

Report to:	Council	Date of Meeting:	Thursday 21 April 2022
Subject:	Review of the 2021-2022 Member Development Programme and Proposed Strategy for the 2022-2023 Programme		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

This report provides a review of the Member Development Programme which ran in 2021-2022 and proposals for the 2022-2023 Programme.

Recommendations:

Council is requested to:

- (1) Approve rolling forward of the Sefton Council Member Development Programme for 2022-2023 Municipal Year.
- (2) Approve the continued designation of Mandatory to the following non-statutory courses:
 - Information and Compliance
 - Safeguarding Children Awareness
 - Safeguarding Adults Awareness
 - Corporate Parenting
- (3) Approve the establishment of a Member Development Steering Group comprising representation from the respective political groups and authorise the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services to approve the membership and terms of reference of the Steering Group.
- (4) Note and endorse the intention to work towards achievement of the North-West Member Development Charter for Sefton.

Reasons for the Recommendations:

The aim of the Member Development programme is to provide Councillors with skills and knowledge to help them more effectively fulfil the vital role they play in working with and supporting their local communities.

The North-West Member Development Charter provides an established framework to help Councils undertake a self-assessment to develop and review good practice in relation to Member Development.

The formation of a Member Development Steering Group would help ensure that Members are actively involved and take ownership of the Member Development Programme.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

To cease continuance with the Member Development Programme, not progress with the establishment of a Member Development Steering Group and not work towards the North-West Development Charter would lead to Members being less able to fulfil their role in effectively supporting their local communities.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

None directly

(B) Capital Costs

None directly

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):

Aside from Overview and Scrutiny Training and Code of Conduct training which used an external providers in 2021-2022, there are no direct costs associated with the Member Development Programme which is provided in-house by the Corporate Learning Centre, other Sefton Council departmental staff and local partners, such as Sefton Carers, Merseyside Police and Sefton CVS.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications.

Equality Implications:

A number of courses – Equality and Diversity Awareness, Hate Crime Awareness, Unconscious Bias, etc, raise equality issues and actively promote equality.

Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	N
Have a neutral impact	Y
Have a negative impact	N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: YES
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: YES
Commission, broker and provide core services: N/A
Place – leadership and influencer: YES
Drivers of change and reform: YES
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: N/A
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

- A Member Development Survey seeking Councillors' feedback on the Member Development Programme 2021-2022
- The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD6762) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD6764) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

North-West Employers have provided advice about the Council's working towards a Member Development Charter.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the Council meeting.

Contact Officer:	Ruth Appleby
Telephone Number:	0151-934 2181
Email Address:	Ruth.appleby@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

The following Appendix is attached to this report:

- Appendix 1- Member Induction Programme 2022

Background Papers:

The following background papers which are not available on the internet can be accessed via the Council's intranet:

- Guidance for Councillors Handbook - 2021-2022 [Guidance For Newly Elected Members Handbook For Councillors 2021/2022](#)
- Member Development Programme Handbook 2021-2022 [Member Development Programme Handbook 2021-2022](#)
- Course Participation Statistics 2021-2022 [Member Development Programme](#)
- Individual Course Feedback Summaries for courses held remotely and face-to face [Document Individual Course Feedback 2021 2022](#)
- Member Development Programme 2021-2022 Survey Feedback Results [Survey Results 2021 2022.pdf](#)

1. **Introduction/Background**

The Member Development Programme was launched as a result of recommendations arising from the LGA Peer Review in 2018.

A report to Cabinet on 19 January 2019, set out the LGA action plan, including an action to “Develop the role of all members in a changing context for local government and a changing model of delivery locally”. Work on the Member Development Programme commenced in 2019 with a view to launching the programme following the elections in 2020.

Working closely with the, Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Resources, a report - ‘Briefing on proposals for induction of newly elected members and continual member development’ was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 5 November 2019.

The following proposals were outlined in the report:

- Production of a Guidance for Newly Elected Members Handbook – Providing information for Members (and continuing Members).
- A revamp of the Member Induction Programme to include introductory ‘bite sized’ videos from each Head of Service to support members in becoming familiar with key officers.
- Provision of a Member Development Programme of Courses to support new and continuing Members in their role as a Councillor, involving production of a handbook containing full details of all courses offered.
- Newly Elected Members being given access to the Council’s Learner Management System - ‘Me Learning’, in order that Members may access Sefton’s e-Learning resources such as information compliance and the Office 365 suite of training modules.
- An intranet page (Library) be developed for Member Development where resources and information can be accessed.

2. **Preparation and Planning**

Planning and preparation for the launch of the Member Development Programme involved:

1. Assigning a dedicated Democratic Services Officer to lead and work on the Member Development Programme.
2. Planning meetings between Democratic Services and Corporate Learning Centre staff in provision of courses to be accessed via on-line e-learning, virtual/remote via Microsoft Teams and face to face sessions.
3. Support from Strategic Support/Comms colleagues in production of the 2 Member handbooks.
4. Support from the Corporate Communications Manager in planning and preparing for the Induction Programme – in particular, production of

- 'bite sized' videos of Executive Directors and Heads of Service.
5. Creation of a dedicated Member Development Library on the Intranet to enable Members to access Member development material such as course slides and Member Development Handbooks.
 6. Liaison with Executive Directors and Service Heads in production of the Guidance for Newly Elected Member Handbook.
 7. Liaison and close working between Democratic Services, course providers and CLC colleagues in scheduling and preparing for respective courses listed in the Member Development Handbook.
 8. Liaison and close working with ICT department and political group PAs for the swift supply and distribution of Council laptops to new Members following 2021 election, which was crucial for the success in their being able to function as a Councillor.
 9. On-going liaison with the Cabinet Member, Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Resources on the content of the programme.

3. Impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic

As indicated in 1 above, the launch of the Member Development Programme was initially planned to take place in May 2020. However, the onset of the Covid pandemic in March 2020, the subsequent lockdown and the postponement of the 2020 Elections meant that the Induction of New Members and the Member Development Programme did not take place that year.

Following the easing of lockdown restrictions and the announcement by the Government that the Elections would take place in May 2021, work continued with the preparation and development of a Member Induction and Development Programme which was launched in May 2021.

4. Member Induction

Member Induction in 2021-2022 comprised 2 main aspects and the Induction Programme for 2022-2023 will follow the same format, namely:

1. One-to-one (face-to-face) meet up with Democratic Services Staff to introduce Members to the Council and for completion of forms, etc., and provision of Induction Information Packs.
2. Induction Programme

As set out in Appendix 1 to the report, the 2022 Induction Programme will be held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 12 May 2022 and will involve introductions by the Chief Executive and the respective Executive Directors. The Service Area Heads will each provide 'bite sized' video introductions to their service areas.

The supply of Council laptops to new Members will be essential to the success of the Induction Programme and to be able to commence in

their new role with immediate effect.

A key component of the induction programme will be a slot delivered by the Corporate Learning Centre on accessing e-learning courses on the Council's Me-Learning website.

5. **Councillor Handbooks**

In 2021-2022 - 2 key documents were produced and distributed to support Councillors in their role as Sefton Councillors and on-going development.

Namely:

1. Guidance for Newly Elected Members Handbook 2021-2022
2. Member Development Programme Handbook 2021-2022

Both documents are currently being updated for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year.

Electronic and paper copies were provided to newly elected Members at their Induction and copies were emailed to continuing Members. Copies were also made available on the Council's Intranet web library at the above links.

Both of the handbooks are 'living' documents - continually evolving and being amended in response to changes to Council personnel, addition of new courses, etc.

5.1 **Guidance for Newly Elected Members Handbook**

Link:

[Guidance For Newly Elected Members Handbook For Councillors 2021/2022](#)

This handbook provides a guide to Members to help them in their first weeks and continuance as a Sefton Councillor. The document provides information about Sefton, the Core Vision, Core Purpose and Framework for Change, responsibilities of elected Members, Code of Conduct, the decision-making process/Committees, the political management structure, local government finance and so on. The handbook also provides information and contact details for the respective service areas.

As previously indicated, this document is a 'living' document and amended subject to changes in the Council, such as Council personnel.

5.2 **Member Development Handbook -**

Link: [Member Development Programme Handbook 2021-2022](#)

This document contains a programme of courses to provide Councillors with a

steady stream of information to support them in their role as a councillor.

In 2021-2022 the majority of courses were offered in-house with training delivered by service providers and CLC trainers at no additional cost to the Council.

Exceptions were:

- Overview and Scrutiny Training provided externally by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.
- An additional training session on the Council's new Code of Conduct was provided remotely on 13 September 2021 by Bethan Evans of Governance Training & Consultancy.

Courses were offered in a variety of teaching/learning formats – namely:

- Remote sessions (held via Microsoft Teams)
- via e-learning on the Council's Me-learning website
- face to face sessions – more recently following relaxation of Covid precautions.

Members were sent reminders about all of the courses 1-2 weeks before they were due to run. Teams/Calendar invitations were sent for remote courses and email reminders were sent about e-learning courses prior to recommended completion dates.

To maximise take-up, some of the courses were offered on more than one occasion and at different times (e.g. during the day and/or in the evening).

In the case of the mandatory Corporate Parenting Course, this session was held twice in 2021. However, to maximise take-up, 3 more sessions were added and took place early in 2022. The handbook was updated to reflect these additions and Members were sent Teams invitations immediately after the New Year.

Some of the courses were requested by Members during the year and added to the programme accordingly – e.g. Culture, Values and Behaviours – Understanding Your Role as a Councillor, requested by Clthe – Cabinet Member – Regulatory Compliance and Corporate Resources and 'Dementia Friends' requested by the – Cabinet Member, Adult Social Care.

6. Corporate Learning Centre (CLC)

Information about all of the courses listed in the Member Development Handbook is also available on the CLC website and Members have individual learning profiles providing a history of the courses they have undertaken to date. Guidance on accessing the CLC website is provided as part of the Member Induction Programme and the CLC are also available to help individual Councillors on request.

7. **Accessibility of Courses**

As previously indicated, sessions are run in a variety of formats – e-learning, sessions held remotely via Teams and face to face (where possible given Covid restrictions).

Information is provided in accessible formats and Members experiencing difficulties accessing course information are accommodated (e.g. course material provided on yellow paper for members with dyslexia).

ICT support

Members of the CLC Team and Democratic Services staff are available to help Members experiencing difficulties accessing remote and e-learning courses and their learning records. Also, one-to-one stand-alone ICT training sessions for any Members requiring additional support with basic IT skills are provided on request.

8. **Monitoring Participation - 2021-2022 Course Take-up**

Take-up statistics for courses held remotely and face to face in 2021-2022 can be viewed in the graphs at the following link: [Member Development Programme](#)

This document includes take-up statistics for the respective political groups.

9. **Monitoring Member Satisfaction - Evaluation of Courses 2021-2022**

9.1 **Courses held Remotely and Face-to-Face**

Feedback on courses held remotely and face to face was obtained via on-line forms made available to attendees (together with presentation slides for remote and classroom courses) immediately after each course. Feedback on the individual courses run can be viewed at the following link: [Document Individual Course Feedback 2021 2022](#)

9.2 **E-Learning Courses**

We also captured evaluation feedback for **e-learning** courses and below are some comments provided by Members:

Equality and Diversity Awareness

- “training is great but interactive sessions may be good as reading things aloud and discussing can further aid understanding. Also, it is good to challenge discrimination and we all should, but only safely, so training on that would be good too”.

Safeguarding Adults Awareness

- “Good course around a difficult subject”.
- “Better if these things are more interactive”.

Safeguarding Children Awareness

- “Thank you for the detailed and informative talk”
- “I thought this was very informative and very well put together”

Unconscious Bias

- “Interesting course to complete”
- “Would be good for this course to be mandatory”.

9.3 Mandatory Courses

Some of the courses were designated mandatory:

Namely:

- Planning Committee Training (statutory requirement) (Remote – Teams session)
- Licensing Committee Training (statutory requirement) Face to face session
- Information and Compliance (e-learning)
- Safeguarding Adults (e-learning)
- Safeguarding Children (e-learning)
- Corporate Parenting (Remote Teams Sessions)

Feedback on whether these courses should be classed as mandatory has been mixed and in some cases was fed back via direct email communications with Democratic Services. For example, some Members objected vociferously to non-statutory courses being classed as ‘mandatory’; whilst other Members felt that more courses should be mandatory for Members (e.g. Equality and Diversity Awareness and ‘Unconscious Bias’).

9.4 Member Development Programme 2021-2022 Feedback Survey

9.4.1 In December 2021 Councillors were asked to complete an **on-line** feedback survey on the whole of the Member Development programme to help gauge Member satisfaction and opinion to inform development of the programme for 2022-2023.

Paper copies of the survey were also handed out for completion by Members at the full Council meeting on 3 March 2022.

The survey closed on 7 March 2022 and 38 responses were received.

This response was disappointing, especially as the deadline for completion of the on-line survey had been extended **three times** to encourage more Councillors to participate in the survey.

9.4.2 Survey results

- The survey summary report can be viewed at the following link: [Survey Results 2021 2022.pdf](#)

Analysis and comment on the Survey:

	Comment /Action for 2022/2023 programme
<u>Overall Programme / Handbook</u>	
Q1 – 37 of the 38 respondents indicated that they thought the Member Development Programme 2021 -2022 was of benefit	Continue to run the Member Development Programme
Q2 – 35 respondents found the Member Development Handbook helpful. Suggestion was made that hard copies should be distributed	Copies of the 2022/23 Member Development Handbook to be distributed to Members via email (and made available on-line) with paper copies provided to Members on request.
Q3 – 21 Respondents thought more of the courses should have run in 2022 (as opposed to 2021). However, it should be noted that the take-up for courses which ran in January to March 2022 was significantly lower than in 2021 with 2 remote sessions having had to be cancelled due to poor take-up.	2022/2023 programme to follow same format as in 2021/2022
Q4 – 35 respondents thought the frequency of courses was suitable	2022/2023 programme to follow same frequency as in 2021/2022
Q5 – 36 were happy with the variety of courses offered	2022/2023 programme to follow same format as in 2021/2022, with new/additional courses offered if requested (subject to resources)
<u>Accessibility of courses</u>	
Q6– 33 respondents felt they had received adequate support accessing the courses, 5 said they felt that they had partly received adequate support	Continue to offer ongoing support to Members in accessing courses

Q7– 36 respondents found emails reminding them about courses helpful	Continue to send email reminders about upcoming courses
Q8 - 35 said they were easily able to access e-learning	Continue to offer support to Members in accessing e-learning. The Member Development Handbook includes a Guide to Accessing e-learning courses.
Q9 – 14 respondents agreed that non-mandatory e-learning courses should have a recommended completion date - 24 said not	The completion date for non-mandatory is recommended only , but not enforced
Q10 – 37 found courses held remotely via Microsoft Teams accessible	No change
Q11 – 28 thought courses should be held more than once, 5 thought not and 5 were undecided	Offer courses more than once on request / if required – subject to resources
<u>Mandatory Courses</u>	
Q12 the majority of respondents agreed that the following courses should continue to be designated mandatory as indicated below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Parenting – 34 • Information and Compliance - 21 • Safeguarding Adults Awareness – 24 • Safeguarding Children and Young People – 29 	Recommend continuation of mandatory designation
Q13 – 24 respondents agreed that mandatory courses should have a deadline for completion. 14 said not.	Mandatory courses to continue to have a completion deadline date (although this is difficult to enforce). Suggest that the courses run annually.
Q14 Although it only received 16 indications that it should be mandatory - additional comments were received about the importance of Equality and Diversity Awareness training being mandatory for Councillors in line with policy for Council staff.	Suggest that a Member Development Steering Group (see para 10.2 below) give further consideration to Equality and Diversity Awareness training being mandatory for Members.

<p>Q15 – the following responses were received indicating that training should be mandatory for members of the following Committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Audit and Governance – 15 ➤ Overview and Scrutiny – 18 ➤ Health and Wellbeing – 8 ➤ No response -15 	<p>Training for these Committees to be included in the Member Development Programme but not mandatory.</p> <p>Audit and Governance Committee Members receive on-going training and development prior to each quarterly meeting.</p>
<p>Q16 – the majority of respondents felt that Code of Conduct Training should be offered annually with an equal split of 18 respondents saying it should be mandatory and 18 that it should be non-mandatory. 5 did not think Code of Conduct training should be offered annually.</p>	<p>Code of Conduct training is provided as part of the Induction Programme for new members.</p> <p>Recommend that Code of Conduct training is also made available annually for all members as part of the Member Development Programme, but is not designated mandatory</p>
<p>Q17 – A number of suggestions were given on how to encourage Member take-up of courses as detailed in the survey</p>	<p>A Member Development Steering Group (see para 10.2 below) to take on board suggestions and consider how to improve course take-up.</p>
<p>Q18 – the following suggestions were made for future Member Development themes/courses.</p>	<p>Member Development Steering Group (see para 10.2 below) to take on board suggestions for the development of future programmes.</p>
<p>Q19 – all of the respondents indicated that they felt better informed after taking part in the programme.</p>	
<p>Q20 – the following additional comments were received.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It should be stressed that courses are for learning not a way of bringing issues to officers or for political point scoring.” • “I think it is great – even courses I am repeating are reassuring and there is so much to learn. I also really like to see other Councillors in the sessions as well as getting to know 	<p>Member Development Steering Group / Democratic Services to take on board and give further consideration to the comments and suggestions.</p>

<p>trainers/officers better.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Only to say thank you to the officers involved.” • “In every job I have had I have had to take part in a professional development program. At the very minimum, Councillors should be able to demonstrate an understanding of safeguarding, equality and diversity and their role and responsibility as corporate parents.” • “Having been on Planning so far I believe some element of planning training should be mandatory to all Councillors to better inform them and give them an understanding of process” • “It’s easier to do remotely” • “A survey of 21 questions is going the wrong way. Ask a maximum of 5 questions, beyond this and people are disengaged.” • “We can always learn new ideas.” 	
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10. Member Development Strategy 2022/2023

In addition to rolling out a Programme of Courses for Members in 2022-2023, taking on board feedback survey results, 2 key actions are proposed namely:

10.1 Working towards Achieving the North-West Member Development Charter

The aim of the Member Development programme is to support and develop councillors to enable them to fulfil the vital role they play working with and supporting local communities.

The North-West Member Development Charter provides an established framework to help the Councils undertake a self-assessment to develop and review good practice the principles contained within the Charter.

To start the accreditation process, the Council would sign a declaration to demonstrate its commitment to the principles of the Charter and using the charter framework, build a portfolio to practically demonstrate this commitment and show that it has met all of the requirements. This would be followed by an external assessment before being awarded the charter.

The Council previously achieved the Charter in 2014, but this lapsed after 3 years, following Council cutbacks which led to the post of dedicated Member Support Officer post not being replaced when the post holder left the Council and the Member Development Charter was not progressed.

Key advantages to the Council in working toward and achieving the Member Development Charter are:

- The quality of councillor development is improved
- New councillors are better prepared for their roles and responsibilities
- Councillor progression is better enabled
- Helps ensure councillors can operate at their most knowledgeable, skilled and effective
- Increases councillors' competence and confidence
- Helps councillors navigate the ever more complex and demanding role and local government landscape
- Self-care and reflection for councillors through development and growth.
- Impact on all Partners
- Strengthens member-officer relationships
- Helps ensure effective top team political and managerial leadership
- Encourages robust and accountable decision making
- Helps ensure proactive succession planning
- Helps improve councillor diversity
- Enhances democracy and participation

10.2 Establishment of a Member Development Steering Group

A key aspect to working towards the Member Development Charter would be the establishment of a Member Development Steering Group.

This would be Chaired by the Cabinet Member, Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services and would also comprise membership from across all of the Council's political groups. It is suggested that the group Whips would be Members and any Councillors with a keen interest in Member development.

This would mean that Councillors would be at the heart of supporting and shaping member development taking into consideration the changing role of the Councillor.

A key function of the Member Development Steering Group would be to help

guide the Council's work towards achieving the North-West Member Development Charter, which would include consideration of the introduction of personal development plans and identification of key skills of Councillors and identification of suitable topics for future Member development courses.

Subject to approval of the formation of a Member Development Steering Group, the proposed Membership and Term of Reference would be delegated for approval by the Cabinet Member – Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.