MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP ACHIEVEMENTS 2017-18

REPORT OF: Terry Stanley, Democratic Services Business Unit Leader

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Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Customer Services & Service Delivery

Purpose of Report

At the Leader's request, to provide for information a brief summary of the Working Group's achievements in the period December 2017 – December 2018.

Background

1. At a meeting of the Member Development Working Group (MDWG) on 2nd November 2017, Members offered a vision for overall enhancement of the MSDC Member learning offer that it wished to see developed in the following 12 months.

2. The improvement brief for Officers suggested the following 3 key work streams:

2.1. Learning objectives to be set in advance of all Member learning sessions so that participants and the MDWG can evaluate how Members have benefitted.

2.2. Mindful that some Members work and have other commitments, additional learning methods be developed to provide Members with the flexibility to learn in other ways and at different times, in an effort to promote greater take-up.

2.3. New Member induction training to be reviewed and potential future developments to include; providing an understanding of the Council's service areas, how the business units contribute to the corporate plan and for consideration to be given to a 'New Member Mentoring' system.

Achievements

[Ref: 2.1]
3. Learning objectives are now set for each member learning opportunity and are promoted via the MIS. Each opportunity is clearly indicated to fall within one of the following categories; Committee/Regulatory (Essential), Core Knowledge (Important) and Councillor Skills (Recommended).

4. Following in-person sessions, Members are actively encouraged to immediately complete post-learning evaluation forms relating their experience to the objectives. Evaluations are collected by Democratic Services and the feedback is entered into a central log which is shared with the MDWG. The individual feedback forms are also shared with the Chairman and she actively reviews the content.

[Ref: 2.2]
5. In April 2018 we introduced the Learning Pool, an online platform used across the sector to host a variety of courses in a number of styles. Standard courses are tailored to meet specific Member requirements or entirely new courses are designed / commissioned (with costs involved).

6. The Learning Pool requires individual log-in and these have been provided to all Members. It is accessible on most devices.

7. A very well attended in-person training session on how to use the Learning Pool was provided to Members and graphical instructions were circulated. Some Members have received individual user support from Democratic Services.

8. Published Learning Pool modules now include; Using Social Media, Business Continuity, GDPR and Annotating PDF/Editing Word documents. Modules currently in development include Safeguarding Vulnerable People, Planning Application Decisions for Non- Planning Members and how to download and use the Council/Committee Member App.

9. In-person learning sessions delivered so far this year include; GDPR and being a Data Controller, Air Quality, PiP & Technical Details, Universal Credit, Planning Application Decisions for Non- Planning Members, Licensing, Council/Committee Member App and an update for Members on the District Council's housing role and responsibilities including the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Forthcoming learning sessions include; an overview of Parking Services.

10. Member learning opportunities are generally promoted via the MIS, though in-person sessions are also notified via email and by text. Reminders are also sent by text to Members a day ahead of the scheduled training.

11. Member attendance at in-person training is logged by Democratic Services and the MDWG monitors the report relating to both the number of Members that have attended the sessions and the attendance record of individuals.

    [Ref: 2.3]
12. As suggested by the MDWG, New Member induction training has been thoroughly redesigned and is the subject of a separate report.

13. Proposed new Member mentoring schemes are the preserve of political groups.

14. In addition, Democratic Services reviewed and redesigned the Council's public information document entitled 'Being a Councillor' with the aim of providing an updated resource for those considering standing for election in 2019. The MDWG took an active interest in its development and agreed its final content. This vastly improved publication is available via the Council's website: Being a Councillor

Conclusion

15. Introduction of the Learning Pool occurred 7 months ago and is being accessed by 22 Members. As a year one outcome this level of engagement is encouraging and is a good base from which to build with returning and new Members following the May 2019 elections. In-person learning session attendance has, as an average, doubled on the attendance levels of previous years.

16. It is evident that Member development in general has a higher profile as a result of work done in the past year and as a result Members are more engaged with it. Post learning evaluations provide much evidence that indicates quality learning outcomes have been achieved and Members feel more knowledgeable.