

SUBJECT: MEMBER INDUCTION REVIEW

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

LEAD OFFICER: CAROLYN WHEATER – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LEGAL AND CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES)

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To review the effectiveness of the member induction process for 2014/15.

2. Background

2.1 The Council is elected by thirds and so inductions for new members are held regularly. In order to limit the cost of the induction process, the majority of the events held are facilitated by officers.

2.2 The programme for the 2014/15 induction was split over two days and included the following events:

Tuesday, 27 May 2014

10:00 Formalities, including:

- Issuing of City Hall access cards
- Taking photographs for Council website and publicity materials
- Signing the acceptance of office

12:00 Lunch break

13:10 Meet the Officers I (officers from the departments with which councillors and the public deal most frequently will give short presentations on the Council's responsibilities and how to deal with any issues that may arise.)

15:00 Member Code of Conduct and Meeting Procedure Rules Briefing

16:00 Induction close

Wednesday, 28 May 2014

10:00 Introduction to Scrutiny Committees

11:00 Meet the Officers II

12:20 Lunch break

13:20 Introduction to Equality and Diversity

14:20 Meet the Officers III

15:45 Induction close

17:30 Planning Committee training

Monday, 2 June 2014

16:30 Meeting with Council directors

17:30 Licensing Committee training

2.3 The number of councillors newly elected to the Council in the May elections was four, with two having significant experience of working within the Council either as

an officer or a councillor.

3. Induction Process Review

- 3.1 Following the 2012 elections, member inductions were split over the course of two days. This included an initial day coordinated by officers and a further day with external local government trainers from the University of Birmingham. It had originally been planned to offer members the opportunity to attend a residential course for new councillors. However, following the cancellation of this event a local one-day session was arranged to take place several months into the new councillors' terms of office.
- 3.2 Wherever possible officers have sought to give new members the opportunity to attend relevant courses to help them in adjusting to their new roles. However, as the Council elects by thirds, this is often only feasible in years when sufficient local elections are taking place elsewhere for providers to offer the relevant courses. For 2014/15, no suitable external course was available.
- 3.3 The principal changes to the induction programme for 2014/15 included offering more advice about accessing Council services and the production of a considerably reduced and revised member induction pack. In particular, by extending the induction process over two days it was possible to give officers in key departments 20-30 minutes to brief new members on their service areas. It is hoped that this will give new councillors an increased awareness of how the Council operates and how to access services on behalf of residents.
- 3.4 The majority of feedback from new members has been positive, with a few suggestions for areas in which small improvements could be made. This included a request for increased use of handouts summarising the main points covered in individual sessions. This will be taken into account during the next set of inductions.
- 3.5 One of the new members with prior experience of the Council advised that a two-day induction programme was excessive and that a reduced number of events spread over a longer period would be preferable. This feedback is likely to a common factor for returning councillors, as their level of knowledge will almost inevitably be higher than that of councillors who are new to local government. However, it remains important to ensure that members who are new to local government are not offered a programme which is only suitable for those with previous experience.
- 3.6 As such, returning members will be encouraged to consider which induction sessions are likely to be appropriate to them. For 2014/15 inductions, a timetable was provided to all prospective councillors a month in advance of the induction days which should allow members an opportunity to consider which of the available areas are most appropriate to them.
- 3.7 As with previous inductions, participating members will be contacted for further feedback after a suitable period of time has elapsed to allow new members scope both to understand their role as a councillor and any means by which their induction could have been improved. Any feedback received will be factored into arrangements for future years.

4. Organisational Impacts

4.1 Finance

There are no financial implications from this report.

4.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications from this report.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 That members note the report and offer comments on the suitability of the 2014 induction process.