Agenda item 6

For decision - Councillor Induction and Development Programme for the 2027 Elections
Authors: Authors: Peter Wheelhouse, Town Clerk; Laura Flaherty, HR Lead & Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk; Cllr Lyndsey Mayhew and Cllr Richard Pinnock

Summary (inlc. recommendations)

As part of Frome Town Council's Improvement Plan, a review has been undertaken of the support provided to Cllrs before and after election. The 'Councillor Induction and Development Programme' at Appendix 6.1 can be read on the website here and proposes a structured approach to support residents considering standing for election and to help newly elected Cllrs become confident and effective in their role.

The programme has been developed through a number of discussions in our small group with further input from other Cllrs. It recognises that Cllrs join the Council with differing levels of experience and knowledge and proposes a set of ways to support Cllrs throughout their first year.

Recommendations

1. Approve the proposed Councillor Induction and Development Programme for implementation ahead of the 2027 elections.
2. Delegate authority to the Town Clerk and HR Lead & Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk to implement the programme and make minor amendments where necessary.

Background

The Council's Improvement Plan identified an opportunity to strengthen the induction and development support available to Cllrs. Feedback from both Cllrs and staff highlighted the benefits of providing information before the election, helping prospective candidates better understand the role, and extending support beyond the initial induction period.

The proposed programme therefore supports individuals throughout their journey from prospective candidate to established Cllr.

Proposal Overview

The programme is structured around five key elements:

1. Pre-election candidate engagement

Informal information sessions will be held before the election, providing prospective candidates with an opportunity to meet officers and Cllrs, learn about the role, understand FTC's responsibilities and ask questions in an informal setting.

2. Initial welcome and induction

Following the election, newly elected Cllrs will be invited to a welcome event designed to help build relationships with fellow Cllrs and officers, introduce the Council's culture and values, and complete the necessary administrative requirements at the start of their term of office.

3. First six months support programme

Rather than concentrating learning in the first week after election, the programme proposes a series of monthly development sessions during the first six months.

Sessions will cover topics such as governance, decision making, finance, community engagement and strategic priorities. Each session will include opportunities for discussion and questions, enabling Cllrs to seek advice and clarification as they gain practical experience of the role.

4. Councillor Portal

A dedicated Cllr area will be developed as part of FTC's wider website project, providing access to induction materials, key documents, training resources, FAQs and other useful guidance.

5. Ongoing training and development

Cllrs will be given the opportunity to undertake further training during their first year, including core subjects such as governance, safeguarding, equality and diversity, and data protection, alongside additional development opportunities where appropriate.

Benefits

The programme is intended to:

- Improve understanding of the Cllr role before election.
- Enable Cllrs to contribute more confidently and effectively from the outset.
- Strengthen understanding of governance responsibilities and decision making.
- Support positive working relationships between Cllrs and staff.
- Improve accessibility by providing learning opportunities in a range of formats over an extended period.

By providing a more structured and supportive approach, the programme aims to create a more informed, confident and effective council while reducing barriers for prospective candidates and newly elected members.

Financial and resource implications

Many elements of the programme can be delivered through existing officer capacity and planned member development activities. Any additional training or specialist support requirements have been considered as part of the 2027/28 budget setting process.

Other options considered	This is the first comprehensive programme we have created to support prospective and new Cllrs.

Key considerations for the Council	Whether this programme is reflective of Cllr needs and would provide a suitable level of support.
Consultation and feedback	Two to three meetings were held with Lyndsey Mayhew and Richard Pinnock to inform the development of the programme. Both are the newest FTC Cllrs and both had differing experiences of local government so were best placed to help shape this programme. After producing the proposal there was further feedback from Fiona Barrows and Steve Tanner.
Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan	Links to aim 5 of the Council Plan.
Financial and Risk Implications	None
Legal / HR Implications	None
Equalities Implications	Supports equalities by enabling access and support.
Community Safety Implications	None
Climate Change and Sustainability Implications	None
Health and Safety Implications	None
Constitutional Requirements	None but can be linked to the Cllrs Code of Conduct and Staff and Cllrs Protocol
Background Papers	None
Report Sign-Off	Jane Llewellyn, 4/11/26

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