



## OFFICER REPORT TO COUNCIL

### ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL – MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

#### **KEY ISSUE/DECISION:**

1. Members play an essential role in setting, and maintaining, the strategic direction of the Council. They also act as community leaders and provide an essential interface between the Council and Surrey residents.
2. It is therefore important that the Council invests in the development of its Members, to enable them to perform their roles as effectively as possible.
3. This report provides an annual overview of the Council's approach to Member development, so that Members can be assured that the current approach is sufficient, equitable and effective.

#### **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP:**

4. All Member development activity is monitored by the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG). The MDSG is cross political and the current membership is Tim Oliver (Chairman), Nick Darby, Robert Evans, Chris Townsend and Hazel Watson.
5. The group meets informally, four to six times a year, overseeing the delivery of the Member Development Programme and other support issues.

#### **INDUCTION**

6. The successful delivery of the induction programme was a key priority of the MDSG in 2017/18. A survey was circulated to assess Members' experience of the induction programme, with 97% of Members rating it as good or excellent. The full results have been circulated to all members and are available on the Member Portal.

#### **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

7. 2017/18 has seen the introduction of a planned Member Development Programme, published three times a year. This has enabled a more strategic approach to scheduling Member development events, as well as giving Members greater notice of briefings and training, so that they can plan to attend. There has also been a greater emphasis on involving partners in the delivery of training events, with recent sessions including guest speakers from the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office and the Environment Agency.

## **MEMBER PORTAL**

8. 2017/18 also saw the introduction of a new Member Portal, designed to provide an online resource for Member information and training. One of the key benefits of the Portal is the ability to upload videos of briefings and training events, improving the accessibility of training for those Members who may have work or caring responsibilities. Site analytics show us that there is a spike in page views whenever a training video is uploaded to the portal, with over 20 unique visitors accessing the recent budget and business planning briefing after it was uploaded. However, accessibility remains a barrier to realising the full benefits of the portal and addressing this issue will be a priority for the next year.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF IN-HOUSE TRAINING COURSES**

9. In line with the Council's efforts to reduce unnecessary expenditure, there has also been a greater focus on developing training interventions in-house. For example, a number of Members have attended (and provided positive feedback for) our in-house 'Chairing Skills' course – something that we would have previously commissioned for delivery by an external provider.

## **CHARTER PLUS ACCREDITATION**

10. The Local Government Association (LGA) assesses the support and development that councils offer their Members through what is known as the 'Charter' scheme. In order to achieve Charter accreditation, councils have to prove that their Member development and support offer meets a required standard. Surrey County Council first became a Charter Council in 2011, and was re-assessed as meeting the standard in 2015. On March 5 2018, the Council was assessed as meeting the Charter **Plus** standard for member development and support. Surrey is one of only a handful of councils in the country that has met this higher level of accreditation.

## **PRIORITIES FOR 2018/19**

11. The MDSG has a number of priorities for 2018/19. These include:
12. **IT Device Refresh Project.** The MDSG have been overseeing this project, designed to find an IT offer than enables Members to perform their roles easily and effectively. The MDSG have been testing possible devices and will oversee the deployment of an improved IT offer from May 2018. They will also scrutinise the results of the annual Member IT survey, due to take place in October 2018. This will enable the MDSG to assess the effectiveness of the new offer and any further interventions that are required to improve Members IT experience.
13. **Development of the Member Portal.** Although the portal has improved the accessibility of the development programme, through offering sessions online, there is still opportunity to improve the site and increase its use by Members.
14. **Continued roll out of Member 1-1s.** In September 2017, Democratic Services introduced Member 1-1s in order to enable a tailored approach to supporting individual development needs. So far, 29 Members have participated in these sessions and the feedback has been extremely positive.

The intention is to offer Member 1-1s on an annual basis with a target of 60% of Members having participated in a session by the 2020.

**15. Delivering Member Development activities in partnership with District and Boroughs.** In line with the Council's People and Places approach, the MDSG will explore opportunities to deliver development events jointly with District and Boroughs. Doing so will enable a greater variety of training interventions and locations, whilst at the same time reducing costs and supporting greater partnership working.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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16. That Council endorses the current approach to Member development and agrees that it is sufficient, equitable and effective.

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