

STANDARDS COMMITTEE



Report subject	Councillor Development Framework
Meeting date	9 July 2019
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>The Standards Committee is responsible for ensuring that appropriate advice and training is provided to Councillors in respect of ethical governance and the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>This report seeks to the support of the Committee for a councillor development framework for delivering continuous development opportunities for all councillors.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) the Councillor Development Framework, as set out in Appendix '1' to this report, be noted;(b) periodic updates on the delivery of the training programme for councillors be reported to the committee for monitoring purposes and to ensure that the programme supports the ethical governance and code and conduct objectives.
Reason for recommendations	<p>To promote and maintain high standards of conduct by all decision makers and to provide guidance on the potential requirement to withdraw from a meeting where a declarable interest, bias or predetermination exists.</p>

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Vikki Slade (Leader of the Council)
Corporate Director	Julian Osgathorpe (Corporate Director Resources)
Contributors	Richard Jones, Head of Democratic Services
Wards	Authority-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. The Standards Committee has responsibility for ensuring that appropriate advice and training is provided to all councillors in respect of ethical governance and the Code of Conduct.
2. Local Authorities in general have a further obligation to ensure that they support councillors to provide and improve corporate governance, local democracy and local services.
3. Councillors have a pivotal role in taking forward the modernisation agenda and the success of this will depend on councillors having the capacity to provide the best possible service to their residents, regardless of whether they are newly elected or experienced.

Councillor Development Framework

4. Appended to this report is a draft Councillor Development Framework which is intended to form the basis of a structured but yet dynamic training programme. The framework is operational in nature and does not require Council approval but is being brought before the Standards Committee to ensure it is fit for purpose and to secure councillor support.
5. The implementation of the framework will help councillors develop a range of skills to assist them in their work within the community and within the council. In particular, it will support all councillors develop core competencies, in Local Leadership, Partnership working, Communication skills, Political understanding, Scrutiny and Challenge and Regulating and Monitoring.
6. The Framework seeks to further develop and continue with the induction programme offered to all councillors since the elections in May 2019.
7. In order to develop a training programme which not only addresses the collective needs of all councillors, the framework will seek to capture and identify individual councillor priorities. This has commenced already through the self-assessment of ICT Skills which is being used to develop appropriate training programmes.
8. Whilst the Standards Committee responsibilities in relation to ensuring training is provided is limited to ethical governance and the Code of Conduct, ensuring all councillors have the opportunity to develop their skills and competencies in all areas of the council's business, could be considered to indirectly support good ethical governance and reduce the likelihood of breaching the code of conduct.

9. The Standards Committee may therefore wish to consider receiving periodic updates on the delivery of specific training for councillors, attendance records and the realised benefits.

Resource Implications

10. There are no additional manpower implications arising from this report. The co-ordination and delivery of councillor training will be managed through existing manpower resources.

Funding

11. The delivery of quality training is critical but must be balanced against the cost of delivery. Where appropriate training will be delivered or supported using internal resources, but where necessary external providers will be utilised. The existing budgets will be carefully monitored.

Summary of financial implications

12. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Summary of legal implications

13. Training and development is important for all councillors both those who are new and to the more established. Induction for new councillors is crucial to enable them to be effective in their roles and learn about the specific requirements of local governance and to protect the Council from legal challenge, particularly in relation to regulatory decision making.
14. The proposed Councillor Development Framework is an operational document and does not require Council approval.

Summary of human resources implications

15. There are no requirements for additional manpower resources arising from this report.

Summary of environmental impact

16. There are no specific environmental implications arising from this report, however, where appropriate information shall be shared and made available to Councillors electronically.

Summary of public health implications

17. There are no public health implications arising from this report.

Summary of equality implications

18. It is recognised that some Councillors will have specific circumstances restricting or limiting opportunities to attend training sessions. Individual requirements identified will be accommodated where possible.

Summary of risk assessment

19. The Council has budget provision for the delivery of training to councillors. Failure of councillors with specific roles and duties could give rise to legal challenge. As a consequence there are certain training sessions that are compulsory.

Background papers

Published works

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Councillor Development Framework

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council

Councillor Development Framework

Introduction

The modernisation agenda for local government, financial pressures on budgets, greater expectations of the public and the introduction of new ways of working, have placed additional pressures on Councillors who are now required to play increasingly diverse and complex roles. This Framework has been produced to provide a planned approach to Councillor development in recognition of the increased levels of skills and knowledge required and the expectations of the future councillor.

Every councillor, whether they are newly elected or have many years of experience, has a duty to themselves, their fellow councillors and their electorate to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to carry out their wide range of roles as effectively as possible.

Whilst this framework is designed to support and structure the councils work in this area it should also be noted that each and every councillor must take personal responsibility for their own development. A structured programme of learning and skills development is only as good as the users of the development opportunities that the council provides.

This framework recommends that the Standards Committee oversees the work towards addressing areas for improvement in Councillor Development and to encourage all elected representatives to use this framework as a foundation for the development of their own skills.

Aim of the framework

Why do councillors need training and development?

All councillors need high quality training and development to be able to carry out their roles effectively.

The Council's commitment to transform working practices and services means that councillors will need to have the appropriate skills to take decisions and monitor the Council's work effectively. Councillors need to know at least a little about a wide range of subject areas, as well as how the Council works and how decisions are taken.

In addition, councillors need to respond to external issues such as changing socio and demographic needs, different ways in which public sector organisations work (such as partnerships) and changes in the law relating to local government. Councillors also need to be able to deal effectively with casework arising from the work they carry out as community leaders within their wards. This casework arrives from a growing number of electronic channels with a greater expectation that issues will be addressed quickly.

Training and development is important for all councillors both those who are new and to the more established. Induction for new members is crucial to enable them to be effective in their roles and learn about the specific requirements of local governance. Whilst

existing councillors have more experience, continuing training helps to ensure skills are updated.

This framework will help councillors develop a range of skills and core competencies to assist them in their work within the community and within the council. These skills and competencies include Local Leadership, Partnership working, Communication skills, Political understanding, Scrutiny and Challenge and Regulating and Monitoring.

1. Local leadership

This refers to the need for councillors to engage with members of their community in order to learn about issues of local concern and help to facilitate a vision for the locality. It involves encouraging trust and respect between individuals and groups by mediating fairly and constructively between different organisations and sections of the community

2. Partnership working

This aspect of the councillor role focuses on the need to build good relationships with others (i.e. colleagues, officers, community groups and other organisations) by identifying and working collaboratively to achieve shared goals. It recognises the need for councillors to recognise and value different contributions, delegate or provide support as required, and to take a long-term view in developing partnerships.

3. Communication skills

This skill area recognises the need for councillors to demonstrate excellent communication skills across many different settings, including the ability to listen sensitively and use appropriate language with different groups. Councillors must also communicate regularly and effectively with all parts of their community using different forms of media.

4. Political understanding

This skill set recognises the need for councillors to develop a range of political skills in order to communicate their values, promote a political vision, and encourage democratic processes and public engagement. It recognises that councillors need to work across group boundaries at times, yet still be able to maintain their own political integrity.

5. Scrutiny and challenge

Scrutiny and challenge is an important day-to-day aspect of the councillor role. Councillors need to act as a critical friend by identifying opportunities for scrutiny inside and outside the council, and by providing constructive challenge and feedback to others. To be effective in this role, councillors need to analyse information quickly and present arguments that are concise, meaningful and easily understood.

6. Regulating and monitoring

This skill set relates to the more judicial aspects of the role that require councillors to understand their legal responsibilities and follow protocol when evaluating arguments and making decisions. Not only do councillors need to balance public needs and

local policy, they must also monitor progress and seek feedback on their own learning needs.

Other specialist training will be required to support councillors perform their roles to maximum effect and as their constituents are increasingly growing to expect. This will include the use of new technology to access information and communicate; innovative ways to manage case work; and specific subject based training to raise both awareness and knowledge considered essential for councillors.

Training delivery

A comprehensive induction programme was offered to all new councillors following their election to office in May. Councillors were supplied with an induction pack summarising the functions of the council and the role of Councillors, etc. Initially sessions were held to introduce and meet with the Chief Executive, Directors and other senior officers. A number of further induction sessions cover the council's constitution, code of conduct, regulatory and scrutiny training.

Internal and external training is conducted depending on the topic, in-house expertise, interest from councillors and availability of quality trainers. Where external trainers are used, they are chosen for their knowledge of the subject, as well as experience in training delivery.

Councillors are busy people and have many demands on their time. The Council shall therefore endeavour to provide training materials in a variety of forms. A library of resources shall be made available to Councillors on the Intranet.

When Members are unable to attend a particular course, they will be sent links to the course materials and the contact details of the trainer (if delivered internally). This will allow councillors to review the course material and contact the officer for more information if they need to.

Alternative methods of delivery will be explored to suit the learning objectives, such as drop-in sessions, video conferencing, role play, etc.

Conferences

The conference budget is managed by Democratic Services. As conferences can be expensive, consideration will be given to each event before circulating joining instructions. When a councillor wishes to attend a conference, they should seek support from their Group Leader and the relevant Corporate or Service Director or Chief Executive before requesting Democratic Services to book the conference (subject to budget provision being available).

Councillors may request to attend a particular conference, particularly if the topic of the conference is broadly relevant to their role as a councillor, or has a particular relevance to committees they sit on or responsibilities they hold within the Council (i.e., portfolio holder, chairman, etc.).

Evaluation

Training should be evaluated in a number of ways. Individual programmes will be evaluated through questionnaires for all participants immediately after an event. An annual survey will be developed to gather feedback from councillors, who will also be asked to suggest subjects they would like to see within the programme. An overview of training and support activity available to councillors shall be reported to the Standards Committee.

Resources and support

This Framework will be delivered by the Democratic Services Team with input from other officers where appropriate. It will be reviewed annually. A dedicated budget is available for councillor training, development and conferences. Sessions will be co-ordinated and scheduled to maximise the use of the available budgets.

Outline of Proposed Councillor Development Programme

The following outline of proposed training and development topics will form the basis of the topics to be included in the Councillor Development Programme.

The programme includes the induction schedule for newly elected Councillors, the six core skill areas identified above, and specialist training

A. New Member Induction

- Welcome pack at Election
- Introduction to being a councillor
- The role of the Councillor
- Management structure (who's who)
- Contacting the council
- Key Services
- The Constitution
- Public speaking and debating
- Introduction to policy framework (locally and nationally)
- Basic finance and budget framework (including financial regulations)
- ICT training for new councillors

B. Core Skill Areas

1. Local leadership

- Chairing and managing effective meetings
- Community Leadership
- Develop an effective relationship with the local media
- Housing and neighbourhood working
- Local government finance
- Planning – how the system works
- The effective ward councillor
- Holding effective ward surgeries

2. Partnership working

Commissioning, contract and relationship management
Negotiating and influencing skills
Representing the Council at key partnership meetings and on outside bodies

3. Communication skills

Communications (that's listening as well!)
Complaint handling
Dealing with difficult customers
Media skills
Public speaking and presentation skills
Social Media (blogs, twitter, facebook, youtube, etc.)
Speed Reading

4. Political understanding

Code of Conduct
Financial Regulations
Local Government Financial Planning and Budgeting
Officer/Councillor relationships
Understanding committee procedures and the constitution

5. Scrutiny and challenge

Holding the council to account
Questioning skills
The critical friend – support and challenge

6. Regulating and monitoring

Specialist training sessions will be provided for regulatory Committee Members
Audit
Gambling Act 2005
Licensing Act 2003
Performance Management
Planning (Development Control)
Risk management

C. Specialist training

1. Governance and policy

Access to information
Corporate Parenting
Corporate Plan Overview
Data protection
Equality and diversity
Freedom of information
Personal safety (making lone visits safely)

2. Business essentials

ICT literacy
Improvement and innovation
Managing casework in the new environment
Mobile working
New ways of working
Using the Internet

3. Subject based learning

Adult and Children's Services
Crime and disorder
Economic Growth
Emergency Planning and Civic Contingencies Act
Health and wellbeing
Management of heritage and landscape assets
Highways and Transport
Housing
Public Health
Rivers and coastal issues
Supporting older people
The Commercial public sector
Youth Services