

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 March 2019

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

1 THE INDUCTION PROCESS FOR NEW MEMBERS

To review the process undertaken when newly elected Council Members are introduced to the Council, following the Borough Council Election on 2 May 2019.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 As with previous elections, we are aware that there is likely to be a number of new Councillors elected on 3rd May. We therefore need to prepare a programme to introduce them to the administrative and statutory functions of the Council and the responsibilities and expectations of representing their ward.

1.1.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is therefore invited to assist with development of the induction process for 2019. At the end of 2018, we asked those Councillors, who were newly elected at the previous election in 2015, to provide any feedback on the induction process or comment on their own experience of this process. We have received feedback that the biggest issue in 2015 was having too many induction meetings too quickly and this was difficult for Members to absorb all the information.

1.1.3 We are grateful for the responses received, which have helped to shape the following suggestions for consideration by this Committee.

1.2 Prior to, and immediately after, the election:

1.2.1 Letters will be sent to all nominated candidates early in the process prior to the election. This will detail when and where the count is taking place and sets out details of the process to be followed after the count is complete, for example, the requirement to have their picture taken, notify the Monitoring Officer of certain financial interests and to sign their Acceptance of Office if elected. In addition, a Welcome Pack will be provided to all new councillors which will include an introductory letter from the Chief Executive, a Summons and Agenda for the Annual Council meeting to be held on 14th May along with a list of Council meetings and an invitation to an initial induction meeting to be held on 8th May.

1.3 Induction Meeting Prior to Annual Council

1.3.1 Rather than having one lengthy initial induction meeting, Members will be invited to a series of shorter induction meetings including the following:

1. **Headline Meeting with Management Team on 8th May 2019:** This will be a concise meeting of introduction and will include information in relation to the Constitution, the Code of Conduct, Allowances and some practical issues including use of emails, using pigeon holes, a tour of the Civic Suite and meeting protocols. Members will receive their building access pass at this meeting.
2. **I.T. and Tablets:** Tablets will need to be issued as early as possible to allow Members to access committee papers etc. It is suggested that new Councillors be invited to book from a number of available timeslots to receive their equipment subject to available IT resources.

1.4 Service Specific Meetings

1.4.1 It is suggested that a series of shorter induction meetings could be spread throughout May/June. It is proposed that a short 10 minute briefing will be given at the start of each Advisory Board/Committee meeting setting out the role of that Board/Committee. Annual Council is due to be held on 14 May, so all Councillors will know by this point which boards and committees they will be undertaking. New Councillors will be encouraged to attend all of these meetings to ensure they understand the wide range of issues that each Board/Committee deal with.

1.4.2 It is recognised that some service areas may require more than one short briefing. For example, the complexities of Local Government finance issues would probably require a number of discreet briefings at the start of each meeting of FIP.

1.4.3 In addition, specific briefings will be needed to cover the following:

An introduction to the Local Plan: As this is a significant issue, a strategic briefing will be held to go through the detail of the Local Plan process;

Area Planning Committees: As with the Advisory Board Meetings, a briefing session will be held ahead of Areas 1, 2 and 3 which will cover the necessary training required to enable new Councillors to understand complex planning laws and processes. It will be emphasised that in order to take part and vote at these Committees, Members will be required to undertake this training.

Licensing and Audit: Formal training will be required for any new Members to enable them to take part in licensing and appeals panels and to understand the formal role of the Audit Committee.

Other Additional Training: including Safeguarding, Prevent and the role of the Community Safety Partnership/Community Safety Unit.

1.5 Possible Additional training and assistance

- 1.5.1 Members are invited to consider whether a Coach trip to strategic sites for new Councillors would be worthwhile. Such tours did take place in the past but were not undertaken in 2015. The Committee is invited to consider whether a tour should be organised to enable new Councillors to have a full picture of the Borough as a whole, including key sites and proposed new developments.
- 1.5.2 New Councillor 'buddy system': we have in the past put in place a buddy system whereby new Councillors are allocated a nominated Senior Council Officer to assist them informally with any issues or concerns during their first 2/3 months at the Council. The Committee is invited to consider whether this should be re-introduced.
- 1.5.3 The above suggestions hopefully cover the issues that have been raised, we will of course be happy to accept any additional suggestions that this Committee may raise.

1.6 Legal Implications

- 1.6.1 N/A

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.7.1 N/A

1.8 Risk Assessment

- 1.8.1 N/A

1.9 Equality Impact Assessment

- 1.9.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

1.10 Recommendations

- 1.10.1 That Members **BE INVITED** to consider the above proposals and **AGREE** the Member Induction Process for 2019.

Background papers:

contact: Gill Fox

Nil

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Chief Executive