

## Annex 3: Charter Plus 2021 – Assessors’ Comments – Surrey County Council

### Continuous Improvement

Surrey County Council have achieved Councillor Development Charter Plus status - well done, the following are areas for improvement and future priorities:

- Councillor conversations an action plan and target date to be set for the achievement of 60% participation. The MDSG should take a lead on the conversations as well as Cabinet and Leader. The approach to the councillor conversations should be joined up between Cabinet and other Members to avoid duplication and confusion of accountability. **Current Progress: Member 1-1s have been taking place since October 2021 with the Democratic Services Management Team. Plans are in place to complete 1-1s before the end of July 2022, with follow-up work taking place during August.**
- Clear strategy to be in place regarding transition from virtual to hybrid and in-person learning. **Current Progress: Member Development Steering Group to review in September 2022.**
- Council should review the Be a Councillor Programme and identify the barriers to people standing and having a more representative group of councillors. **Current Progress: Member Task Group established and carrying out investigations.**
- The Council should further develop its discussion with districts and boroughs to identify opportunities for shared development. This could initially take place at the officer level via the Surrey Officer Member Development Network. **Current Progress: Surrey Officer Member Development Network meeting held in early 2022 to discuss opportunities for joint training.**
- The induction programme to be reviewed and to send out an initial questionnaire to new councillors to seek feedback for the MDSG. Some initial feedback from the new councillor workshop included shorter bite size training, Training in committee and meeting protocols e.g., Standing Orders, Motions etc. **Current Progress: Officers in Democratic Services are working to review training offer.**
- In preparation for 2025 election, introduce Councillor exit surveys. **No current progress to report.**
- Further promote the Member Portal to increase use and access. **Current Progress: Officers in Democratic Services are working to review training and promotion.**
- Following feedback from the new councillors, support and training should be provided to officers who undertake training delivery. This would be a 'Train the Trainer' programme to assist officers with presentation and training techniques. **Current Progress: Officers in Democratic Services have**

***begun to investigate training opportunities for staff and will continue to do so.***

## **Special Mention**

Surrey County Council demonstrated a number of key strengths in the evidence they provided in advance and throughout the interviews, this included:

- Top political and managerial commitment – leadership commitment to Member Development.
- Strong officer support from Chief Executive to the Democratic Services team.
- Strong and sustainable budget that has not been cut, despite the current circumstances.
- MDSG have a high profile with cross-party group leaders and cabinet representation.
- Commitment to PDPs via bespoke councillor conversations and a target of 60% in place.
- Actively promote local democracy via Be A Councillor Events and evidence that the events attracted candidates within the Independent group.
- Commitment to leadership development via LGA Leadership Academy etc.
- Member Development supports the council's strategic objectives. Member Development Strategy high profile and regularly reviewed.
- Monday morning briefing sessions highly valued and well received.
- Some evidence of development with district councils and strategic partners e.g., GDPR.
- An evaluation strategy in place with a commitment to further develop and improve.
- Councillor Induction programme following 2021 election is highly valued.

## **Assessors' Comments**

Surrey County Council have met the requirements of the Charter Plus, congratulations to everyone involved. We look forward to hearing about the progress with the Personal Development Plans in due course. Please can you provide a target date for the completion of the Councillor Conversations and share the development priorities that have been identified from the conversations.

Well done to everyone involved.

## Recommendation from the Verification Team

Surrey County Council has successfully been awarded the Charter Plus for Councillor Development for a period of three years until September 2024. An interim review will be scheduled with the Chair of the MDSG and the lead officer in eighteen months (March 2023). The Council can continue to use the Charter Plus logo (below). Congratulations!



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