring skills training.. This has been reflected in the External Auditors Value for Money Recommendations for 2022/23 a report on which is presented elsewhere on this Committee agenda. The Committee is invited to provide feedback on how the Council may better engage members in member training and development.

## **3. DRAFT MEMBER INDUCTION PROGRAMME**

- 3.1 At the local elections on 2 May 2024, 17 of the 49 seats on the Council will be up for election. In preparation for supporting new members post-election officers have drawn up a draft member training and induction programme, which is attached at Annex A. The draft programme is similar to that for the intake of new members in 2023. The programme includes some planned induction and training sessions which are specifically aimed at new members, as well as sessions that are aimed at all members, or members with certain responsibilities.
- 3.2 It is proposed that new members will be invited to attend a choice of two welcome sessions to be held at different times of day on the Wednesday after the elections. Returning councillors will also be more than welcome to attend these sessions. It is proposed that the welcome sessions include, among other things, training on the Code of Conduct for Members.

#### **4. FURTHER MEMBER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

**4.1** Democratic Services have been working with the Learning and Development team to deliver further training opportunities for members. As a result, a suite of online training courses will soon be made available to elected members through the Council's iHASCO Learning Management System. This will be communicated to members in the coming weeks. The following online courses have been identified as being the most likely to be of interest to members:

- Health and Safety Essentials
- Lone Worker Safety
- Conflict resolution
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Gender Identity and Expression
- Managing Anxiety
- Menopause Awareness
- Mental Health Awareness
- Prevent Duty
- Sexual Harassment Awareness
- Unconscious Bias

**4.2** Carbon Literacy training has recently been delivered to senior officers. Climate Change officers are currently developing proposals for carbon and climate literacy training for members.

**4.3** In addition to member training, Democratic Services will continue to facilitate regular member briefing sessions on issues or services that are likely to be of interest to Members. These sessions are held remotely on Teams and are recorded for the benefit of members who are unable to attend at the given time. Recent briefings include Health and Wellbeing (14 March), the Local Government Boundary Commission Review (13 March), the GLL Annual Progress Review (5 March), Cyber Security and it's Risks (20 February), and Ubico Update (8 February).

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** The Council has allocated a budget of £4,000 per annum for member training. This is sufficient to fund two externally provided training sessions per year. Alternatively, the funding may be apportioned to groups to enable members to attend external training courses.

#### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** There is no legal requirement for the Council to provide member training but doing so is considered to be good corporate governance and member support practice. Member training on regulatory functions (e.g. planning, licensing and standards) is important for ensuring that decisions taken will be sound and reduce the risk of decisions being successfully challenged.

## **7. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1** If members are not trained on the Code of Conduct, social media and equality and diversity there is a risk of an increase in the number of complaints against members.
- 7.2** If members taking planning, licensing and standards decisions are not trained on those functions there is an increased risk of decisions being successfully challenged, which can be costly for the Council and result in negative publicity.

## **8. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 8.1** All newly elected councillors will be invited to declare any special requirements relating to the provision of training and Democratic Services will work with the individual to ensure that any such needs are met.

## **9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1** Where appropriate, training and briefing sessions are held online to minimise travel emissions. There are no other climate and ecological emergencies implications arising from this report.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1** None.

(END)