

CONSTITUTION AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE
23 June 2022

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| REPORT TITLE: | MEMBERS SUPPORT STEERING GROUP ANNUAL REPORT MAY 2021 – APRIL 2022 |
| REPORT OF: | DIRECTOR OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE |

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to enable the Constitution and Standards Committee to be appraised of the work to date and ongoing planned work of the Members Support Steering Group. The Constitution and Standards Committee will receive this report at the first meeting of each municipal year.

The Wirral Plan 2021-2026 sets out the Councils vision to secure the best possible future for our residents, defined by the community prosperity we create and supported by our excellent people and services. The Members Support Steering Group helps Members in their implementation of the five key themes within that plan:

- Sustainable Environment
- Brighter Futures
- Inclusive Economy
- Safe and Pleasant Communities
- Active and Healthy Lives

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION

The Constitution and Standards Committee is recommended to endorse and comment on the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The report provides the Members of the Constitution and Standards Committee with the opportunity to review, appraise and to contribute to the work undertaken by the Members Support Steering Group during the 2021/2022 Municipal Year.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Not to submit a report to Committee. This was discounted as it was deemed appropriate to appraise the Constitution & Standards Committee on the work undertaken by the Steering Group.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Members Support Steering Group was established by the Constitution and Standards Committee at their meeting on 24 February 2021. The newly formed Group was a product of the merger of the former Member Support Group and Member Equipment Steering Group.

3.2 Terms of reference

The role of the Member Support Steering Group is to:

- provide cross-party strategic leadership to member learning, development, support so as to enable members to help deliver the Refreshed Wirral Plan 2021-2026 and its themes;
- provide cross-party strategic leadership to the member ICT offer to ensure that equipment, software and systems used by members enables them to effectively undertake their duties;
- Provide oversight on the development of the Member Portal;
- Ensure all members have the requisite skills, knowledge and attributes to be able to meet their varied duties and responsibilities;
- Actively promote, encourage and oversee member culture, development and support;
- Explore, research, gather insight, examine and develop and implement new innovative methods, approaches and initiatives to improve member culture, development and support.
- Drive continuous improvement in member culture, development and support within political groups.
- "Provide an overview of support to members in fulfilling their roles and duties as Councillors.
- Oversight of the Member Welfare Policy

3.3 Membership

Membership is appointed from the Constitution and Standards Committee and comprises of seven members, appointed by reference to political proportionality. Membership for the 2021/22 municipal year was as follows:

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|--------------|-------------|
| Councillors: | P Gilchrist |
| | S Hayes |
| | K Greaney |
| | J Johnson |
| | P Stuart |
| | S Williams |

3.4 Frequency of Meetings

The Group met on three occasions during the previous municipal year in July 2021, November 2021, and March 2022. It is proposed that the group meets in July, November, January and March during the current municipal year.

Work undertaken to date

3.5 Members Portal

The Members Portal was rolled out to all Members December 2020 supported by a programme of training. Training on how to use the Portal is offered to all Members annually as part of the New Member Induction Programme. The Portal offers a number of facilities for Members to utilise but a primary goal on implementation was to make the process of reporting cases and casework management more efficient and user-friendly for Members. During the previous municipal year, Members of the Steering Group were kept updated with developments to portal including: Migration of reporting functions, the implementation of a notes feature and the sign posting to Members training resources.

- 3.6 Alongside reporting cases the Portal also serves as a domain for Members to gain all the relevant information they need to undertake their role. A highlight is the training library recordings and clips which is regularly updated.

3.7 New Member Induction Programme

- 3.8 The Members Support Steering Group were instrumental in contributing to the new Member Induction Programme for 2022/2023 as attached as an appendix to this report (appendix 1). They also reviewed and approved updates to the material circulated to new members upon election night (Appendix 2). The programme was highlighted received positive comments from both the Independent Panel and from colleagues from the Local Government Association during the recent Peer Challenge. It will be further reviewed (alongside the wider Member Learning &

Development Offer) to ensure sure that it aligns with the 2023-2027 Whole Council electoral cycle.

3.9 For 2022/2023 a number of new training opportunities were included in the programme:

- All Member Finance
- Pensions
- Committee System and Decision-Making
- Corporate Parenting
- Carbon Literacy
- Mental health awareness and wellbeing
- Social Media

3.10 **Member Welfare Policy**

It had been recognised and communicated through the Constitution & Standards Committee at their meeting on 23 June 2021 (minute 7 refers) that there were insufficient structures in place to support Councillor's wellbeing. The Committee agreed that Member Welfare should be included in the terms of reference for the Member Support Steering Group and tasked the Group to both develop and have oversight of policy.

3.11 A project group was established made up of officers from Organisational Development and Democratic & Member Services Officer and an offer was presented to the Member support steering group on 3 March 2022 and signed off. and is attached to this report as appendix 3.

3.12 To inform the policy, a survey was circulated to Members on the matter and the results are attached in appendix 4. As a result of feedback received, officers are looking at options for further safeguarding in in respect of lone working. More information on this will be delivered in due course.

3.13 **Members Development Strategy 2023-2027**

A project group has been established to design a Members Development Strategy 2023-2027 in order to provide Members with the tools and skills they need to undertake their role as councillor both within their ward and in the committee room. Updates will be provided to the Member Support Steering Group and the intention is to present the final strategy to the Feb 2023 meeting of this Committee for approval and adoption.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The majority of Member Training is provided in house by council officers, however there have been a number of training events that have been provided by external individuals or agencies. Should there be a cost implication the Members Support Steering Group is consulted and if the majority do not agree to the spend an ad-hoc meeting can be arranged to discuss concerns.
- 4.2 During the financial year (1 April 21 – 31 March 22) the total cost for Members Training was £4,332. This included individual training courses as requested by Members and costs for external trainers providing sessions for all Councillors.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 Members Development is included within job packages of two members of staff working in Democratic Services with HR and organisational development support .

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 If the Members Support Steering Group fails to meet and be consulted regularly there could be ineffective oversight on development of individual members.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Members of the Steering Group are consulted and reported to during meetings in the municipal year and as and when necessary

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 There are none arising directly from this report

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Where possible training is delivered virtually as a means to prevent unnecessary carbon emissions in car journeys.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Elected Members are committed to improving the lives of the people across Wirral and that is at the core of the work we do. Wirral Council will continue to develop our Social Value agenda in all procurement where relevant and proportionate to ensure that businesses we contract with, are supporting our local communities and adding value beyond their contractual requirement.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – New Member Induction Programme May 22
Appendix 2 – Member Induction Booklet
Appendix 3 – Member Welfare Policy
Appendix 4 – Results from Member Survey

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Role of a Councillor – Local Government Association

The 21st Century Councillor – University of Birmingham

Highlighting Political Leadership – Local Government Association

Constitution

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|------------------------|-------------|
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