

Date of issue: Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2023

<b>MEETING:</b>	<b>STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b> (Councillors Mann (Chair), Sabah (Vice Chair), P. Bedi, S. Malik, Minhas, Mohammad and S. Parmar)  <b>CO-OPTED PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS:</b> Britwell Parish Council (Cllr Kevin Barry) Colnbrook with Poyle (TBC) Wexham Court Parish (Cllr Iftakhar Ahmed)  <b>INDEPENDENT PERSON:</b> Raymond Tomkinson (Observer)
<b>DATE AND TIME:</b>	THURSDAY, 6TH APRIL, 2023 AT 6.30 PM
<b>VENUE:</b>	COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL
<b>DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER:</b> (for all enquiries)	NICHOLAS PONTONE  01753 875120

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



**STEPHEN BROWN**  
Chief Executive

**AGENDA**

**PART I**

<b><u>AGENDA</u></b> <b><u>ITEM</u></b>	<b><u>REPORT TITLE</u></b>	<b><u>PAGE</u></b>	<b><u>WARD</u></b>
	Apologies for absence.		
1.	Declarations of Interest	-	-

*All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary or other Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in Section 9 and Appendix B of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed.*



<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>WARD</u>
2.	Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th July 2022	1 - 4	-
3.	Meeting with the Leader of the Council and with the Chief Executive	5 - 6	All
4.	Draft Member Development Programme 2023-24	7 - 34	All
5.	Member Survey Results	37 - 58	All
6.	Schedule of Complaints - Update	59 - 64	All
7.	Date of Next Meeting - 10th October 2023	-	-

#### **Press and Public**

**Attendance and accessibility:** You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before any items in the Part II agenda are considered. For those hard of hearing an Induction Loop System is available in the Council Chamber.

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In addition, the law allows members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record or tweet the proceedings at public meetings. Anyone proposing to do so is requested to advise the Democratic Services Officer before the start of the meeting. Filming or recording must be overt and persons filming should not move around the meeting room whilst filming nor should they obstruct proceedings or the public from viewing the meeting. The use of flash photography, additional lighting or any non hand held devices, including tripods, will not be allowed unless this has been discussed with the Democratic Services Officer.

**Emergency procedures:** The fire alarm is a continuous siren. If the alarm sounds Immediately vacate the premises by the nearest available exit at either the front or rear of the Chamber and proceed to the assembly point: The pavement of the service road outside of Westminster House, 31 Windsor Road.

**Standards Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 19th July, 2022.**

**Present:-**

**Elected Members:-**

Councillors Mann (Chair), Sabah (Vice-Chair), P. Bedi, Minhas and Mohammad

**Parish Councillor Representative:-**

Parish Councillor Kevin Barry (Britwell)

**Apologies for Absence:-** Councillors S. Malik and S. Parmar.  
Raymond Tomkinson (Independent Person, Observer)

**PART 1**

**1. Declarations of Interest**

None were declared.

**2. Councillors' Code of Conduct and Standards Committee terms of reference**

The Monitoring Officer introduced a report that set out the terms of reference for the newly formed Standards Committee. Members were asked to agree to recommend minor changes to the terms of reference to Council to remove the requirement for independent members and to the procedure for determining complaints to reflect the role of the new committee. The proposed changes were detailed in Appendix 1 and 3 to the report.

It was noted that with effect from the municipal year 2022/23 a separate Standards Committee had been established to assist the Council to meet its duty under s.27 of the Localism Act 2011. Previously the functions had been the responsibility of the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee. The new structure had been implemented at the suggestion of the DLUHC Commissioners. The core functions of the Committee, proposed changes and working arrangements were outlined.

In relation to the proposed removal of the requirement for independent members on the committee it was noted that it was good practice for audit committees to have co-opted membership of this kind, but it was not considered to be required for standards which already had independent input from the Independent Person and from parish council co-optees on relevant issues. Parish Council representatives were non-voting members of the Standards Committee. The Committee supported the proposed change and agreed to recommend the revised terms of reference to Council.

A Member asked about the reasoning why there could not be any cross-membership between the standards committee and audit & corporate governance committee. It was responded that good practice from other authorities could be explored and the matter could be considered in future reviews of the terms of reference.

A summary of complaints received about borough and parish councillors under the Code of Conduct to date in 2022/23 was reviewed. Members asked a number of questions about specific cases which the Monitoring Officer responded to as far as possible without disclosing any confidential aspects of the cases. It was noted that all of the four complaints received during 2022/23 had been either determined or closed with none requiring any formal investigation. The update was noted.

**Recommended to Council -**

- a) That the Constitution's Article 9A and Part 5.1 Councillors' Code of Conduct be amended as set out in Appendices 1 and 3 to the report.

**Resolved -**

- b) That the outcome of complaints determined to date in 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be noted.

**3. Whistleblowing annual report**

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report which provided Members with an annual update in relation to the Council's whistleblowing arrangements.

The provision of an annual report to the committee increased the profile of whistleblowing across the Council and provided an opportunity to highlight areas of good practice and requirements for improvement. Members agreed that an annual report on whistleblowing be provided to the committee by the Monitoring Officer.

The Committee were reminded that in response to an internal audit report, the Whistleblowing Code was reviewed by Audit and Corporate Governance Committee in July 2021. The Code had been amended in response to recommendations in the internal audit report and it was agreed that the Code should be formally reviewed annually. The current code had been reviewed against the requirements of the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy's guidance and it was considered that the Council's code was compliant. Minor changes to the Confidential Whistleblowing Code were proposed, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, and the Committee agreed that they should be recommended to Council for approval.

In 2021/22 the Council's internal auditors, RSM, conducted a review of the Council's whistleblowing arrangements which included a survey of staff, although the response rate had been very low with only 35 responses. The results indicated that nearly half of those respondents had either not been

informed about or knew where to find the whistleblowing code, the majority did not understand the procedure and a significant proportion did not feel that the culture of the organisation encouraged whistleblowing where necessary or were confident that a concern would be handled appropriately.

Members noted that the 2021 governance review of the Council did not specifically refer to whistleblowing as a concern, it did raise significant concerns about the culture and leadership, including the lack of an annual governance statement for 2020/21 or an action plan for the previous statement. It was noted that whilst an effective whistleblowing code and associated procedures were important they were part of a much wider system to ensure ethical practices were understood and complied with and that the Council was a learning organisation, seeking continuous improvement and encouraging staff to raise concerns. The Monitoring Officer stated that the Council's corporate plan had raised leadership and culture and governance as two of its seven recovery themes.

Members asked about the number of whistleblowing complaints received in the past year. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that none had been received. A small number of concerns raised by individuals had been termed whistleblowing at the point they had been submitted, but on examination did not fall under the definition of whistleblowing as set out in the code. It was recognised for example that some 'whistleblowing' concerns raised were often in fact grievances which would be dealt with under the relevant policy.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Committee agreed that the changes to the whistleblowing code be recommended to full Council for approval.

**Resolved -**

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted.
- (b) That the minor changes to the Confidential Whistleblowing Code as set out in Appendix 2 be agreed and recommended to full Council for approval.
- (c) That the Committee receive an annual report on whistleblowing.

**4. Annual Update on Members' Register of Interests and Gifts & Hospitality**

The Democratic Services Lead introduced a report which provided the first annual on the Members' register of interest and declarations of gifts & hospitality for the 2021/22 municipal year.

Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 required that the Monitoring Officer establish and maintain a register of interest for Members of the authority, to ensure that the authority, public and any other interested parties know of any interests a councillor may have that might give rise to a conflict of interest. The Councillors' Code of Conduct in Part 5.1 of the Constitution set out the relevant interests that should be declared and disclosed in both the register

and at meetings. It was highlighted that Members were personally responsible for registering and declaring their interests.

The current procedure for registration of interest forms was outlined and activity in relation to the register and declarations at meetings since the start of the 2021/22 municipal year was summarised. Members were informed that following a review of the processes, areas for improvement had been identified as maintaining accuracy, compliance and ensuring declarations relating to outside bodies were up to date.

Members were reminded that the Council had also strengthened its transparency process relating to Gifts and Hospitality and that from June 2021 all registrations by Members had been published on each councillors webpage. Older declarations were maintained in a file held by democratic services and available for public inspection on request.

Since the start of the 21/22 municipal year no declarations were made for the receipt of gifts or hospitality over an estimated value of £50. However, the Council was not complacent about the relatively low levels of declarations of gifts and hospitality and Members would be regularly reminded of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct to declare any such matters.

Members of the committee asked about the report on councillors performance which usually came to committee and it was responded that this matter remained in the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee's remit.

**Resolved** - That the report be noted.

**5. Update on Government's Response to Committee on Standards in Public Life**

The Monitoring Officer provided the Committee with an update on the Government's response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life report and recommendations arising from its review of Local Government Ethical Standards and explained how these recommendations would apply in the local context of Slough. The update was noted.

**Resolved** - That the update and the Council's local procedures be noted.

**6. Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 2 February 2023.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.58 pm)

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report To:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Date:</b>	6 April 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	Meeting with the Leader of the Council and with the Chief Executive
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
<b>Ward(s):</b>	ALL
<b>Exempt:</b>	NO
<b>Appendices:</b>	NONE

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to afford the Standards Committee an opportunity to discuss with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive matters relating to the Council's ethical governance framework and issues of probity, particularly the Authority's approach to ethical governance and its key priorities in ensuring that high ethical standards continue to be promoted and maintained within the Council.

#### Recommendations:

Committee is recommended to:

- a) Welcome this opportunity for discussion with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, and
- b) Recommend any actions that the Committee feels would support continued improvement in the Council's approach to ethical governance

#### Commissioner Review

The Commissioner has reviewed this report and commented: *"Nothing to add to this. Very clear and appropriate."*

### 2. Report

- 2.1 The purpose of the Standards Committee as set out in Article 9A of the Council's Constitution is *"to promote and maintain the highest ethical standards."* This is in order to enable the Council to comply with section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 which requires the council to *"promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the authority."*
- 2.2 The Committee also has a number of core functions including assisting members to observe the Council's Ethical Framework and the Code of Conduct, advising and training members on matters relating to the ethical framework, and monitoring its operation.

- 2.3 Parishes within the Borough also have the same statutory obligation in relation to their own members, and the Committee also assists parishes within the Borough in their duty to comply with it.
- 2.4 The purpose of the Committee meeting with the Leader of the Council and with the Chief Executive is to seek their perspective as to how the Ethical Framework, as set out in the Council's Constitution, is working in practice in relation to both members and officers. Further, it also offers them the opportunity to suggest areas on which the Standards Committee could focus in order to promote and maintain ethical standards whether it be in relation to the culture of the authority or ensuring that necessary elements of the ethical framework are in place.
- 2.5 The Committee can then consider whether any suggestions put forward should be included in a future work programme of the Committee.

### **Options considered**

It is open to the Committee not to invite the Leader of the Council or the Chief Executive to meet with them.

## **3. Implications of the Recommendation**

### **3.1 *Financial implications***

No specific financial implications have been identified as arising from this report.

### **3.2 *Legal implications***

The Council has a duty under section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members and co-opted members of the authority. Meeting with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive will help inform the Standards Committee as to any current or emerging issues which may need to be addressed.

### **3.3 *Risk management implications***

No risk management implications have been identified as arising from this report. Any risk management issues which may arise during discussion of this report will be addressed in any future report.

### **3.4 *Environmental implications***

No environmental implications have been identified as arising from this report.

### **3.5 *Equality implications***

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been completed for this report as it does not recommend a change in Council policy or service.

## **4. Background Papers**

None



## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report To:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Date:</b>	6 April 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	Draft Member Development Programme 2023-24
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Alexander Polak, Head of Governance & Scrutiny, Statutory Scrutiny Officer  Manize Talukdar, Principal Democratic Services Officer
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix A – Draft Member development & induction programme 2023-24  Appendix B – Centre for Governance and Scrutiny; Scrutiny Members Development Proposal  Appendix C – Update on last year’s Member Development activity

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

#### 1.1 This report:

- Sets out draft Proposals for the 2023-2024 Member induction programme following the local elections in May 2023
- Recommends the creation of a small, informal ‘Member Development Working Group’ to be consulted on the ongoing development of the Member Development Programme throughout the year.

#### Recommendations:

Committee is recommended to:

- Consider the proposals in the report and
- Endorse the creation of a small, informal ‘Member Development Working Group’ of councillors and officers to advise the Monitoring Officer on member development issues throughout the year.

## **Reasons for recommendations:**

- a) To provide Councillors with the key skills, tools, knowledge and confidence to enable them to successfully navigate their roles and effectively discharge their council responsibilities.
- b) To address the recommendations in the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's *Scrutiny Improvement Review* to upskill and develop Members' capacity and capability to take on and respond to the current significant challenges faced by the Council.
- c) To ensure that the Council complies with its duty to implement the Directions of the Secretary of State to achieve improvements in relation to the proper functioning of democratic governance and scrutiny.

## **Commissioner Review**

Commissioners comments will be provided at a later date.

## **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 A draft programme of Member induction is set out in Appendix A, with specific attention given to training of Scrutiny Members (in Appendix B) in light of the government direction on that topic. A summary of the past year's activity is at Appendix C for information.
- 2.2 The Member development plan itself takes the form of a series of principles for the way in which member induction and development will be done during the year. It will focus on key skills and knowledge designed to enable first time Councillors to hit the ground running and enable returning Councillors to build on their existing knowledge and skills base.
- 2.3 The plan is designed to provide a framework for, and demonstrate our commitment to, the continued professional development of Councillors. In order to meet the council's improvement goals it must provide sufficient ongoing development opportunities for its decision-makers, to steadily improve their skills, knowledge and behaviours.
- 2.4 The plan is closely aligned to the requirements highlighted in the CFGS Scrutiny Review, the Directions from the Secretary of State (specifically to ensure that Members make evidence-based decisions, and are mindful of the duty of best value), and the Council's strategic priorities, its recovery plan and vision.
- 2.5 The plan envisages that the bulk of training will be provided in-house, with a mixture of online and in-person sessions, with accessibility enabled by modern technology such as recording sessions on Teams. Some sessions will be facilitated by external providers and Members will also be encouraged through various other means to gain outside experience of 'what good looks like'.
- 2.6 A draft induction programme is presented in Appendix A, and a new Member Development Working Group is proposed in order to work with the Monitoring Officer to firm up the detailed schedule of member development for the rest of the year, in light of Members' feedback in the recent Member Survey.

### **3 Member Development Plan 2023/24**

- 3.1 The Member Development Plan for 2023/24 is made up of training geared towards induction for the first part of the year (introductory, mandatory and key skills sessions) and then continuation of the annual Member development offer throughout the remainder of the year. Much of this latter part is yet to be scheduled – the focus at this point has been on the induction programme.
- 3.2 The following items comprise the principles and practices which will ensure the success and continual improvement of the Member development offer during 2023/24:

#### Structure and prioritisation of development offer

- 3.4 The intention is to prioritise as follows:
1. Mandatory courses first which comprise a minimum baseline of compliance with legal and constitutional requirements (eg with regard to Member Code of Conduct, declarations of interest, information governance, and mandatory Planning/Licensing training)
  2. Skills next (ie *how* to be an effective councillor)
  3. Subject matter knowledge, primarily delivered at moments when it is relevant and can be applied eg subject briefings in advance of decisions on those topics.
- 3.5 The draft Induction programme set out at Appendix A follows this pattern and is split into these sections for clarity.

#### Scrutiny Training

- 3.6 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), with funding assistance by the Local Government Association, have designed a programme of Scrutiny development work specially for Slough Borough Council, in light of the findings in their review of SBC's scrutiny arrangements and the developments in the service since. Their proposal was submitted in July 2022 and the council has agreed to take up this offer for the new cohort for Scrutiny members commencing immediately after the election. This is a critical thread in the Council's Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan.
- 3.7 Full details of the CfGS proposal can be found at Appendix B. It is anticipated that in the final implementation there will be some adjustment to the emphasis of the exact courses offered, as they will wish to respond to the more recent circumstances at the council.

#### Other Committee-specific training

- 3.8 Where possible, committee-specific training (such as that for planning and licencing) will initially take place on the evening of their first scheduled meeting, as is custom and practice at SBC.
- 3.9 Further training and development is expected to take place on at least an annual basis, and for key committees which are currently subject to considerable corporate focus (such as Scrutiny and Audit) on a more frequent basis through the system of regular pre-meetings.

### External expertise, including visits and mentoring

- 3.10 In the past members have had some concerns about training delivered by third parties, both because it costs money and because training delivered in this way has sometimes been felt to lack sufficient awareness of Slough Borough Council's local context, or the lived experience of SBC's councillors.
- 3.11 Efforts must be made to mitigate this effect however it is important to recognise the value of input from outside sources. In particular, the council's commissioners have repeatedly expressed that they felt there would be a benefit for SBC Councillors of visiting other authorities and meeting councillors from other authorities in order to develop a stronger sense of 'what good looks like'.
- 3.12 A programme of visits to other authorities is proposed a part of the ongoing development programme, with an emphasis on committee Chairs gaining contacts and experience with their opposite numbers at other authorities. The LGA has offered to assist the Council with identifying suitable councils to visit.
- 3.13 Some external input into the skills development of councillors is also considered important. In order to mitigate the issue of whether external providers will provide training relevant to Slough, where possible slides will be requested to be shared with the lead member for the subject area (and with Democratic Services) in advance of key training courses, for feedback.
- 3.14 Over the course of the past year, the LGA has provided a structured mentoring service to Members with key roles. They provide and-picked mentors for SBC councillors who are experienced councillors from other authorities around the country. These mentors are professional and are paid for their time, and the LGA has funded this work. It is to be hoped that this programme of support will continue into the new municipal year as anecdotal feedback from the members involved has generally been very positive.

### Remote working and creating a video library

- 3.15 In light of the significant proportion of members of Slough Borough Council who work full time and/or have caring responsibilities it is considered beneficial to conduct the majority of traditional development and training sessions online rather than in-person. This also enables recording of these sessions via MS Teams. A library of member development videos can then be built, hosted by Democratic Services on SharePoint, for members to review in their own time at a later date. This is likely to increase the overall uptake of learning and development opportunities and allows members to access content at a time which suits them rather than having to attend a specific training session.
- 3.16 However there will remain an important role for face-to-face sessions when different learning styles are being employed, for example coaching, mentoring, whole-committee workshops and applied learning in-committee will all benefit from being conducted in-person where possible. Members views are sought.

### Members' Handbook 2023

- 3.17 The induction programme will be supplemented by the Members' Handbook, which is designed to be a resource for Members throughout their term of office. It contains

a wide range of useful and practical information regarding their roles and responsibilities, how the Council operates, its vision and priorities and support available for Members. The 2023 handbook is being updated taking into account feedback received from Members and officers.

### Senior Officer attendance

- 3.18 There is an expectation that subject-matter training will be delivered and/or attended by senior officers so that there is accountability and appropriately strategic engagement with Members. In the past Councillors have reported lack of attendance by senior officers as an issue.

### Measuring and Monitoring Satisfaction

- 3.19 In the past, response rates from Members to post-course surveys have been extremely low which makes it difficult to assess the success of the training provided. However this information has been gathered by emailing Word Documents to councillors which is not particularly user-friendly. Going forward, feedback is to be moved to instant in-session feedback and online survey tools (eg MS Forms) where possible in order to gather data to improve quality of training.
- 3.20 The Member Development Survey will also be used as a means to assess overall satisfaction with member development. Members' baseline impressions can be found in Appendix A to the Member Survey item elsewhere on today's agenda.

### Member Development Charter

- 3.21 Some authorities (13 in the South East) have [obtained 'charter status'](#) for Member Development. This is essentially a system which recognises local authorities which have been formally assessed to have met a set of criteria defined by the Local Government Association. The criteria relate to the quality of member development offered by the authority. In our region the assessment and associated support is carried out by South East Employers. There is a cost of about £3,000 associated with gaining charter status and a significant investment of officer and member time is required. For example, one criterion has been that all members should have a personal development plan and regular 1:1 meetings with a lead officer to assess progress against that plan.
- 3.22 While charter plus would be a worthy goal for SBC, it is not considered that resources are available to support the required level of investment in 2023/24. However, members should keep an eye on the possibility that SBC could aim for charter status by the end of the new four-year administration, if the required resources can be identified and the cost justified.

### Making courses 'mandatory' and differentiating between new and experienced Members

- 3.23 Members are not employees and the Council has no sanctions it can apply to force Members to undertake training, except where some specific committees constitutionally require their Members to undertake training in order to sit on a committee. This is a nationally recognised issue when it comes to Member development. Nevertheless, a strong expectation can be set by Group Leaders who are in a position to apply sanctions within their Groups as they see fit.

3.24 In the draft Induction Schedule at Appendix A, the following terms are used in order to best encourage take-up of training by the most relevant councillors:

- **Mandatory** – failure to attend would not be in compliance with the requirements on members set out in the constitution and/or prevent you from sitting on a specific committee
- **Essential** – All Members are expected by their own Group Leaders to attend
- **Encouraged** – All Members would benefit from attending and it will be relevant to all Members
- **Welcome** – All Members would benefit from attending, but it may be less relevant for some.

### Scheduling

3.25 It is intended that online working and recording of member development sessions will enable the councillors to access learning and development courses regardless of the time of day they are held. However, in general it is considered best to hold online sessions around the end of the working day but before evening meetings (eg between 17:00-18:00) or to hold in-person sessions immediately before formal meetings (17:30-18:20). Democratic Services will be responsible for scheduling member development sessions in order to minimise the frequency of clashes with the formal meeting calendar.

### Format

3.26 There is an expectation that presenters will provide an active learning environment with varying styles of learning and presentation and opportunities for discussion. This will be assessed through Member feedback.

### Attendance

3.27 Members' attendance will be recorded as per any other Member meeting. The Annual Survey at Appendix A of the Member Survey report elsewhere on today's agenda gives some insight into Members' reasons for not attending sessions, however the greatest response from councillors was that nothing prevents them. The annual production of the Member development plan should continue to report to Members on attendance statistics to inform any potential actions as necessary if attendance or compliance is low.

### LGA resources – e-learning and workbooks

3.28 Slough Borough Council is a Member of the Local Government Association. This Membership includes access for Slough's Members to a number of e-learning courses and workbooks. The LGA is always releasing new content and courses, and Democratic Services stays abreast of this content and includes it in the regular Member Newsletter every Friday.

3.29 Self-service is a key tenet of the Council's current transformation programme. Councillors will be guided to access the following e-learning courses via self-registration with the LGA, and data about completion rates will be monitored and reported to Group Leaders:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- Holding council meetings online
- Facilitation and conflict resolution
- Effective ward Councillor
- Scrutiny
- Influencing skills
- Local government finance
- Supporting mentally healthier communities

3.30 Councillors will be referred to the 28 workbooks available for them to work through in their own time, through a scheduled series of articles in the Members' Newsletter over the period of the council, including:

- Acting on climate change
- Being an effective ward Councillor
- Bribery and fraud prevention
- Chairing skills
- Community leadership
- Community safety
- Councillor/officer relations
- Engaging young people
- Handling casework
- Health and safety in the council
- Health in All Policies and COVID-19
- Local government finance
- Neighbourhood & community engagement
- Neighbourhood planning - ward Councillors
- New Councillors
- Scrutiny of finance
- Supporting residents with complex issues

### Member Survey

- 3.31 A survey of members was carried out and the results can be found elsewhere on today's agenda. This includes important data about members' satisfaction with member development and a significant amount of valuable free-text comments providing suggestions for future training. To avoid duplication of paperwork those comments are not reproduced in this report but they can be found in Appendix A to the Member Survey item elsewhere on today's agenda.
- 3.32 The survey results have been taken into account by officers in the development of the draft induction schedule presented at Appendix A of this report. In addition to this, it is expected that one of the first roles for the Member Development Working Group will be to assist officers with reviewing members' feedback in order to inform the remainder of the ongoing Member development schedule.

### Resources for delivery of the Member Development Plan

- 3.33 Given the financial climate in which the council finds itself, Member Development will need to be delivered within existing resources and it should be noted that the member development plan presented here is ambitious given the context. Accordingly, co-operation by the whole council will be necessary in order to deliver a year-round programme of learning for Members.

## **4. Implications of the Recommendation**

### **4.1 Financial implications**

While a modest budget is available for individual members to attend external training or to bring in external trainers during the year, this report does not commit members to any specific spend. This budget is managed and administered by Democratic Services and the Democratic Services Manager has the authority to determine payment from this for external providers of any courses mentioned in this report, without the need for a councillor decision.

### **3.2 *Legal implications***

None, other than as referred to in the report.

### **3.3 *Risk management implications***

None, other than as referred to in the report.

### **3.4 Environmental implications**

None

### **3.5 Equality implications**

None

## **5. Background Papers**

None



## **Appendix A – DRAFT Member Induction Schedule 2023 – for discussion**

All dates are currently provisional.

The option to use external providers to support or deliver any of the below content will be explored on a case-by-case basis.

<b>DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION</b>						
<b>Name of training</b>	<b>All Members</b>	<b>First-time Members</b>	<b>All recently elected Members</b>	<b>Specific Members</b>	<b>Provisional delivery target</b>	<b>Delivery</b>
<b>PRE-INDUCTION</b>						
Election					Thurs 4 May	
Count					Friday 5 May	
At count: Sign acceptance of office Sign IT governance form Provide contact details Initial photograph taken			Mandatory		Friday 5 May	In person
At count: All members issued with welcome pack and declarations of Interest forms					Friday 5 May	In person
Group meetings and administration time					w/c 8 May w/c 15 May	
<b>INDUCTION – WELCOME and bitesize first modules.</b>						
CLT welcome and corporate overview (including financial position)	Essential	Essential	Essential		Thurs 11 May 18:00-19:30	In person
Induction programme overview						
Member Support overview						

<b>DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION</b>						
<b>Name of training</b>	<b>All Members</b>	<b>First-time Members</b>	<b>All recently elected Members</b>	<b>Specific Members</b>	<b>Provisional delivery target</b>	<b>Delivery</b>
Bitesize basics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intro to Governance, Code of Conduct &amp; Declarations of Interest</li> <li>How decisions are made</li> <li>Information Governance – data handling as a Councillor (5 minute intro)</li> </ul>						
Sign acceptance of office (any not complete at election count)			Mandatory		Appointments with individual new Members as per availability 11-14 May	In person
Distribute IT equipment and IT training support for O365 etc		Essential			Appointments with IT ASAP after election - TBC	In person
All new Members to be allocated 'buddies' from existing cohort in their party – organised by Group Leaders						
<b>INDUCTION - SKILLS</b>						
Skills for the Modern Slough Borough Councillor  Proposed to include: * How to use the facilities - printing / ICT help desk / meeting room access etc * Governance Module 1 - Understanding Local Government (strong leader & cabinet model), what is good governance	Encouraged	Essential	Encouraged		TBC – before AGM if possible  Videos available for Members to self-access after that.	online

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION						
Name of training	All Members	First-time Members	All recently elected Members	Specific Members	Provisional delivery target	Delivery
* Code of Conduct module 2 – the detail (To include importance of good governance and Slough’s governance journey since 2016) * Governance module 2 - meeting conduct, rule 30, call-in, points of order * LG Finance module 1 * Ward and case work module 1 – including making representations, how to get things done, petitions, CIF bids * Data and Information Security Module 1 * Councillors’ right to information, confidentiality & FOI						
LGA e-learning offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</li> <li>Local government finance</li> </ul>	Essential	Essential	Essential		May-July, in Members’ own time, prompted by emails and Member Newsletter. Completion data monitored and shared with Group leaders.	online
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective ward Councillor</li> <li>Holding council meetings online</li> <li>Facilitation and conflict resolution</li> <li>Influencing skills</li> <li>Supporting mentally healthier communities</li> <li>Scrutiny</li> </ul>	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged			

<b>DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION</b>						
<b>Name of training</b>	<b>All Members</b>	<b>First-time Members</b>	<b>All recently elected Members</b>	<b>Specific Members</b>	<b>Provisional delivery target</b>	<b>Delivery</b>
Planning training	Encouraged	Essential	Encouraged	Mandatory: New Planning Cttee Members	25 May 6:30 pm	In person
Licencing training	Welcome	Essential	Welcome	Mandatory: New Licencing Cttee Members	1 June 6:30 pm	In person
Annual Audit Cttee training	Welcome	Welcome	Welcome	Essential: Audit & Corporate Governance Cttee Members	7 June 6:30 pm	In person
O&S training – first session	Encouraged	Essential	Encouraged	Essential: O&S Members	30 May 6:30pm	In person
Further O&S training sessions as per CfGS proposal at Appendix C	Welcome	Welcome	Welcome	Essential: O&S Members	TBC	Mixture of in person and online
Chairing skills	Welcome	Welcome	Welcome	Essential: All Chairs and Vice Chairs	w/c 22 May (ie after AGM)	online
IT skills drop-in sessions TBC	Welcome	Encouraged	Welcome		TBC	Mixture of in person and online
Visits to other local authorities, for Chairs to meet their opposite numbers and for committee members to view other committees in action	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged		Year-round	Mixture of in person and online
Communication and media training	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged: Cabinet and Chairs	June	Online
First Aid	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged		September	In person

<b>DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION</b>						
<b>Name of training</b>	<b>All Members</b>	<b>First-time Members</b>	<b>All recently elected Members</b>	<b>Specific Members</b>	<b>Provisional delivery target</b>	<b>Delivery</b>
<b>INDUCTION - KNOWLEDGE</b>						
Statutory responsibilities – Module 1 introduction to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding</li> <li>• Corporate parenting</li> <li>• Health &amp; Safety</li> <li>• Equality and Diversity</li> </ul>	Essential	Essential	Essential		(part of welcome session)	online
Directorate priorities – ‘An evening with...’ each Exec Director.  Exec Directors to consider use of site visit opportunities.	Welcome	Encouraged	Welcome		Spread across the year	Online
Cabinet-focused development (designed with new cabinet)				Essential: Cabinet Members		TBC
Understanding Local Government Finance – module 2	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged		June	Online
Prevent - Terrorism and Radicalisation	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged		July	Online
Councillors will be referred to the 28 Local Government Association workbooks available for them to work through in their own time including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acting on climate change</li> <li>• Being an effective ward Councillor</li> <li>• Bribery and fraud prevention</li> <li>• Chairing skills</li> </ul>	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged		In Members’ own time	N/A

<b>DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION</b>						
<b>Name of training</b>	<b>All Members</b>	<b>First-time Members</b>	<b>All recently elected Members</b>	<b>Specific Members</b>	<b>Provisional delivery target</b>	<b>Delivery</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community leadership</li> <li>• Community safety</li> <li>• Councillor/officer relations</li> <li>• Engaging young people</li> <li>• Handling casework</li> <li>• Health and safety in the council</li> <li>• Health in All Policies and COVID-19</li> <li>• Local government finance</li> <li>• Neighbourhood &amp; community engagement</li> <li>• Neighbourhood planning - ward Councillors</li> <li>• New Councillors</li> <li>• Scrutiny of finance</li> <li>• Supporting residents with complex issues</li> </ul>						

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## Scrutiny Member Development & Improvement

### Proposal

July 2022

## **Member Workshops and Development Support**

### **FOCUSING ON KEY ISSUES:**

- **Core skills**
- **Culture shift – positive relationships**
- **Constructive challenge**
- **Advanced skills and techniques**
- **Scrutiny focus on recovery, improvement and sustainability**
- **Analytical and strategic scrutiny**
- **Shaping outcomes and improving performance**

The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) were invited to support Slough Borough Council to review its scrutiny arrangements and advise on way to improve and develop its role.

The outcome of that work will help to ensure that Councillors and Officers share a common understanding of the role, function and demands of scrutiny in a strategic context. It will also support Members to acquire the essential skills, behaviours and participation methods to constructively analyse, explore and constructively challenge the policies, plans and forward decisions of the Cabinet and the council's corporate plans.

This programme of Member development will integrate within a common theme of improvement and support – both for individual roles, but also tackling improvement as an on-going process of continual improvement, not a set of episodes. Each aspect of this Member development plan will be delivered by a CfGS subject specialist.

CfGS has worked with a several councils described as 'challenged' and successfully assisted improvements through Member development programmes.

This proposal recommends several development activities aimed at scrutiny Members to raise scrutiny capability:

- Essential understanding. Ensuring that all Members have a shared experience of the role of scrutiny and how it forms an important part of the governance of the council – through leading accountability, constructive challenge, shaping and improving policy and key decisions, developing new insight and driving improvement.
- Playing an effective role in crucial areas of the council, in particular: robust and early budget and corporate policy scrutiny; Adult Social Care and Health (due to significant change eg Health & SC Bill, ICS etc and high value financial pressures), Children's Services (due to increasing pressures, costs and risks)
- Scrutiny Chairing and Leadership. Scrutiny chairs can be the best agents of change and improvement. A package of support is necessary in this area
- Support for Officers working with scrutiny to develop a common understanding and efficient model of support which helps improve scrutiny impact and useful productivity
- Support for Cabinet Members to work collaboratively with scrutiny, to get the best out of the relationship and to effectively align the aims of both
- On-going improvement workshops to focus on areas that need more concentrated effort or help for Members

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In addition, ***all-Member training, one-to-one coaching and mentoring for chairs, support for Officers and Cabinet***, we propose an on-going expert advice service and regular clinics and workshops to focus on key improvement issues.

This plan avoids the single-dip approach to training. Instead, it takes a structured support with on-going observation, monitoring and improvement.

## **All Member Workshop 1 – The Essentials of Effective Strategic Scrutiny**

### **For Scrutiny Committee Members - proposed content:**

- The foundations of effective scrutiny – collaboration, trust, and transparency
- Latest guidance and good practice
- Support members to increase their understanding and experience as effective and confident scrutiny practitioners
- To help improve individual member skills in the essential principles of effective scrutiny
- To give scrutiny members an increased understanding of the strategic role and potential impact of scrutiny
- Scrutiny influences and how to use them
- Importance of relationships, behaviours and communication (culture aspects)
- To understand how scrutiny can have significant impact in supporting performance
- To explore how scrutiny can better add value to policy and practice in the future
- To ensure the focus of overview and scrutiny and its work programme is balanced and effective – the importance of developing a work programme that is aligned to council priorities
- Core questioning and listening skills. Developing a questioning strategy

### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of this session Members should have a clear overview and understanding of scrutiny's strategic role in helping to improve and shape council policy and plans through constructive scrutiny and enquiry.

**\*\*\*\*Added to this session would be meeting observations followed by:**

**\*\*\*\*Scrutiny Development workshops**

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These would be held every committee cycle to explore and discuss the performance of scrutiny and address any issues where improvement could be necessary. This would be part of a mature continuous improvement programme which stays in contact with the scrutiny committees to embed and lock-in improvement. This will ensure that new Members also join a high-performing scrutiny function and will therefore become part of an effective committee and can continue the good work. It may avoid the need for repeating the whole process.

**\*\*\*\*Scrutiny members advice clinics**

Access to advice for scrutiny chairs and officers on issues relating to scrutiny. This would be an email and Teams call service by arrangement.

## **Workshop 2 – Chairing and Leading Scrutiny**

### **An introductory session for Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs – proposed content:**

- Why Chairs set the standard – the importance of leadership advocacy
- How Chair influence the ‘operating culture’ of scrutiny and lead by example. Setting cultural norms and expectations of the scrutiny committee to drive objective enquiry and quality outputs
- Support the role of scrutiny within the latest government guidelines and best practice
- Support members to increase their understanding and experience as effective and confident scrutiny practitioners
- To help individual member to learn for latest best practice and skills in leadership of scrutiny skills
- Prioritising and objective setting
- Leading the process of building focused and effective work programmes
- The role of Chairs in negotiating pre-scrutiny
- Build teams, avoiding randomness in scrutiny
- Preparing and planning
- Developing key lines of enquiry
- Use of evidence, insight and witnesses
- Techniques to gain broadest member engagement
- Effective and efficient meeting management
- The role of committee chairs outside the meeting
- Managing and measuring your committee’s performance

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## **Learning outcomes**

At the end of this session Chairs and Vice Chairs should have a clear understanding of their role in getting the best out of their committee through clear leadership and inclusive chairing. They should also know their role beyond the committee in developing strong relationships, advocating for scrutiny and being active in the setting of agendas and work programmes

### **1-2-1 Further Development for Scrutiny Chairs – Coaching and Mentoring**

This will provide the Scrutiny Committee Chairs with 1-2-1 coaching and support to assist their personal and professional growth as an effective Chairs and leaders of scrutiny within the council. To offer analysis and explore possible strategies for development.

This development proposal is designed to be delivered in person

- Initial consultation with each Chair prior to a committee meeting. This discussion is designed around the chair to consider issues, challenges and approaches.
- Meeting observation. Can be remote access. This will gather insight on the meeting, behaviours, performance and effectiveness and the role of the Chair in leading and chairing the meeting to get the best outcomes. It will be the basis for a further feedback session.
- Post meeting feedback session. This will offer an opportunity to reflect on the meeting and the role of the Chair. It will assist the Chair to analyse his/her strengths and weaknesses, how to build and improve and set some personal goals and plans to strengthen his capacity in the role
- Based on the above further 1-2-1 sessions may be required to support the chair to set and achieve realistic personal objectives for his role

### **Workshop 3 - Getting the most from scrutiny for Cabinet Members**

To help Cabinet Members to develop and maintain a constructive relationship with scrutiny and how to ensure that the benefits of scrutiny are achieved through mutual understanding and co-operation and trust.

Proposed content:

- Understanding the role of scrutiny as a core whole-council function
- How scrutiny adds value in supporting council performance
- Developing a positive relationship between scrutiny and cabinet
- Scrutiny as a critical friend. The positive benefits of challenge and testing
- How scrutiny helps cabinet Members to develop their policy and key decision-making
- Getting the maximum benefit from scrutiny for cabinet Members
- Advising the scrutiny work programme

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- The importance of visible democratic accountability
  - Handling the scrutiny 'politics', behaviours and challenge
  - Effective strategies to plan for scrutiny meetings
  - Officer support for Cabinet at scrutiny Meetings
  - Sharing information and briefing scrutiny
  - Facing scrutiny – questions – feedback – openness and risks

#### **Workshop 4 – Supporting Scrutiny – Officer workshop**

This session is intended for Officers who support, attend or serve scrutiny through reports or supply of information. It will develop the 'whole council' approach to scrutiny and its democratic role in holding to account but also in constructively shaping and improving. To do this Scrutiny must have good access to information, together with professional help and guidance to enable it to develop the capacity to be effective. Officers can play an important part in changing and improving the role and value contribution of scrutiny. This workshop will concentrate on similar areas as the Member's session, together with developing an appreciation of the cultural issues and how they can be addressed.

Proposed content:

- The foundations of effective scrutiny – collaboration, trust, and transparency
- Latest guidance and good practice
- The essential principles of effective scrutiny
- Information flow, disclosure and timing
- Collaborating with scrutiny Chairs to gain greater understanding of objectives and how best to support their achievement
- Supporting members to increase their understanding and experience of key issues – assisting in building knowledge
- Why and how scrutiny has a strategic role and potential impact of scrutiny
- Scrutiny influences and how they can work positively
- Importance of relationships, behaviours and communication (culture aspects)
- How scrutiny can have significant impact in supporting performance
- To explore how scrutiny can better add value to policy and practice in the future

- 
- To ensure the focus of overview and scrutiny and its work programme is balanced and effective – the importance of developing a work programme that is aligned to council priorities

### **Learning outcomes**

Officers will have a better understanding of scrutiny's future role and purpose and how they can play an important part to ensure that scrutiny has positive impact.

### **Workshop 5 – Work programmes, setting priorities and focus**

A key recommendation of the Scrutiny Improvement Review report was to repurpose the scrutiny committees to focus on the crucial priorities of the council, especially areas of weakness, high risk or recovery-related issues. This can best be achieved together with Member development, through a thorough review of work programmes.

This workshop will therefore be a practical session, with significant Member and Officer input to agree an appropriate methodology which will identify and prioritise candidate subjects for scrutiny which can then be build into its work programme for the next twelve months and potentially in subsequent years. It will be Member-led but impartially supported and facilitated to work through a rational process of selection and rejection of subjects to create a work programme that is strategically aligned and focused on improvement and community priorities.

- Purpose of work programmes
- Inputs and a sources of candidate subjects
- Identifying council and community priorities
- Long-listing
- Using a selection and prioritisation tool – structured methodology
- Aligning and cross-cutting
- Setting scrutiny objectives
- Different scrutiny techniques to build agility and capacity
- Importance of openness and collaboration
- Reviewing and adapting

### **Learning outcomes**

Member and Officers will be able to understand the vital role that work programming has in effective scrutiny and how careful selection based on a rational process will help to prioritise and focus scrutiny on key priorities.

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## **Workshop 6 – Council Finance, Budget and Commercial Scrutiny – Scrutiny Councillors**

Designed to give Councillors an understanding of the role scrutiny plays in the development and delivery of the council's recovery plans, medium-term financial strategy, revenue and capital budgets and treasury and asset management. It will also focus on scrutiny of commercial undertakings and how scrutiny's role differs but maintains effective oversight.

Proposed content:

- How finance/budget scrutiny can add value to council
- How budget scrutiny should be planned and managed
- Scope out the task of budget scrutiny
- Process, timeline and milestone in budget scrutiny
- How scrutiny plays a key role in testing assumptions and in shaping budgets
- Build understanding of the role of scrutiny in the budget cycle
- Explore how key lines of enquiry can assist and focus scrutiny in its role
- The role of scrutiny in other areas of the council's financial activities
- Scrutinising and tracking budget delivery, transformation and cost reduction plans
- Understand risk and the role of scrutiny in assessing it
- Scrutinising financial performance and delivery
- Commercialisation, new models of delivery and the role of scrutiny

### **Learning outcomes**

This session will help Members of scrutiny to recognise the vital role of scrutiny in helping to constructively test and challenge to council's recovery strategy, corporate priorities and the robustness of financial planning to support them. Members should gain an understanding of how scrutiny can test assumptions, risks and pressures that underline budgets and medium-term financial plans. This session will also help Members to develop questioning strategies to test budget and financial plans and hold to account political decision makers for the delivery of their plans. The session will also cover how scrutiny can engage with the council's commercial operations and interests.

## **Seminar 7 – Scrutiny of Children's services and safeguarding**

To identify the role and purpose of overview and scrutiny in relation to children's services and safeguarding

Help scrutiny Members to:

Identify sources of data and information to assist scrutiny



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Consider a range of effective questions and lines of enquiry for scrutiny

Explore ways to overcome any barriers to effective reviews

The session will look into the council's children's services and safeguarding responsibilities in relation to overview and scrutiny including:

- Understanding the diverse landscape of children's services and the role of scrutiny
- How scrutiny supports the shaping and improving of children's services
- General safeguarding
- Links with Health and Health partners
- Child protection and safeguarding
- Early intervention
- Looked after children
- SEND
- Children in need
- Commissioning services

### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of this session Members should have a clear understanding of their role in ensuring that Children and Family Services are effective and to be more able to (a) identify sources of data and information to assist scrutiny (b) consider a range of effective questions and lines of enquiry for scrutiny of these services and (c) to understand the relationships with key partner agencies, health services and children's health service providers.

### **Seminar 8 – Health & Social Care Scrutiny**

To explore and understand how scrutiny plays an essential role in the overview of health and social care provision in the Council area and how it constructively works to holds the council's Cabinet and partners to account for its appropriate delivery.

- This session will include implications of the Health and Care Bill and the anticipate changes to social care provision and links to health care
- To support councillors to understand the role of scrutiny in the complex framework of health scrutiny in the context of evolving integrated care systems and implications for changes in service delivery across all health settings from primary to acute
- To understand how scrutiny can play a key role in improving health provision in the community by exploring issues important to residents
- To provide councillors with an opportunity to explore and take practical steps to carry out scrutiny of health services in a way that makes an impact.

- 
- The importance of strategic focus in scrutinising health partners
  - Assist the understanding of the various provider roles and to consider how each can be effectively scrutinised and held to account
  - Building and understanding of the overview and scrutiny framework within an integrated social care and health setting
  - Setting strategic objectives for scrutiny
  - Developing a shared understanding of scrutiny's purpose
  - The scrutiny work programme – focus, rigour and depth
  - Focusing on the right priorities
  - Public interest and health scrutiny
  - Identify who, when and how scrutiny holds to account
  - Suggest areas where more in-depth scrutiny enquiries may assist the process such as specific task and finish groups
  - Building strong relationships, with partners and constituent members
  - Managing behaviours, cultures and expectations

### Learning outcomes

At the end of this session Members should have a clear understanding of their role in ensuring that the council is delivering good essential services in social care and that the ASC and Health partnership and integration arrangements are working effectively and furthermore, that health providers are addressing the priorities of the residents of Slough.

### Costs

Activity	Cost options
Workshop sessions	Onsite - £1100 plus vat and travel
1-2-1 Coaching for Chairs	Delivered in person on-site - £1400+vat + travel per Chair
Advisory support to Scrutiny Support Team	£850 a day plus vat

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## About CfGS and delivery

CfGS is the leading national body promoting and supporting excellence in governance and scrutiny. As a charity, our work has a strong track record of influencing policy and practice nationally and locally. CfGS provides training, consultancy and conferences. Crucially we are respected and trusted to provide independent and impartial advice.

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## Appendix C - Update on last year's Member Development Activity

During the Covid pandemic and ensuing lockdown, the Member development programme had to be pared back and was largely delivered online. With the gradual ease of restrictions during the 2022/23 Municipal Year, training has been offered both online and in person. In addition to mandatory training modules such as planning and licensing, we have provided the following (see table A):

- Bespoke training for scrutiny Members
- Bespoke training for Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and Trustee Members
- Welcome induction event and handbook for new Members in May 2022
- Briefings with chairs and vice-chairs of scrutiny
- Briefings in advance of formal Member meetings
- Signposting Members to free LGA webinars and e-learning

**Table A – Member training/briefing sessions May 2022-January 2023**

	<b>Training/Briefing 2022/23</b>	<b>No of attendees</b>
1.	New Members' Welcome Evening – 12 May 2022  Brief Introduction to the People, Children Directorate, -Brief Introduction to the People, Adults Directorate -Brief Introduction to the Corporate Operations Directorate -Brief Introduction to the Place & Community Directorate -Signing of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office -Presentation: The Code of Conduct, the Nolan Principles and Declaration of Pecuniary Interests	10
2.	Half Day Induction Workshop – 8 June 2022 (Virtual)  -Casework -Information Security, Data Protection & FOI -Safeguarding Adults -Safeguarding Children & Corporate Parenting -Intro to Local Govt Finance	13
3.	SEE New Councillor Induction 16 June 2022 (Virtual)	1
4.	Scrutiny Training 16 June 2022	21
5.	LGA Webinar: Finance without numbers – An introduction to local government finance 21 Sep 2022 (Virtual)	7
6.	LGA Webinar: Charing Skills Essentials 22 Sep 2022 (Virtual)	1

7.	LGA Leadership Webinar: Finance for non-finance Cabinet Members 29 Sep 2022 (Virtual)	1
8.	Member Briefing: Domestic Violence 12 December 2022 (Virtual)	13
9.	Member Briefing: The Pan Berkshire Suicide Prevention Summit 12th December 2022 (Virtual, External - Dan Devitt, Reading BC )	12
10.	Member Briefing: Mental health, suicide prevention 11 Jan 2023 – Fiona Harris & Public Health team	TBC

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Date:</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> April 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	Member Survey Results
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Alexander Polak, Head of Governance and Scrutiny
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Member Survey Results

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with the results of the member survey conducted in January-February 2023, seeking their views on key issues arising which they would like to see addressed by further work.

#### Recommendations:

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the results of the Member Survey and the actions underway to draw lessons and actions from the data and highlight key issues for further work.

#### Reason:

It is important that the attitudes and needs of councillors and officers are understood in order to a) design appropriate interventions to improve the council and b) have a benchmark against which to measure the council's subsequent improvement.

#### Commissioners Comments

Commissioners comments will be provided at a later date.

### 2. Report

#### Introduction

- 2.1 At the request of the Secretary of State, in the form of directions issued to Slough Borough Council, a series of 'improvement plans' have been created and published. Progress against these plans is being monitored by government-appointed commissioners.
- 2.2 A number of these plans will benefit from data about councillors' skills, attitudes, motivations and concerns. These include the Democratic Governance Action Plan and Scrutiny Action Plan, as well as a Culture Change plan which overarches all the work.

- 2.3 It is in any event good practice for local authorities to survey their councillors periodically and to use the results to ensure that services and support for councillors are designed to meet their specific needs. At a national level the Local Government Association carries out a 'census' of councillors for similar reasons.
- 2.4 An action to complete such a survey was included in the Democratic Governance Action Plan.

### **Method**

- 2.5 An online survey was launched to councillors using Microsoft Forms during January-February 2023. Group Leaders agreed the content and furthermore agreed to encourage their membership to complete the survey. It was:
- Sent to each councillor individually on Microsoft Teams once.
  - Sent to each councillor individually by email twice.
  - Sent to all councillors in the Member Newsletter (multiple times)
  - Available via QR code on posters outside the meeting chamber at Observatory House
- 2.6 Results were recorded anonymously.
- 2.7 The survey was designed to include a number of questions from the National Councillor Census conducted by the Local Government Association, allowing a degree of national benchmarking.
- 2.8 The survey is a little bit longer than would be ideal. While completion time was estimated at 30 minutes, the average time to complete it was 47 minutes. However, this is the first survey of its type in recent years at Slough Borough Council, so its value is high and very few councillors dropped out before the end.

### **Response**

- 2.9 24 out of 42 councillors responded, a response rate of 57%. This is considered good for a survey of this type, especially towards the end of an administration when some members may not be intending to stand for election again.
- 2.10 The results of the questions, including a full account of the free text responses - and comparisons, where available, with the LGA councillor survey - are presented at Appendix A.
- 2.11 Any potentially identifying personal comments have been redacted, otherwise the free text comments are presented in their original and full form)

### **Next steps**

- 2.12 These results should primarily be viewed as a baseline whose value will grow when we do repeat surveys. The intention is to survey the new incoming cohort of Members in October 2023 using substantially the same questions, to provide a comparison with the old cohort and a baseline for the new four-year municipal cycle, and then annually thereafter.



- 2.13 A survey of new cohort should also be done with an emphasis on understanding more about the demographics of the member cohort, which is not covered by this survey but is covered by the LGA's national census.
- 2.14 Various statistics in this survey should provide the basis for measurement of the council's performance in terms of support provided to members (eg Members' satisfaction with Democratic Services, IT, officer responsiveness etc) and in terms of their perception of the council's performance at supporting residents (eg the figures about responsiveness to service requests and complaints). Crucially, a number of statistics will provide insights into the intended improvement of the leadership culture at Slough Borough Council, especially as it relates to the relationship between senior officers and members.
- 2.15 Most importantly, the council needs to consider what, if any, new actions it will take in response to the survey results. Members of the Standards Committee are today invited to provide officers with their views on the key results and a steer as to how they would like to see the council respond to the data. Here is how the council is already planning to use this data:
- The Corporate Governance Working Group (an officer Board chaired by the Monitoring Officer which acts as the Project board for the Democratic Governance project and the Scrutiny Improvement project) is reviewing the data for actions to add to the Democratic Governance or Scrutiny Action Plans. Members feedback from today will assist them in this.
  - The Culture Change Programme Board (an officer board chaired by the Executive Director for Strategy and Improvement which is overseeing the council-wide culture change programme) is reviewing the data for actions to add to the culture change action plans. Members feedback from today will assist them in this.
  - The plan for Member development and induction (found elsewhere on today's agenda) takes into account the wealth of feedback from Councillors in the survey about their development needs
  - Some survey data has been shared with scrutiny members at the annual review workshop in early march 2023 and is included in the Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23 which was agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 March 2023 for recommendation to Council on 28 March 2023.
  - The survey results relating to members' use of IT and their training needs are informing current work on refreshing the IT offer for all councillors in May 2023 in time for the new cohort of councillors.
  - The full extended leadership team of the council will be discussing the survey results at their 'extended CLT' meeting in April.
  - The full set of results have been sent to the top 4 tiers of the organisation with an instruction that these should be reviewed at Directorate Leadership Team meetings for potential lessons to learn in each service area.

### **3.1 Financial implications**

- 3.1.1 There are no specific financial implications.

### **3.2 Legal implications**

3.2.1 There are no specific legal implications to be noted.

### **3.3 Risk management implications**

3.3.1 Failure to take proper account of the information provided could hinder the council's improvement efforts and/or make it harder to demonstrate improvement to the government-appointed commissioners.

### **3.4 Environmental implications**

3.4.1 There are no specific environmental implications.

### **3.5 Equality implications**

3.5.1 This survey provides some insight into the demography and family circumstances of councillors, in addition to information about the degree to which members have experienced bullying and/or harassment. When reviewing this information the Council must take into account its equalities duties.

## **4. Background Papers**

None.

## **5. Appendices**

A – Member Survey Results

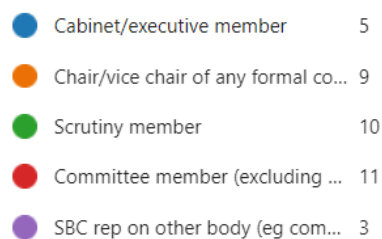
## Member Survey Autumn 2022 – Full responses

*For presentational reasons, responses are not listed in survey order, however they are numbered in survey order.*

Twenty-four members responded, out of 42 councillors (57%).

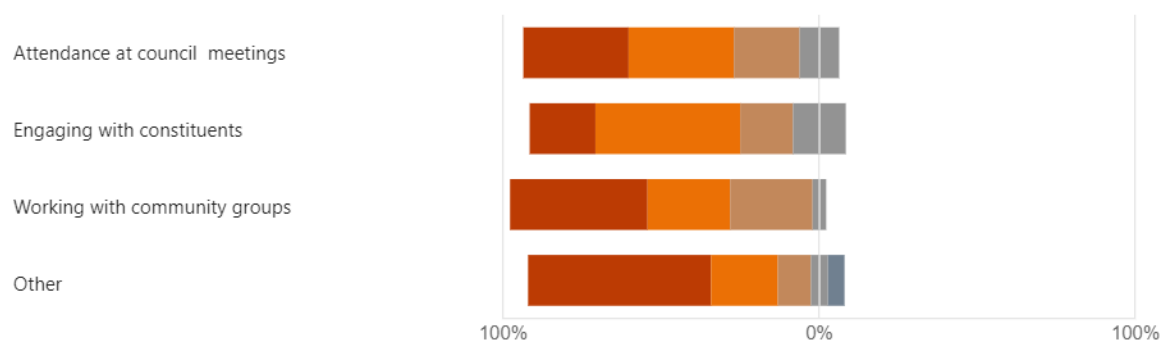
### WHAT COUNCILLORS DO

33. What position(s) do you hold at SBC?

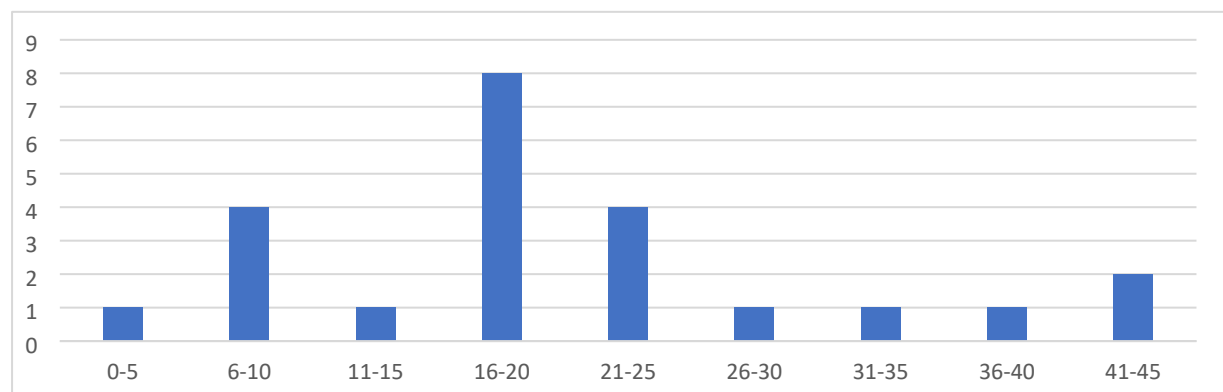


34. Roughly how many hours do you spend on the following council business in an average week?

■ 0-5 hrs 
 ■ 6-10 hrs 
 ■ 11-15 hrs 
 ■ 16-20 hrs 
 ■ 21-25 hrs 
 ■ 26-30 hrs 
 ■ 31+ hrs



35. Roughly how many hours in total do you spend on your councillor role in an average week?



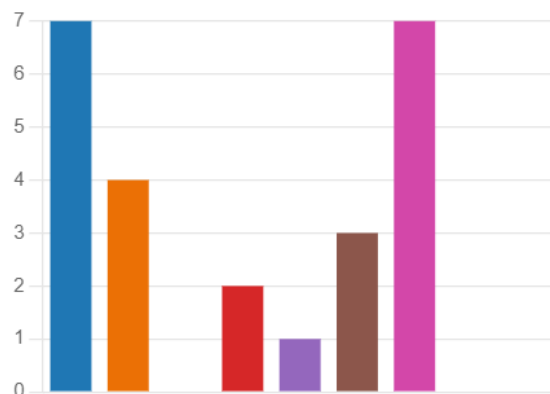
## Appendix A

The average time spent by SBC councillors on their councillor role in an average week was 21.7 hours.

For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 was 22.4 hours.

### 36. What are your current circumstances? (select one)

In full-time paid employment	7
In part-time paid employment	4
Not in paid work - in full-time e...	0
Not in paid work - looking after ...	2
Not in paid work - other reason	1
Retired	3
Self-employed or freelance	7
Unemployed	0
Other	0

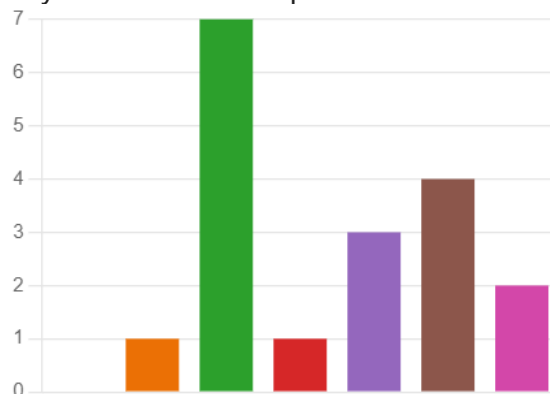


For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

In 2022, 40.0 per cent of councillors were retired (SBC's figure is 12.5%). The proportion in full-time employment was 20.3 per cent (SBC's figure is 29.1%).

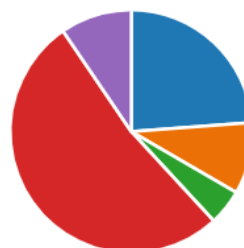
### 37. If you are in paid employment, what is your current occupation?

Administrative, clerical, secretari...	0
Lecturer, teacher or researcher	1
Managerial or executive	7
Manual or craft	1
Professional or technical	3
N/A (not in paid employment)	4
Other	2



### 38. Do you hold additional democratic/voluntary/unpaid positions?

Parish councillor	5
School governor	2
Magistrate	1
No such positions	11
Other	2



39. Do you have any caring responsibilities (as a primary carer)? (select any which apply) (optional)

Child(ren)	8
Partner	2
Relative	5
None	10
Other	2



For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

In 2022, more than two-fifths of councillors (45.9 per cent) had responsibility as a carer, higher for women (50.6 per cent) than men (38.9 per cent). Most commonly councillors cared for a child or children (19.7 per cent, 25.5 per cent of women and 17.1 per cent of men). Most of the rest cared for a relative (11.1 per cent) or partner (9.8 per cent). The overall proportion with a caring responsibility had previously ranged between 24.2 per cent and 27.9 per cent between 2004 and 2013, before increasing in 2018 and 2022.

40. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

Trustee

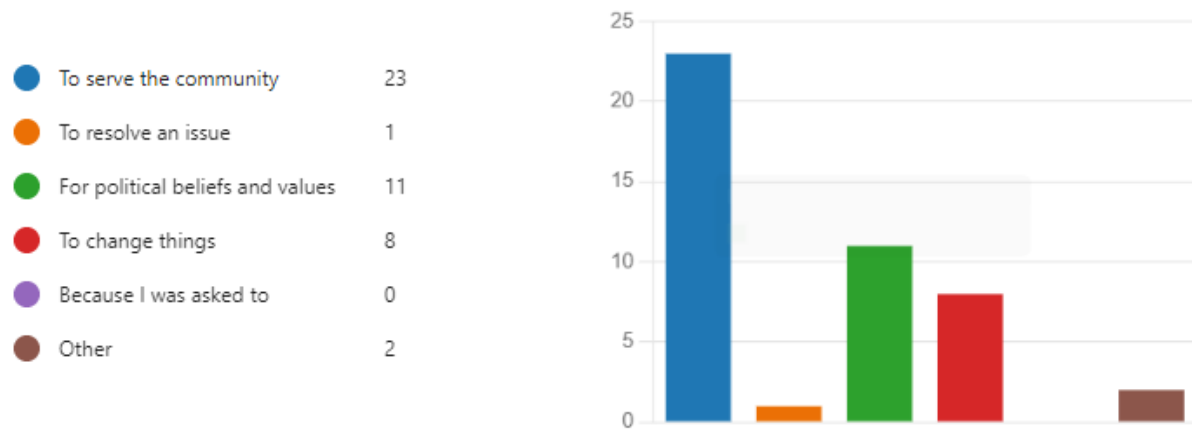
I am loosing lot of time in dealing with caseworks & follow up/chasing officers. If systems & procedures are working well then there will be less caseworks and less chaseups but that is not the case. Senior officers do not even respond to councillor emails. Member Casework team is only a mediator but what can they do if officers are not acting.

I am a grandparent

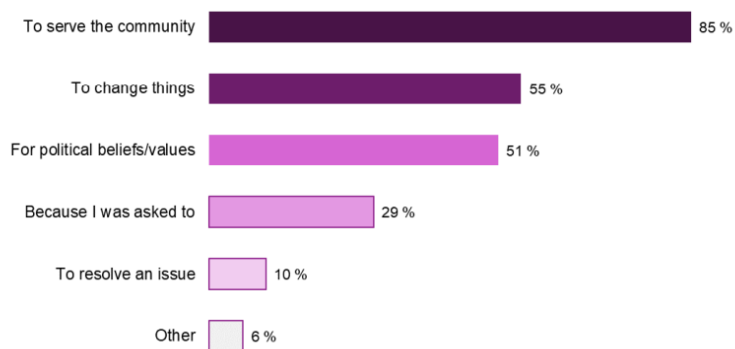
## **COUNCILLORS' MOTIVATIONS AND ATTITUDES TO THE ROLE**

1.What were your main reasons for becoming a councillor?

(Options from LGA's councillor census)

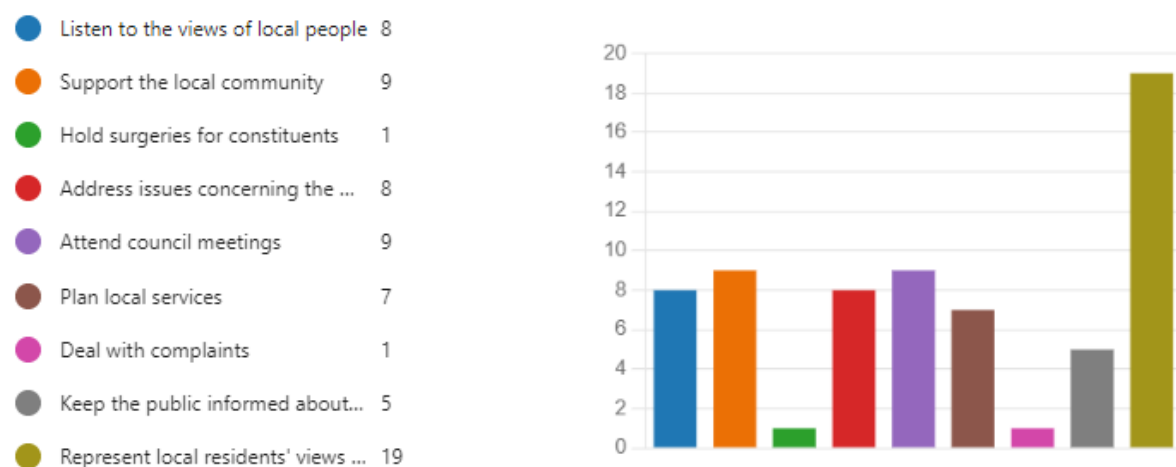


For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:



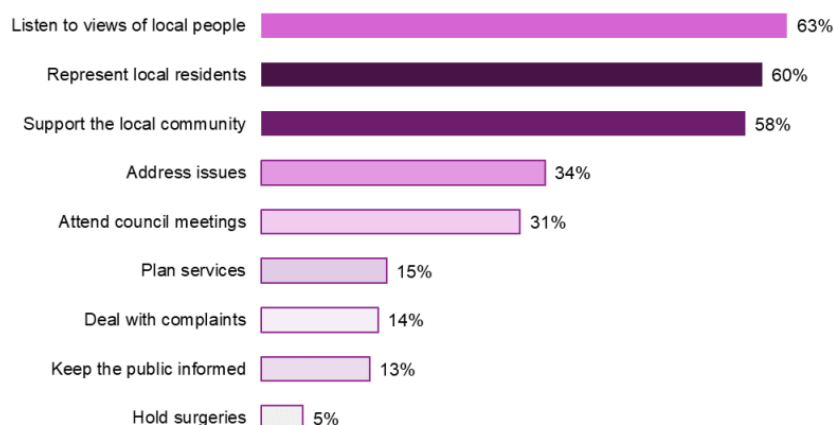
2. In your view, which are the most important things that councillors do?

(Options from LGA's councillor census)



## Appendix A

For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

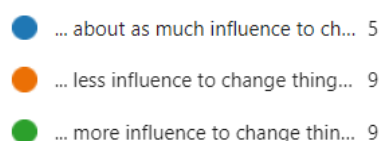


### 3. I feel that I have...

'...about as much influence to change things as I expected'

'...less influence to change things than I expected'

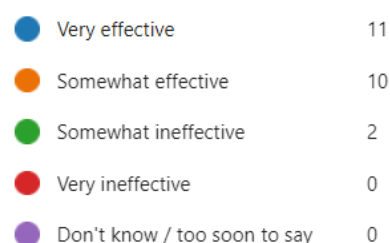
'...more influence to change things than I expected'



For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

In 2022, 33.9 per cent of councillors thought that they had about as much influence to change things in their area as they expected before they were elected (SBC's figure is 22%), while 33.3 per cent felt that they had more influence than expected (SBC's figure is 39.1%) and 32.8 per cent felt that they had less influence (SBC's figure is 39.1%).

### 4. How effective are you in your role as a councillor?



For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

A little under a third of councillors (31.9 per cent) thought that they were very effective in their role in the council (SBC's figure is 47.8%) and 59.6 per cent rated themselves as fairly effective (SBC's

figure is 43.5%). Only 5.7 per cent regarded themselves as not very or not at all effective (SBC's figure is 8.7%).

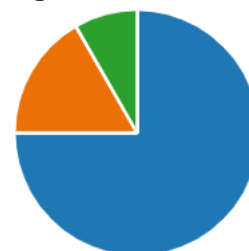
### 5. How effective are most Slough Borough Councillors in their roles as councillors?

Very effective	5
Somewhat effective	12
Somewhat ineffective	2
Very ineffective	3
Don't know / too soon to say	1



### 6. Would you recommend becoming a Slough Borough Councillor?

Yes	18
No	4
Don't know	2



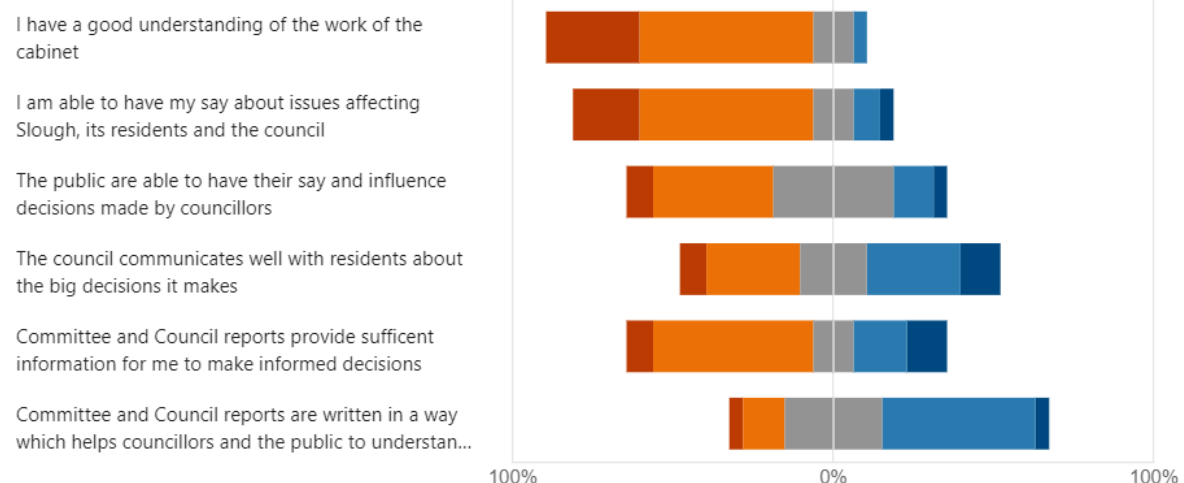
For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

In 2022, 79.0 per cent of councillors nationally would recommend the role to others (SBC's figure is 75%), 8.6 per cent would not (SBC's figure is 16.7%), and 12.4 per cent did not answer or could not say (SBC's figure is 8.3%).

## **DEMOCRACY**

### 26. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree





## 27. This space is yours for any comments on this topic

### Responses

Reports are not fit for purpose, and even the Commissioners have commented on this. Councillors are , therefore, not equipped with the means to get to the bottom of problems and have full opportunity to change things for the better.

#### NEEDS SIMPLE REPORTS NOT IN A COMPLEX WAY

There has been some limited improvements in papers for scrutiny but still some are not being made available in time and in a way that actual allows good questioning by Cllrs. Information and figures are sometimes duplicated and almost laid out in a way that makes the information to confessing given the time to understand and put meaningful questions forward!

Only cabinet knows what they are doing but we are not aware other than that they participate in cabinet meetings and some officers meetings. I am not able to have my say about issues affecting Slough, because there is no platform for it. All meetings are agenda based so I can not raise anything that is not in agenda. We are always told to raise casework for something that we wanted to discuss, but case works are for residents issues, if councillor wanted to discuss then there is no opportunity. It is also difficult to find which officer is responsible for what, departments hierarchy should be self explanatory. We need to have briefing sessions or brainstorm sessions with each directorate so we can discuss various matters that affects Slough.

it would help if there were good introductions and executive summaries.

I think that as we are within age of digital transformation it is a time of dynamic communication, some residents would benefit from non digital forms of communication.

The last question, the reports need to be in more laymen terms

Council usually consult residents

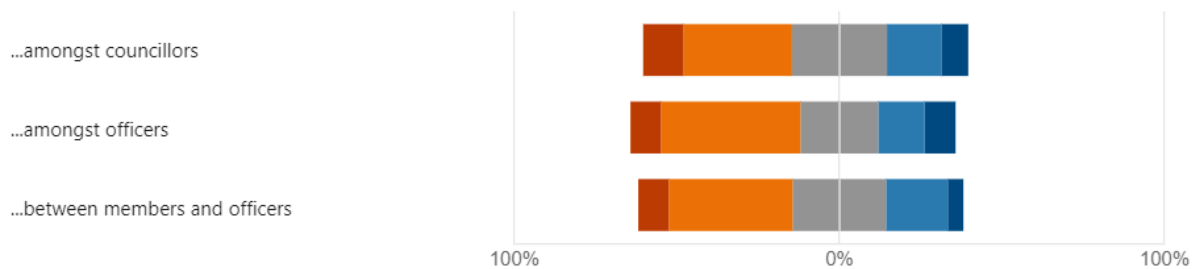
Reports are very specific and meant to be all encompassing which is fine for decision makers but are not 'user friendly for the public .

reports are still far to complex and far too much detail

## CULTURE

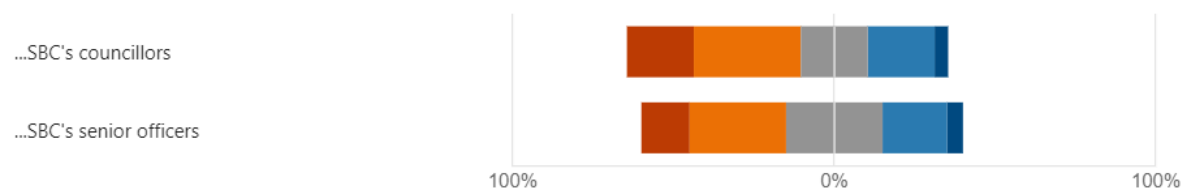
### 8. There is a healthy culture and good ways of working overall...

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



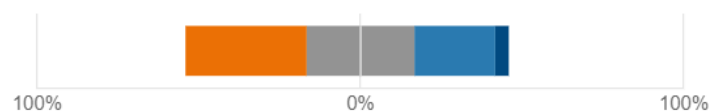
### 9. I have confidence in...

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



### 10. Senior officers understand councillors and how politics works in Slough

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



### 11. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

#### Responses

I am critical of the current organisational culture, which I think is prone to bully, but I do think there are lots of good intentions. Reports to members are often not helpful in providing real choice and sometimes don't disclose key information. Officers overwhelmingly have good intentions, but are prone, like anyone to manipulation and often pursue their own agendas. Most senior officers don't live in Slough and, therefore, lack historical perspective, don't fully understand the complexities of the local community, and are not affected by the decisions they make here in the same way as these who actually live here - not enough live local or would ever want to live in Slough!

it could do better for officers to under little more that how does politics works in slough.

Lack empathy local people who come disadvantage background as most middle class and white.

## Responses

As the two recent independent investigations have found there was and remains in my view a real cultural, ownership, communication issues within the organisation. This includes the political neutrality of some officers in my personal opinion sadly.

Officers lack of professionalism and accountability

The majority of councillors are affective in their role and the relationship between councillors and officers is positive.

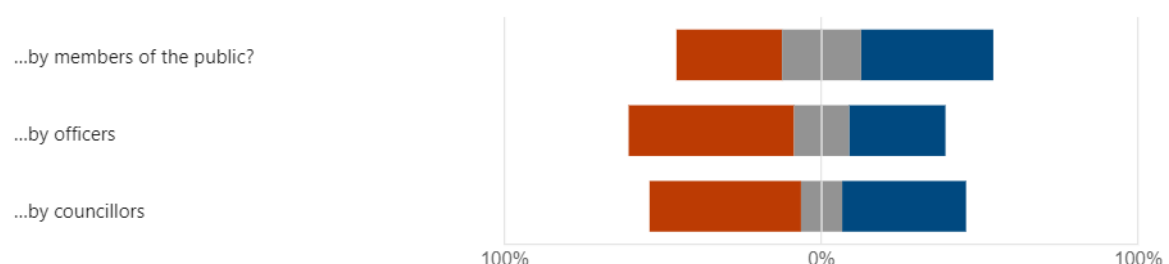
If in doubt I consult officers.

Officers have to really understand the community we all serve in order to understand the politics of the town. Particularly the drivers for why most councillors stand for public office. South Asian countries being a councillor or mayor is a role of prestige and influence. Has little to do with genuinely helping people or even understanding how to system works in order to assist.

## MEMBER WELLBEING AND HANDLING ABUSE OR INTIMIDATION

28. Are effective arrangements in place to deal with inappropriate behaviour...

■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know



Please note that the blue colour represents 'Don't Know'.

For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

In 2022, most councillors thought that their council had appropriate arrangements in place to deal with inappropriate behaviour towards them in their role as councillors. The proportion varied between 69.6 per cent in respect of such behaviour by council officers, 56.8 per cent in respect of councillors, and 54.8 per cent in respect of members of the public.

## 29. How often over the last twelve months have you...

■ Frequently ■ Occasionally ■ Rarely ■ Never



For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

Just under a half of councillors (45.1 per cent) reported that they rarely felt at risk personally when fulfilling their role as a councillor, while 26.8 per cent never felt at risk, 24.1 per cent occasionally felt at risk, and 4.0 per cent frequently felt at risk.

Around one in ten councillors (10.3 per cent) had frequently experienced abuse or intimidation in their capacity as a councillor over the last twelve months, 29.4 per cent had experienced abuse or intimidation occasionally, 33.4 per cent had rarely experienced them, and 26.9 per cent had never experienced abuse or intimidation over the last twelve months.

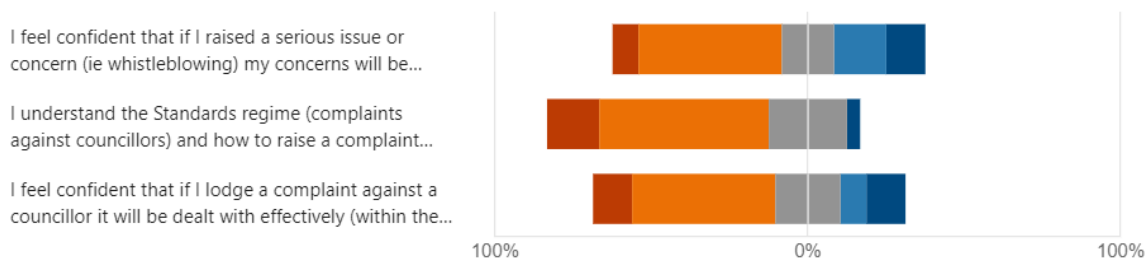
## 30. If you have experienced abuse or intimidation, was it from... (select any that apply)

- SBC Officer 1
- SBC Councillor 4
- A member of the public 8
- Other 4



## 31. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree



## 32. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

### Responses

Some complaints have not gone as far as I have wished. There has not been positive resolution. There is more to complain about today than ever before.

## Responses

My personal experience has just underlined how biased and in many ways it is pointless to hope for a fair out come but it is important to at least register your complaint as a matter of official record for any later independent review has access to such official records. Such investigation internally still are inappropriately affected by the poor biased culture that remains within SBC sadly

i feel issues i raise as important are not dealt with effectively

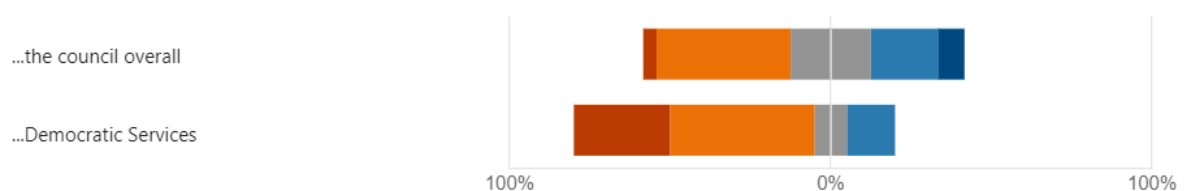
I have full confidence in officers

little confidence in the system

## MEMBER SUPPORT

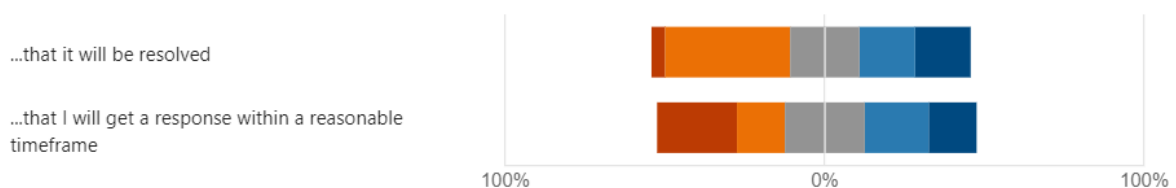
7. I am satisfied with the quality of the member support provided by...

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

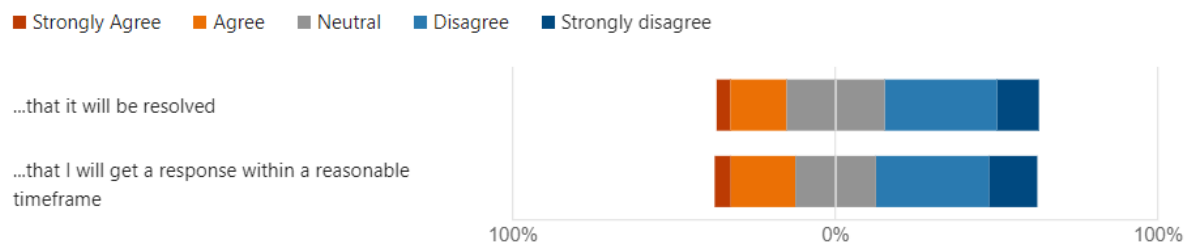


12. When I submit casework I am confident...

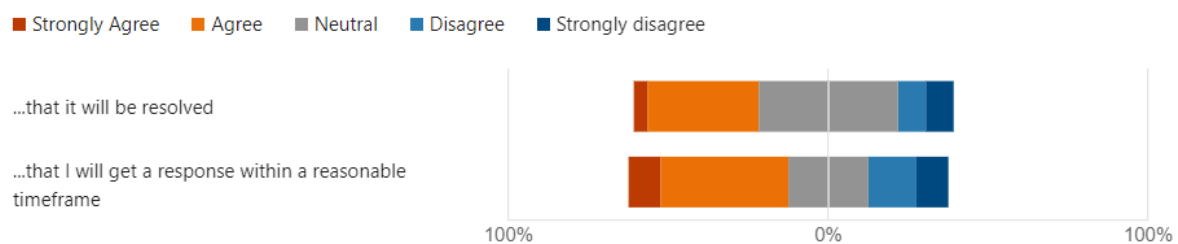
Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



13. When I submit a service request (eg via the council's website) I am confident...



14. If I contact a senior officer with a question or an issue, I am confident...



15. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

### Responses

Many inquiries are not responded to, requiring follow up; some are passed around with no closure; responses are generally not within an agreed or acceptable timeframe. Some positive response still don't resolve the issue. Generally, SBC provides poor customer service, is not customer focused, and does not offer good value for money.

with short of staff it hard.

My answer to the above are neutral and disagree as depends on officers and type of casework! some are better than others

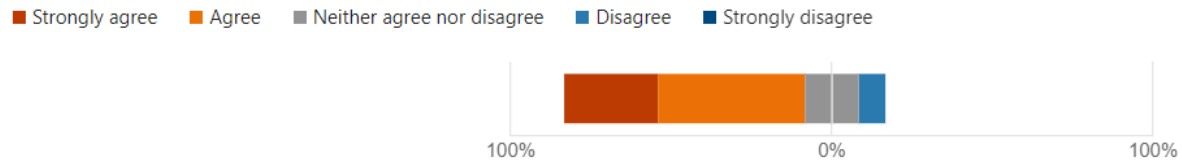
I am tracking my own caseworks/Service Requests as I am not confident enough that they will be resolved/concluded without me following up/chasing.

Officers are very help full

All depends on department who the responsible officer is. Huge inconsistencies across the council. Big issues when responding to a multifaceted case - as its rare to get a consolidated response.

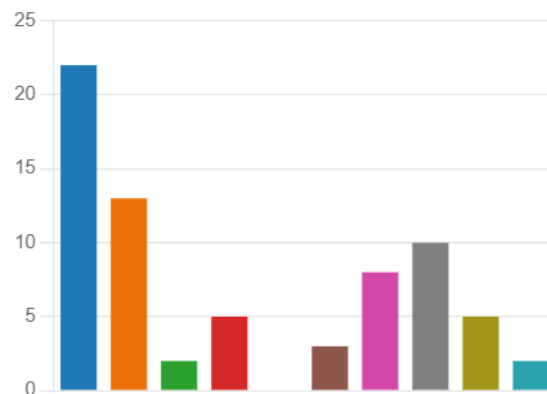
## MEMBER SUPPORT - IT

16. The council provides me with IT equipment and infrastructure which enables me to carry out my role effectively



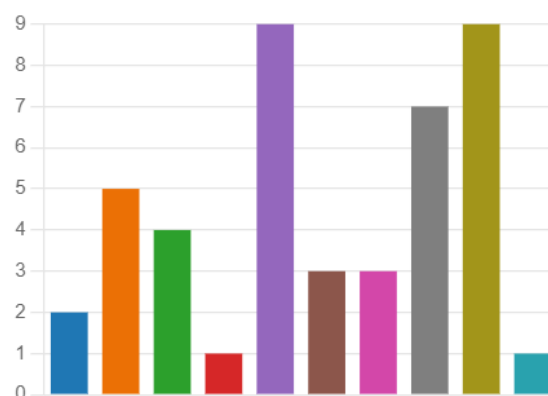
17. What digital tools are most important to enable you carry out your role effectively?

Email	22
Microsoft Teams (video calls & c...	13
Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Ex...	2
Internet access	5
The Intranet	0
Smartphone	3
Wifi connectivity on council pre...	8
Access to meeting papers digita...	10
Ability to annotate meeting pap...	5
Other	2



18. Which digital tools would you most benefit from more training about?

Email	2
Microsoft Teams (video calls & c...	5
Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Ex...	4
Internet access	1
The Intranet	9
Smartphone	3
Wifi connectivity on council pre...	3
Access to meeting papers digita...	7
Ability to annotate meeting pap...	9
Other	1



19. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

### Responses

Our systems are intermittent and especially our webcasting and internet connectivity re speed and capacity are poor

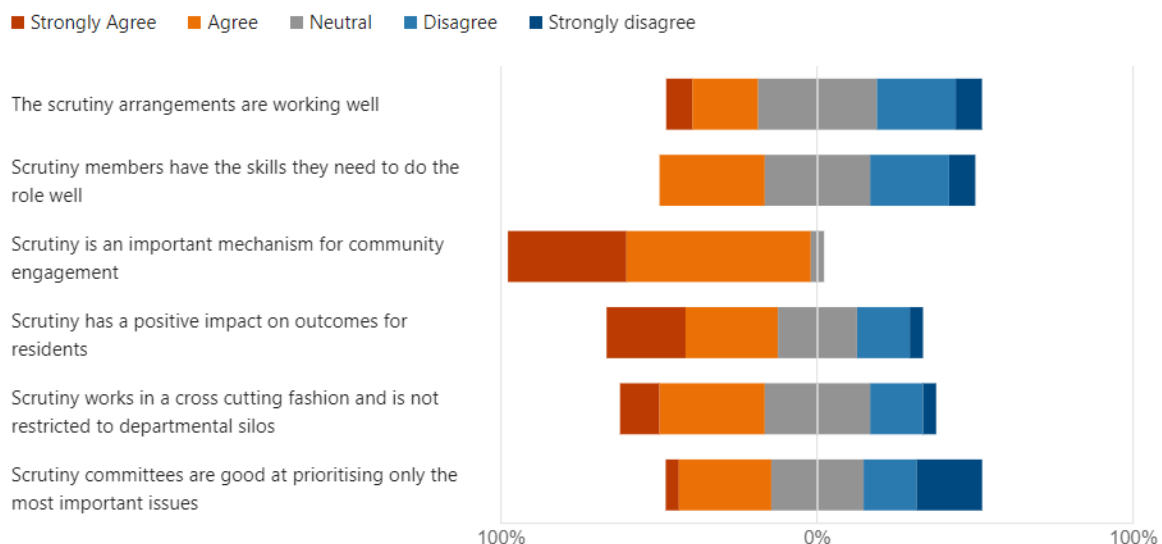
Officers/Councillors not using MS Teams as much as they could to interact

For planning meetings I am provided with paper copy If I need

wifi and connectivity in Observatory house is very poor and causes issues with signing during meeting. leading to going paper based. Many councillors sttend meetings with neither papercopies nor devices. How can these councillors be engaged and participate if they dont come prepared for the meetings? Who's responsible for doing these checks? surely the MO should be asking questions.

## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

20. When it comes to our Overview and Scrutiny Committee and three Scrutiny Panels...



21. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

### Responses

Efforts have been made to look at issues in a cross-cutting setting but this effort is often undone at the follow-through stage - there is insufficient follow through and too much silo mentality, and convention.



## Responses

SCRUTINY IS TO REVIEW THE POLICIES .

The ability to be able to scrutinise both departments and lead members has been further demised in my opion this year and remains politically biased to ruling group in a manor i feel is unacceptable

Scrutiny structure is change so this section is not of important anymore

poor training of councillors effects how well they can do their job

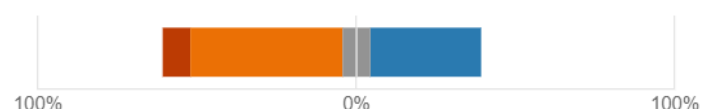
Scrutiny committee is free from political pressure which act as watchdog to the delivery of all services.

Scrutiny is made up of good officer support and councillors that are engaged and participate in the meetings. They need to have a good knowledge and understanding of the council and in particular the area they are scrutinising - which many don't.

## MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

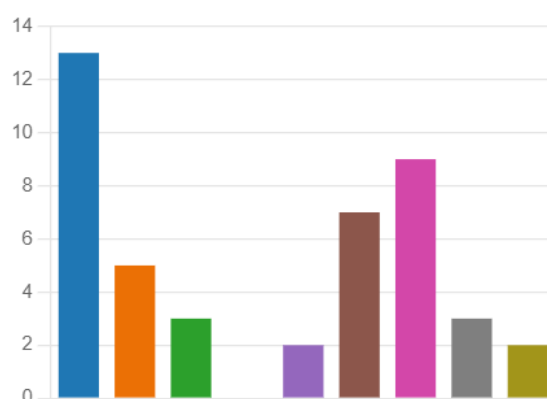
22. Councillors have the training and development opportunities they need.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree



23. What would you say are the main things which prevent you from attending more member development sessions?

- Nothing prevents me - I go to t... 13
- I am not aware of them 5
- I am too busy 3
- I am sufficiently skilled and kno... 0
- The topics do not seem relevant... 2
- They happen at an inconvenient... 7
- They are not online 9
- I don't have confidence that the... 3
- Other 2



24. What top 3 things should be included in the all-councillor induction during May-August 2023?

### Responses

Casework resolution IT training Understanding Council decision-making processes and review points
Training, Development,
CODE OF CONDUCT, REGISTER OF INTEREST, CASEWORK MANAGEMENT, OVERVIEW OF THE FULL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT,
-Role of a Councillor -Understanding Budget reports and to how Finance works (MRP & Budget) -Improve Communication Skills (improve skills to speak at Council meeting)
Meeting conduct What relevant questions to ask planning, overview scrutiny etc not policy issues. Lots of things can't be done by Councillor due to budget constraints, ideas for better engagement with residents.
- Communication skills with residents and colleagues - Understanding budget reports - Role of Cllr - casework management
A proper up to date chart of organisational department contacts with full contact details including mobile phone/ landline ext as well as email addresses! Full training on Best practice Scrutiny practices giving full details of both officers' requirements to respond and for Cllrs to be best assisted in making Scrutiny work!
1) Detailed hierarchy of officers and which portfolio each one owns and what departments fall under each portfolio. For example, pot holes ---> highways, parks?, green verge ---? garage sites?, street lamps? We need a clear self-explanatory chart of which section of various public services falls into which directorate and their low level breakdown till their group manager 2) What procedures to follow if Senior officers do not reply to Councillors. Residents have complaints procedure to follow and what about Councillors, where can councillors complain if something they are not happy. 3) About new scrutiny committees, scope of member questions in Council meetings
Department area leads contacts Overview of scrutiny Finance training
Support documents
understanding finance and audit. safeguarding how to report requests for service.
SBC's Officers contact list which we used to get with up-to-date contact numbers. All the facilities available to use in council offices for members
Training for all Cllrs on scrutiny
Finance, officer responsibilities, clear guidance of roles on different committees

## Responses

Communication with officers training of what to expect and how to contribute in council meetings Support network for councillors with particular needs

Raising case work Acceptable Conduct at meetings. Header level finance training

Finance, Budgeting and Scrutiny and what a good local authority is supposed to do.

Residents First rather than Party Politics Understand your role is not only sitting in a council chamber, it is to be part of your community, let them know who you are rather than only seeing them at the time of canvassing Take on board the concerns of residents and make them your priority

Your actions-Never put council in disrepute. Honesty Integrity

Responsibility to whole Borough not just ward explained more clearly Need to engage on long term work streams not just attend meetings/ask questions Take specific training for area of interest, maybe even outside of council - LGA etc

S114 - Deep dive in to local government finance How a council operates - show n tell how the different departments works How to effectively serve your community when things go wrong Casework - who, how, where to report - self service platform etc Health & Safety safeguarding Local Plan Corporate plan - what is it and why is it important Officer/ member conduct - do's and dont's

25. What additional training or development opportunities do you think councillors most need?

## Responses

IT training Scrutiny training Local Government Finance and statutory obligations

USE OF IT , ROLE OF COUNCILLOR , SCRUTINY TRAINING , MEETINGS TRAINING , DEALING WITH RESIDENT AND OFFICERS , TRAINING FOR ROLES THE COUNCILLOR HAVE WORK FOR .

-Questioning Techniques (to ask officers right question in Scrutiny meetings as full information is not provided in the reports) -Casework - Pathways

New Members given training on how to conduct themselves in meeting and not be pointed out others for asking questions or made feel inferior. Learning process of life. Think outside Box . Taster sessions of different department . Especially Education , planning and complaint.

- Communication development - Casework submission

The skills on how to be a good Cllr, where to acquire the Council functioning information and the actual issues the Council is facing

### Responses

Budget setting
Casework procedure
how to use lap tops to annotate documents
How to submit casework and follow up Importance of Member Development Financial situation of the Council
Effective scrutiny and withstanding community pressure
N.a
Scrutiny Meeting Training What are the right questions to ask
An understanding of what a well ran local authority does on behalf of its residents.
Officer and Councillor relations
Chairing skills Critical Thinking Ability to Analyse Information prior to decisions
Understanding the role of a councillor particularly when attending meetings - etiquette, paperless - bring your devices!! These are for you use for council business not as home computers. Code of conduct How not to be influenced by peers, residents or businesses

### **OTHER**

41. If you would like to make any further comments you may do so here:

### Responses

The survey was rather long - it might be better to break it down into several surveys on different themes.
--

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Standards Committee
<b>Date:</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> April 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	Schedule of Complaints - Update
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Nick Pontone, Democratic Services Lead
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Outcomes of Code of Conduct complaints

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update in relation to the activity under the Councillors' Code of Conduct in 2022/23.

#### Recommendations:

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the outcome of complaints under the Code of Conduct as set out in Appendix 1.

#### Reason:

The Councillors' Code of Conduct is a key part of the Council's Ethnical Framework and this report updates Members on activity since the last meeting in July 2022.

#### Commissioner Review

Any comments from the Commissioner will be reported to the meeting.

### 2. Report

#### Introduction

- 2.1 With effect from the municipal year 2022/23, the Council has set up a separate Standards Committee to assist the Council to meet its duty under s.27 of the Localism Act 2011. Part of the Committee's remit is to advise the Council on the adoption or revision of the Councillor's Code of Conduct and to determine written complaints made against an elected member alleging a breach of the Code of Conduct.
- 2.2 The Monitoring Officer is also scheduled to produce bi-annual reports on Member Conduct Complaints. This is the second report on such complaints during the municipal year.

## **Complaints made under Code of Conduct to date in 2022/23**

2.7 The Committee received a report at the previous meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2022 from the previous monitoring officer that set out the schedule of complaints received under the Code of Conduct to the end of June 2022. All of the complaints reported at that time were either determined or closed during that reporting period. The update in Appendix 1 therefore updates on the complaint received since June 2022.

2.8 The induction programme for councillors following the elections in May 2023 will include training on the Code of Conduct and other aspects of the ethical framework as set out in a report elsewhere in the agenda.

### **3.1 Financial implications**

3.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **3.2 Legal implications**

3.2.1 Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 places a duty on local authorities to ensure that their members and co-opted members maintain high standards of conduct and require them to adopt a code of conduct for their members.

3.2.2 Section 28 confirms that the adopted code should be consistent with the seven “Nolan” principles of standards in public life and must set out the rules that the authority wants to put in place in relation to registering and disclosing pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests. The Council adopted the LGA’s model code of conduct in 2021.

3.2.2 Section 28 also requires local authorities to put in place arrangements under which it can investigate an allegation of a breach of the code made in writing and, if it considers that it warrants investigation, requires that the authority appoint at least one independent person whose views must be sought after it has made an investigation and before it takes a decision. The Council appointed Mr R Tomkinson as the Council’s independent person from 19 May 2022.

### **3.3 Risk management implications**

3.3.1 Having an effective code of conduct in place setting out the standards of behaviour for elected members and an effective system for managing and monitoring such behaviour is a key part of the Council’s ethical framework and risk management system. As a public body, the Council should act lawfully and in the public interest and failing to do so opens it up to challenge. Decisions of the council can be challenged where they have not been made on a rational basis or having followed a fair process. Ensuring that elected members take decisions in an appropriate and properly informed way, including declining to take part in decision-making when they have a relevant interest, will help ensure fair and lawful decisions and reduce the risk of successful legal challenge.

### **3.4 Environmental implications**

3.4.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising from this decision.

### **3.5 Equality implications**

3.5.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to pay due regard to the need to

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

6.3 The Code of Conduct requires members to promote equalities and not discriminate unlawfully against any person. It explains the central role that elected members have in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the Council's performance and strategic aims and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

## **4. Background Papers**

None.

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**Code of Conduct complaints – 2022/23**

Date received	Nature of complaint	Subject member	Outcome	Comments
1 May 2022	Lack of respect	Cllr 1	No need for formal investigation – member did not breach Code of Conduct	Determined by former MO
Prior to 19 May 2022	Relationship between two elected members	Parish Cllr 2	Recommendation for informal resolution via mediation or training	Determined by former MO
Prior to 19 May 2022	Lack of respect	Cllr 1	No need for formal investigation – member did not breach Code of Conduct	Determined by former MO
18 May 2022	Various allegations – detail unclear	Cllr 3	Further information requested on 23 May 2022, as allegations relate to historic matters and lack of detail in order to assess complaint. Clarification sought regarding disclosure of complaint to subject member. As at 11 July 2022 no further information received, complaint closed.	Independent person consulted and responded on 1 July 2022 confirming that he was satisfied with the proposal to close the complaint, which was appropriate and in line with the Council's procedure.

14 November 2022	Lack of respect	Cllr 4	No formal investigation and no further action. The Monitoring Officer offered to facilitate a meeting between the councillors involved but that offer has not been taken up.	Independent Member was consulted and was of the view that a formal investigation was not warranted as the incident was not sufficiently serious to warrant investigation.
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