

CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERS' DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Constitution and Members' Development Committee was held on Friday 8 October 2021.

PRESENT: Councillors J Hobson (Chair), A Bell (Vice-Chair), A Hellaoui, B Hubbard, D Rooney and J Thompson

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillor D Coupe

OFFICERS: C Benjamin, S Reynolds, C Breheny and J McNally

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors M Saunders, M Storey and C Wright

21/1 **MINUTES - CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERS' DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - 26 FEBRUARY 2021**

The minutes of the Constitution and Members' Development Committee held on 26 February 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

21/2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations made at this point in the meeting.

21/3 **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

The Head of Democratic Services presented the report to advise Members of the Member Development Skills Framework which supports the previously agreed Member Development Policy and also asked Members to note the proposed Member Development Programme for 2021/22.

Members were advised that the Framework was built around the LGA Framework and included a number of competencies including:

- Local leadership
- Partnership working
- Communication skills
- Political understanding
- Scrutiny challenge; and
- Regulatory and monitoring

The Head of Democratic Services advised that the majority of training was delivered in house through briefing sessions and internal courses to reduce costs however some training had been delivered externally. Members were advised that the LGA provided a number of online training courses and in person training courses for Senior Members which were fully subsidised or part subsidised.

In respect of the subsidised courses a Committee Member raised concerns that not all Members were aware that the LGA courses were subsidised. It was agreed that when LGA course information was circulated to Members it would include whether the training was subsidised or not. Concerns were raised that a lot of the LGA training took place in Coventry and that some Members struggled to attend. The Head of Democratic Services stated that some training had taken place online during the Covid pandemic and she would investigate if some training could be held online again.

The Head of Democratic Services stated that the Member Development Programme was a live document that was continually updated with training opportunities for Elected Members to attend. The Member Development Programme enabled Members to gain the key skills to

enable them to fulfil their role.

Reference was made to the online Teams training that Members had undertaken through the Middlesbrough Learns Platform and whether future training would be made available to Members using this platform. The Head of Democratic Services advised that work was being undertaken with Organisational Development to provide a Members area where training and training materials could be accessed.

Members were asked to note the Member Development Skills Framework and proposed Member Development Programme for 2021/22.

AGREED as follows:-

- a) That Members note the Member Development Skills Framework and proposed Member Development Programme for 2021/22
- b) That course subsidies would be included in future emails to Members
- c) That the Head of Democratic Services contact the LGA to see if they could provide some of their training online

21/4

CONSTITUTION - WORK PLAN REPORT

The Director of Legal and Governance Services presented the report and advised Members that the Council's Constitution was subject to continual review together with any associated documents for example the Scheme of Delegation, Procedure Rules and protocols to ensure that decisions taken by the Council were lawful and reflected changes in legislation and Council priorities.

The Constitution was a live document, which from time to time required adjustment to reflect how the Council operated. Occasionally amendments were needed to reflect changes in policy and legislation whilst others dealt with inconsistencies and presentational issues that had no effect on the agreed procedural rules. Other minor amendments were required to deal with the results of new legislation and do not require a change in Council processes.

Members heard that a phased review of the Constitution were underway to ensure that the Constitution was fully up to date. Some topics were prioritised last year and since then amendments had been made on various topics such as motions, votes of no confidence, voting on appointments, and the Member Code of Conduct had now been refreshed and approved by Council

The report sought the consideration of the next set priorities for review and that those priorities were timetabled as a future work programme for the Committee.

The report also proposed that the Committee consider the physical structure of the Constitution and how it was laid out to improve readability and accessibility for elected members and the public.

AGREED as follows:-

- a) That the Constitution and Member's Development Committee agree to the next set of priorities for review and that they are timetabled as a future work programme for the Committee.
- b) That the physical structure of the Constitution be reviewed to improve readability and accessibility for elected members and the public.

21/5

MEMBERS ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING

The Head of Democratic Services presented the report to the committee. The purpose of this report was to provide Members of the Constitution and Members Development Committee with a summary of Elected Members attendance at training sessions for the municipal year 2020-21.

The committee heard that attendance at the required training was consistently high with all

members of the specific committees attending the required training. It was advised that this could be due to members having to attend this training before being able to take part in the decision making in respect of those committees. The Head of Democratic Services stated that whilst training may be devised specifically for committee Members, these events were open to all members to attend, which would aid groups should they wish to appoint a substitute to attend a committee in the case of the absence of one of their Members.

The Head of Democratic Services advised members that newly appointed Chairs and Vice Chairs were required to undertake Chairs training when elected to a Committee however attendance at this training was not as successful with a lower percentage of Chairs and Vice Chairs attending. Members were asked to consider what actions could be put in place to encourage attendance at this training and should there be any sanctions for non-attendance as required as set out within the policy. It was also suggested that the requirement to attend required training be added to the Constitution.

Members raised concerns that some training could be difficult to attend due to other commitments. A discussion took place around e-learning if a Member could not attend physical training the majority of Members agreed that e-learning would not be suitable for Chairs training. A Member commented that it should be mandatory to attend Chair's training before a Member can take up the role of a Chair. The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that Chairs training was already a required element which was agreed in 2018 when the Member Development Framework was approved. It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer would contact Chairs/Vice Chairs who had not completed Chair's training to inform them that this was required training.

A Member requested that a regular report be provided detailing Members who had attended training to enable issues to be addressed appropriately.

Agreed as follows:-

- a) That the content of the report be noted
- b) The Director of Legal and Governance Services contact Chairs/Vice Chairs who had not undertaken Chairs training and encourage them to attend

21/6 **PAPERLESS MEETINGS**

Following the publication of the agenda, the report in relation to paperless meetings was subsequently withdrawn.

21/7 **EXEMPT REPORTS**

A Member asked for clarification on the Exclusion of Press and Public from Committee meetings and whether an Elected Member was exempt from this exclusion and where this was stated in legislation. The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that there was legislation and it was covered under the Access to Information rules which stated what Members were able to see and under which circumstances. It was advised there had to be a need to know to have access to information.

The Director of Legal and Governance Services stated that at present it was down to the Chair's discretion if a Member could remain in the meeting during an exempt item. The advice that would be provided to a Chair was that as Members of the Council it would be assumed that the Council should be open and transparent in terms of Council business and that a Member could stay however there could be certain circumstances when it was not appropriate for a Member who was not part of the Committee to remain. This was for the Chair to decide as the situation presented itself. The Director of Legal and Governance Services advised that the decision should be made when the papers for the Committee were issued rather than at the time of the meeting.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that the Executive Member/Scrutiny Member Protocol was being reviewed to look at whether the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Board should be allowed to remain during Executive decision making process.

21/8 **ANY OF OTHER URGENT ITEMS WHICH IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIR, MAY BE CONSIDERED.**

There were no urgent items for this meeting

21/9 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING - 10 DECEMBER 2021**

The Chair confirmed that the next meeting of the Constitution and Members Development Committee would be held on 10 December 2021.