

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL:

ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 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 achieve our corporate priorities.
- 1.2 To support Members in their role we adopt 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.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 This strategy was originally approved in June 2007, and subsequently revised in 2011 and 2013, in line with the County Council's commitment to reviewing it every other year. It formed an important part of the council's portfolio submission for Elected Member Development Charter status through South East Employers.
- 1.5 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

- 2.1 The Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) plays a crucial role in the achievement of this strategy and was instrumental in helping the authority to achieve the Elected Member Development Charter in October 2011, and to ensure that Charter status was renewed in April 2015. The group is Member led, and includes Members from three of the county council's political groups. It is supported by the Senior Manager, Leadership and Member Support in Democratic Services, who can provide guidance on learning and development. The Democratic Services Lead Manager also attends the MDSG meetings, as well as an officer from the council's HR and Organisational Development team. 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.
- 2.2 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 maintain the Charter for Elected Member Development and to achieve Charter Plus status.

4. To review and consider training and development needs with a view to producing comprehensive induction and ongoing training and development programmes.
- 2.3 The membership of the group is currently:
Denise Le Gal, Cabinet Member for Business Services and Resident Experience, including portfolio responsibility for member development; Margaret Hicks, Mary Lewis, John Orrick, Keith Taylor and Chris Townsend.

3 IDENTIFYING MEMBER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

- 3.1 A variety of approaches have been piloted, and this will continue, to identify specific individual learning and development needs. A current priority for the MDSG is to develop an approach to help Members understand their personal impact and enable skills development to support individuals in their decision making, policy forming and community leadership roles. One element of this process is the opportunity for Members to receive feedback from peers. Accordingly, the Steering Group will be involved in the establishment of a 180° feedback process, which will be piloted in 2015. Cabinet Members and Associates, Board and Committee Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen will be expected to undertake this process and other councillors will also be offered the opportunity to participate at some point during the four-year term of the Council.
- 3.2 The responsibility for identifying learning and development needs rests with individual Members. In turn, the corporate centre and services should be well placed to identify needs and provide appropriate and timely training arising from, for example, the introduction of new legislation and corporate governance issues.
- 3.3 Members who wish to sit on certain committees must have undertaken the relevant training beforehand to ensure they are compliant with the legislation.
- 3.4 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 and Member Support.

4 ANNUAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

- 4.1 Prior to the County Council elections in 2013 the MDSG agreed a Learning and Development framework for each year of the four year Council term. The framework identifies types of learning activities that Members might expect to undertake during each year of the County Council's term and is designed to encompass:
 - 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
 - Development requirements identified through a PDP process
 - Suggestions from Members and officers.
- 4.2 At least one day a month is specified as a 'Member Development Day' and these dates are published in the online calendar and the Members' 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. As far as

possible the timings of learning and development activities is planned in line with Member preferences, as expressed in the Member Survey, which is carried out on a regular basis.

- 4.3 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 bulletin for 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 assess whether they need to attend.
- 4.4 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. There are some training activities that all elected Members are expected to undertake, which are:
- Member induction
 - 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
 - Corporate Parenting.

5 MEETING MEMBER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

- 5.1 Currently, a variety of approaches is 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 Boards, local committees, regulatory committees; representational roles on behalf of the Council; and community leadership. 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.
- 5.2 The paragraphs below set out the opportunities available to respond to each particular development need:

Role specific training: In addition to a generic role description for a Surrey County Councillor, the County Council has agreed role descriptions for the following specific positions, all of which are published within the Constitution:

- Leader of the Council
- Deputy Leader of the Council
- Chairman of the County Council
- Vice-Chairman of the County Council
- Cabinet Member
- Cabinet Associate
- Chairman of a Board
- Vice-Chairman of a Board
- Chairman of Planning and Regulatory Committee
- Vice-Chairman of Planning and Regulatory Committee
- Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee

- Vice-Chairman of Audit and Governance Committee
 - Chairman of a Local Committee
 - Vice-Chairman of a Local Committee
 - Group Spokesperson of Opposition Group
- 5.3 Over the remaining two years of this Council's term, the MDSG will refine the role profiles to avoid duplication and ensure that they exist for those roles that are discrete.
- 5.4 Role specific skills and knowledge delivered through officer support, to committees such as Planning & Regulatory Committee and Boards, 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.
- 5.5 Members new to the council will be offered the support of a more experienced senior officer 'buddy' to support them in their new role alongside a designated Democratic Services contact.
- 5.6 In the run up to the next County Council election in 2017, the MDSG will develop a model mentoring scheme for use by each political group to support new Members.
- 5.7 **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 and workshops is organised throughout the year to brief and engage Members on key issues. The subject of each seminar can be determined by Member request, by a service identifying a need due to changes in legislation, or by the need to give further information regarding corporate priorities, for example. The MDSG considers the seminar programme at each of its meetings and going forward it intends to monitor the programme to ensure it meets Members needs and links the subject matter to the achievement of the county council's corporate priorities. The dates for these seminars are set at the start of the council year and are printed in the county diary to ensure Members are able to plan to attend.
- 5.8 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. The series of Business Planning briefings for Members led by the Chief Executive is a good example of such an approach.
- 5.9 **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 are able to play a full role in modern organisations, and opportunities for IT training are offered to Members, subject to demand. Examples of IT training offered to Members include drop in sessions, 1:1 surgeries and general briefings, while top tips documents have also been produced and published to provide support on key applications to make sure Members are able to optimise use of the IT equipment supplied to them by the County Council.
- 5.10 **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 signposted to guidance published for new councillors nationally, such as the Local Government Association's Guide for New Councillors.

- 5.11 The MDSG will consider the plans for induction in the autumn preceding the election and will prepare a draft programme for agreement early in election year. The Senior Manager, Leadership and Member Support, will have responsibility for ensuring that the agreed programme is delivered.
- 5.12 In addition, pre-election events will be held aimed at informing prospective councillors about the role of a Member and the County Council's current challenges and priorities, as well as information about the support that can be offered by officers and established political groups once elected.
- 5.13 Those elected to the County Council, including returning Members and those elected at by-elections, will be provided with a 'Countyfile' containing generic information about the authority, along with specifics on their own division, 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.
- 5.14 The success of the induction programme will be assessed by the MDSG, drawing on the results of a survey, which will be circulated to all Members in the autumn following each county council election, and one year later, through consulting those Members who were newly elected to the council. The outcome of these consultations will be reported to the MDSG and used to inform future inductions as well as the member development programme for the remainder of the council term.
- 5.15 A tailored induction programme will be provided for Members who are elected at by-elections, as those Members do not have the benefit of the full programme that follows the scheduled County Council elections.
- 5.16 At any time during their term of office, when newly appointed as a member of a particular board, committee or to the Cabinet, all county councillors should receive an induction that sets out the information they need in order to perform the role.
- 5.17 **Personal development:** As well as group or generic training, learning and development opportunities that satisfy individual needs will 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.
- 5.18 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.
- 5.19 **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.

- 5.20 All Members who are standing down at a scheduled election will be invited to complete an exit interview questionnaire in order to share their reflections on their term of office. An analysis of the responses to the exit interviews is shared with the MDSG, to agree any corrective actions and suggestions.
- 5.21 **Learning Styles:** It is important to remember that people learn in different ways. 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.
- 5.22 Other development activities that can be sourced are 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 and have access to a suite of e-learning modules designed specifically for councillors via the training catalogue on s::net.
- 5.23 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 provided if possible.
- 5.24 Opportunities will be explored to improve accessibility to training activities, for example, through the use of e-learning, webcasting and distance learning tools.
- 5.25 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

- 6.1 Information about events organised by accredited training organisations will be advertised via the monthly Learning and Development bulletin, which is circulated to Members electronically and published on the Members' Portal. Occasionally, external events may be advertised direct to specific groups of Members, where it is logical to do so. The MDSG has approved a protocol for Members' attendance on external developmental events, linking requests to personal development and corporate priorities.
- 6.2 Attendance on any external learning and development event is subject to the prior agreement of the Assistant Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of the MDSG. Members are expected to share their learning from these events and training materials will be published on the Members' Portal so that all Members can benefit from the activity.

7 OTHER SUPPORT

7.1 Members' Portal

Members have a designated web-based area (at <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/news/members-portal>) where they can access information relating to their division, including forthcoming highways works, road and transport

consultations and residents' complaints. The site also links to **Surrey-i**, where Members can access corporate and community information about the county, including specific information for each division. In addition, information about Members' Allocations, and countywide news and recent publications is accessible from the site, along with useful links to other websites, maps and committee papers.

7.2 **Dedicated resource area**

One page of the Members' Portal is dedicated to learning and development, where Members can access information about forthcoming events as well as user guides for e-learning and associated forms.

- 7.3 Members need to be able to access the latest information quickly and easily in hard copy as well as electronically. A Member Resources Room at County Hall 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 solely for Members' use

8 BUDGET FOR MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 8.1 The central budget for Member learning and development currently sits within the overall Democratic Services budget but plans are underway to establish a stand alone Member Development budget. The current central budget meets the cost of the annual learning and development programme and is managed by the Democratic Services Lead Manager. 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 funded from the learning and development budget, as attached at Appendix C. The MDSG will work with Finance officers to shape the budget for Members' Learning and Development, and will take a view on the prioritisation of budget spend according to corporate priorities and individual Member need.

9 EVALUATING MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 9.1 Attenders at learning and development activities held in-house are required to complete an evaluation form to establish the effectiveness of the activity and to ensure that it is fit for purpose. Evaluation has the objective of enabling improvements to be made to future provision, thereby producing increased benefits both to individual Members and to the County Council. Members attending external learning and development events are invited to submit a short briefing on the event to other members on their committee or political group to cascade the learning. In addition, they are requested to provide feedback about the event to the Senior Manager, Leadership and Member Support, to inform decisions about future attendance by other Members.
- 9.2 As set out in paragraph 5.14 above, the views of newly-elected Members will be sought after a year of service and reported to the MDSG so that ideas about additional support can be suggested and further measures and activities put in place.

10 SOUTH EAST EMPLOYERS ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER

- 10.1 The authority was awarded Charter status in October 2011, and this was renewed in April 2015. The MDSG intends to achieve Charter Plus status before the end of 2017.
- 10.2 In order to maintain the Charter and to achieve Charter Plus status, the county council will have to robustly demonstrate:
1. Commitment to councillor development, including evidence of Top political and managerial leadership commitment to development of elected members and a Councillor Learning and Development Policy
 2. A strategic approach to councillor development, including evidence of Individual Learning and Development Plans
 3. Evidence that learning and development is effective in building capacity, and that investment in learning and development is evaluated in terms of benefit and impact
 4. Evidence that councillors are supported, for example, conducting business to allow for equality of access to the key political decision making processes.

11 STRATEGY REVIEW

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 This Strategy will also be reviewed every other year. 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.

Denise Le Gal
Cabinet Member for Business Services

June 2015

Next review due: 2017 and every other year thereafter

Appendices:

Appendix A: Four year learning and development programme

Appendix B: Member role profiles including required skills/development (not included)

Appendix C: Protocol for Elected Member Attendance at External Courses and Conferences, and application form