SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL:
ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1   INTRODUCTION

Elected Members have a vital role in establishing and maintaining the strategic direction of Surrey County Council. They support the Council, by acting as Community Leaders, to embed our values and support our goal of 'Making Surrey a Better Place'.

To support Members in their role we need to produce a flexible approach to learning and development, which meets collective and individual development needs over the term of the council, taking into account each elected Member's individual learning style.

The purpose of this document is to set out the County Council's approach to Member development and how the approach is to be achieved.

This strategy was originally approved in June 2007, and updated in September 2008. It is being revised now as part of the Action Plan to achieve the South East Elected Member Development Charter by July 2011. We need to make the link between the corporate plan and Members' job roles, which enables Members' needs to be identified at individual and Council-wide levels. This includes processes for evaluating and informing future development plans.

The aim of this elected Member Development Strategy is to provide Members with an outline of development activities open to them, which will support them in their role as a County Councillor throughout their term of office.

2   MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

The Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) plays a crucial role in the achievement of this strategy and also the attainment of the South East Elected Member Charter. The group is Member led, and includes Members from all of the county council's political groups. It has the support of the Senior Manager of the Leadership Team in Democratic Services, who can provide guidance on learning and development alongside a Senior Organisational Development Manager from Human Resources and Organisational Development. While the officers are responsible for the administration of member development, the Steering Group ensures that the proposed programme of activities meets Members' needs and that events are scheduled and commissioned appropriately and effectively.

The terms of reference of the Steering Group are as follows:

1.   To be champions for, and promote the development of, Members.

2.   To keep the Elected Member Development Strategy relevant and up to date.

3.   To take a leading role in helping the authority to achieve the Charter for Elected Member Development.

4.   To review and consider training and development needs with a view to producing comprehensive induction and ongoing training and development programmes.

The membership of the group for 2010/11 is as follows:
David Hodge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet portfolio responsibility for member development; Steve Cosser, Zully Grant-Duff, Peter Lambell and Chris Townsend. Should a Member be unable to attend a meeting of the group, the following Members are appointed to substitute for them:
Conservative group substitute: Carol Coleman
Liberal Democrat group substitute: John Orrick
RA/Independent group substitute: Nick Harrison.

The group will develop a mechanism for providing feedback, sharing knowledge and evaluating the outcomes of collective and individual development, using good practices in place elsewhere within the organisation and nationally.

3   IDENTIFYING MEMBER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

A variety of approaches are employed to identify specific individual learning and development needs. Personal Development Plans (PDPs) are encouraged for Members, as they provide a rigorous approach to this. Many Members will have been offered the opportunity to attend a PDP interview with a Local Government Improvement and Development consultant during the term of the current council. To ensure a more sustainable approach to personal development planning, the MDSG has approved the purchase of an online tool developed by the South East Employers that produces individual PDPs for councillors following a self-assessment and 360° feedback approach.

Individual Members are responsible for identifying their own learning and development needs. There is also a responsibility from the corporate centre and services to identify needs and provide appropriate and timely training on, for example, new legislation, corporate governance, etc.

Members who wish to sit on certain committees must have undertaken the relevant training beforehand to ensure they are compliant with the legislation.

Democratic Services keep a record of all the learning and development activities attended by each Member. The responsibility for maintaining this record lies with the Senior Manager, Leadership Team.

4   ANNUAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The MDSG has agreed a Learning and Development Programme for each Council year. The programme is designed to encompass:
- Development requirements identified through the PDP process
- Development activities to reflect the council's agreed corporate objectives
- Development needs arising from external factors, such as legislative or other changes affecting local government and its functions
- Suggestions from Members and officers.

At least one day a month is specified as a 'Member Development Day' and these dates are published in the county diary. Wherever possible, these dates will be used for training and

development events and efforts will be made to avoid scheduling other Member meetings at the same time.

Administrative support for member development will be provided by Democratic Services. This includes co-ordination of the programme, promotion of the learning and development events, maintaining records and administering the budget. Information about learning and development events in each forthcoming three month period will be published in a monthly poster circulated to all Members, with the aim of allowing good notice to be given. Sufficient information about the content and planned outcomes will be advertised to enable Members to decide whether they need to attend.

The agreed Learning and Development Programme for the four-year term of the council is attached at Appendix A. The development activities outlined in the programme are designed to be flexible and appropriate and delivered as a programme of events that Members can tap into as required. The only training activities that all elected Members are expected to attend are:

- Newly elected Member induction
- Equalities and Diversity Awareness
- Code of Conduct training
- Committee relevant training e.g. planning legislation, induction sessions
- Role-specific training prior to commencing certain roles, eg chairing skills
- Scrutiny.

5   MEETING MEMBER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Currently, a variety of approaches are taken to meeting Members' collective and individual development needs.   Members of the Council carry out a wide range of roles, including Cabinet portfolio holder; Chairman or Vice Chairman; Members of select committees, local committees, regulatory committees; representational roles on behalf of the Council; and divisional Members. In addition they need to keep up to date with the over-arching strategic challenges facing the County Council and corporate initiatives to deliver the Corporate Plan and Vision of 'Making a Difference'.

The paragraphs below set out the opportunities available to respond to each particular development need:

Role specific training: Surrey's elected Members formally approved a simple description of the role of the Surrey County Councillor at County Council in June 2007. Other role descriptions also agreed are:
- the Leader
- Deputy Leader
- Chairman of the County Council
- Cabinet Member
- Select Committee Chairman
- Chairman of Planning and Regulatory Committee
- Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee
- Chairman of Standards Committee
- Chairman of Local Committee

Role specific skills and knowledge delivered through officer support, to committees such as Planning & Regulatory Committee and select committees, will ensure that Members' needs are met. Officers and Members will continue to identify ongoing development needs,

especially for new Members and when changes in regulation or in local policy are introduced. Members new to the council following countywide elections will be offered the support of a more experienced officer 'buddy' to support them in their new role. In addition, informal mentoring systems may be used by each political group to support new Members.

Training on corporate initiatives and strategies: A different approach is required for the development associated with corporate/whole council initiatives that benefit all Members. Keeping Members informed and up to date is one of the essential outcomes for Member development. A programme of seminars is organised throughout the year to brief and engage Members on key issues. The subject of each seminar is determined either by Member request or by a service identifying a need due to changes in corporate initiatives, for example. The MDSG considers the annual seminar programme at each of its meetings. The dates for these seminars are set at the start of the council year and printed in the county diary to ensure Members are able to attend.

Officers hosting these training events are encouraged to adopt an approach that enables a two-way dialogue on the council's priorities and the roles of Members within them.

Generic skills development: There continues to be a need for skills development and awareness training in respect of such topics as finance, information technology, time management etc. IT skills are particularly important in order to ensure that Members have the skills to play a full role in modern organisations and regular IT training will be offered to Members, for example, on file management, BlackBerry use, keyboard skills, Word and Lotus Notes, subject to demand. In addition, drop in sessions will be regularly organised for Members to have their IT queries answered, with top tips documents produced and published to provide support on key applications.

Financial training and awareness is very important for Members, who are accountable to the community. Members need to be able to explain how the budget is controlled and allocated. Training on Medium Term Financial Planning has been set up for all Members. Provision of a training course covering the basics of local government finance, similar to that included in the induction programme, will be investigated.

Induction: It is essential that new Members are provided with the opportunity to take on board knowledge and skills that they need for their roles within the council as soon as possible after their election. Member induction covers key corporate themes, initiatives and departmental overviews and introductions. This is followed by a series of key sessions spread across a number of months. New Members are also provided with a copy of the Local Government Improvement and Development's Councillors Guide. The guide has been designed as an introduction to their new roles, and as a refresher for sitting and returning Members.

The MDSG will consider the plans for induction in the autumn preceding the election and will prepare a draft programme for agreement in January of the election year. The Senior Manager, Leadership Team will have responsibility for ensuring that the agreed programme is delivered.

Those elected to the County Council, including returning Members, will be provided with a 'Countyfile' containing information designed to support them in their role. The contents will be subject to a full review by the MDSG in the year leading up to an election.

An induction programme for Members who are elected at by-elections will also be established, as those Members do not have the benefit of the full programme that follows the scheduled elections.

Personal development: As well as group or generic training, learning and development opportunities that satisfy individual needs must also be offered. It is up to each individual to take responsibility for their own development – this in itself also implies some accountability for ensuring that Members are taking personal steps to ensure that they are appropriately skilled for their particular role. This anticipates a willingness to take part in learning opportunities that are designed to meet their development needs.

Members are encouraged to consider different approaches to their development, including: requesting a one to one with an appropriate officer, undertaking a site visit, discussing a matter with a more experienced Member, carrying out some personal research or attending an external event. All Members should take on this responsibility and consider how they can meet their own needs, particularly in the light of their learning style preference.

Individual support: Where appropriate and where business needs allow, individual needs may be met on a 1:1 basis, for example, with computer skills or for Members with specific learning requirements.

All Members who are standing down at a scheduled election will have the opportunity to attend an exit interview with the Senior Manager, Leadership Team, in order to share their reflections on their term of office. An analysis of the responses to the exit interviews is shared with the Member Development Steering Group, to agree any corrective actions and suggestions.

Learning Styles: It is important to remember that people learn in different ways. Members can undertake the Honey and Mumford Learning Styles questionnaire, available on s::net, to identify their learning style and try to match that and their development need to a relevant programme. As no single approach will be suitable for all Members, a range of approaches is used. Some Members will want to get involved in practical approaches, for example site visits, while others will need the space to stand back and reflect on issues before forming a view.

Other development activities that can be sourced are mentoring, job shadowing, coaching and networking, both at internal and external events, as well as market stall events, reading and visits. Members are entitled to attend in-house courses advertised in the training catalogue on s::net. Organisations such as Local Government Improvement and Development include specific pages on councillor development on their website at www.idea.gov.uk

When planning events, consideration will be given to the need to accommodate the other commitments that Members have as far as possible. Alternative timings, such as early mornings, evenings and weekends will be considered when organising sessions, subject to Members' views.

Opportunities will be explored to improve accessibility to training activities, for example, through the use of e-learning and distance learning opportunities.

Where possible, the council will seek to offer training and development opportunities with other local authorities and partner organisations and provide joint training activities where appropriate.

6   EXTERNAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Information about events organised by accredited training organisations will be advertised in the Members' Resources Room at County Hall, and via the monthly Learning and Development poster, which is circulated to Members electronically. The MDSG has approved a protocol for Members' attendance on external developmental events.

External learning opportunities include the following:

- **Local Government Improvement and Development Leadership Academy**
  The programme provides those in leadership positions with the latest thinking in political and personal leadership. It is offered over three two-day core modules considering personal leadership, political leadership and community leadership with an optional fourth module tailored to the participant's preference.

  The Leadership Academy is aimed at leading Members, which includes: leaders of councils, leaders of political groups, portfolio holders, scrutiny Chairmen, and opposition spokespeople.

- **Surrey Improvement Partnership (SIP)**
  Supported by the Surrey Local Government Association, the Surrey Improvement Partnership provides leadership to ensure that Surrey authorities together are a continuing model for excellence.

  The SIP's Member Development project is developing a network supplemented by a training programme to encourage joint working in the County on member training, focusing on core areas that are common to all Members, with a view to achieving efficiencies and service enhancements. Opportunities vary from learning more about the services or communities Members represent, to developing in their role as community leaders, acquiring new skills or increasing their capacity in an area they are already familiar with.

Attendance on any external learning and development event, with the exception of SIP events, is subject to the prior agreement of the Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the MDSG.

7   OTHER SUPPORT

Dedicated intranet site

Members have a designated resource area on the s::net where they can access news and recent publications, corporate and community information about the county, including demographic information for each division, and useful links to other internal and external websites, including the Local Government Improvement and Development site, maps and committee papers.

Dedicated resource area

Members need to be able to access the latest information quickly and easily both in hard copy and electronically. The Member Resources Room is stocked with key corporate documents, area information, consultation documents and training manuals. A networked PC, printer and photocopier are also provided in the room.

8   BUDGET FOR MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The central budget for Member learning and development sits within the overall Democratic Services budget. This will meet the cost of the annual learning and development programme and is managed by the Senior Manager, Leadership Team. Some associated costs are met from other service budgets, including the cost of Members attending service-based conferences and occasional other events. The MDSG has agreed a protocol for Members' attendance at learning and development events paid for from the learning and development budget.

9   EVALUATING MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The MDSG will establish processes for evaluating the effectiveness of member learning and development, including mechanisms to enable Members to give feedback on events in which they have participated. Evaluation will have the objective of making improvements in future provision and consequently producing increased benefits both to individual Members and the County Council. The process for evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of member learning and development is set out at Appendix C.

10   SOUTH EAST ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER

The South East Charter has five key objectives for each organisation that signs up to it:

1. Being fully committed to developing elected Members in order to achieve the council's aims and objectives

2. Adopting a Member led strategic approach to elected Member development

3. Having a Member learning and development plan in place that clearly identifies the difference development activities will make

4. Seeing that learning and development is effective in building capacity

5. Addressing wider development matters to promote work-life balance and citizenship

There are five stages in achieving the Charter. The process begins with the authority signing up to the charter and demonstrating our commitment to improving performance, through the development of our elected Members. By implementing the stages of the strategy outlined in sections 1-5, above, Surrey will be able to demonstrate its commitment to learning and development. The County signed up to the Charter in 2009 and the intention is to achieve the Charter by July 2011.

11   STRATEGY REVIEW

The needs of Councillors will evolve over time and it is important that both individual needs and the overall Elected Member Development Strategy are reviewed regularly.   This will provide an opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of recent training events as well as identify any new requirements.

Item 13, Appendix 1

This Strategy will also be reviewed on an annual basis. The MDSG will take the lead on reviewing the strategy and will recommend any proposed changes it considers necessary. The Strategy will be submitted to Council for approval.

David Hodge
Deputy Leader and Chairman of the Member Development Steering Group

March 2011
Next review due: [Date tbc]

Appendices:
Appendix A: Four year learning and development programme
Appendix B: Member roles including required skills/development
Appendix C: The process for evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of member learning and development