

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 achieve our corporate priorities.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 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) is Member led, and includes Members from a cross-section of political groups. It is supported by the Senior Manager, Leadership and Member Support in Democratic Services, who can provide guidance on learning and 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.
- 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 Members' Development Strategy relevant and up to date.
 3. To take a leading role in helping the authority to maintain the Elected Member Development Charter status 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.
 5. To monitor the expenditure of the dedicated Member Development budget.

3 IDENTIFYING MEMBER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

- 3.1 As of May 2017, every Member will be offered a Personal Development conversation on an annual basis, with the first to take place within 6 months of joining the Council. The purpose of this meeting will be for the Member to identify any training, development or support needs that they would like to address. The meeting will take place with a member of the Democratic Services Senior Management team who will be able to signpost the Member to suitable training and development opportunities.

- 3.2 Members who wish to sit on certain committees (such as Planning and Regulatory Committee) must have undertaken the relevant training beforehand to ensure they are compliant with the legislation.
- 3.3 Democratic Services keep a record of all the learning and development activities attended by each Member.

4 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 4.1 The MDSG have agreed a Learning and Development plan for each year of the four year Council term. The plan sets out what type of training and development a Member might expect to undertake in each year of the Council term.
- 4.2 At least one day a month is specified as a 'Member Development Day' and these dates are published in advance in the online calendar. 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.
- 4.3 Administrative support for member development will be provided by Democratic Services.
- 4.4 The agreed Learning and Development Programme for the four-year term of the council is attached at **Appendix 1**. 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, e.g. 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.
- 5.2 These include:
- Role specific training:** In addition to a generic role description for a Surrey County Councillor, the County Council has agreed role descriptions for all posts that receive a special responsibility allowance. These are attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 5.3 Role specific skills and knowledge are delivered through a variety of methods. For example, training sessions are offered to Committee Chairman in Chairing skills whilst Cabinet Members are offered the opportunity to attend LGA Leadership Academy events.
- 5.4 **Training on corporate initiatives and strategies:** 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. The MDSG

considers the seminar programme at each of its meetings. The dates for these seminars are set at the start of the council year to ensure Members are able to plan to attend.

- 5.5 **Generic skills development:** Generic skills development and awareness training and drop in sessions are offered to Members on subjects such as IT, finance etc throughout the year. IT skills are particularly important in order to ensure that Members are able to play a full role in modern organisations. Officers will look for themes from Personal Development conversations to help identify where generic skills training may be useful.
- 5.6 **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. In 2017, there will also be a focus on preparing Councillors to operate effectively in their divisions.
- 5.7 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.
- 5.8 Members who are elected at by-elections will be offered a tailored induction plan, as those Members do not have the benefit of the full programme that follows the scheduled County Council elections.
- 5.9 At any time during their term of office, when newly appointed as a member of a particular board, committee or to the Cabinet, Democratic Services will make arrangements to enable all county councillors to receive an induction that sets out the information they need in order to perform the role.
- 5.10 **Personal development:** It is up to each individual Councillor to take responsibility for their own individual development. Where skills or knowledge gaps are identified through a Personal Development conversation, Officers can advise on possible training activities which could meet the development need.
- 5.11 Members are encouraged to consider different approaches to their development, including: requesting a one to one with an appropriate officer, undertaking site visits, discussing a matter with a more experienced Member, carrying out some personal research or attending an external event.
- 5.12 **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.
- 5.13 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 Member Development Steering Group, to agree any corrective actions and suggestions.
- 5.14 When planning events, consideration will be given to the need to accommodate the other commitments that Members have as far as possible. Alternative timings will be provided if possible and training materials will be made available online.

- 5.15 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 update which is circulated to Members electronically. Members can apply to attend external training courses by completing an application form.
- 6.2 Attendance on any external learning and development event is subject to the prior agreement of the Director for Legal, Democratic and Cultural Services in consultation with the Chairman of the MDSG. Members are expected to share their learning from these events and training materials will be circulated where appropriate.

7 OTHER SUPPORT

- 7.1 From May 2017, Members will have their own dedicated SharePoint site which will be used as a way of sharing, and signposting to, useful information to support them in their role. Presentations and other training materials shared at briefings will be posted on the site, for those Members who are unable to attend events in person. The site also links to Surrey-i, where Members can access corporate and community information about the county, including specific information for each division.

8 BUDGET FOR MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 8.1 An allocated budget is set aside each year for Member Development from the overall Democratic Services budget. This is intended to meet the cost of the annual learning and development programme. The budget is managed by the Democratic Services Lead Manager but monitored by the MDSG at each meeting.
- 8.2 The MDSG has agreed a protocol for Members' attendance at learning and development events attached at **Appendix 3**.

9 EVALUATING MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- 9.1 Attenders at learning and development activities held in-house are requested to complete an online evaluation form to establish the effectiveness of the activity and to ensure that it is fit for purpose. Members attending external learning and development events are also asked to complete an online evaluation form, to inform decisions about future attendance by other Members.
- 9.2 The views of Members will also be sought regularly through Personal Development conversations. A mid-term Member survey will take place in 2019, the results of which will be reported to the Member Development Steering Group.

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 has committed to achieving Charter Plus status after the May 2017 elections.

11 STRATEGY REVIEW

- 11.1 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

March 2017

Next review due: March 2019 and every other year thereafter

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Four year learning and development programme

Appendix 2: Member role profiles including required skills/development

Appendix 3: Protocol for Elected Member Attendance at External Courses and Conferences, and application form

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