

TITLE	Overview and Scrutiny Member Training
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 17 July 2019
WARD	None Specific;
DIRECTOR	Andrew Moulton, Assistant Director Governance

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider feedback on the Overview and Scrutiny Member training session held on 26 June 2019 and to discuss options for future training sessions.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:

- 1) consider feedback on the recent Scrutiny Members training session;
- 2) discuss future Member training requirements and agree a list of priority training sessions to be delivered during 2019/20.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At its meeting on 19 June 2019 the Committee considered the Government's Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny. The guidance referred to the importance of Member training which should be provided to enable Members to carry out their Scrutiny roles effectively.

Members attended an Overview and Scrutiny induction training session on 26 June 2019. The training provided an introduction for new Members and a refresher for more experienced Members. A further training session on Budget Scrutiny will be held on 22 July 2019 as a precursor to Scrutiny of the WBC Budget, to be carried out by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The report gives details of further Scrutiny training opportunities and invites Members to consider training priorities for the remainder of the 2019/20 Municipal Year.

Background

Overview and Scrutiny Committees play a key role in holding the Executive to account, reviewing issues of local importance, shaping policy and improving performance. In order to carry out these different roles effectively Scrutiny Members need to understand the context of their work and the powers they have to effect change.

Effective Scrutiny must be a whole council responsibility and not left to a few Members in scheduled meetings. It needs to be strong on prioritisation, develop strategic work programming and engage in evidence-based objective enquiry. It must have measurable impact on policy shaping, decision making, value and quality of Council services.

An important aspect of Member development involves their role, in Overview and Scrutiny, in ensuring that the Council's plans and priorities are delivered. Members also want Scrutiny to play a role in policy development, holding service leaders to account and reviewing issues of importance to local communities. To achieve this, Scrutiny Members need to develop a shared understanding on the role and capability of Scrutiny and to be strong on prioritisation, work programming and the quality of their Scrutiny activities in measuring performance and delivery.

Members attended an Overview and Scrutiny training session on 26 June 2019. The training provided an introduction for new Members and a refresher for more experienced Members. The training session covered the following range of issues:

- Giving Scrutiny Members an increased understanding of the role and potential impact of scrutiny of scrutiny and its role within the Council;
- Understanding how Scrutiny can have significant impact in supporting Council performance;
- Exploring how Scrutiny can better add value to policy-shaping, decision-making and service delivery in the future;
- Considering how Scrutiny sets its priorities to focus on 'big-ticket' and key strategic matters;
- Understanding core questioning skills and techniques essential in effective scrutiny.

Feedback on the training session was generally very positive. A further training session on Budget Scrutiny will be held on 22 July 2019 as a precursor to Scrutiny of the WBC Budget, to be carried out by the Community and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Budget Scrutiny session will be open to all Members.

In addition to the training sessions referred to above, there are a range of additional sessions which could be delivered to support and develop Members' Scrutiny knowledge and skills. Examples of additional training modules delivered by the Centre for Public Scrutiny include:

- Chairing skills and Scrutiny leadership – covering team building, understanding the role and purpose of Scrutiny, focusing on outcomes and questioning skills;

- Performance management – understanding different performance management systems and the ways in which Scrutiny can use performance information and data to influence its work;
- Children’s safeguarding and Scrutiny – understanding the relevant legislation, roles and functions and learning lessons from key inspection reports and inquiries;
- Scrutiny of Adult Social Care – understanding the changing cost, demography and risk issues and the importance of working with health providers and partners in the care and voluntary sector;
- Health Scrutiny – understanding the changing relationship between Councils and the NHS, integration of health and social care and the role of Scrutiny in providing democratic challenge and accountability;
- Effective questioning skills – how to plan and prepare, un-pack issues and select the correct questioning techniques;
- Scrutinising Partner/Commercial Organisations – understanding the partnership landscape and complexities around Scrutiny of commercial/arm’s length ventures.

The Local Government Association also runs Member training courses including a two day residential course on Effective Scrutiny. Potential training modules can be tailored to suit the specific needs of Members and can be combined with more hands on support as necessary. Initially, the cost of additional training for Members can be met from the corporate training budget. Longer term requirements should be considered as part of a wider discussion on resourcing and support for Overview and Scrutiny.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£900 per session	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£900 per session	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£900 per session	Yes	Revenue

Other Financial Information

Member training sessions cost around £900. Additional training events could initially be funded from the corporate training budget.

List of Background Papers

None

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Date: 8 July 2019	Version No.: 1

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