

## **2019 Member Induction Survey – Findings: Appendix 1**

### **Background**

Following the Local Elections in May 2019, an Induction Programme for all elected Members of West Devon Borough Council was undertaken. It was designed to act both as a refresher for re-elected Members and to inform newly elected Members about the operations of the Council and the role and responsibilities of Borough Councillors. It ran for approximately three months and was developed in consultation with the Member Development Steering Group.

The aim of the Programme was to help new Members to prepare for and settle in to their new role as quickly and as effectively as possible and to help build their confidence. In the design of the schedule, account was taken of the vast amount of information that needed to be conveyed, balancing this where possible with the time available for training. The 2019 Programme was also created to reflect feedback given on previous Induction Programmes.

In order to help gather the most accurate information on the Members' experience, a short survey was circulated to all Members. A total of 14 responses were received.

### **Findings**

Attached at Appendix A is a copy of the questionnaire complete with all the combined scores and comments made by Members; Appendix B includes a summary of the three month Programme and Appendix C is a review of the programme from Cllr Hipsey. In summary, overall the programme was generally well received with some useful suggestions made for inclusion in the design of future programmes.

### **Programme Content**

Question 1 sought Members' views on the content of the Programme and whether subjects were covered in enough depth or if they proved to be too challenging.

Overall Members indicated that they were generally happy with the level at which the sessions were pitched with all scores given in either the 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' bracket. Some Members reflected that the key sessions held on 10 May (as listed on the attached schedule) should have perhaps been revisited or had more time devoted to them and another suggested that a worksheet, particularly on key sessions, for Members to complete and/or refer to subsequently might have been useful. Some felt that a baseline of understanding, including the use of acronyms was presupposed, however, others felt that they were able to understand how the Council functioned following the sessions and were happy with the level of jargon used.

### **Delivery Style**

Members were asked whether or not there was enough variety in the content and delivery style of the sessions, whether the amount of Interaction was appropriate and whether or not the blend of internal (officer & Member) and external training provider was successful

Twelve of the 14 responders found that the sessions were generally presented in an interesting way although the comments received would suggest that this was not the case with several Members highlighting the issue that the Officers are not trainers and as such the aims and expectations of the sessions were not made clear, resulting in some key information being missed by the audience. Additionally, as experts in their field, sometimes leaps of understanding were made by the

presenters leaving some new Members struggling to keep up. Additionally, it was felt that different learning styles were not addressed.

Regarding the variety in content and training style, again 12 were happy with the training received, two were not, one of whom was particularly dissatisfied. Comments made reflected those of the previous question. Members were satisfied with the blend of training provision, liking the mix of Internal and external providers with all scores appearing in the top bracket of the ratings for this question.

In terms of interaction within the sessions, the scores from Members suggested that there was generally enough involvement for them in the training although their comments highlighted some shortcomings in this area. Interaction was deemed as 'the ability to ask questions' which was seen to disrupt the flow of the training in some cases. Other comments suggested that sometimes 'interaction' led to lengthy and off the point discussions which again disrupted and confused the training, particularly for new Members.

When asked to identify the sessions they found most interesting, Members highlighted the sessions held on 10 May, (as can be seen on the attached schedule) and those on Housing and Planning of most interest. In terms of those of least interest, a range of sessions were mentioned though Social Media/Media skills was only session to appear twice. In most cases this appeared to be a matter of personal interest or lack thereof in the subject matter rather than any fundamental problem with the training itself.

Overall the comments made reflected positively on the Member's interest in the sessions they attended.

### **Delivering Expectations**

Members were asked a series of questions related to whether or not their expectations were fulfilled in terms of their anticipated learning

Twelve scores in the 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' categories were received indicating that most of those who responded learned what they were expecting to learn during the Programme though it was suggested that highlighting the most important or essential sessions at the outset would have been very helpful. Cllr Hipsey's review at Appendix C summarises the reasons for the scores at the lower end of the scale.

Most Members felt that the Programme was generally well paced although two suggested that this was not the case, feeling it was a little rushed. The Officer Buddy System was generally well received in terms of scoring but some commented that they didn't know of or use the scheme, however those who did were very complimentary.

### **The Council's Approach to the Induction Programme**

An open question was asked at question 8, seeking Members' thoughts on what proved helpful during the programme and what changes they would make. Those who commented gave a general indication that the Programme worked well, with most stating they wouldn't change anything about the training, aside perhaps from the pacing of it – too much too fast; though one Member indicated that the programme lasted too long. Some felt that there was inadequate instruction on Fire evacuation and familiarisation with Kilworthy Park and another would have liked a more comprehensive directory, with photos, of key staff to assist them in their early weeks at the Council.

## **Overall Impressions**

At Question 9, separate questions were asked of new and returning Members, looking to identify for new Members which sessions proved the most useful in equipping them to undertake their new role as quickly and as confidently as possible and for returning Members how the 2019 programme compared to any others that they had attended in the past.

As would be expected, new Members found the early sessions of most benefit, the structure and Governance of the Council, the Committees, the IT sessions and the use of Modern Gov. They enjoyed too the shared experience of undertaking the journey with others.

For re-elected Members comparing the 2019 Programme with previous Inductions, the overarching comments indicated that although there were still improvements to be made, this year's Programme was certainly better than previous Inductions experienced.

## **Future Training**

The final question sought Members' immediate thoughts on what they would like to see included in the rolling programme of training undertaken throughout their term of office. The answers given will be considered by the Member Development Steering Group and, where appropriate, will make up part of the ongoing Training Programme for the 2019-2023 Council term

## **Overall Scores**

Given the opportunity to give their overall score of the Programme, twelve Members rated it Satisfactory or better providing comments supportive of their view. Two Members found it unsatisfactory for the following reasons

- Because I had to miss so much of it
- In summary:
  - Identify sessions that are 'Presentations' and those that are 'Training Sessions'. The approach to each should be fundamentally different.
  - Ensure that everyone involved in delivering sessions is properly trained to do so, at least to some extent.
  - Consider providing separate, additional, introductory sessions specifically for new members.
  - Get the projectors in the Main Council Chamber fixed!

## **Conclusion**

As can be seen from the scoring given, overall the Programme was well received and seen to have generally delivered on its requirement to prepare Members for their new roles and responsibilities. Many lessons have been learned and improvements made on past Induction programmes, however, there is always room for further improvement and delivery of training can be developed further in terms of content, variety and in better preparing Officers, who are not trainers, to deliver their sessions. A key point to consider for 2023 would be the flagging of key sessions and the provision of worksheets and summary information for Members to take away from each session (this does not need to be in hard copy).

The issues raised in this survey will be considered and where possible implemented for the next Induction Programme in 2023.