CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 25 MARCH 2020

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ORGANISATION

REPORT ON MEMBER INDUCTION, TRAINING AND MEMBERSZONE

EXEMPT INFORMATION

None

PURPOSE

This report provides an update to the Committee on:
- Feedback received from the Member Induction programme delivered at the start of this municipal year as agreed by the Committee at its meeting in July 2019;
- The Member Training programme which has been delivered during this municipal year, as well as feedback from Members on this training;
- Feedback on Members' utilisation and views on MembersZone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is requested to consider the following, and where appropriate make recommendations to Cabinet:

1. The member induction programme for 2020/21 to be reviewed, updated and implemented, noting that:
   1.1 the schedule of induction events should be made available to all election agents as early as possible before election day;
   1.2 any initial ICT training of newly elected members should be undertaken on a 1-2-1 basis;
   1.3 the importance of the induction training should be emphasised to all new members; in particular Safeguarding and Data Protection / FoI.
2. The member training programme for 2020/21 to be reviewed, updated and implemented, noting that:
   2.1 the schedule of training sessions should be made available to all councillors prior to the start of the municipal year, or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter;
   2.2 options to consider training sessions at alternative times of the day (day time / twilight / full day conferences) were not generally supported by the members who responded to the survey;
   2.3 shorter and interactive training sessions were recommended where practical;
   2.4 refresher IT training is available to all interested members and members should be encouraged to contact ICT support to arrange 1-2-1 support;
   2.5 training relevant to specific committee members such as planning, licensing and audit & governance should be scheduled to support members' attendance prior to members making decisions at such

committees;

2.6 the use of online training as an alternative to face-to-face training was not generally not supported;

2.7 members who responded considered that the training programme covered the correct topics, although some members requested more formal training, perhaps utilising external training bodies;

2.8 all members who responded to the question, felt that the training programme had helped them understand their role and responsibilities as a Councillor and the work of the Council.

3. All members to be reminded of the importance of attending training sessions and in particular members of the regulatory committees are reminded of the importance in attending scheduled regulatory training sessions.

4. Consideration be given as to whether to recommend that member training records of training sessions attended be published on the Council website on the grounds of openness and transparency.

5. New members to be actively encouraged to attend the Local Government Association regional event for new councillors.

6. New members will be invited to a meeting with the Leader of the Council and the Mayor.

7. Members to be encouraged to access and use MembersZone regularly which will continue to be updated and the content widened.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During 2018/19 the Committee set up working groups to address support for new and existing members, which split into three sub-groups covering:

- Member induction
- ICT Support to members; and
- Information exchange with members

The Member induction and ICT support for members sub-group completed their work and made recommendations to Cabinet in February and April 2019. Following this, arrangements were rolled out at the start of the 2019/2020 municipal year to ensure a comprehensive induction programme was available to the 10 newly elected / re-elected members as well as ensuring that arrangements were in place to roll out appropriate ICT resources to those newly elected members who required it. A report to this Committee was received on these matters in July 2019 and an action to provide feedback from the newly elected / re-elected Councillors on their induction programme was agreed, and which this report addresses.

The work of the information exchange with members sub-group was deferred whilst further time was given to the implementation of MembersZone and to allow consideration of members' views on this implementation. It is intended that this sub-group would then determine their next steps, and any other areas where further work may be required. As a separate piece of work, a small project team has been formed comprising Councillors Dr S Peaple and S Goodall, the Executive Director Organisation and the Executive Director Communities to agree the further work required in order to further improve the dissemination of information to ward members. This project team has met and the plan for this work is ongoing and has been fully consulted on and agreed by the team.

1   Feedback on Member Induction

An interim update on member induction was received by this Committee in July 2019.

A survey was issued to the 10 newly / re-elected Councillors in August 2019 and responses were received from only 5 members.

The results from the survey responses can be summarised as follows:

No.		Question area	Results RAG	Notes / Actions
1		Communication with candidates re Induction programme dates pre-election		Ensure for 2020 that Induction dates are made available to all candidates
2		Initial meetings with new councillors		
	2a	Key Council Officers		
	2b	Leader & Mayor		A majority of responders were not introduced to the Leader or Major
3		Induction training (face-to-face)		
	3a	Attendance levels		High attendance levels amongst 5 responders to survey
	3b	Welcome – Vision overview session		Positive feedback
	3c	IT Training sessions		Implement 1-2-1 IT training
	3d	LGA Event – Hitting the Ground Running (Birmingham)		Positive feedback
	3e	Data Protection and FoI training session		Positive feedback
	3f	Safeguarding training sessions		Positive feedback
	3g	Member Code of Conduct Standards		Positive feedback
4		Induction training (online)		
	4a	Completion levels		Mixed completion rates for online training amongst responders
	4b	Data Protection online		Positive feedback
	4c	Freedom of Information		Positive feedback
	4d	Cyber-Security		Positive feedback
	4e	Safeguarding		Positive feedback
5		Provision of IT Devices		A responder reported a problem with the IT device issued
6		IT Support		Positive feedback
7		Tour of Marmion House		More time to be spent on 2nd Floor

8	MembersZone		Positive feedback
9	Overall view of Induction programme		Positive, although acknowledgement that some issues need to be learnt over time.
10	Amount of formal training provided		No additional formal training requested

All feedback will be taken into account in preparing the 2020/21 Member Induction programme, as set out in the recommendations above.

2. Member Training Programme

A detailed Member Training programme was launched at the start of the municipal year and regularly updated with new events throughout the municipal year. The content of the programme was designed by looking at previous training provided in the Council, as well as the best practice which was followed at other councils. All training was open to all members, although in some areas the training was highlighted as essential for members of some committees (such as planning, licensing and audit and governance).

All members had access to the latest version of the Training programme through MembersZone.

The 2019/20 programme covered the following topics:

1. Planning training (essential for Planning Committee members however open to all other members)
2. Licensing training (essential for Licensing Committee members however open for all other members)
3. Safeguarding training (essential for all members)
4. Members Code of Conduct training (essential for all members)
5. Briefing for Councillors on Health Service Commissioning (recommended for all Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee members and open to all members)
6. Chief Executive Office Briefing (meet the team) (essential for all members)
7. Staffordshire Police Briefing (open to all members)
8. Keeping Safe – Health & Safety and Lone Working and HAT Policy Awareness (essential for all members)
9. Organisation (meet the team) (recommended for all members)
10. Equality & Diversity training (recommended for all members)
11. Finance (meet the team) (essential for all members)
12. Primary Care Briefing (open to all members)
13. Audit & Governance Committee training (essential for all members however open to all other members)
14. Communities (meet the team) (recommended for all members)
15. Treasury Management (Link Asset Services) (open to all members)
16. Members Seminar on Housing Repairs Contract (open to all members)
17. Capital Strategy (Link Asset Services) (open to all members)

Some members have also attended external training, including scrutiny training and training provided by the Local Government Association to newly elected Councillors.

In February 2020, all members were invited to complete a Survey regarding their experience of the Member Training programme and responses were received from 13 (out of a possible 30) members.

The results from the survey responses can be summarised as follows:

No.		Question area	Results RAG	Notes / Actions
1		Communication regarding dates in the Training Programme (before the start of the municipal year)	🟥	A majority of responders requested details of training dates before the start of the municipal year
2		Members' awareness that the Training programme is on MembersZone	🟩	Members are aware. More information below regarding MembersZone
3		Member training (face-to-face)		
	3a	Attendance levels	🟧	The attendance levels at training sessions varied. The maximum attendance level was just over 50%, and generally attendance averaged around 35% of the members
	3b	Planning Committee	🟩	Positive feedback
	3c	Licensing training	🟩	Positive feedback
	3d	Safeguarding training	🟩	Positive feedback
	3e	Member Code of Conduct	🟩	Positive feedback
	3f	Health Service Commissioning	🟩	Positive feedback
	3g	Chief Executive Office briefing	🟩	Positive feedback
	3h	Staffordshire Police Briefing	🟩	Positive feedback
	3i	Keeping Safe – health & safety and Lone Working and HAT Policy	🟧	Limited numbers fed back on this
	3j	Organisation briefing	🟧	Limited numbers fed back on this
	3k	Equality & Diversity	🟩	Positive feedback
	3l	Finance	🟩	Positive feedback
	3m	Primary care Briefing	🟧	Limited numbers fed back on this
	3n	Audit & Governance training		No feedback provided
	3o	Communities	🟩	Positive feedback
	3p	Treasury management	🟩	Positive feedback
	3q	Members Seminar on Housing Repairs Contract	🟧	Limited numbers fed back on this
	3r	Capital Strategy	🟧	Limited numbers

			 	fed back on this
4		Current training programme coverage	 	Over 90% positive response
5		Views on utilisation of online training methods	 	75% preferred face – to face. However, there was support for online to be an option for all training provided
6		Effectiveness of training programme in understanding roles & responsibilities	 	All responders felt the training programme had helped the understanding of the councillor role
7		Amount of formal training	 	Mixed almost 50/50 response to whether more formal training required. Possibly use LGA courses more.
6		Views on Refresher IT training	 	50/50 response on whether more refresher IT training wanted. Recommend inviting members to contact ICT.
7		Timing of Member Training sessions	 	Most responders appeared to prefer 6pm start to the various other options proposed; twilight (4-6pm) day time, full day conferences
8		Publication of Councillor attendance at training courses	 	Mixed response (see details below)

Records of member attendance at the training sessions are retained by the HR team.

Members were asked for their view on publishing members' attendance at training sessions on the Council's website and the response was fairly evenly split (55% in favour, 45% against publication). The reasons in support of publication can be summarised as to demonstrate a member's commitment to learning and taking responsibility for own training as well as promoting openness and transparency. The reasons for not publishing include the fact that external training (employment related) would not be taken into account, that it may give the appearance that the member is not doing their job and this is not the case, and that training is voluntary. Consideration of publication of councillor training records is on the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee work plan.

Members were also asked to provide their views on the training sessions provided and comments made included:

- Keeping training sessions shorter and interactive where possible. The use of case studies / workshops was appreciated in some training sessions;
- There appeared to be a general preference to keep training face to face in order that questions can be asked and answered during the training;
- Access to the slides and presentation materials was appreciated.

3. MembersZone

MembersZone was developed as an area on the Council's intranet, where members could access relevant information in one single place, and therefore simplify communication channels for general information.

MembersZone has the following pages:

- Home – Welcome to MembersZone
- Members Bulletin - includes Mayoral Diary and Planning Applications, Starters and Leavers
- Contacts -includes key Officer contact details and Organisational Charts
- FAQs
- Induction section
- Training section – which includes the updated Member Training programme, together with copies of presentations used (where available)
- Useful Documents – includes certain key policies, guidance, ward profiles and forms which members may need to claim mileage and declare gifts and hospitality.

In addition MembersZone has Quick Links to other key areas for members such as the Council Meetings agenda and Reports (ModGov), InfoZone for all other Council relevant information, the Safeguarding area (with all relevant contact details for any safeguarding concerns) and the Council's external website. A review of the appropriateness of these Quick Links will be undertaken following the feedback received.

Data has been collected on the number of hits on each area of MembersZone since its launch in June 2019, so that it is possible to understand those areas of most interest. The data collected includes all hits by Councillors as well as by Officers (who can also access this area). The data is shown in Figure 1 below:
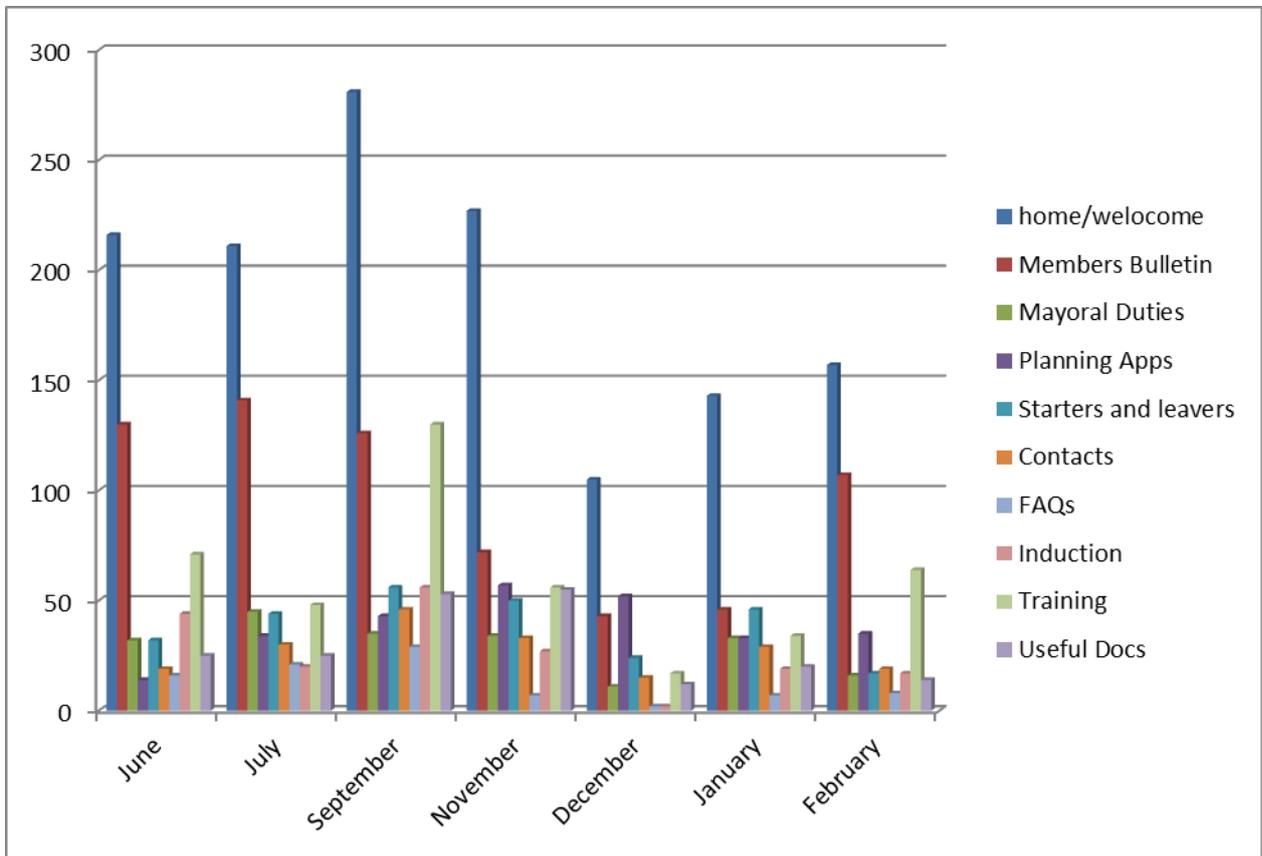
Figure 1.

As can be seen from the above data, the home page (where most users will initially navigate to), the Members Bulletin and the Training pages appear to be the most popular. It is also worth noting that the use of MembersZone has declined since it was first launched.

In addition, in the Member Training survey, members were specifically asked about their use of MembersZone. As can be seen from Figure 2 below, the use made by the individual members who responded (please note 13 members responded) is quite variable, although most members have made some use. It is unknown how much use is made of MembersZone by those members who did not respond to the Survey.
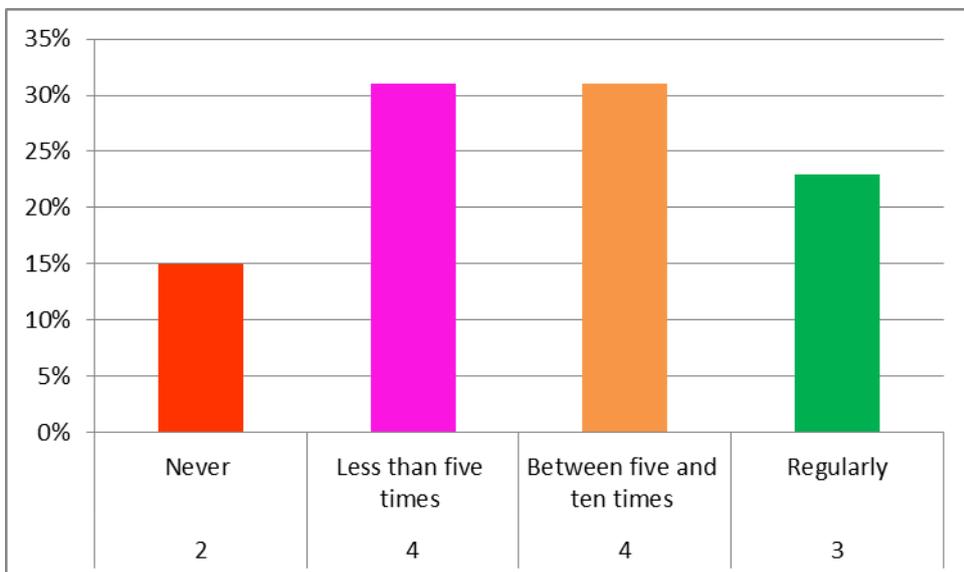

Figure 2.

Members also provided comments on those areas they found most useful and areas of potential future development. These are summarised below:

- Some members commented that they did not use MembersZone due to the fact that it required them to access it via a Council device and/or via using remote access software;
- Some members found all areas useful and reported that they used it to keep up to date with meeting dates, committee meeting details, media releases, planning applications, mayoral duties and licensing applications;
- Some members reported that they would like it to include; policy documentation, details of planning applications, Licensing applications and an updated Officer contact list;
- One member requested the return of e bulletin.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

In terms of the timing of Member Training and the publication of Member Training records, the survey sought member's views and these have been taken into account in the recommendations made.

RESOURCE AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Existing staff resources from Democratic Services, HR, ICT PR, Communications and across the Council have been utilised to support the implementation of the member induction programme, training programme and roll-out and updating of MembersZone and the additional ICT support to members.

Consideration may need to be given to the member training budget for 2020/21. The current budget for member training in 2019/20 is £3k, and £3.3k has been spent/committed (utilising other underspent budgets within the Training & Development cost centre).The budget for the next municipal year is £3k.

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND

None.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

The induction and training programme has been adapted in terms of time, place of delivery and method of delivery as well as the officers being able to provide additional support to members with specific needs.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

None

REPORT AUTHOR

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS
Report to Cabinet, 26 September 2019

Report to Corporate Scrutiny Committee, 10 July 2019
Report to Cabinet, 25 February 2019
Report to Cabinet, 11 April 2019

APPENDICES
None.