

Report to:	Audit and Governance Committee	Date of Meeting:	Wednesday 20 March 2024
Subject:	Audit and Governance Committee Member Training and Development		
Report of:	Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Resources		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The Audit and Governance Committee held on 15 March 2023 gave approval for a programme of briefing sessions for Audit and Governance Committee Members and Substitutes to be held one hour (1.45 pm to 2.45 pm) prior to meetings of the Audit and Governance Committee.

This report provides:

- An update on the programme of briefings held for Audit and Governance Committee Members and Substitutes in 2023/24 detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.
- Proposals for the 2024/25 programme of briefing sessions, based on the recommended Core Areas of Knowledge for Audit and Governance Committee Members outlined by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.
- An update on the Treasury Management course which in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management code, will be provided annually with a required attendance by Members and Substitute Members of Audit and Governance Committee
- Proposal for the Treasury Management course to continue to be offered to **all Councillors** in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code and included in the Member Development Handbook as part of the Council's Member Development Programme 2024-2025.

Recommendation(s):

That Audit and Governance Committee is requested to:

- (1) Note the update and attendance at the programme of briefings held for Audit and Governance Committee Members and Substitutes in 2023/24 detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.
- (2) Approve the proposed Audit and Governance Committee schedule of member development briefings to be held from 1.45 to 2.45 pm prior to meetings of the Audit and Governance Committee in 2024-2025 and 2025-26 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.
- (3) Note that the briefing topics listed in Appendix 2 are to be provided in accordance with CIPFA identified core areas of knowledge required of Audit and Governance Committee Members.
- (4) Authorise the Democratic Services Officer to amend the schedule of briefings set out in Appendix 2, in consultation with the Chair of Audit and Governance Committee, to meet any changing circumstances such as facilitator non-availability.
- (5) In line with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code, note that all Members and Substitutes of the Audit and Governance Committee will be required to attend the Treasury Management session to be provided annually by the Council's Treasury Management Consultants.
- (6) In line with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code, approve the continued inclusion of an additional 'Treasury Management' training session provided by the Council's Treasury Management Consultants, for all Councillors as part of the Member Development Programme 2024-2025.
- (7) Endorse the importance of Audit and Governance Committee Members and Substitutes 'buying into' and showing commitment to training and development.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

CIPFA emphasises the importance and good practice of providing ongoing training and development for Audit and Governance Committee members and recommends that authorities establish a programme of support that provides regular briefings /formal training programme.

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

To not provide Audit and Governance Committee Member development would limit the capacity for Members to effectively participate and contribute at meetings.

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):	
None directly – most of the briefings will be undertaken ‘in-house’ facilitated by Council Officers.	
Briefings provided by external providers, such as Ernst and Young (EY) (External Auditors) and Arlingclose (Treasury Management consultants) are incorporated in their ongoing fees and charges and will therefore incur no additional costs.	
Legal Implications:	
There are no legal implications.	
Equality Implications:	
There are no equality implications.	
Impact on Children and Young People: No	
Climate Emergency Implications:	
The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	No
Have a neutral impact	Yes
Have a negative impact	No
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Yes

Contribution to the Council’s Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable:
Training undertaken by Audit and Governance Committee Members will help to provide them with requisite skills and knowledge for effective decision making in helping to protect the most vulnerable.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:
Training undertaken by Audit and Governance Committee Members will help to provide them with requisite skills and knowledge for effective decision making in helping to facilitate confident and resilient communities.

<p>Commission, broker and provide core services:</p> <p>Training undertaken by Audit and Governance Committee Members will help to provide them with requisite skills and knowledge for effective decision making in helping to commission, broker and provide core services.</p>
<p>Place – leadership and influencer:</p> <p>Training undertaken by Audit and Governance Committee Members will help to provide them with requisite skills and knowledge reinforcing effective decision making as Place leaders and influencers.</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform:</p> <p>Training undertaken by Audit and Governance Committee Members will help to provide them with requisite skills and knowledge for effective decision making in helping to drive change and reform.</p>
<p>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:</p> <p>Training undertaken by Audit and Governance Committee Members will help to provide them with requisite skills and knowledge reinforcing effective decision making to help facilitate sustainable economic prosperity.</p>
<p>Greater income for social investment:</p> <p>Training undertaken by Audit and Governance Committee Members will help to provide them with requisite skills and knowledge reinforcing effective decision making for provision of greater income for social investment.</p>
<p>Cleaner Greener:</p> <p>Training undertaken by Audit and Governance Committee Members will help to provide them with requisite skills and knowledge reinforcing effective decision making for ensuring a cleaner greener Sefton.</p>

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD7606/24) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5706/24) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

None

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting

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Appendices:

- **Appendix 1** Audit and Governance Committee Briefing Sessions held in 2023/24 and Number of Attendees
- **Appendix 2** Proposed Schedule of Member Briefing Sessions for the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 Municipal Years - based on the CIPFA recommended Core Areas of Knowledge for Audit and Governance Committee Members.

Background Papers:

1. The CIPFA document -'Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police – 2022 edition' setting out best practice for audit committees, is referenced throughout the report. This can be accessed on the Council's website at the following link: [CIPFA Audit Committee Practical Guidance](#)

1.0 Introduction / Background

1.1 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) recommends that regular briefings and training are essential to keep Audit and Governance Committee members up to date, confident and effective in their role.

1.2 CIPFA has outlined the following skills and functions of what an Audit and Governance Committee should be undertaking in the Public Sector:

- Good Governance and the Annual Audit and Governance Statement
- Internal Audit
- Risk Management
- Assurance Frameworks and Assurance Planning
- Value for Money and Best Value
- Countering Fraud and Corruption
- External Audit
- Financial Reporting
- Partnership Governance and Collaboration Agreements
- Governance and Ethical Values
- Treasury Management
- Standards – Breaches of the Member Code of Conduct

1.3 Based on these functions CIPFA has set out a list of core areas of knowledge required of the Audit Committee members to help meet the functions outlined above. In Sefton the Audit Committee is titled Audit and Governance Committee to reflect wider responsibilities for managing some governance issues and the Audit and Governance Committee briefing sessions aim to meet these required core areas of knowledge as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

1.4 The Audit and Governance Committee held on 15 March 2023 gave approval for a programme of briefing sessions for Audit and Governance Committee Members and Substitutes to be held one hour (1.45 pm to 2.45 pm) prior to meetings of the Audit and Governance Committee.

1.5 This report provides an update on 2023-2024 provision and proposals for the 2024-2025 programme.

2.0 Audit and Governance Committee Briefing Sessions held in 2023-2024

2.1 The Audit and Governance Committee held on 15 March 2023 approved topics for a proposed a rolling programme of briefing sessions for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 Municipal Years. During the course of 2024/24 some the dates for some of the topics had to be changed due to the non-availability of presenters and some of these are now included in the 2024/25 programme.

2.2 Appendix 1 to the report provides a list of briefing sessions run so far in 2023-2024 and the number of Members who attended. Substitute Members did not take up the opportunity to attend any of the sessions.

3.0 Proposed Audit and Governance Committee Briefing Sessions for 2024-2025 and 2025-2026

- 3.1 Appendix 2 to the report sets out the proposed programme of Audit and Governance Committee Briefings for 2024/25 and 2025/26 Municipal Years. The topics listed aim to satisfy the functions of the Audit and Governance Committee identified by CIPFA detailed in paragraph 1.2 above and the core areas of knowledge (detailed in the Appendix against each topic) required of the Audit Committee members to help meet these functions.
- 3.2 There will be occasions where for various reasons – usually the availability of the training facilitator, that the sessions will be provided on different dates to those set out in Appendix 2. In such instances the Democratic Services Officer will change the dates for the session in consultation with the facilitators concerned and the Chair of Audit and Governance Committee.

4.0 Treasury Management

- 4.1 The CIPFA Code relating to Treasury Management, training states that:

“The responsible officer will ensure that board/council members tasked with treasury management responsibilities, including those responsible for scrutiny, have access to training relevant to their needs and those responsibilities.....and those charged with governance recognise their individual responsibility to ensure that they have the necessary skills to complete their role effectively”

- 4.2 In response to the CIPFA Code, it is proposed that Audit and Governance Committee Members and Substitutes will be required to attend the Treasury Management training session to be provided annually prior to the March meeting of the Committee. The Council’s Treasury Management Consultants will provide this training.
- 4.3 As indicated in 4.1 above, treasury management responsibilities affect the work of all Councillors and in response to this, the Audit and Governance Committee held on 15 March 2023 gave approval for the provision of Treasury Management training for all Councillors as part of the Sefton Council’s Member Development Programme. A Treasury Management course will therefore continue to be offered to all Councillors (in addition to that provided to Audit and Governance Committee Members) and will be included in the Member Development Handbook for the 2024/25 Municipal Year. This training will also be provided by the Council’s Treasury Management Consultants.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 CIPFA stresses the importance of Audit and Governance Committee Members being committed to and ‘buying into’ training and development regardless of previous knowledge and skills they had when they joined the committee; ensuring that their knowledge is kept up to date, giving them more confidence and understanding of their role as Audit and Governance Committee members and helping to facilitate effective participation and decision making at meetings.
- 5.2 Given the emphasis by the CIPFA Code relating to Treasury Management, it is proposed that Treasury Management Training will be provided annually and Members and Substitute Members of the Audit and Governance Committee will be

required to attend this session.

5.3 Treasury Management training will also continue to be available to all Councillors as part of the Council's Member Development Programme.

5.4 To further support Audit and Governance Committee Members, a comprehensive library of information is available in the Audit and Governance Committee folder found in the Mod Gov Library, comprising CIPFA information documents and slides from Audit and Governance Committee member briefing sessions - accessed via the following link:

<http://smbc-modgov-03/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13922>