Date of issue: Monday, 11th March, 2024

MEETING:	**STANDARDS COMMITTEE** Councillors Satti (Chair), Tomar (Vice-Chair), I. Ahmed, Ajaib, Dauti, Gill, Naveed and W. Sabah **CO-OPTED PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS*:** Britwell Parish Council (Cllr Preston Brooker) Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council (Cllr Naveed Rana) Wexham Court Parish Council (Cllr Mubashir Ahmed) **INDEPENDENT PERSON:** Raymond Tomkinson
DATE AND TIME:	TUESDAY, 19TH MARCH, 2024 AT 6.30 PM
VENUE:	COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	NICHOLAS PONTONE 07749 709 868

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

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AGENDA

PART I

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Press and Public

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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.

Webcasting and recording: The public part of the meeting will be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The footage will remain on our website for 12 months. A copy of the recording will also be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy. By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings.

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.

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* In accordance with the terms of reference, one Parish Council Member from each of the three Parish Councils within the Borough, are non-voting members on the Committee and are entitled to speak only on matters that relate to parish councils.

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Standards Committee – Meeting held on Tuesday, 10th October, 2023.

Present:-

Elected Members:-

Councillor Satti (Chair), Councillors Tomar (Vice-Chair), I. Ahmed, Ajaib, Dauti and Naveed (from 6.48pm)

Parish Councillor Representatives:-

Parish Councillor Preston Brooker (Britwell)
Parish Councillor Naveed Rana (Colnbrook with Poyle)
Parish Councillor Mubashir Ahmed (Wexham Court)

Independent Person:-

Mr R Tomkinson (Observer)

Attending under Rule 30:- Councillors Dhillon, Iftakhar and Smith

Apologies for Absence:- Councillors Gill and W. Sabah

PART 1

1. **Declarations of Interest**

   No declarations were made.

2. **Standards Committee Terms of Reference**

   As it was the first meeting of the committee in the 2023/24 municipal year the Monitoring Officer summarised and terms of reference and ways of working as set out in Article 9A of the Constitution. The primary purpose of the Standards Committee was to promote and maintain high ethical standards and core functions included matters such as the Councillors' Code of Conduct, advising on aspects of the Ethical Framework, whistleblowing and the Members' register of interests. The Committee noted the terms of reference.

   Resolved – That the Standards Committee terms of reference as set out in Article 9A of the Constitution be noted.

3. **Minutes of the Meetings held on 19th July 2022 and 6th April 2023**

   Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 19th July 2022 and 6th April 2023 be approved as a correct record.

4.   Meeting with the Leader of the Council and with the Chief Executive

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive were welcomed to the meeting for a discussion on matters relating to the Council's ethical governance framework and issues of probity and conduct.

The Monitoring Officer summarised an Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis that had been prepared to provide background for the discussion. The document set out key information held by the Council on areas such as councillor and officer codes of conduct, procedure rules and other protocols along with details of the current situation to assist the committee in identifying any particular areas for review or further action.

In his opening remarks to the Committee the Leader confirmed the commitment of the new administration to seek to uphold the highest standards of behaviour including adherence to the Nolan Principles of standards in public life. He stated that he wanted to promote and embed a culture of accountability, transparency and empowerment across the Council and that he had written to staff and communicated these priorities widely. High standards of conduct and behaviour were expected of all councillors and he indicated that he had spoken to other group leaders who shared the desire to focus on ways of working constructively together in the future. The ethical audit prepared by the Monitoring Officer was welcomed and set out how the Council already had relevant and up-to-date policies and procedures covering all main areas of the ethical framework. The Chief Executive highlighted that high standards and good Member-Officer relations were an important part of the Council's recovery and this was a particular focus following the May 2023 elections with a change in political administration and the fact that over half of the Members elected were new to the Council.

(Councillor Naveed joined the meeting)

The Committee welcomed the stated priority to promote high standards of conduct and behaviour. Members expressed support for the principles of accountability and transparency and encouraged the group leaders to work together and seek to improve conduct, including at Council and committee meetings. It was recognised that there would be political disagreements amongst elected members and groups and there should be the opportunities to hold decision makers to account in a constructive and civil manner.

A question was asked about whistleblowing procedures and whether a previous concern that some employees did not feel confident about coming forward had been addressed. The Monitoring Officer responded that there had been an internal audit of whistleblowing during the year. The actions included measures to raise awareness of the policy to employees and a staff survey would be carried out in the future which would ask about awareness of and confidence in the system. The number of whistleblowing cases remained low but that was not considered to be due to a reluctance of staff to come forward.

In relation to the Employee Code of Conduct, Members raised the issue of the standards of behaviour and responsiveness that residents could expect to receive in their interactions with Council officers. The Leader recognised the concern raised and indicated that improving customer service was a priority. The Chief Executive explained some of the steps being taken to improve external communications and staff training.

The Monitoring Officer was asked if he considered the Councillors' Code of Conduct to be adequate in relation to social media activity, including the accuracy and appropriateness of statements or comments made. He responded that he believed the Code was adequate and no recent formal complaints about social media activity had been made. The LGA had also issued social media guidance. However, in light of the issue raised by the Committee the Monitoring Officer would give further consideration as to whether the current approach was sufficient and encouraged Members to highlight any specific issues or omissions in the code or other policies relating to councillors use of social media.

A number of other issues were raised during the course of the discussion including the publication of the register of gifts and hospitality and the application of the code to parish councils.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee thanked the Leader and Chief Executive for their contribution to the meeting and the Ethical Audit Desktop Analysis was noted. Recommendation (b) to the report asked Members to recommend any actions that the Committee felt would support continued improvement in the Council's approach to ethical governance. Members agreed these issues to be high standards of customer care and responsiveness for residents under the Officer Code of Conduct, potentially including further staff training; and Member behaviour at Council and committee meetings, which the Monitoring Officer would discuss further with group leaders.

Resolved –

(a) That the opportunity for a discussion on standards and ethical issues with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive be welcomed and matters discussed noted.

(b) That the actions the committee felt would support continued improvement in the Council's approach to ethical governance be customer care in interactions with residents and Member behaviour at Council and committee meetings.

5. **Member Survey**

The Head of Governance & Scrutiny introduced a report on the results of the first Member Survey carried out in January/February 2023 and invited views on the survey questions relating to Member conduct ahead of the next survey scheduled for October 2023.

The Member survey carried out in earlier in the year had been the first recent such exercise for elected Members in Slough. Many of the questions mirrored those asked in the LGA national census conducted of councillors so the data would be comparable. A repeat of the survey would be carried out in October 2023 and annually thereafter to provide regular information about Members' perceptions and opinions including about conduct and standards issues. The results would help identify issues, ensure adequate Member support and inform specific areas of work such as the Member development programme.

Members felt that the survey was well structured and the questions were relevant. Further information was requested about the purpose of the survey and use of the information provided, including whether the data on casework had been fed back to the service area. The Head of Governance & Scrutiny commented that it was good practice to carry out a Member survey and it helped improve awareness of councillors views and opinions which would help inform a range of activities and plans. The data had been reviewed by the Corporate Governance Working Group and fed into the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Action Plans; shared with scrutiny members and the annual review workshop and included in the 2022/22 scrutiny annual report; and circulated to the Corporate Leadership Team and Directorate Leadership Teams for potential lessons to learn in each service area.

At the conclusion of the discussion the results of the first Member Survey were noted and it was generally agreed that the survey was well structured and the questions were relevant.

Resolved –

(a) That the results of the previous Member Survey be noted.

(b) That the feedback of the Committee that the survey was well structured and that the questions remained relevant be noted ahead of the next survey in October 2023.

6.   **Member Induction and Member Development Working Group**

The Head of Governance & Scrutiny introduced a report on the 2023 Member Induction Programme; sought endorsement of the principles for the ongoing Member development programme; and support for an informal Member Development Working Group.

Plans for the Member induction programme for councillors after the May 2023 whole Council elections had been put in place early in the year. There had been a significant change in the composition of the Council as more than half of the Members elected in May 2023 were new. The induction programme was therefore adjusted to reflect the cohort of Members elected. The induction programme had been delivered and the appendix to the report summarised the sessions held, which had been well attended. In terms of the future delivery of the Member development programme the Committee was

asked to endorse the principles set out in section 3 of the report. The first stage of the programme during the induction period focused on mandatory courses to meet required legal and constitutional requirements, for example code of conduct, planning and licensing training. It was proposed that the balance shift towards more subject matter knowledge delivered at the appropriate time in advance of decisions on such topics.

Members gave their feedback on the induction programme since May and the majority of comments were that it had been very informative and comprehensive. The short and concise sessions which allowed time for questions and answers were considered to be the most effective format. The Committee discussed various aspects of the programme, including the relative benefits of in-person and online training; and the potential ways that participation in Member development sessions could be incentivised. This was something that could be considered. The Committee agreed in principle that Member Development Working Group be established and proposed that Group Leaders be asked to nominate members to join the group when it was ready to commence its work.

The Monitoring Officer highlighted that he had written to the clerks of the three parishes offering assistance in relation to any matters under each Parish Council's Code of Conduct and that Britwell Parish Council had recently responded positively to the offer and he hoped the other parishes would do so soon. Parish Council representatives agreed to raise this offer with their clerks and commented on some of the training provided to their members to date. The Monitoring Officer highlighted that it was important that the parish clerks kept records of training and had an appropriate programme in place.

Resolved –

(a) That the feedback on the induction programme for new councillors in 2023 be noted;

(b) That the principles for Member development set out in section 3 of the report be endorsed for the ongoing Member development programme; and

(c) That the committee endorses the creation of a small, informal 'Member Development Working Group' of councillors and officers to advise the Monitoring Officer on member development issues.

7.   **Schedule of Complaints - Update**

The Monitoring Officer introduced a report that provided Members with an update in relation to the activity under the Councillors' Code of Conduct. A revised version of the Appendix was tabled that included details of one further complaint that had been dealt with in 2022/23.

The Monitoring Officer summarised the complaints in the Appendix and indicated that the level of formal complaints received under the Code was not

particularly high in comparison to other authorities. He highlighted that a relatively high proportion of the complaints received were submitted by other councillors rather than residents compared to other areas.

Members of the Committee asked questions about the position regarding several of the individual complaints listed in the Appendix. The Monitoring Officer stated that it would not be appropriate to comment on the details of individual complaints received but assured the Committee the process for dealing with complaints as set out in the Councillors' Code of Conduct would be followed properly and the Independent Person was consulted. In relation to point 2(f) of the Committee's terms of reference that stated that one of the core functions was to determine written complaints made about councillors, a Member asked about the role of the Committee in individual complaints and what recourse Members had if they did not agree with a decision taken by the Monitoring Officer not to refer a complaint to the Committee. The Monitoring Officer responded that the Councillors' Code of Conduct clearly set out the staged process and criteria by which complaints would be dealt with, and the circumstances in which a complaint would come to the Committee. The agreed Code stated there was no right of appeal against a decision of the Monitoring Officer in relation to a complaint and that their duty was to apply the process detailed in the agreed scheme in a non-political way. It was noted that the Council could review the complaints process as set out in the Code in the future if it wished to do so.

Various other issues were raised during discussion including how trends were monitored to identify any repeated breaches or issues, and the Monitoring Officer confirmed that records of complaints were kept to see if any patterns emerged. There was provision in the Code for the Monitoring Officer to discuss with the Independent Person any instances of repeated minor breaches of the Code made by a Member.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

Resolved –   That the outcome of complaints under the Code of Conduct as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be noted.

8.   **Date of Next Meeting - 19th March 2024**

The date of the next scheduled meeting was confirmed as 19th March 2024.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.15 pm)

Slough Borough Council

Report to:	Standards Committee
Date:	19th March 2024
Subject:	Member Survey
Chief Officer:	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
Contact Officer:	Alexander Polak, Head of Governance and Scrutiny
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	Appendix A – survey responses detail

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report:
- Reports the results of the second-ever survey of SBC councillors which concluded in December 2023
- Compares those results to the previous survey, which took place in January 2023 ie in the final quarter of the previous council; and
- invites members' reflections on actions which should arise from these survey results.

Recommendations:

1. **That the results of the previous Member Survey, and plans for the use of these by officers to inform future action, be noted; and**

2. **That the committee provides feedback to officers on potential actions to be taken in response to the survey.**

Reason:

The Standards Committee's terms of reference include to 'monitor the operation of the council's ethical framework including the code of conduct' and to advise the council based on its findings. The member survey provides an important source of information about members' perceptions and opinions, including about the conduct of members and other aspects of the committee's terms of reference.

Commissioners Comments

This report has been reviewed by Commissioners and there are no specific comments to add.

Introduction

1.2 A report on this topic was most recently received by this committee in October 2023.

2.3 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, and the council has additionally identified a number of other areas for improvement.

2.4 All the council's 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.

2.5 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.

2.6 An action to complete such a survey was included in the Democratic Governance Action Plan. A further action to embed this as annual practice is also included. By carrying out the survey for a second time, this action is being fulfilled.

Method

2.7 An online survey was launched to councillors using Microsoft Forms during November-December 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.
- Sent to each councillor individually by email.
- Sent to all councillors in the Member Newsletter

2.8 Results were recorded anonymously.

2.9 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. Additionally, questions were kept as similar as possible to the first survey from January 2023, in order to assist with comparison.

Response

2.11 31 out of 42 councillors responded, a response rate of 74%. This is considered good for a survey of this type, and is an enormous improvement over the previous survey, which had a 57%. Response rate.

2.12 The results of the questions, including a full account of the free text responses - and comparisons, where available, with the LGA councillor survey and the previous survey - are presented at Appendix A.

2.13 Any potentially identifying personal comments have been redacted, otherwise the free text comments are presented in their original and full form. The only information

not presented is the free-text comments from the former survey. This can be reviewed in the appendix to the [October 2023 Standards Committee item](#).

2.17 In May 2023, twenty-two new councillors joined the council (out of forty-two) and the political administration changed. It is impossible to know how many of the 20 councillors who remain from the previous cohort were amongst the 24 who responded to the first survey, and we don't know how many of those were amongst the 31 respondents to the second survey.

2.18 Therefore, the comparability of the results between surveys in Appendix A cannot be assumed. However, the exercise of comparing these survey results is not pointless as long as it is done carefully in this informed context. Some subjects covered by the survey – such as councillors' perceptions of the quality of the member support offer and of officers' behaviours – may be easier to meaningfully compare than others.

Next steps - Response to the Survey

2.15 Various statistics in the original January 2023 survey were expected to 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 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.

2.16 Overall there is a general improvement in the metrics across the board. Where this is not the case it is highlighted in Appendix A.

2.16 Members of the Standards Committee are 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. Officers intend to use the data in similar ways to the results from the first survey, including:

- 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) will review the data for actions to add to the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Action Plans.
- 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) will review the data for actions to add to the culture change action plans.
- The plan for member development and induction (found elsewhere on today's agenda) has taken into account the feedback from councillors in both surveys about their development needs, assisted by the contribution of an informal Member Development Working Group convened in April 2023 for that purpose.
- Survey data relating to Scrutiny will be factored into the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee's annual review.
- The survey results relating to members' use of IT and their training needs will continue to inform the IT offer for all councillors, including training.

- The full extended leadership team of the council will review the survey results and how the organisation should respond, at an 'extended CLT' meeting once this group is reconvened.
- The full set of results will again be sent to the top 4 tiers of the organisation for review at Directorate Leadership Team meetings for potential lessons to learn in each service area.

2.19 The results of some of the survey questions will provide this committee with some insights relating to part of its terms of reference, namely to 'monitor the operation of the council's ethical framework including the code of conduct' and to 'advise' the council based on its findings.

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

Appendix A – Survey responses

Member Survey Dec 2023 – Full responses

This is 'appendix A' to the April 2024 Standards Committee report on Member Survey Results.

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

For the sake of brevity and clarity, the January 2023 survey results are labelled '2023'. The second, December 2023, survey results are labelled '2024'.

Thirty-one members responded to the '2024' survey, out of 42 councillors (74%). In 2023 there were 24 (57%).

WHAT COUNCILLORS DO

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

2024:

🔵 Cabinet/executive member	4	
🟠 Chair/vice chair of any formal co...	14	
🟢 Scrutiny member	8	
🔴 Committee member (excluding ...	16	
🟣 SBC rep on other body (eg com...	8	

2023:

🔵 Cabinet/executive member	5	
🟠 Chair/vice chair of any formal co...	9	
🟢 Scrutiny member	10	
🔴 Committee member (excluding ...	11	
🟣 SBC rep on other body (eg com...	3	

34. Roughly how many hours do you spend on the following council business in an average week?
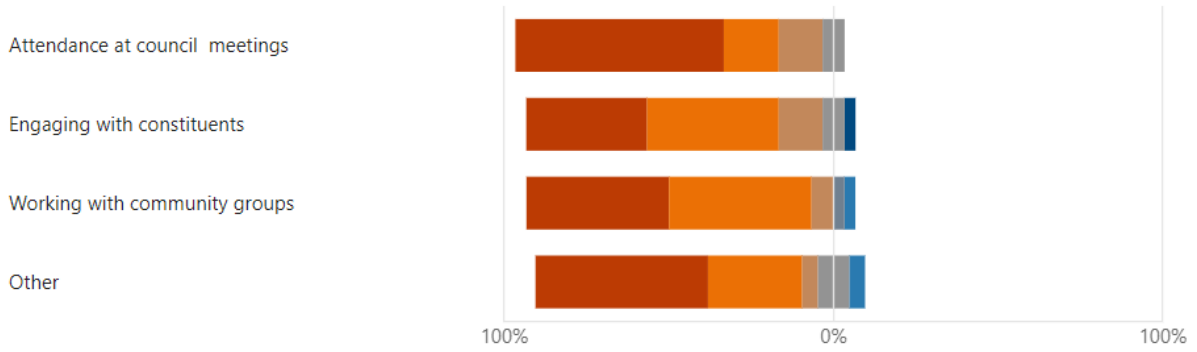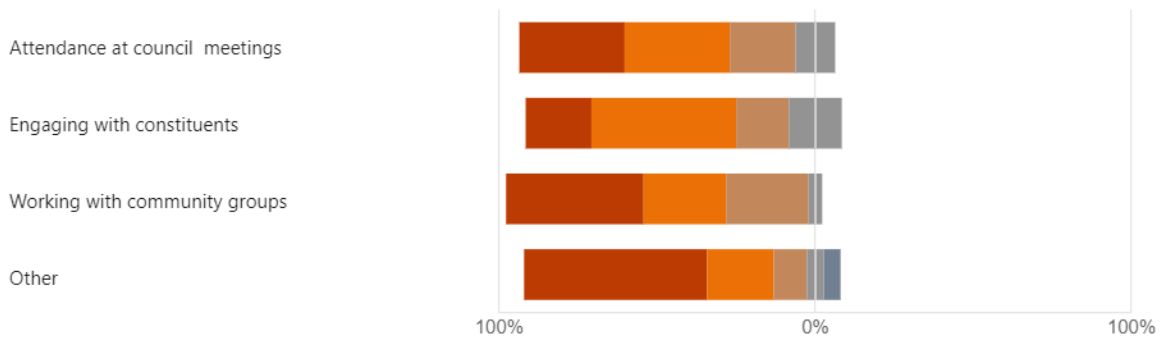
2024:

2023:

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

2024:

9	
8	▇ (11-15)
7	
6	▇ (16-20)
5	
4	▇ (6-10)
3	▇ (0-5) ▇ (21-25)
2	▇ (26-30) ▇ (40-45)
1	▇ (31-35) ▇ (36-40)
0	

Categories (x-axis): 0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 40-45

2023:

9	
8	▇ (16-20)
7	
6	
5	
4	▇ (6-10) ▇ (21-25)
3	
2	▇ (41-45)
1	▇ (0-5) ▇ (11-15) ▇ (26-30) ▇ (31-35) ▇ (36-40)
0	

Categories (x-axis): 0-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45
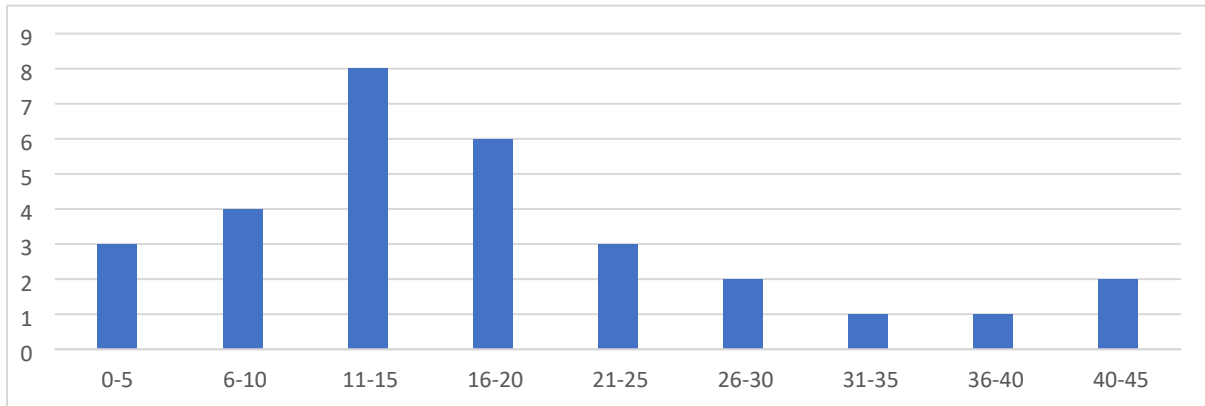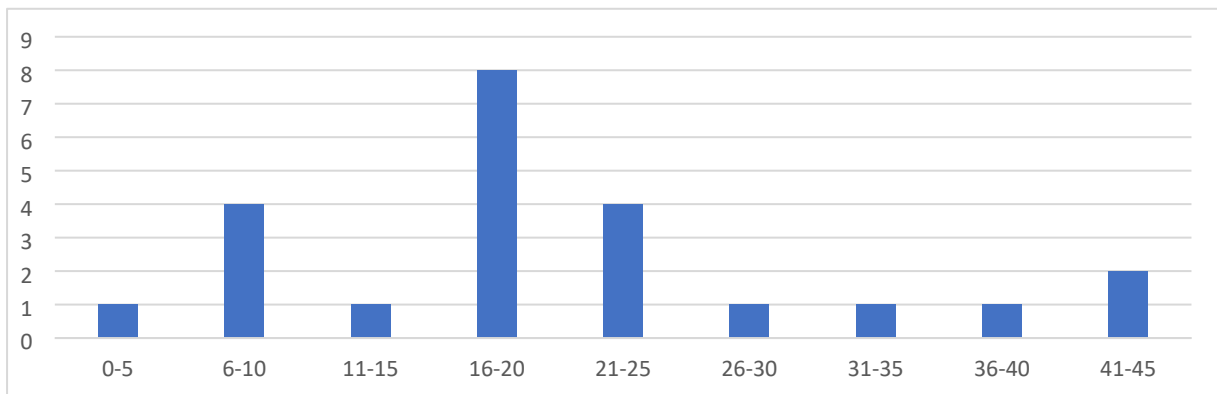
The average time spent by SBC councillors on their councillor role in an average week was 19.4 hours – extremely similar to the previous survey.

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

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

2024:

● In full-time paid employment	18
● In part-time paid employment	0
● Not in paid work - in full-time e…	0
● Not in paid work - looking after …	0
● Not in paid work - other reason	1
● Retired	5
● Self-employed or freelance	4
● Unemployed	0
● Other	0
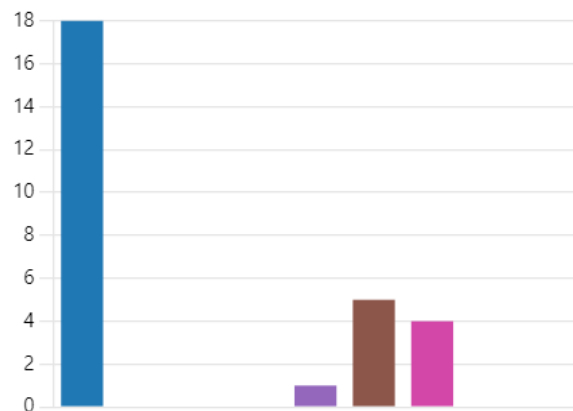
2023:

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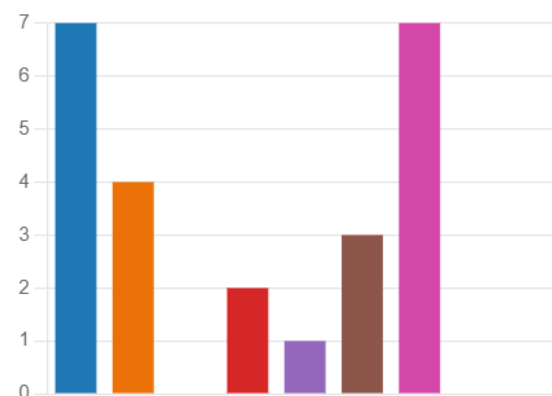
For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

In 2022, 40.0 per cent of councillors were retired (SBC's figure is 16.1%). The proportion in full-time employment was 20.3 per cent (SBC's figure is 58.1%, up dramatically from 29.1% in January 2023).

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

2024:

🔵 Administrative, clerical, secretari...	3
🟠 Lecturer, teacher or researcher	0
🟢 Managerial or executive	8
🔴 Manual or craft	1
🟣 Professional or technical	7
🟤 N/A (not in paid employment)	3
🩷 Other	2
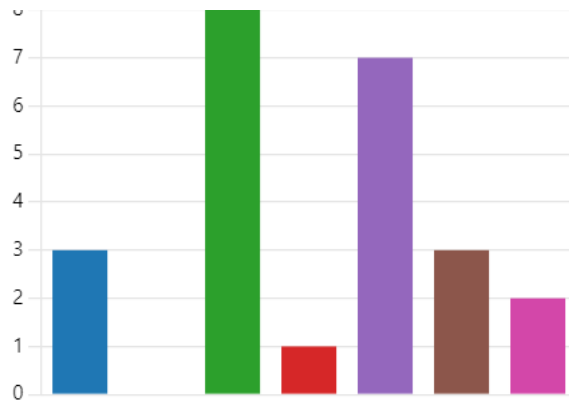
2023:

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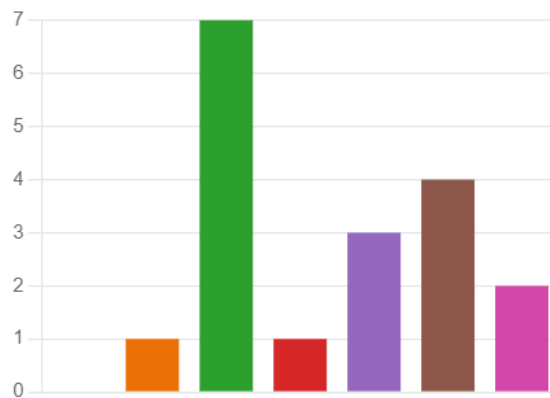
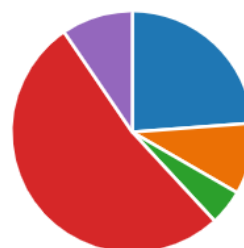## 38. Do you hold additional democratic/voluntary/unpaid positions?

2024:

🔵 Parish councillor	3
🟠 School governor	1
🟢 Magistrate	1
🔴 No such positions	17
🟣 Other	6
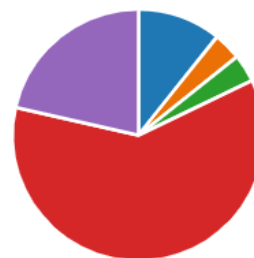
2023:

🔵 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)

2024:

🔵	Child(ren)	6
🟠	Partner	0
🟢	Relative	3
🔴	None	20
🟣	Other	1
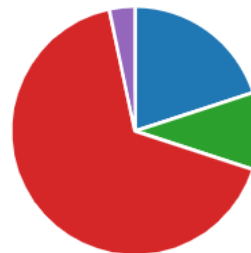
2023:

🔵	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.

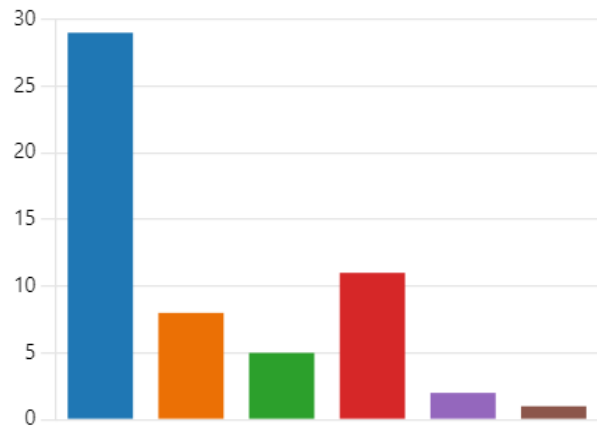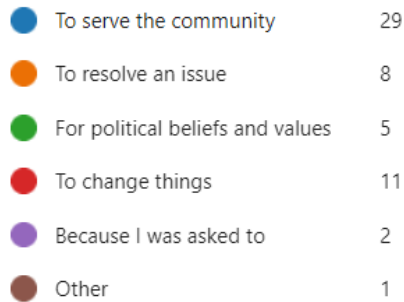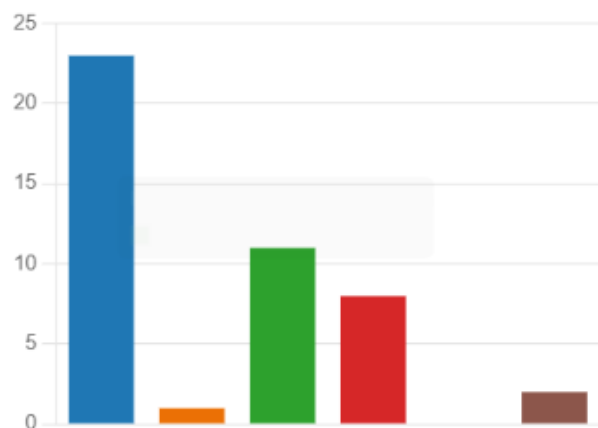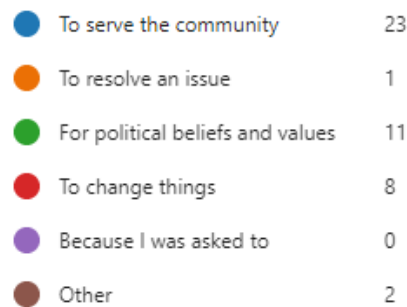| |
|---|
| EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS NEEDED IN THE MEETINGS |
| I spend most weekends and some evenings working with residents and groups. I stood for election I stood for election in order to do this and my wife enjoys the peace |
| SCRUTINY IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT COMMITTE SHOULD NOT BE POLITICAL BASED |

COUNCILLORS' MOTIVATIONS AND ATTITUDES TO THE ROLE

1.What were your main reasons for becoming a councillor?
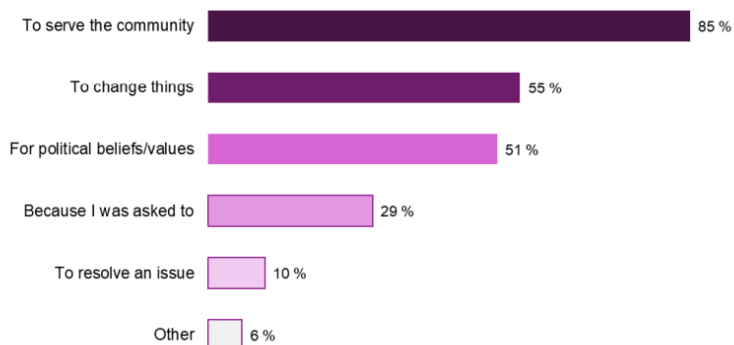(Options from LGA's councillor census)

2024:

●	To serve the community	29
●	To resolve an issue	8
●	For political beliefs and values	5
●	To change things	11
●	Because I was asked to	2
●	Other	1

2023:

●	To serve the community	23
●	To resolve an issue	1
●	For political beliefs and values	11
●	To change things	8
●	Because I was asked to	0
●	Other	2

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

To serve the community	85 %
To change things	55 %
For political beliefs/values	51 %
Because I was asked to	29 %
To resolve an issue	10 %
Other	6 %

2. In your view, which are the most important things that councillors do? (Options from LGA's councillor census)

2024:

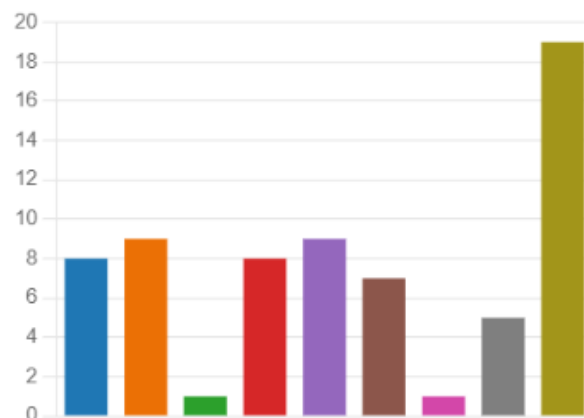|		
🔵	Listen to the views of local people	16
🟠	Support the local community	16
🟢	Hold surgeries for constituents	4
🔴	Address issues concerning the ...	9
🟣	Attend council meetings	10
🟤	Plan local services	4
🟣	Deal with complaints	1
⚫	Keep the public informed about...	11
🟡	Represent local residents' views ...	20
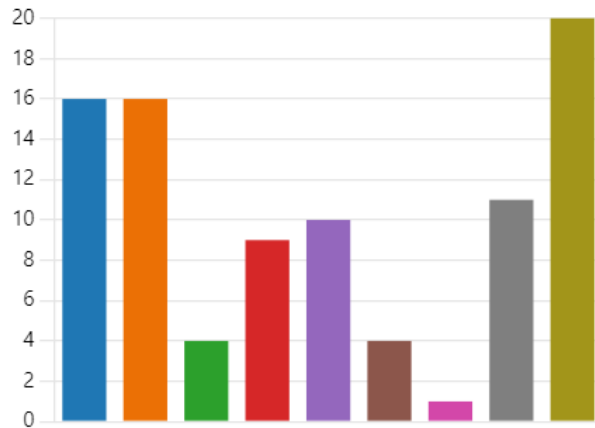
2023:

🔵	Listen to the views of local people	8
🟠	Support the local community	9
🟢	Hold surgeries for constituents	1
🔴	Address issues concerning the ...	8
🟣	Attend council meetings	9
🟤	Plan local services	7
🟣	Deal with complaints	1
⚫	Keep the public informed about...	5
🟡	Represent local residents' views ...	19

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

Listen to views of local people	63%
Represent local residents	60%
Support the local community	58%
Address issues	34%
Attend council meetings	31%
Plan services	15%
Deal with complaints	14%
Keep the public informed	13%
Hold surgeries	5%
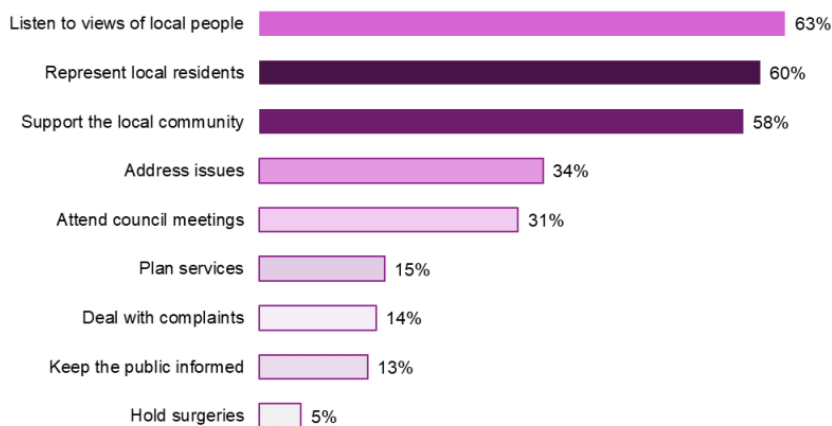
3. I feel that I have…

'…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'

2024:

- ● … about as much influence to ch… 12
- ● … less influence to change thing… 9
- ● … more influence to change thin… 9

2023:

- ● … about as much influence to ch… 5
- ● … less influence to change thing… 9
- ● … more influence to change thin… 9

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?

2024:

🔵	Very effective	14
🟠	Somewhat effective	10
🟢	Somewhat ineffective	1
🔴	Very ineffective	1
🟣	Don't know / too soon to say	4
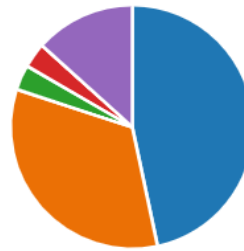
2023:

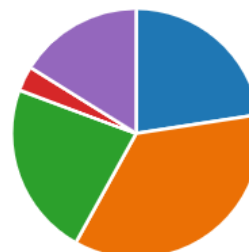|		
🔵	Very effective	11
🟠	Somewhat effective	10
🟢	Somewhat ineffective	2
🔴	Very ineffective	0
🟣	Don't know / too soon to say	0

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?

2024:

🔵	Very effective	7
🟠	Somewhat effective	11
🟢	Somewhat ineffective	7
🔴	Very ineffective	1
🟣	Don't know / too soon to say	5

2023:

🔵	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?

2024:

● Yes	24	
● No	5	
● Don't know	2	

2023:

● Yes	18	
● No	4	
● Don't know	2	

For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:
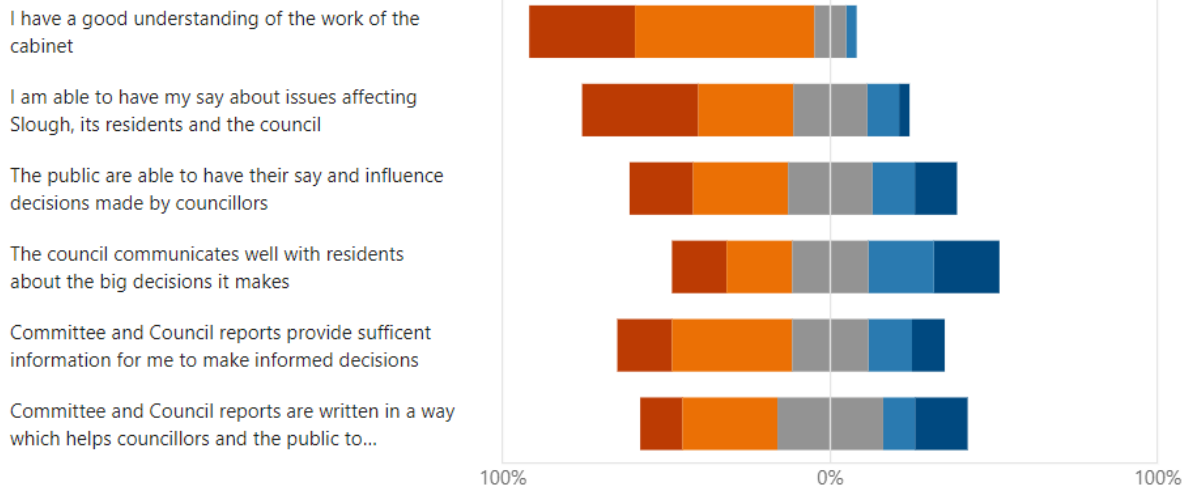
In 2022, 79.0 per cent of councillors nationally would recommend the role to others (SBC's figure is 75%), 8.6 per cent would not (SBC's figure is 16.7%), and 12.4 per cent did not answer or could not say (SBC's figure is 8.3%).

DEMOCRACY

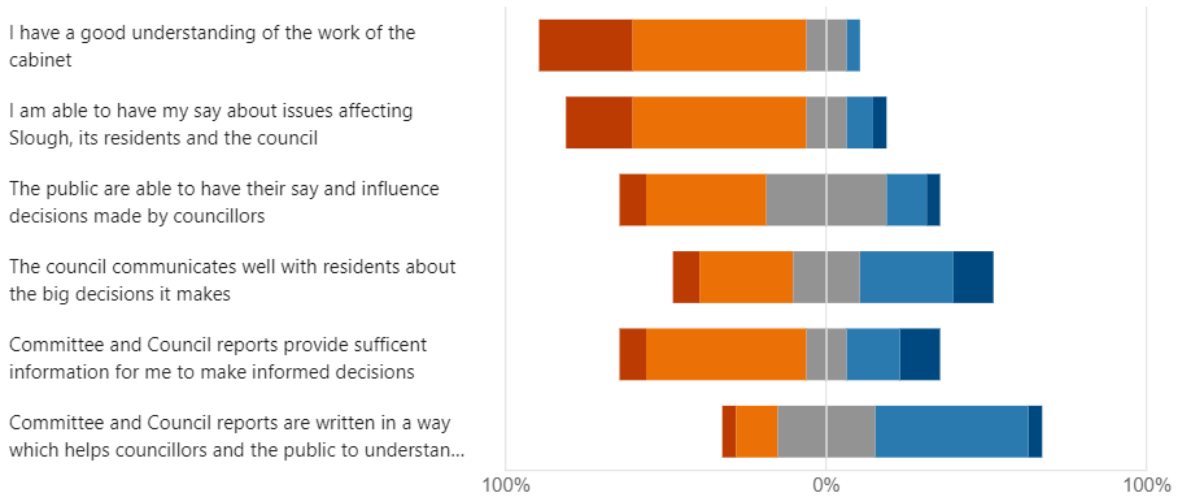26. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

2024:

Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

2023:

Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

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

THE REPORTS SHHOULD BE WRITTEN IN SIMPLE LANGUSGE AND NO JARGON LANGUAGE SHOULD BE WRITTEN.MAKE IT USER FRIENDLY TO READ

Reports needs more details in a simple language.

Needs to simplify language and cut the Jargon

The residents casework does not get acknowledged as a serious concern

There is always further improvementscan be made

reports are satill very complecated and complex but lot better than reports from 2021 and 2022.

Reports can obfuscate rather than clarify. Failings should detail what went wrong and WHEN will it be put right.e space than successes.

COMMUNICATION ON THE REPORTS SHOULD BE SIMPLE AND EASY TO UNDRSATND AVOID USING JARGON LANGUAGE

Reports could be concise and give a greater range of opinions with greater clarity. By the time a full understanding of an issue emerges, we often need to take decisions straight away - there isn't the time or the clarity or background knowledge in most cases to allow for genuine consultation.

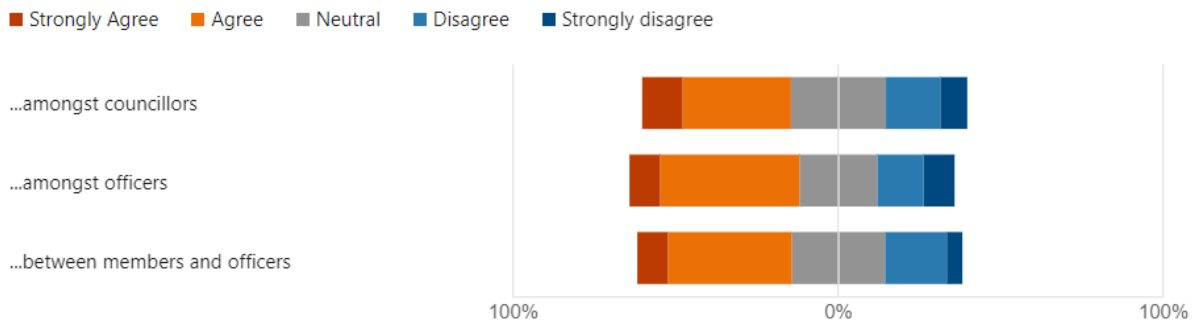The reports must be abstracted, Graphics speak louder than text

CULTURE

8. There is a healthy culture and good ways of working overall…
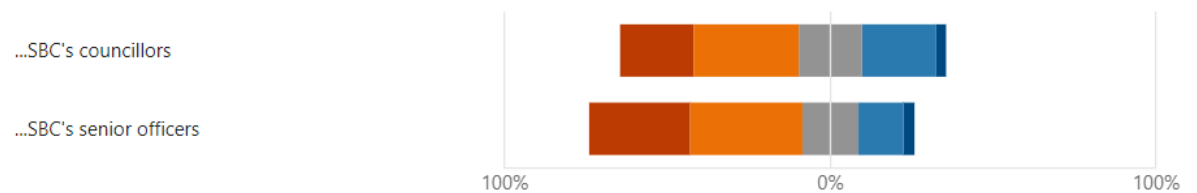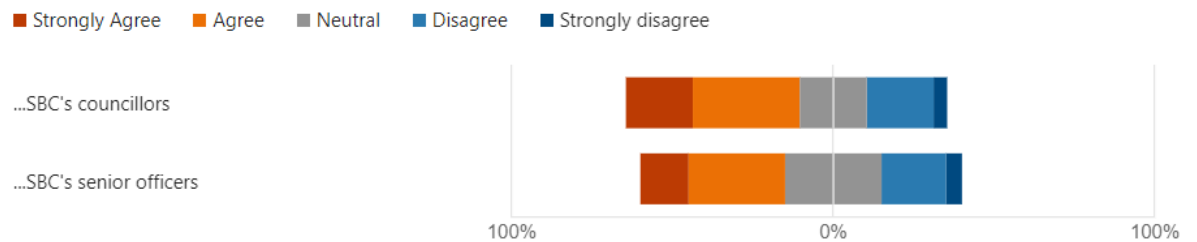
2024:
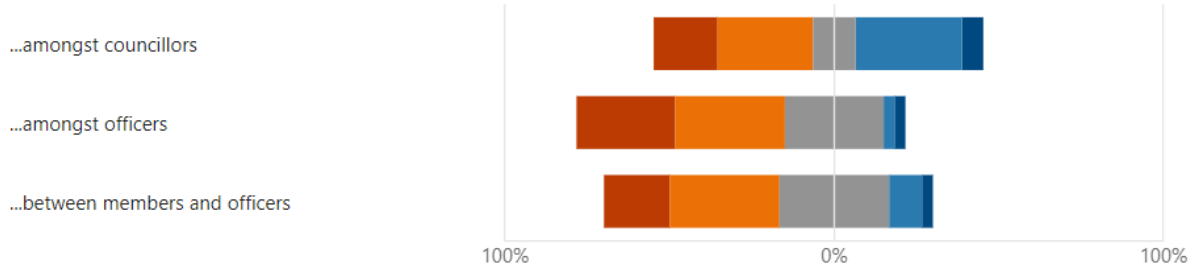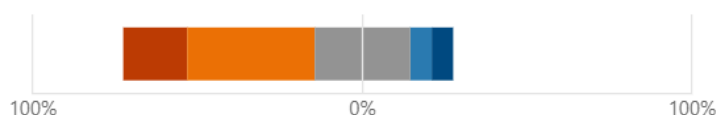

2023:

9. I have confidence in…

2024:

2023:

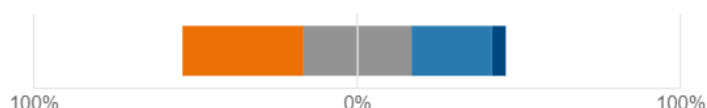## 10. Senior officers understand councillors and how politics works in Slough

2024:

2023:

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

THE COMMUNICATION SHOULD ALWAYS BE TRANSPERENT FROM THE OFFICERS
Officers are doing good but need to cooperate more, so we can solve local issues more rapidly. thanks
Councillors motto should be - To serve with pride.
They have no understanding of the 'community politics' at play in Slough and the impact this has on democracy in the town and how this leads to poor decision making and corrupt practices.
I thank the officers for enabling the members to discharge their duties. Thanking each and every officer in the council. The council will not function with out you, the officers.
Senior officers needs to be more communicative to councillors.
The whole Council is ineffective to provide the services that are needed for the residents
There is so much of personal egos and bullying behavior in Slough Borough Council
The Officers need to collectively work with the councillors and to ensure that the views expressed by the residents are heard and considered before any implementation is made.
Further improvements can be made
there is lot of to improve between councillors and officers relations.
Culture beats strategy, SBC culture is sub optimal
Hard working officers, trying to keep the lights on by fixing things on a daily basis!

COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPERANVY IS VITAL
There is room for improvement in most aspects but a clear understanding that things can and should be done better, largely because we are starting from a low base and SBC is in intervention, but also because there is genuine buy-in to continuous improvement.
Officers and members must work together to bring change in Slough
Members are provided with excellent support. Senior officers are always available to support.

MEMBER WELLBEING AND HANDLING ABUSE OR INTIMIDATION

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

2024:
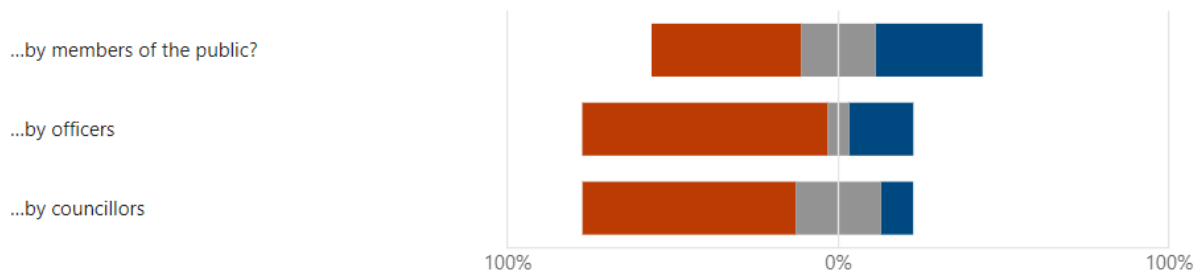
2023:
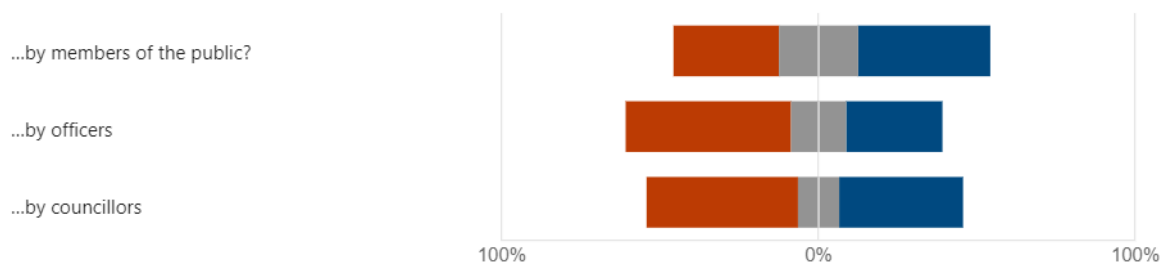
Please note that the blue colour represents 'Don't Know'.

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...

2024:
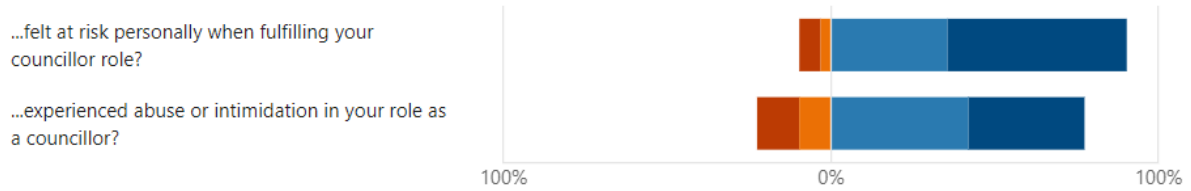
2023:
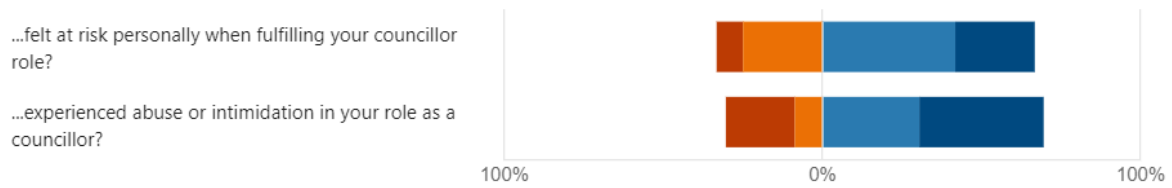
For comparison, the national results in the LGA Councillor Census 2022 were:

- 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)

2024:

🔵	SBC Officer	0
🟠	SBC Councillor	7
🟢	A member of the public	8
🔴	Other	3

2023:

🔵	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?

2024:

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

I feel confident that if I raised a serious issue or concern (ie whistleblowing) my concerns will be…

I understand the Standards regime (complaints against councillors) and how to raise a complaint…

I feel confident that if I lodge a complaint against a councillor it will be dealt with effectively (within th…

2023:

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

I feel confident that if I raised a serious issue or concern (ie whistleblowing) my concerns will be…

I understand the Standards regime (complaints against councillors) and how to raise a complaint…

I feel confident that if I lodge a complaint against a councillor it will be dealt with effectively (within the…
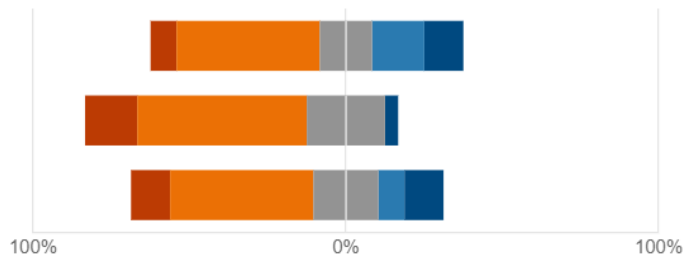
32. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCILS CULTURES SHOULD CHANGE FOR POSITIVE
It is clear from behaviour in the Chamber that some male councillors find it appropriate to mock female councillors who express that they felt intimidated including by gestures from male councillors opposite. I experience it for myself in the meeting - it is grossly inappropriate and nothing is done.
The procedure needs to be more widely known and readily available.
Officers are employees and subject to normal grievance procedures processes. Councillors appear to work in an immunity zone and leadership are afraid to address behavioural issues
COUNCILLORS SHOULD BE VERY OFTEN BE REMINDED ABOUT THE CODE OF CONDUCT
I think these systems are functioning but rather woolly.

MEMBER SUPPORT

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

2024:

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

…the council overall

…Democratic Services

100%   0%   100%

2023:

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

…the council overall

…Democratic Services

100%   0%   100%
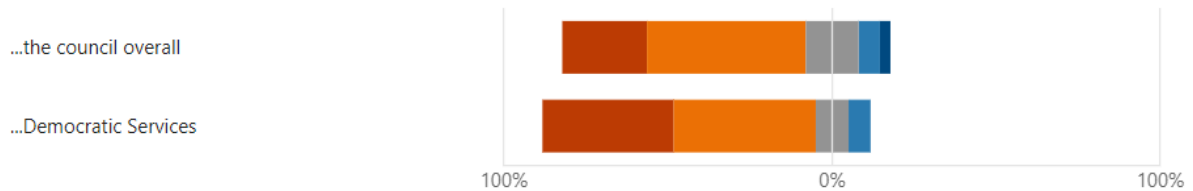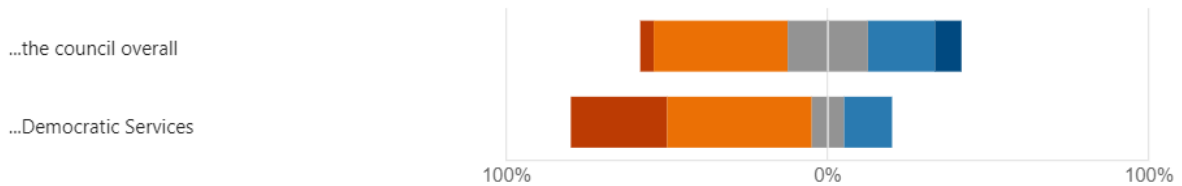
12. When I submit casework I am confident…

2024:

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

…that it will be resolved

…that I will get a response within a reasonable timeframe

100%   0%   100%

2023:

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

…that it will be resolved

…that I will get a response within a reasonable timeframe

100%   0%   100%
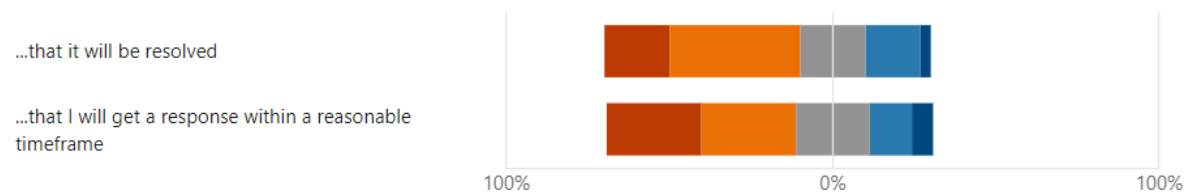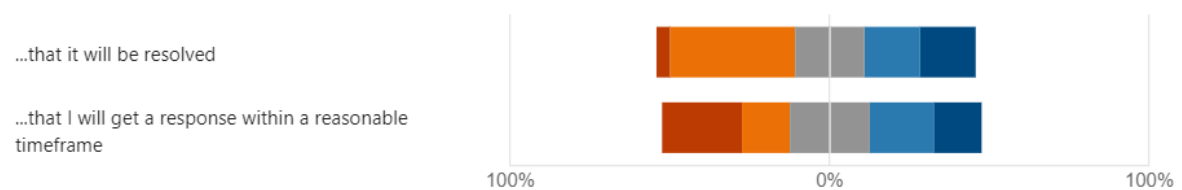
13. When I submit a service request (eg via the council's website) I am confident...

2024:

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

...that it will be resolved

...that I will get a response within a reasonable timeframe

100%   0%   100%

2023:

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

...that it will be resolved

...that I will get a response within a reasonable timeframe

100%   0%   100%
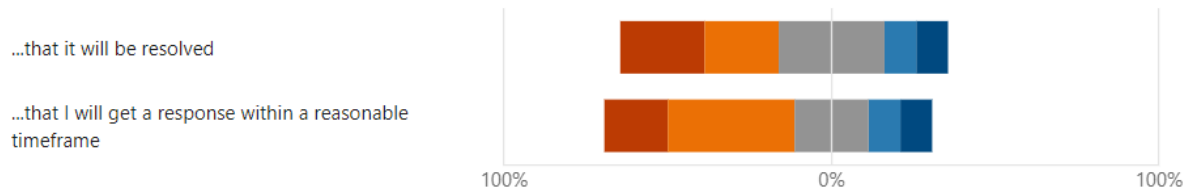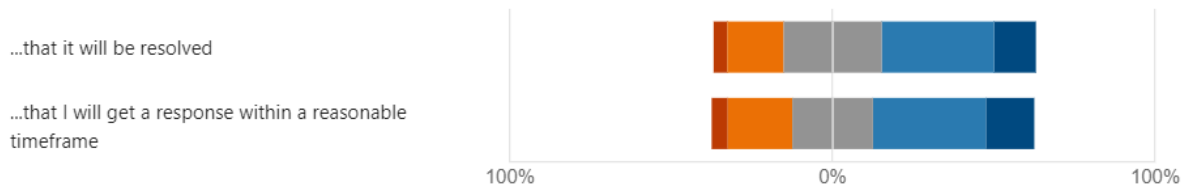
14. If I contact a senior officer with a question or an issue, I am confident...

2024:

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

...that it will be resolved

...that I will get a response within a reasonable timeframe

100%   0%   100%

2023:

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

...that it will be resolved

...that I will get a response within a reasonable timeframe

100%   0%   100%
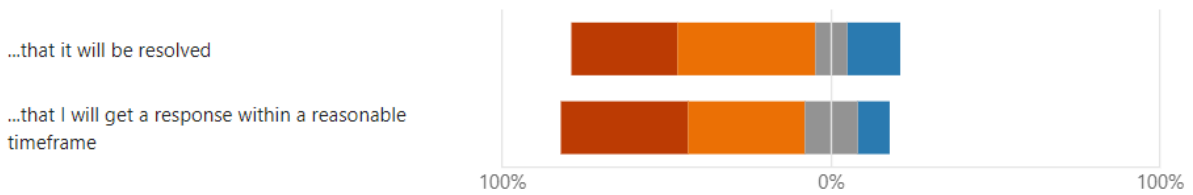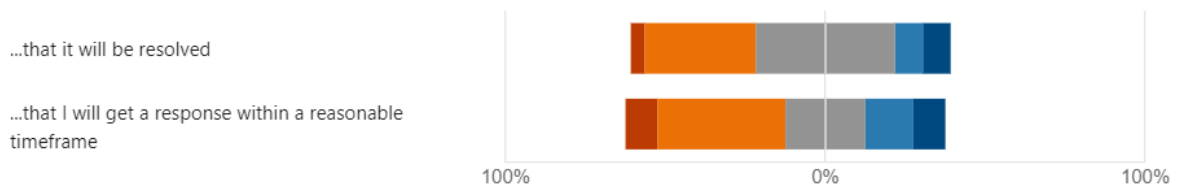
15. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

ALL THE CASE WORKS WHICH ARE NOT RESOLVED IN 10 DAYS SHOULD BE ESCLATED AND REPORT SHOULD BE SENT TO ALL THE COUNCILLORS

Timely response is the key to build trust between Council and its residents.

We shouldn't have to try to track down an officer that we know in order to get issues resolved.

Senior officers need to be more approachable and hold regular surgeries to see Councillors.

The whole environment is geared to not to do anything

Further improvements can be made

every complaint from residents to concillors should go through coperates complaint office.

Activity within the council is sometimes mistaken for achievement

COMMUNICATION AND TIME LINE IS IMPORTANT KPI NEED TO BE ADDED

A bit problem, and a cause of uncertainty is the lack of feedback or conclusive response given - this is even more so when annonomysed by generic reporting sites (with no feedback)..

Casework support is excellent. with positive outcomes.

MEMBER SUPPORT - IT

16. The council provides me with IT equipment and infrastructure which enables me to carry out my role effectively
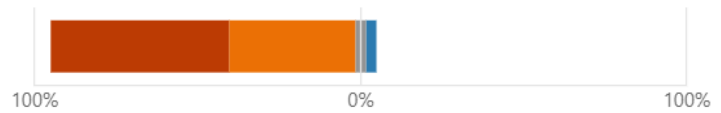
2024:

2023:
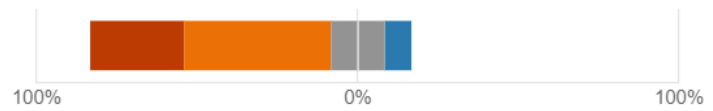
17. What digital tools are most important to enable you carry out your role effectively?

2024:

🔵	Email	28
🟠	Microsoft Teams (video calls & c...	19
🟢	Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Ex...	5
🔴	Internet access	12
🟣	The Intranet	1
🟤	Smartphone	11
🟣	Wifi connectivity on council pre...	2
⚪	Access to meeting papers digita...	11
🟡	Ability to annotate meeting pap...	3
🔵	Other	0
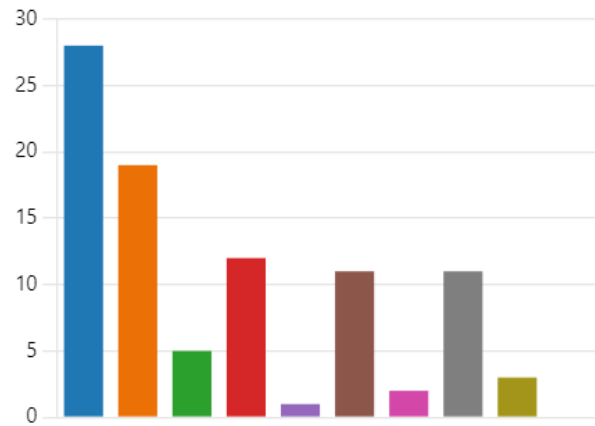
2023:

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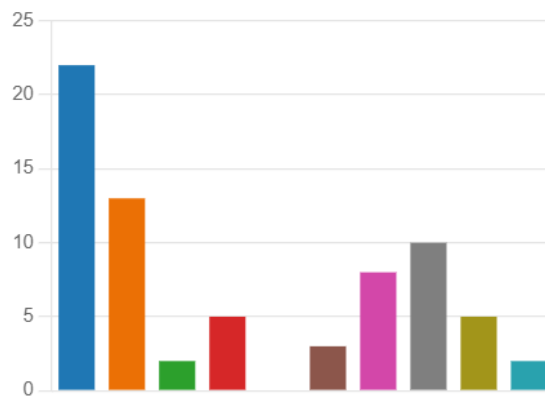
18. Which digital tools would you most benefit from more training about?

2024:

🔵 Email	11
🟠 Microsoft Teams (video calls & c...	9
🟢 Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Ex...	6
🔴 Internet access	6
🟣 The Intranet	4
🟤 Smartphone	6
🟣 Wifi connectivity on council pre...	5
⚪ Access to meeting papers digita...	7
🟡 Ability to annotate meeting pap...	7
🔵 Other	2
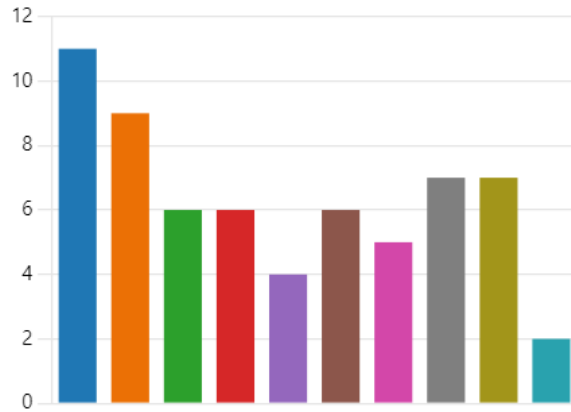
2023:

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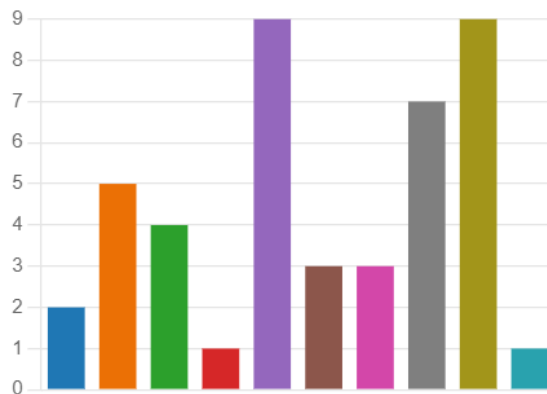
19. This space is yours for any comments on this topic.

CONNECTION OF NETWORK CONNECTION OF SMART PHONES INOBSERVATIVE HOUSE NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED
Communication resolves issues.
Connectivity needs to be improved all around.
BYOD would save the council money and is a mature/secure technology by now
WIFI IN THE COUNCIL BUILDING NEEDS TO BE IIMPROVED
I don't know how to set up a video call or manage one.
My laptop has so far proved to be of limited effectiveness
IT equipment is fantastic

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

2024:

20. When it comes to our Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee...
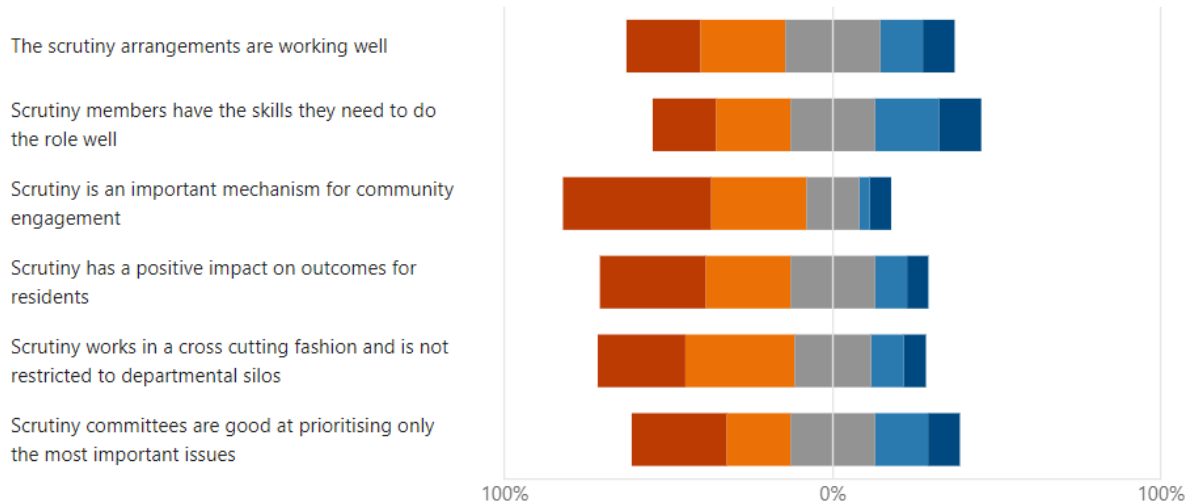
2023:

20. When it comes to our Overview and Scrutiny Committee and three Scrutiny Panels...
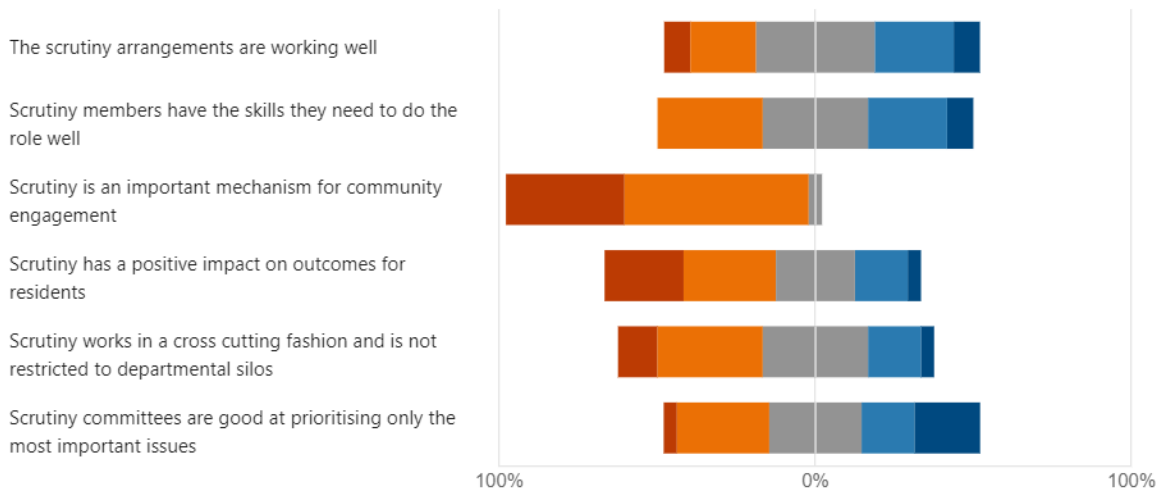
Note that in 2023, over half of all councillors were on one or more scrutiny committees (24 out of 42). By 2024, there is a single committee of 10 councillors. In light of this the improvement in perception is particularly good.

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

OFFICERS SHOULD SUPPORT THE SCRUTINY WITH ANY INFORMATION THE SCRUTINY TEAM NEEDS

Scrutiny Committee need to be more proactive.

The amount of collaboration required is huge, the officers are doing great job

Scrutiny needs more support and training in different aspects of this function. More public engagement.

every six month scrutiny committee member need to refresh training.

The committees are set up politically instead of by skills. Upskilling low skilled politicians who think they know everything already is hard work.

The officers made sure enablement of the councillors to conduct a proper scrutiny.

OFFICERS NEED TO ENGAGE WITH TRANSPERANCY AND HAVE EFFECTIVE COMMNICATION

I don't think there is enough engagement with the local community, or focus on residents getting value for money. Scrutiny definitely has the potential to challenge silo working and require more collaborative effort. I think most/too much of its prioritising is done for it by officers (maybe for the reason that resources are still very limited).

Scrutiny should do more.

The Scrutiny function is working well, big targets to meet.

MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

2024:

22. Councillors have the training and development opportunities they need

AND I am satisfied with the induction I have received since May 2023
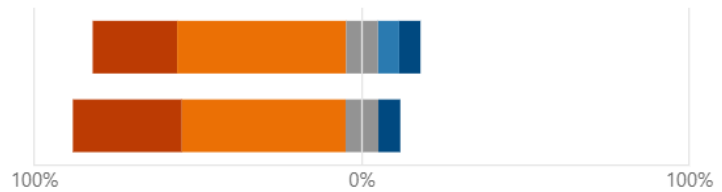
2023:

22. Councillors have the training and development opportunities they need.
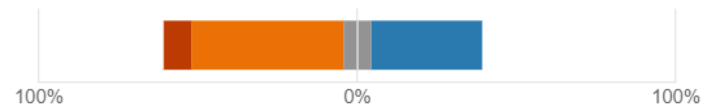
23. What would you say are the main things which prevent you from attending more member development sessions?

2024:

🔵 Nothing prevents me - I go to t...	25
🟠 I am not aware of them	2
🟢 I am too busy	0
🔴 I am sufficiently skilled and kno...	4
🟣 The topics do not seem relevant...	1
🟤 They happen at an inconvenient...	7
🩷 They are not online	5
⚪ I don't have confidence that the...	1
🟡 Other	5
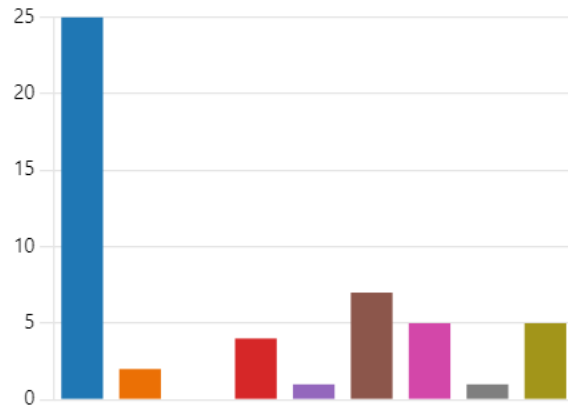
2023:

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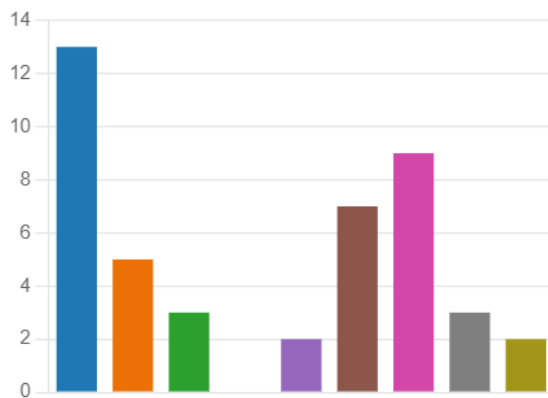
24. What additional training or development opportunities do you think councillors most need?

MICROSOFT TEAM MEETING .ON WEBB HOW TO CONDUCT AND STREAM LINE
Communication
Regular training
Humility
FACE TO FACE ENGAGEMNET WITH THE OFFICERS
Effective public speaking and questioning techniques - to help with clarity and getting to the bottom of an issue rather than scratching the surface.
As members of various committees, need training relevant to that committee of which one is a member.
Must have montly seniors officers meeting with Councillor's
I believe that more training g could be provided by the individual political groups
Conduct in public meetings / speech

OTHER

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

A number of councillors have an ego so large that it is hard to see them representing the residents, thet are here more for their own progression
GOOD COOPERATION IS NEEDED FORM THE COUNCIL OFFICERS AND HAS TO BE HONEST AND TRANSPERENT
...democracy is being undermined by all the committees being chaired by the ruling coalition administration. There is a lack of diversity amongst councillors. The council is not representative of our community. That the council leadership has no 'grip' on the poor behaviour of members. That the new intake of councillors are totally ill equipped to deal with the problems facing the council.
There should be a positive culture change at every level, focusing on providing best value for money for people Slough. We should have a vision of cleaner, greener and healthier Slough.

Being a Councilor is very challenging but not rewarding. There is no appreciation for new councillors and they often looked down by cabinet members

Members casework department response time should be taken seriously and should change from 10 working days to respond back in 3 working days. Residents are not happy with the waiting time

...Running a local council on political party lines is an ineffective method of governance. Everything is politicised and irrelevancies are argued over. There is far too much fiddling while Slough burns.

SLOUGH BOROROUGH COUNCIL SHOULD EFFECTLVELY ENGAGE WITH THE RESIDENT TO RE GAIN THE TRUST AND BE TRANSPERST AND HAVE EFFECTIVE COMUNICATION

I do not think members have visibility on the value that is being added by democratic services and what more democratic services can offer to the members. There needs to be monthly/quarterly surgery conducted by democratic services with members.

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Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Standards Committee
Date:	19 March 2024
Subject:	Member Induction and Member Development Working Group
Chief Officer:	Stephen Taylor, Monitoring Officer
Contact Officers:	Alexander Polak, Head of Governance & Scrutiny, Statutory Scrutiny Officer
Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	Appendix A – Induction Programme 2023/24 as delivered
	Appendix B – Proposed outline of Member Development Programme 2024/25

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1   This report:
- Provides information about the Member Induction and Development Programme delivered over 2023/24 in the first year of this 4-year municipal cycle, including the relevant results from a survey of Members.
- Recommends the 'Member Development Working Group' approved by this Committee in October now be convened to review the proposed outline of a Member Development Programme 2024/25 as at Appendix B, in light of any comments made by the Standards Committee
- Seeks members' re-endorsement of the principles for the ongoing member development programme, contained within this report – which would wrap around the items set out in Appendix B;

Recommendations:

1. **That the committee provide feedback on the induction programme for new councillors in 2023/24, in light of the member survey;**

2. **That the ongoing Member Induction and Development Plan 2023/24 (Appendix A) be welcomed and endorsed and any outstanding training needs for 2023/24 not included in the Plan be identified by the Committee for consideration by the Monitoring Officer;**

3. **That a 'Member Development Working Group' of councillors and officers be convened to advise the Monitoring Officer on the outline Member**

Development Plan 2024/25 set out in this report and at appendix B, in light of any steer by this committee; and

4. **That the principles for member development set out in section 3 are endorsed again for the ongoing member development programme.**

Reasons for recommendations:

- 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.

- To demonstrate progress against the recommendations in the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's *Scrutiny Improvement Review*, including that we have begun to upskill and develop councillors' capacity and capability to take on and respond to the current significant challenges faced by the Council.

- 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

This report has been reviewed by Commissioners and there are no specific comments to add.

2. **Introduction**

2.1 The induction programme and associated Member Development which was delivered by Slough Borough Council over the past ten months for its incoming councillors is set out in Appendix A. It gave specific attention to training of Scrutiny Members in light of the government direction on that topic, as well as supporting all members more generally and Chairs, Cabinet Members etc in their specific roles.

2.2 The Member development plan was originally published on the agenda for an April 2023 meeting of the Standards Committee, which was not quorate, and therefore the plan was formally agreed by an October 2023 meeting.

2.3 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 current year, and a detailed plan for induction. It was designed to focus on key skills and knowledge so that first-time Councillors could hit the ground running and to enable returning Councillors to build on their existing knowledge and skills base. This focus on new councillors and scrutiny was prescient since, in the event, 22 of the 42 councillors elected in May 2023 were new to the council. Nevertheless, the plan was adapted significantly from what was originally proposed and was supported by a lot of personalised support for individual councillors in key roles, in light of the election result and change in administration.

2.4 The plan was designed to provide a framework for, and to 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.

2.5   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 councillors make evidence-based decisions and are mindful of the duty of best value), and the Council's strategic priorities, its recovery plan and vision.

2.6   The plan envisaged that the bulk of training would 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 would be facilitated by external providers and councillors would also be encouraged through various other means to gain outside experience of 'what good looks like'. In the event, the main outside providers of member development have been the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny – who delivered the Scrutiny induction programme in conjunction with SBC officers – and the Local Government Association.

3   Member Induction and Development Plan 2023/24

3.1   The core pieces of the induction programme – as delivered - are presented in Appendix A. Appendix A is a record of primarily formal, group learning opportunities and therefore is not comprehensive of everything which has assisted Members to learn this year. For example, it *excludes* the following, which have also been critical aspects of the overall member development programme:
   - Peer mentors offered by the LGA to all cabinet and other members in key positions such as Leader of the Opposition and Chair of Scrutiny.
   - Numerous and regular service-led briefings for each Cabinet member
   - Subject-specific workshops in Scrutiny Committee and Audit Committee pre-meetings, including constant reflection on the specific role of those committees in that context.
   - Various external training sessions attended by individual councillors, either free or funded from the Member Development budget, identified by either Members or officers, typically relating to skills (eg aimed at new cabinet members or scrutiny members) or subject matter (eg members of scrutiny T&Fs attending webinars on scrutiny topics).
   - Support and mentorship by lead officers and Democratic Services officers to members in key roles, often in a much more involved way than would be usual with experienced councillors in long-established roles.

3.2   The year split into broadly three phases, in line with the plan set out in April and October for this committee:

   1. Mandatory courses first which comprised a minimum baseline of compliance with legal and constitutional requirements (e.g., with regard to Member Code of Conduct, declarations of interest, information governance, and mandatory Planning/Licensing training)

   2. Skills next (i.e., *how* to be an effective councillor)

   3. Subject matter knowledge, primarily delivered at moments when it is relevant and can be applied e.g., subject briefings in advance of decisions on those topics, changes in legislation, etc.

3.3   As planned, the frequency of formal training sessions decreased as the year passed and Members' became busier applying their new knowledge in committee and community settings. By the latter part of the year, most member development effort was happening in focused, targeted ways for committees or individual members. Members are requested to identify any remaining training needs for 2023/24 and which have not been included in the Plan so that these can be addressed by the Monitoring Officer.

Structure and prioritisation of development offer

3.4   The intention in 2024/25 is to continue to prioritise in a similar way, with a programme of work which kicks off after the Annual Meeting ie after any potential changes of chairmanships or cabinet portfolios:

1. Refresher sessions of mandatory courses first, covering compliance with legal and constitutional requirements (e.g., with regard to Member Code of Conduct, declarations of interest, information governance, and mandatory Planning/Licensing training). Establishing an expectation of annual review of these key topics.

2. Skills next (i.e., *how* to be an effective councillor), in the form of training aimed at committees and individuals in key roles, especially where there have been changes of personnel.

3. Subject matter knowledge, primarily delivered at moments when it is relevant and can be applied e.g., subject briefings in advance of decisions on those topics, changes in legislation, etc. Supported by increasing the formality around all-member briefings, the use of which has been increasing in frequency in the latter part of the year, and which have generally been well received.

3.5   The induction programmes set out at Appendix A and B follow this pattern and are 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 delivered 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 delivered it in full for the new cohort for Scrutiny members commencing immediately after the election. This was a critical thread in the Council's Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan. It included facilitated support for the development of the Scrutiny Work Programme as well as bespoke training for the scrutiny committee, its chair, the cabinet and officers.

3.7   Full details of the CfGS proposal can be found at Appendix B to the report published on this committee's agenda in April 2023 and is described in Appendix A as delivered.

More recently, CfGS officers have undertaken an informal review of scrutiny at Slough, the results of which are pending. The intention is that the results will be discussed by scrutiny Members at a forthcoming workshop and factored into the

Scrutiny Annual Report – this is likely to help shape future training and development for scrutiny members in particular.

<u>Other Committee-specific training</u>

3.8   Where possible, committee-specific training (such as that for planning, licencing & audit) took place on the evening of their first scheduled meeting, as is custom and practice at SBC, and then, for some committees, at other suitable junctures through the year, typically in pre-meetings.

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 and officer briefings.

<u>External expertise, including visits and mentoring</u>

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'. Some councillors have taken up this idea, with the Leader, many Cabinet Members and committee chairs visiting or contacting other local authorities.

3.12   A programme of visits to other authorities is intended as part of the ongoing development programme, with an emphasis on committee Chairs gaining contacts and experience with their opposite numbers at other authorities.

3.13   During the previous administration, the LGA provided a structured mentoring service to Members with key roles and this has been reconstructed for the new administration too. The LGA provide hand-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. Anecdotal feedback from the members involved has generally been very positive.

3.14   Most cabinet members in the new administration have now accepted a Mentor and begun working with them, as have those committee chairs covered by the scheme.

<u>Remote working</u>

3.15   In light of the significant proportion of members of Slough Borough Council who work full time and/or have caring responsibilities, it was anticipated that remote working capability would be used where possible to deliver training. This was intended to increase the overall uptake of learning and development opportunities and allow members to access content at a time which suits them rather than having to attend a specific training session. A 'video library' was mooted. Virtual training, when it was delivered, was filmed and the links circulated to Members. However, in

practice Members' preference for face-to-face learning was borne out by better attendance figures and better engagement for in-person sessions, and so most member development has taken place face-to-face. Face-to-face sessions were also an important part of helping to build a positive culture and relationships between members.

Members' Handbook

3.16   The induction programme was supplemented by the Members' Handbook, which was 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, priorities, and support available for Members.

Senior Officer attendance

3.17   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. Senior officer buy-in to member development has been good, where relevant, during the 2023 induction programme.

Measuring and Monitoring Satisfaction

3.18   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. Regrettably, this pattern has continued since the election – only 5 responses to satisfaction surveys have been received across the entire induction programme. Members' views are welcome on how to improve our visibility of member satisfaction with training sessions.

3.19   In the meantime, the Member Survey has been used as a means to assess overall satisfaction with member development, see below for detailed results.

Member Survey

3.20   A second-ever survey of members was carried out just before Christmas 2023 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 elsewhere on today's agenda.

3.21   The survey results were taken into account by officers in the development of the outline induction programme in appendix B.

3.22   The survey results (overpage) show a big improvement in members' satisfaction with member development, In January 2023, 34.8% of respondents disagreed that 'Councillors have the training and development opportunities they need.' By December 2023, this figure had fallen to 13%, while the percentage of councillors strongly agreeing that it met their needs had risen from 8.7% to 25.8%. Overall, 77.4% of councillors agreed or strongly agreed that they had had the opportunities they needed in this first year of the administration. The figures relating to induction are even more positive, although of course there is no prior figure for comparison.

3.23 The data about barriers preventing members from attending training show a markedly improved situation too. The number of councillors reporting that they have no issue attending and so so regularly is much higher, and the range and frequency of barriers to entry are much reduced. Areas for continued reflection are on whether a more convenient time can be found to deliver them, and whether more of them should be online.

JANUARY 2023 SATISFACTION:
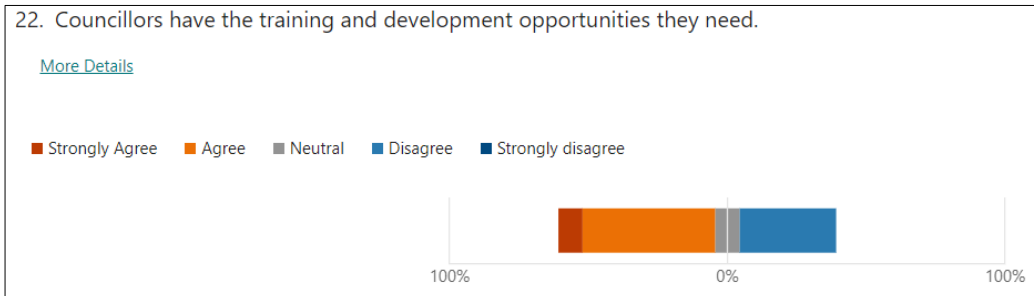
DECEMBER 2023 SATISFACTION:
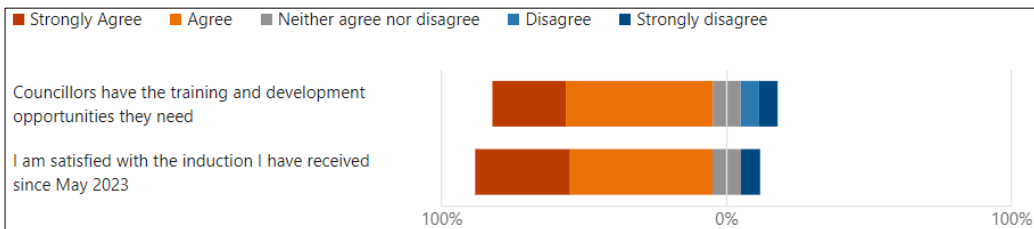
JANUARY 2023 – BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE

DECEMBER 2023 – BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE

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

More Details

● Nothing prevents me - I go to t...	25
● I am not aware of them	2
● I am too busy	0
● I am sufficiently skilled and kno...	4
● The topics do not seem relevant...	1
● They happen at an inconvenient...	7
● They are not online	5
● I don't have confidence that the...	1
● Other	5

Member Development Charter

3.24   Some authorities (13 in the South East) have obtained 'charter status' for Member Development. This is essentially a 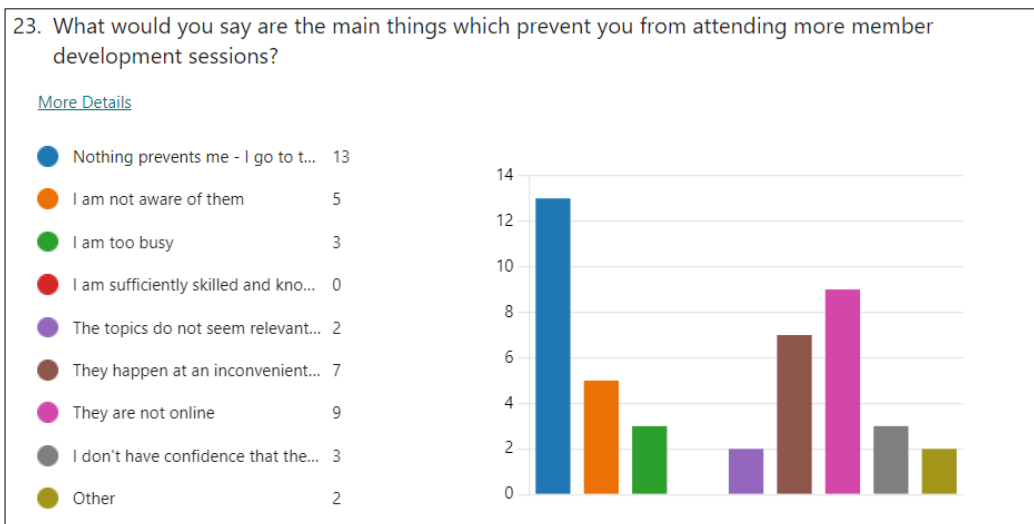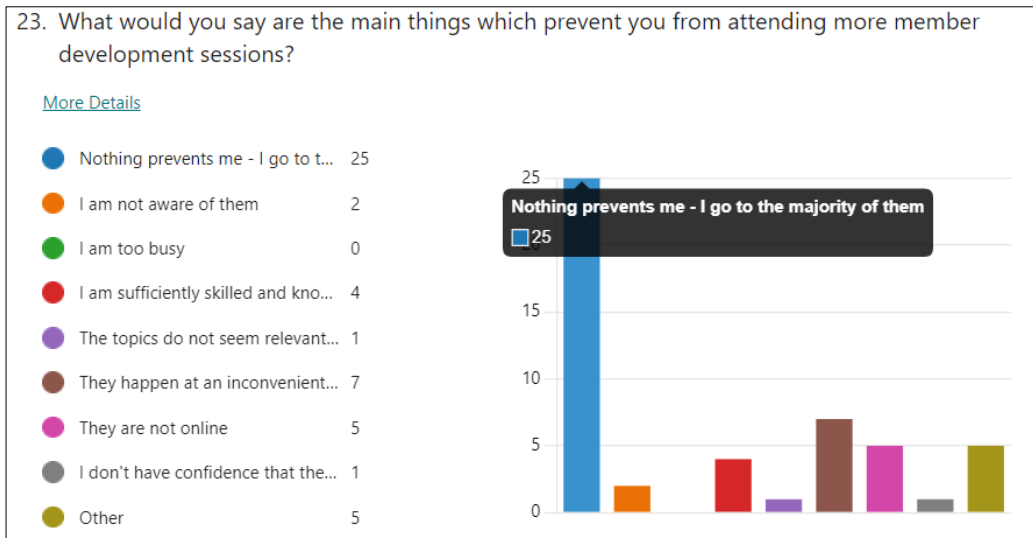system which recognises local authorities which have been formally assessed to have met a set of criteria defined by the Local Government Association. The criteria relate to the quality of member development offered by the authority. In our region the assessment and associated support is carried out 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.

3.25   While charter plus would be a worthy goal for SBC, it was not considered that resources were 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 four-year administration, if the required resources can be identified and the cost justified.

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

3.26   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 and whips who are in a position to apply sanctions within their Groups as they see fit.

3.27   In all invitations and communications relating to the induction programme, the following terms were 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

3.28 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 experience this year showed that it was best to hold online sessions around the end of the working day but before evening meetings (e.g., between 17:00-18:00) or to hold in-person sessions immediately before formal meetings (17:30-18:20). Democratic Services will continue to be responsible for scheduling member development sessions in order to minimise the frequency of clashes with the formal meeting calendar, however much of the content is of course the responsibility of individual services.

Format

3.29 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 continue to be assessed through Member feedback.

Attendance

3.30 Members' attendance will be recorded as per any other Member meeting. 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.

LGA resources – e-learning and workbooks

3.31 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.

3.32 Self-service is a key tenet of the Council's current transformation programme. Councillors have been guided to access the following e-learning courses via self-registration with the LGA. This will be a key part of the Member Development 'refresh' after the Annual Meeting:

- 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

3.33 Councillors have been referred to the many LGA workbooks available for them to work through in their own time, through a scheduled serious 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

Resources for delivery of the Member Development Plan

3.34 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 induction programme was 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. Individual service areas have agreed to be responsible for delivering member development on subject-specific areas.

Parish Councils

3.35 The Monitoring Officer has written on several occasions to the Clerks of the three parishes on the Borough, offering assistance in relation to any matters arising under the Parish Council's Code of Conduct or any other related issues, but this offer has not been taken up, to date. This included specifically asking if he can assist with any training of Parish Councillors on the Code of Conduct and asking for assurance as to what training has been given in relation to the Code of Conduct.

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.

4.2   *Legal implications*

The Council has many different statutory functions and duties. When making decisions members must comply with these legal duties, including making decisions in a fair, lawful and transparent manner. Members must comply with the Member Code of Conduct and understand their obligations to register and declare interests and the sanctions regime for failing to comply with the Code of Conduct. The Member Development Programme assists members to be effective and ensure the Council complies with its legal obligations.

4.3   *Risk management implications*

None, other than as referred to in the report.

4.4   *Environmental implications*

None

4.5   *Equality implications*

The Council has a duty to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for those with a protected characteristic and those without. The member development programme, and the way we deliver it, should take account of members' protected characteristics and consider any adjustments needed. This is done on a session-by-session basis.

5.   Background Papers

None

Appendix A – Member Induction and development over 2023/24

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Name of training	All Members	First-time Members	All recently elected Members	Specific Members	Date	Delivery
PRE-INDUCTION						
At election 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	
INDUCTION – WELCOME and bitesize first modules.						
New Members Welcome Evening CLT welcome and corporate overview (including financial position and governance responsibilities) Induction programme overview	Essential	Essential	Essential		Thurs 11 May 18:00-19:30	In person
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

Name of training	All Members	First-time Members	All recently elected Members	Specific Members	Date	Delivery
All new Members to be allocated 'buddies' from existing cohort in their party – organised by Group Leaders						
INDUCTION - SKILLS						
Pre-AGM briefing in council chamber for all new Councillors	Welcome	Essential	Welcome		18 May 17:30 prior to the Annual Meeting (up to 60 minutes long)	In person
Pre-meeting before each committee meets for the first time *Key procedure rules and practical tips e.g., speaking through the Chair etc * Purpose of committee, ways of working, importance of reading reports, tips for reading reports				Essential for all members of the relevant committee	Prior to each committee	In person
Induction Workshop 1 - 1. Code of Conduct and Member Officer Protocol 2. Improvement and Recovery (Non - Finance) 3. Governance & Decision-Making	Essential	Essential	Essential		8th June 2023	In person
Induction Workshop 2 1.Safeguarding Adults 2.Safeguarding Children 3.Local Govt Finance	Essential	Essential	Essential		14th June 2023	In person
Member Induction Workshop 3	Essential	Essential	Essential			In Person

Name of training	All Members	First-time Members	All recently elected Members	Specific Members	Date	Delivery
1.Data Protection, GDPR, Information security 2.Communications						
LGA e-learning offer: • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion • Local government finance • Effective ward Councillor • Holding council meetings online • Facilitation and conflict resolution • Influencing skills • Supporting mentally healthier communities • Scrutiny	Essential Encouraged	Essential Encouraged	Essential Encouraged		May-July, in Members' own time, prompted by emails and Member Newsletter. Completion data monitored and shared with Group leaders.	online
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 & Corporate Governance 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

Name of training	All Members	First-time Members	All recently elected Members	Specific Members	Date	Delivery
Further O&S training sessions: 1:1 support for Chair and Vice Chair of CISC – 13 June Planning an Effective Scrutiny Work Programme – 4 July Cabinet-only scrutiny training – 7 September Extended CLT (officers) training Budget/finance scrutiny (cabinet and scrutiny) – 6 September				Essential: O&S Members, Cabinet, Officers as appropriate	June-September	Mixture of in person and online
Chairing skills	Welcome	Welcome	Welcome	Essential: All Chairs and Vice Chairs	Two sessions in w/c 22 May	online
IT drop-in sessions	Welcome	Encouraged	Welcome		At each Council meeting	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
First Aid	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged		TBC	In person
Planning an effective scrutiny work programme - facilitated by the CFGS				Scrutiny	4th July 2023	Online

Name of training	All Members	First-time Members	All recently elected Members	Specific Members	Date	Delivery
Member Induction Workshop 3 (In person) 1.Data Protection, GDPR, Information security 2.Communications	Essential	Essential	Essential		6 July 2023	In person
Finance and Council budget scrutiny For Cabinet & Scrutiny Members Facilitated by the CFGS (Online)				Cabinet Scrutiny	6 Sept 2023	Online
Cabinet & Scrutiny - Facilitated by the CFGS				Cabinet	7 Sept 2023	In person
Finance and Council budget scrutiny For Cabinet & Scrutiny Members Facilitated by the CFGS				Cabinet Scrutiny	19 September 2023	Online
Audit Committee: Member Training UPDATE				Audit	16 Nov 2023 in person	
Scrutiny member briefing on Draft budget 2024-25	Welcome			Scrutiny	Various sessions across the year	In person
Second Scrutiny briefing on Budget Plans and MTFS 2024-25 10 Jan2024				Scrutiny	13 Dec 2023	In person
Scrutiny Training for New Vice Chair				Scrutiny	11 Jan 2024	Online
Data and managing performance					1 Feb 2024	Online
Scrutiny training workshop: Data and Scrutiny				Scrutiny	7 Feb 2024	Online

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT - KNOWLEDGE						
Directorate priorities – 'An evening with…' each Exec Director. Exec Directors to consider use of site visit opportunities.	Welcome	Encouraged	Welcome		TBC	Online
ADSO Webinar: An Introduction to Community Power	Encouraged				7 Dec 2023 online	Online
Briefing: Sale of Assets	Welcomed			Scrutiny	22 Feb 2024	In person
Briefing: SEND 'speed dating'	Encouraged				20 Feb 2024	In person
Special Event: Chief Constable's and PCC's Annual report to Slough Councillors	Encouraged			Scrutiny	27 Feb 2024	
Cabinet-focused development (designed with new cabinet – have had a series of away-days)				Essential: Cabinet Members	Spread across the year	TBC
Councillors were referred to the 28 Local Government Association workbooks available for them to work through in their own time.	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged		In Members' own time	N/A

APPENDIX B – overview of proposed Member Development in 2024/25 Municipal Year

The Member Development Programme for 2024/25 should be delivered on the principles set out in this report above, including eg all the 1:1 support and bespoke arrangements for individual lead members, encouragement to engage with LGA resources and mentors, and subject-led briefings throughout the year commissioned whether by Cabinet or Scrutiny.

Below is an outline of potential formal aspects of the member development programme, ie the formal I training sessions. These traditional chalk & talk sessions comprise only a small portion of the overall Member Development offer, as set out in the main body of this report.

Skills – refreshers and developing existing skills
1. Scrutiny Work Programming – Best practice and Workshop
2. Mandatory Planning Training
3. Mandatory Licensing Training
4. Code of Conduct and DPIs
5. Member-Officer relations
6. Governance And Decision-Making
7. Principles of Local Government Finance
8. Casework
9. Information Security, Data Protection & FOI
10. Safeguarding Adults

11	Safeguarding Children & Corporate Parenting	
12	Audit Committee Training	
13	Scrutiny Committee Training	
14	Employment Committee Training	
15	Chairing Skills for Chairs & Vice-Chairs	
16	Trustee Committee Training	
17	Full Council – procedures and protocol	
18	Committees – procedures and protocol	
Subject Matter Briefings 2024-2025		
19	To be led by business need (ie aligned to schedule of cabinet decisions and scrutiny work programme, and in response to issues as they emerge during the year).	
Member-requested sessions		
20	Microsoft Teams	
21	Communication skills	
22	Member Conduct	
23	Effective public speaking and questioning techniques	

24.	More Political Group-led sessions