

Summary of the New Member 12 Month catch-up

Attendees:

Cllr. Bob Waterton - Apologies

Cllr. Matt Tomeo – Apologies

Cllr. Susan Findlay – Apologies

Cllr. Luke Cousin – In Person

Cllr. Tony Deakin – In Person

Cllr. Neil Wright – In Person

Cllr. Roger Stead – in Person

Cllr. Royston Bayliss – In Person

Cllr. Richard Holdridge – In Person

Cllr. Ande Savage – In Person

Cllr. Dillan Shikotra – Via MS Teams

Cllr. Hannah Gill – Via MS Teams

Cllr. Helen Gambardella – Via MS Teams

Cllr. Rebecca Lunn – Via MS Teams

Item 1

Within the last 12 months what have your highlights been?

- Interacting with and supporting residents. Achieving a resolution for residents and making a difference.
- Having a vision for our wards.
- Having a wider influence to change things for the ward.
- Response to gas leak from officers, agencies etc was impressive, everyone pulled together.
- Have felt the weight and the responsibility of the role, and the pressure associated with knowing that residents voted for me, especially when they've never voted for this particular group before – it makes you want to do a good job, makes you feel humbled.
- Glen Parva By-Election was seamless and efficiently run – thank you to all officers involved.
- Growing and getting more confident in role as Councillor. The best is yet to come as members get more confident in their roles.
- Better understanding of Planning and how it works – the Planning training provided by PAS training (specifically the roleplay aspect) was beneficial.
- Conversations with Planning Developers at Stoney Cove – collaborative approach as District Councillors, County Councillors and officers worked together to achieve desired goal.
- Appeals Committee was run efficiently and worked well for the Members involved (resolution achieved).
- Finding feet in new role since by-election in December, enjoying casework and grassroots support to residents.
- Democratic Services' support has been helpful, enjoyed building relationships.
- Forming a Shadow Cabinet.

Item 2

What challenges have you faced over the last 12 months?

Casework:

- Members reflected on the steep learning curve for new Councillors and discussed their approaches to managing casework - everyone has their own methods of managing it.
- Difficulty when you cannot achieve a resolution for residents, e.g. planning, flooding defences – members expressed frustration that some matters are out of their hands.
- How to approach Leicestershire County Council (LCC) – can/should there be a better way to work together to resolve issues – how do we put pressure on LCC to act (some members reflected that they had found a method of approaching LCC)

Work/life balance:

- Members reflected on the difficulty balancing work and other life commitments with Council meetings, briefings, and training etc. This is particularly difficult for the younger demographic of Councillors who have full time jobs and young families.

- A number of members suggested that more meetings should be held on Microsoft Teams.

Training and Development:

- Several members indicated that they feel training sessions are too long.
- One Member expressed frustration that hybrid training is not working in its current format and that better technology is needed than the Meeting Owl. However, members acknowledged the efforts being made by officers to tackle this issue and were happy with the current resolution that training sessions are held either 'in person' or 'virtually', rather than hybrid.

Cancelled and rescheduled meetings/training:

- Several members expressed their frustrations with meeting dates being changed/moved. Officers commented that reasons are provided for each cancellation.
- One member requested that calendar reminders be set for the day before a meeting once a meeting invitation is sent from Outlook. Officers responded that members have the flexibility to set their own reminders as they wish.

Using ICT applications, such as Outlook:

- One member expressed their difficulty using Outlook and accepting meeting invitations –Democratic Services offered their support to the member.
- Members suggested that basic Outlook training for Members could be added to the members SharePoint site.

Other Comments:

- Some members felt that their knowledge, experience and expertise are not being used to the extent that they could.
- One member suggested that more should be done to prepare new Members for what it is like to be a Councillor, as several new members did not realise how much attendance is required. Members commented on the importance of attending the Prospective Councillor Events to gain a better understanding of the role of Elected Member.

Item 3 **Members Buddy's**

12 months on did you find having a buddy beneficial?

Members commented that the initial introduction provided by their buddies were useful, particularly the tour of the Council Offices. However, as members have learned and developed over the past year, they suggested that having a buddy was no longer required. Members commented that they felt reassured by the ongoing support provided by Democratic Services.

Several members commented on the seniority of their buddies, suggesting that having senior officers as buddies could make them difficult to contact and less approachable with minor queries.

Would you recommend having a buddy to New Members?

Several Members recommended the buddy system for new members for the first year and suggested that Democratic Services would continue to provide the necessary support and assistance thereafter.

Item 4 **Induction Programme**

Highlights:

- The Planning Enforcement training was great – interactive.
- The Fraud training (facilitated by an outside agency) – held with officers and members together was very entertaining.
- The Housing training was great.
- The Bio-Diversity training was enjoyable.
- The Local Nature Recovery Briefings were informative.
- The Planning Committee roleplay training provided by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) training was particularly useful and informative, though some members wished it was delivered sooner.
- Leadership Academy (provided by LGA) was good.

More information needed on:

- How the council works, for example how are the Cabinet, Leader, Chair of the Council etc appointed.
- Role/expectations of opposition.
- How to be an effective opposition.
- Keep Members informed on large/contentious applications so that members are aware of what is coming up and can prepare by reading the associated policies/documents.
- More information needed on the Council's Strategic Policies and Plans – this needs to be delivered earlier in the induction programme.

Gaps in learning and suggestions for induction/training programme:

- Several members suggested that the induction programme could be more engaging and interactive, with a focus on workshop style training sessions as opposed to slide reading.
- Some members requested that training sessions be pre-recorded and circulated for members to watch in their own time (and made accessible on SharePoint). This would make training more accessible as it could be watched at leisure (repeated and paused when necessary). A transcription could also be made available for those members who prefer to read.
- The Resilience Partnership briefing was poor – may need future training here.
- Licensing training was very poorly delivered, and it was tough to stay engaged- though members acknowledged that this may be the topic itself.
- LG Inform is very useful and members would benefit from training on how to use it effectively.
- Several members advised that more training was needed prior to the Scrutiny Budget process in January, as member's felt they lacked expertise and understanding during the 2024 Budget Scrutiny. Members acknowledged that it was a steep learning curve and that they would become more confident with time. They suggested that training in the style of the PAS role play would be particularly useful. One member suggested that

training could be provided at an earlier date to give members an earlier sight of financial scrutiny and making the January meetings less overwhelming. Officers informed members of the Finance and Welfare training which took place on Monday 23 October 2023 and received positive feedback from all 11 attendees.

- One Member commented that the Finance Scrutiny session (provided virtually by the LGA) was particularly useful in preparing members for budget scrutiny and suggested that other members would benefit from attending.
- Training needs to be more evenly spread across the calendar.

Have you been able to complete the mandatory modules on iLearn?

- Members generally were able to complete the mandatory modules on iLearn, and several commented that they enjoyed completing some additional optional modules too. Several members commented on the difficulty accessing iLearn and requested that the login details be recirculated. One Member suggested that the link to iLearn could be added to the members SharePoint site to make it more accessible, or that instructions could be provided to members on how to add iLearn to their favourites bar. Another member commented that they do Safeguarding in their own job so do not see the need to do the BDC Training.

Item 5 **Members SharePoint Site**

Members provided generally positive feedback on the SharePoint Site, though several members reflected that they do not use SharePoint frequently and suggested that Democratic Services should perhaps signpost members to the site more often, e.g. by sending SharePoint links via email to encourage members to use the site.

Members offered some feedback and tips to make the SharePoint site more user friendly:

- The Register of Members Interests forms could be added to the SharePoint site.
- The sizing of tiles could be changed; the 3 largest tiles could be replaced with more useful links/information.
- A 'Did you know' bar could be added across the top of the site, with useful bits of information for Members.
- The date of the next Full Council meeting could be added to the site, so that it is prominent and visible to all site users.
- The Schedule of Meetings, approved at Annual Council, could be added to the SharePoint site.
- A link to the Code of Conduct could be added to the SharePoint site.

Item 6 **Looking Ahead**

Members final comments are listed below:

- Members asked that more training/briefing session be provided on Microsoft Teams.
- One member suggested that the organisational structure of SLT should be made available to all Members, including each Portfolio and their responsibilities. Officers commented that this information is published at Annual Council and is available for all members to access on the web.
- More support for Planning Committee Members, especially new members.
- Members requested that Budget items be added to the Scrutiny Work Programme at an earlier date, including ranges and pitfalls, for Scrutiny members to have earlier sight and knowledge prior to the Budget meetings next January.
- Looking forward to being a member of Planning Committee – talked about the role briefly and going in with an open mind.
- Members commented that the Weekly Diary is particularly useful.
- One member commented that the Nature Recovery Briefing was really useful and that they will be going to subsequent meetings due to the briefing.
- Members voiced concerns over attendance rates and commented that it is usually the same few Members who turn up to meetings.