

From: Ben Watts, General Counsel
To: Member Development Sub-Committee, 14 September 2022
Subject: Member Development: Strategy and Work Programme
Status: Unrestricted

1. Introduction

- a) This paper is provided by way of background to the Members of this new sub-Committee. The General Counsel has variously spoken to Members from all political groups about Member development and the importance of ensuring that Members properly understood their role within the governance of the Council.
- b) In assisting Members in beginning this work, there will be a brief presentation at the start of the meeting to pick up some of the ideas discussed in outline with Members who have shown an interest in this area and to help Members to begin to frame their thoughts on the future work of this sub-committee. In short, it needs to begin somewhere!
- c) The creation of the Member Development Sub-Committee was agreed by County Council on 22 October 2020 and was aligned with a series of changes to the Terms of Reference of the Selection and Member Services (SMS) Committee aimed at enhancing the role of that Committee.
- d) The Sub-Committee essentially replaces the Member Development Steering Group. As set out below, the Steering Group did excellent work, but being an informal group had no formal reporting line and the creation of the Sub-Committee was intended to correct this, as well as introduce a clearer and more transparent framework around Member discussions on this important topic.
- e) As a reminder, the Terms of Reference¹ of this Sub-Committee are as follows:
 - 17.44 Membership: 8 Members.
 - 17.45 The role of this Sub-Committee is:
 - (a) to champion and promote the development of Members,
 - (b) to regularly review the Member Training and Development Strategy to ensure its relevance,
 - (c) to agree the Members' training and development plan annually including induction programmes in appropriate years,
 - (d) to monitor and evaluate the development programme for Members on an annual basis,

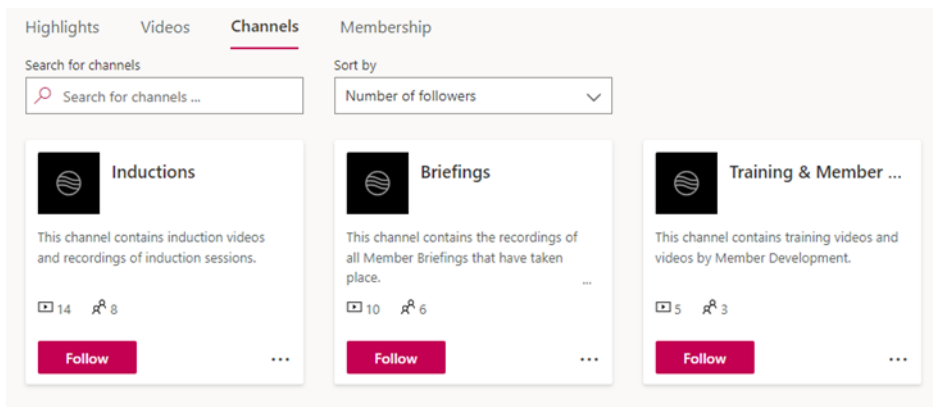
¹ Number references are to the Constitution at the time of writing.

(e) to support and encourage Members in maintaining the Member Development Charter Plus, and

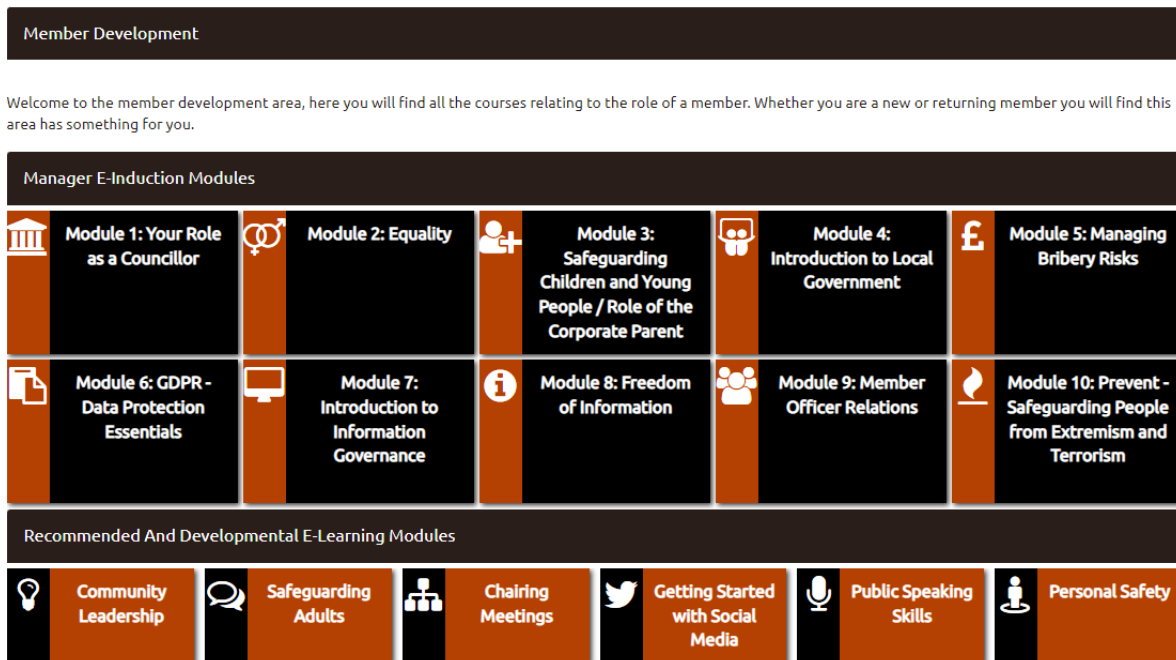
(f) to report to the Selection and Member Service Committee at least annually on progress of Member development.

2. Current Context

a) Both before and since the election, officers have continued to develop the framework within which Member support is delivered, and development signposting and opportunities have been built into this. On 25 November 2021, the SMS Committee received a presentation on the Member KNet pages². On these pages there is access to a “Video Area” consisting of three channels: “Inductions”, “Briefings” and “Training and Member Development” as below.



b) There is also a link on the Member KNet pages to the Member part of KCC’s Delta Learning and Development platform which, when accessed by Members, leads to the following display of options.



² <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=8778&Ver=4>

3. Member Development Plan

- a) On 18 October 2018, County Council agreed the “Strategic Member Development Plan 2018-2022.” This is appended to this report for reference. Work on this Development Plan was led by the Member Development Steering Group and it remains a useful document.
- b) However, the financial and operating environment of the Council, and the way Members work has altered in several significant ways since this Plan was agreed. There has been a significant shift in a relatively short space of time to a mixed virtual and in-person working environment. The impact of Covid continues to be felt and the budgetary assumptions have also altered. Member development has remained important, but the approach taken has necessarily altered. The established pattern of a comprehensive induction programme for Members post-election based in Sessions House had to be replaced with something more selective and training/development often delivered virtually. The Selection and Member Services Committee discussed the findings of a Member Induction Survey on 28 October 2021³. The hard work of staff in delivering this was recognised by Members, especially that of the Members Hub Team, however it was also recognised that there were necessarily some gaps and that this would be addressed in the future.
- c) As with their input into the existing Member Development Plan, it is appropriate for Members to lead the process of establishing what training needs Members have and the most appropriate way for that to be delivered.
- d) The current Plan (see Appendix) is closely aligned with the Council being awarded Charter Plus status by South-East Employers under the South-East Charter for Member Development. This was last awarded in 2017 and remained valid for three years. In 2020, the focus and priorities of the Council were on responding to the Covid pandemic. One of the requirements⁴ for Charter Plus status is “A process exists to identify individual development needs in the form of a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) or Personal Development Plans (PDP) and is working effectively.” Historically, despite committing resources to deliver this there hasn’t been full take up from Members in relation to this option.
- e) However, there are Members who would value having one, or an equivalent. In practice, any body of Members will contain a spread of views – from a minimalist approach through targeted training made available on clearly identifiable aspects of the Member role to opportunities for wider training and development of use beyond the Member role. Feedback from the work undertaken around the last election suggests that the opportunities for development were a factor for some people in considering whether to seek public office or not.
- f) Once elected, Members stress different aspects of the Member role with some, for example, taking on more Committee assignments. Members also take on different formal roles (Chairs, Group Leader, Cabinet Member etc.) and as the staff support differs according to which of these roles a Member has taken on, so perhaps the development offer may need adapting.

³ <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=8777&Ver=4>.

⁴ Set out in full at: <https://seemp.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/The-Councillor-Development-Charter-and-Charter-Plus-2020.pdf>

- g) There are currently four Committees that require relevant training to have been undertaken by Members and substitutes before being nominated to the Committee or a Sub-Committee/Panel. These are:
- Governance and Audit Committee
 - Personnel Committee
 - Planning Applications Committee
 - Regulation Committee
- h) Given views previously expressed by Members, there is currently no mandated training which all Members of the Council must undertake, although some, like GDPR, is strongly recommended. While some of this training is recommended as a means of protecting Members, it is also the case that not undergoing training is not an excuse or mitigation for, for example, breaching the Kent Code of Conduct, adherence to which Members remain individually accountable.
- i) Development captures a wider sphere than formal training. On discussing the Member Induction Survey, the SMS Committee discussed the feasibility of Members mentoring other Members. It was recognised that some of this mentoring would be political in nature and so the responsibility for this rested with Political Groups; and it was also recognised that mentoring activity did go on. It is an open question whether a formal framework is required.

4. Next Steps

- a) One of the formal roles of this Sub-Committee is “to support and encourage Members in maintaining the Member Development Charter Plus”. This was adopted into the Terms of Reference because achieving the Charter Plus is a public symbol of the authority’s commitment to Member development. The working practices of Members and the wider authority have altered substantially even in the short time since it was last awarded. It is appropriate that Members are able to consider this matter afresh and determine the future approach to Charter Plus.
- b) At the meeting, there will be the opportunity for officers and Members to discuss some of the potential sessions that are ready to be organised. Some of these are linked to the induction but it is important to get the shape of what Members feel is needed and the General Counsel has indicated that officers are very happy to advise and support but the view of Members is key to the development of a successful programme of activity.
- c) Having considered the background and current situation regarding Member Development, the strategic role of this Sub-Committee is to produce a replacement to the Strategic Member Development Plan for adoption by May 2023. To that end, the recommendation set out in the next section is put to this Sub-Committee:

5. Recommendation

The Member Development Sub-Committee is asked to do:

- a) Discuss and comment on this report.
- b) Agree an outline work programme for this Sub-Committee.
- c) Agree next steps in producing a new 4-year Member development plan.

6. Background Documents

Strategic Member Development Plan 2018-2022,
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s86882/Item%2013%20-%20Appendix%20-%20Strategic%20Member%20Development%20Plan.pdf>

7. Report Author and Relevant Director

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