

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Report No</b>	<b>HC/42/23</b>

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Highland Council

**Date:** 26 October 2023

**Report Title:** Members' Learning and Development Programme

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance

### 1. Purpose / Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 29 June 2023 Council agreed the remit of a Short Life Members' Working Group ('the Working Group') to shape a refreshed Learning and Development Programme for Members' approval at October 2023 Council. The Working Group met in June and September and participated in a workshop session, also in September.
- 1.2 The Members' Learning and Development Framework ('the Framework') – **Appendix 1** and the Members Learning and Development Programmes for 2023 and 2024 ('the Programme') – **Appendix 2 and 3** respectively, draw from the input of the Working Group, benchmarking with other local authorities and engagement with the Improvement Service.
- 1.3 The Framework sets out the Highland Council's commitment to Members' Learning and Development, the relevant roles and responsibilities, the Learning and Development Cycle (which aligns to the electoral cycle) and available digital resources. The Programme is an annual calendar of learning and development activities which will be updated throughout each year and available on the Members' Intranet.

### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to agree:
  - i. the Members' Learning and Development Framework - **Appendix 1**;
  - ii. the Members' Learning and Development Programmes for 2023 and 2024 - **Appendix 2 and 3** respectively;
  - iii. that a mid-year review of the Members' Learning and Development Framework and Programme with Working Group input is reported to Council in August 2024; and
  - iv. that an annual report is taken to Council each December on the effectiveness of the Members' Learning and Development Framework and Programme.

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** Staff resource will be required to deliver the Learning and Development Programme for Members. It will require dedicated staff time and input from a range of Council Services, including People Development, Member Support Services, Legal, Communications and the Corporate Management Support Team. This will ensure there is a coordinated approach in the delivery of the Programme and that it remains aligned with the Council's objectives. There will also be a time commitment asked of Members of the Working Group to review the implementation and effectiveness of the Members' Learning and Development Programme.
- 3.2 **Legal** There are no direct legal implications arising from the report. There are specific requirements for Members appointed to the Licensing Board and for those who are involved in the determination of planning applications to undertake mandatory training to fulfil regulatory functions and obligations.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** The refreshed Learning and Development Programme will be screened to ensure there are no adverse equalities impacts.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** There are no direct implications arising from the proposals in this report. However, there are plans in place to host two workshops focusing on the Net Zero Action Plan as well as the development of Climate Change and Carbon Literacy Training which will be rolled out in 2024.
- 3.5 **Risk (including Health and Safety risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** A failure to follow appropriate governance and scrutiny in making decisions at committee and council presents potentially significant legal, financial, and reputational risks for the Council. The Learning and Development Programme seeks to mitigate these risks. There are no Health and Safety implications arising as a direct result of this report, but there will be Health and Safety training opportunities provided under the refreshed programme.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** There are no direct implications for the Gaelic, however, the Learning and Development Programme will provide opportunities to raise awareness of the Gaelic language and to acquire Gaelic language skills, to align with the Council's Gaelic Language Plan.

### 4 Learning and Development Improvements

#### 4.1 Improvement suggestions from the Working Group

The workshop and meetings of the Working Group resulted in various suggested areas for improvement in relation to Members' learning and development, namely:

- improvement of communications and consistency around Members' learning and development;
- improved alignment of Member's learning and development with the Council's objective;
- a requirement to increase Member participation in future learning and development activities;
- a more phased approach to the learning and development provision for newly elected Members;
- a requirement to strengthen Members' understanding of their governance and scrutiny role; and

- a need for ongoing learning and development on Local Government Finance and Budgeting.

#### 4.2 **Improving the Members' learning and development approach and offering**

- The Members' learning and development Programme will be regularly updated and made available on the Members' intranet.
- Members will be kept informed of all learning and development activities via email with appointments being issued in a timely manner. A new Members' learning and development mailbox has been set up to manage requests and to ensure that there is a consistent approach.
- The Programme for 2024 will be underpinned by governance and scrutiny within each session.
- The Programme will make provisions to ensure that financial management training is updated and provided to Members annually.
- Newly elected Members' induction sessions will be phased over a longer period (see **Appendix 1**).
- There will be a strengthened focus on the areas outlined below with some sessions already in the 2024 Programme – (see **Appendix 2**)
  - Budget and Financial Management
  - Governance and Scrutiny
  - Community Leadership and Partnership working
  - Decision-making
  - Strategy and Policy Development
  - Climate change and the route to net zero
  - Equality and Diversity

### 5. **Learning and Development Programme Delivery and Evaluation**

5.1 The Improvement Service have developed a model to support Members to consider how they assume and carry out different roles and responsibilities. The sole purpose of the model is to help Members reflect on changes they want to make to better carry out their roles and responsibilities. The model covers six key areas which will be integrated into the design of the Programme:

- Community Leadership
- Strategy and Policy Development
- Decision Making
- Scrutiny
- Partnership Working
- Regulator

5.2 The Programme will be delivered using the following approaches:

- Briefings and Webinars on topical issues.
- Guidance for Members on key areas of work.
- Subject specific training courses.
- Bespoke/tailored on request support.

5.3 The delivery method will be a mix of Microsoft Teams, in-person and blended depending on the topic, approach and intended outcomes.

- 5.3 Evaluation and monitoring are a vital part of the Framework and Programme to ensure successful outcomes are achieved and to identify areas for improvement. Members will be provided with feedback forms following Programme sessions to assist with this process.
- 5.4 Online learning and development resources are available on the Members' Intranet Site. The Traineasy platform which can be accessed via the Members' Intranet Site and offers relevant training resources which are being updated and added to regularly (See table at the end of **Appendix 1**).

## **6. Next Steps**

- 6.1 Implement and update the Programme with focus on Council priorities and Members' needs.
- 6.2 Undertake a review of the Framework and Programme with Working Group input and report to Council in August 2024.
- 6.3 Present an annual report to Council in December 2024 on the effectiveness of the Framework and Programme with recommendations for improvement as appropriate.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance

Date: 12 October 2023

Author: Shelley Rennie, Business Manager

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Members' Learning and Development Framework  
Appendix 2 – Members' Learning and Development Programme 2023  
Appendix 3 – Members' Learning and Development Programme 2024

### Members' Learning and Development Framework

#### Introduction

This framework describes the Highland Council's commitment to Member Learning and Development, the relevant roles and responsibilities and the learning and development cycle through Members' term/s of office. In each year a Members' Learning and Development Programme will be produced in calendar form with the content informed (amongst other things) by local council elections, Member consultation, statutory and regulatory developments.

Members play a pivotal role in ensuring that the strategic aims and objectives of the Highland Council are achieved while fulfilling their responsibilities in making local decisions and enhancing outcomes for Highland Communities. It is a priority of the Highland Council to ensure that all Councillors are thoroughly prepared to meet the demands of their role.

The Highland Council is committed to ensuring that;

- Members' Learning and Development aligns with the Council's objectives as outlined in the Highland Council Programme and Corporate Plan;
- Members have equitable access to learning and development opportunities throughout their term of office;
- Members have access to suitable learning and development opportunities to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for effective role performance;
- There is a planned and structured approach to Members' learning and development, implemented through a programme of events and activities to support their development;
- The Members' learning and development programme is continually updated to align with Council plans and address key challenges impacting the Council's priorities;
- Members have the capacity to self-assess their skills against a recognised framework provided by the Improvement Service;
- Member learning and development activities are adequately resourced within available budgets.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### Chief Executive's Business Manager

The Business Manager will produce, monitor and update the Members learning and development programme in consultation with Members.

The Business Manager will also review during the term of Council:

- The Members Learning and Development Framework
- The Members annual Learning and Development Programme
- Identify opportunities which support Members well-being and resilience.

### Democratic Services

Democratic Services will support Member Learning and Development by:

- Reviewing (in consultation with the Business Manager) the Members induction plan and materials
- Identify requirements for priority training as appropriate e.g. Planning, Licensing.

### Political Leaders

Political Leaders will:

- Promote and encourage participation in the Members Learning and Development Programme.

### Individual Members

Members will:

- Identify their own learning and development needs;
- Seek opportunities to increase effectiveness;
- Attend planned learning and development events and activities;
- Share their knowledge and skills with other Members;
- Participate in the Political Skills Assessment provided by the Improvement Service.

### Corporate Management Team

The Corporate Management Team will:

- Identifying and facilitate service specific learning and development in co-ordination with the Business Manager.

## **The Learning and Development Cycle**

Members will be provided with Learning and Development opportunities starting from their election and throughout their term/s of office, as follows:

### Post Election Induction Process

All newly elected Members will be provided with a comprehensive induction at the beginning of their term in office. Returning Members may also attend any of the sessions. The elected Members induction will be delivered in 3 phases, as follows:

### Phase one

During the first week in office, all newly elected Members will be required to complete their Acceptance of Office and their Declaration of Interests. Members will also be required to attend an introductory session to cover the following:

- Provision of ICT equipment and creation of ICT account
- Completion of personal information to set up remuneration payments
- An introduction to the Highland Council and the facilities available to Members
- Official photographs for the use on the Highland Council website, social media platforms and any other Council publications.

### Phase two

A planned programme of events and activities will be established for all newly and returning elected Members. All events and activities will focus on preparing Members with the sufficient knowledge to undertake their role as a Highland Councillor. This programme of activity is not exhaustive but will cover the following:

- Introduction from the Chief Executive
- An overview of the Council's Services and the Corporate Structure
- An overview of Policy and Service Provision
- Code of Conduct
- Standing Orders
- Governance and Scrutiny
- Corporate Communications

The expectation is that Members will have completed the preparation sessions during their first month in office.

### Phase three

During the final phase of the induction, Members will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to enable them to carry out their role and responsibilities as an elected Member. This programme of activity is not exhaustive but will include the following:

- Community Leadership & Partnership Working
- Resilience
- Corporate Parenting & Safeguarding
- Equalities and Diversity
- Decision Making

The expectation is that Members will have completed any core sessions during their first three months in office.

### Committee Specific Training

All Committee Members will be provided with an induction to their Committee. It is the responsibility of the relevant Chief Officer to discuss with their Committee Chair any additional learning and development requirements of Committee Members. All

Committee Chairs will have the opportunity to attend Committee Chair specific training.

### Continued Learning & Development

Following the elected Members induction, Members will continue to be provided with learning and development opportunities via the Highland Council's online portal (Traineasy) and through the current annual learning and development programme. At this stage of the learning and development cycle, Members will be afforded the opportunity to shape the annual programme in consultation with the Chief Executive's Business Manager. The annual programme will be available on the Members training and development intranet page.

### Members Workshops/Seminars

Throughout the year Members will be offered the opportunity to attend a number of seminars and workshops covering a range of topical issues. The workshops and seminars will be planned throughout the year and will be included in the Members learning and development programme.

### Online Members Training

The People Development team have created a range of e-learning materials to support Members. E-learning resources are accessed through the Traineasy platform and are regularly updated. See **table 1** below in terms of the current offering available via Traineasy. The Traineasy Video Library includes resources and webinars which Members may find useful e.g. Introduction to Personal Resilience, Engaging with constituents through the use of social media, The Green Recovery and Net Zero, Fairer Scotland Duty, Local Child Poverty Action Reports and Community, Child Poverty, Digital Transformation, Planning System in Scotland and Community Wealth Building.

### Members Intranet

The Members' [training and development](#) intranet page provides links to Traineasy and the Improvement Service. It also includes useful information on expenses, the planning system and understanding the annual accounts.

### Evaluation

It is important for the Council to monitor and evaluate the learning and development of its elected Members to ensure that it has met its objectives and to identify where improvements can be made for the future. To evaluate the learning outcomes, Members will be provided with feedback forms following individual training sessions to ensure that opportunities are taken to improve the content and delivery of future learning and development sessions. Feedback forms will specify the outcomes expected at the individual Member, corporate and community level.

### Reporting

The Chief Executive's Business Manager will record all learning and development activities as well as Member attendance. This ensures elected Members can review their learning and development activities as well as allowing the Business Manager to include this information within the Members annual learning and development report to Council.



**Table 1** e-learning modules currently available via Traineasy

<b>Catalogue Name</b>	<b>Course Name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Time to Complete</b>
Mandatory Training	Cybersecurity Awareness	The training introduces why cyber security is important and how attacks happen and covers four key areas of defending yourself against phishing, using strong passwords, securing your devices and reporting incidents ('if in doubt, call it out').	30 minutes
Mandatory Training	Display Screen Equipment (DSE)	This course is mandatory for any elected member or employee who is required to use display screen equipment habitually or as a significant part of their normal work or working day, e.g. for continuous periods of at least an hour or more at any one time.	30 minutes
Mandatory Training	Equal Opportunities and Diversity	This module highlights the importance of understanding what equality, diversity and inclusion means for The Highland Council. The e-learning module has been developed based on content of Local Government Association (LGA) Councillors.	30 minutes
Mandatory Training	Financial Regulations	Everyone should complete sections 1,7,8 and 9. Other sections to be completed are dependent on job role. This course sets out the financial regulations to council staff that have responsibilities for: budgets, banking and receiving income, ordering of goods and services, payment of invoices, petty cash and project governance.	Each section approximately 10 minutes.
Mandatory Training	Fire Awareness	This eLearning package will help you think about situations you may face in your workplace, and how you	30 minutes

Catalogue Name	Course Name	Description	Time to Complete
		must take responsibility for your own safety and those around you.	
Mandatory Training	Information Management	Information is vital in our work. This is true for all of us, whatever our role in The Highland Council. This eLearning package will help you think about some situations you may face in your work, and how you must take responsibility for the information you use.	30 minutes including assessment
Mandatory Training	Introduction to Health Safety and Wellbeing	This course will provide you with an overview of the key responsibilities for managing your health, safety and wellbeing at work.	45 minutes including assessment
Mandatory Training	Run, Hide, Tell	This film gives advice about what to do in a firearms attack.	3 minutes
Members Training	Members Scrutiny Role	This module has been designed as a learning aid for elected councillors. It makes no judgement about whether you have been a councillor for some time, or whether you have been elected more recently. If you fall into the former category the module should serve as a useful reminder of some of the key skills, approaches and tactics that make for an effective councillor – it may even challenge you to reconsider how you have approached aspects of the role to date.	20 minutes
Members Training	Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher Recruitment Training	This training is for elected members who are involved in the recruitment of a head teacher or depute head teacher.	30 minute recording
Members Training	The Role of the Audit Committee	Audit committees are a key component of an Authority's governance framework. Their function is to provide an independent and high-level resource to support good governance and strong public financial management. This e-learning course is for all Members sitting on the Audit	20 minutes

Catalogue Name	Course Name	Description	Time to Complete
		and Scrutiny Committee. It is based upon best practice published by CIPFA on the role of Audit Committees.	

Members Learning & Development Programme 2023

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FEB			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31				
MAR						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
APR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31						
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NOV																																					
DEC																																					

- Members Engagement - Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (In Person)
- Budget Setting Process (In Person)
- Committee Chair Training (Teams)
- Net Zero Action Plan Workshop (Hybrid)

**Members Learning & Development Programme 2024**

	M	T	W	TH	F	SA	SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA	SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA	SU	M	T	W	TH	F	SA	SU	M	T									
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• School Holidays

- Net Zero Action Plan Workshop (Hybrid)
- Budget monitoring (In Person)
- Equality & Diversity (Hybrid) TBC
- Gaelic Awareness Training (In Person) TBC
- Climate Change & Carbon Literacy Training (In Person) TBC
- Capital Programme Workshop (Hybrid) TBC