

# Councillor Development 2021-22: What have we done?



## Delivering a bespoke development programme

Throughout the year we have offered a range of development opportunities. Whether it is working to develop general key skills or training which would help full councillors reach their full potential in specialist roles, there have been over a hundred development opportunities offered to do so.

For the most part the of this year, the council was still constrained by ongoing COVID restrictions, such as remote working and meetings. This has meant an easy access to online webinars and training activities. However as we are phasing out of restriction measures hybrid options are being rolled out.

Equality and Diversity is a focus following on from the creation of the Councillor Equalities Working Group in the previous year. This is a skill that is beneficial for everyone, particularly for Executive Members and Chairs to facilitate inclusive conversations at meetings.

Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, councillor development continues to be delivered in line with the strategy through webinars and online conferences. As we return to normality it is a priority to deliver hybrid sessions to make development activities as accessible as possible.

The Councillor Development Charter Steering Group continues to work in collaboration with officers to identify development needs to ensure our councillors are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to excel.“

Councillor Nick Allen, Chairman of Councillor Development Charter Steering Group

## Working in partnership

As remote working continues, much of the opportunities to work with others have been by organising training with external providers. Most notably with the LGA and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. Webinar topics included:

- COVID-19 vaccinations
- Health inequalities
- Housing
- Modern slavery
- Cybersecurity
- Disability
- Climate change

Internally, sessions organised for Councillors have caught the eye of other officers in the Council who were eager to attend. Our session on the 5 Year Housing Land Supply, delivered by the Planning and Place directorate, was also attended by officers working in Legal Services.

## Councillor Development Steering Group

This year the steering group is updated on a monthly basis by officers working in development, with any updates and proposed plans, with officers regularly seeking feedback from the group.

## Councillor attendance at a glance

Approved Conferences	Additional Conferences	Development Sessions	Training Sessions	Information Sessions
3	23	94	51	49

## Chief Executive updates

COVID-19 updates were frequently provided to councillors through Chief Executive meetings to ensure all were equipped with the latest information for the borough. As the benefits of such updates were noted, the updates are continuing to be delivered post-pandemic at a less frequent rate.

## Adapting to the climate

If there is anything we have learnt in the past few years, it is to be prepared for anything. Adaptability is key to ensuring that the Council remains up to date and councillors feel prepared to confidently deal with issues that are topical. Urgent news continues to be circulated through Democracy Snapshot – including the death of His late Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

Following the death of MP Sir David Amess, a personal safety skills session was organised for councillors which sought to provide essential knowledge on ways to work safely in their role.

## Microsoft Stream Channel

As many development sessions continue to be delivered online, a Microsoft stream channel was set up to upload recordings for those counsellors who are unable to attend or for those who wish to go back and re-watch the session.

Microsoft stream comes with accessibility features such as transcription services and subtitles which are automatically generated.

## Feedback

Feedback is vital in evaluating development sessions to determine what worked well and when improvements are needed.

Towards the end of this year a new feedback form is being trialled to keep the council up to speed with modernising interactions with councillors. This online feedback form was circulated to members of the steering group for feedback and was also trialled for a few additional conferences.

The purpose of the new feedback form is to easily track responses and gain statistics from the feedback given, such as a rating, and look at scale and space for any additional comments that counsellors wish to provide.

Another positive aspect of this feedback form is that it is accessible on both desktop and mobile devices, which means that all councillors will have easy access to the forms.



## Looking forward...

**The councillor development programme 2022-23 is being designed with a focus on making sure that strategy aspirations are delivered, and evaluation of the four-year programme informs the next administration's induction programme and strategy.**

**As the 2023 elections are on the horizon, the steering group will be working with officers across the council to tailor an induction to keep candidates briefed, prepare newly elected councillors for their role and refresh skills and knowledge for re-elected councillors.**

## Leaders update

Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Bettison OBE, provided 8 updates on the intranet to keep Councillors and residents informed.

Briefings	Avg. Attendance
34	29

## Democracy Snapshot



### Topics included:

- IT Tips
  - Development sessions follow up articles
  - Data protection and GDPR
  - Latest pandemic information
  - Overview and Scrutiny updates
  - Training opportunities
  - Councillor workbooks
  - Meetings list
  - Ward alerts.
- 104 weekly recipients with average readership of 99.77%.**

## Councillor Blogs

**BLOG**

This year we have published several blog submissions for the intranet.

Whether it's a personal story, such as 'Calling out the Big C' from Councillor Ian Kirke – who conducted an interview with Councillor Tina McKenzie-Boyle about her experience of cancer; or to commemorate an event, like 'Celebrating Volunteers Week' from Councillor Ray Mossom who shares sporting memories; or even to show what was learnt on an educational trip, such as 'What happens to the food waste we collect in our caddies' from Councillor Sandra Ingham, blog posts have provided an excellent opportunity for councillors to share experiences.

WHAT'S NEXT?