

## **Devon County Council Member Development Policy 2021-2025**

### **1. Introduction**

The world of local government is rapidly changing and can place exceptional demands on its leadership. Members undertake a variety of complex roles and play a critical part in shaping future services for the benefit of the community and determining how these are delivered.

Devon County Council is committed to supporting the development of all Elected Members providing a programme of development opportunities that assists individuals to perform effectively in their role both as community leaders and as representatives of the County Council. Members take a leading role in their development both individually by engaging with the process and strategically through the Member Development Steering Group

### **2. Key Principles**

Through the processes in place to deliver Member Development we will ensure that:

- ❖ A comprehensive programme of development will support the delivery of the Council's priorities and meet individual learning needs as they evolve through the life of the Council.
- ❖ Development activities will be consistent with Equality and Diversity policies and deliver best value. They will be organised and delivered to align with core principles and behaviours as well as addressing the skills and knowledge requirements outlined in the Devon Members' Skills Framework and Senior Leadership Framework.
- ❖ Where possible local and national development initiatives will be utilised, including the LGA Leadership Academy, LGA online resource hub and the Shared Member Development Service.
- ❖ Tools are developed, utilised, and evaluated to support the development of elected Members.
- ❖ The process is Member owned and driven through the Member Development Steering Group. Individuals will be encouraged to take an active involvement in their own learning and development.

### **3. How we deliver this?**

Members will always be at different stages in their political careers, skills and knowledge will be different for each individual and their requirements for

development will vary. The learning and development programme will recognise this and assist in their development through the following processes:

### 3.1 Strategic Direction

The Member Development Steering Group will be responsible for setting the strategic direction for Member Development which will be implemented on their behalf by officers. This cross-party group will be chaired by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Member Development and made up of other members representing geographical areas of Devon and providing political balance. The group will meet at least 3 times per year to discuss all aspects of Member development.

Group leaders will actively encourage party Members to agree personal development plans and participate in development activities. They will also be responsible for identifying suitable nominations for national/local conferences and external training opportunities.

### 3.2 Prior to Election

A variety of methods will be used to communicate with prospective candidates providing information about the role and how they will be supported should they be successful.

### 3.3 Induction

A comprehensive Induction Programme will be delivered following elections for new and returning Members. Skills and knowledge will be delivered in a timely manner using a variety of methods to allow for equality of access. The programme will cover the full range of activities that a Member will undertake and will be delivered incrementally to avoid overloading.

Preparations for the induction programme will take place in good time and will be influenced by feedback from the evaluation of the previous induction and good practice from other authorities.

### 3.4 Identifying development needs

All Members will be offered an annual personal development interview as a tool to identify their personal development needs. Members will be asked to use the Devon Members' Skills Framework to self-assess against, prior to the interview. A personal development plan will be produced for each Member, and this will form the basis of the Annual Members Learning and Development Plan.

Senior Leadership Development will be supported to identify their learning and development needs using the Devon Members Senior Leadership Skills Framework which includes a 360-degree review process

Organisational requirements to provide learning and development to Members will be considered through officer networks, existing committees, and the Member Development Steering Group.

### 3.5 Delivery of learning and development

Learning and development activities will be commissioned to meet individual committee and corporate development priorities.

- Generic skills to enable effective working as a councillor
- Service driven activities to support corporate priorities and committee roles
- Knowledge to support robust decision making
- Community leadership to enhance the community role
- Advanced development activities to enhance leadership skills
- Skills to meet new ways of working resulting from the changing shape of local government

We will provide learning in a way that meets individual needs through:

- Nationally recognised learning programmes
- Internal learning events
- Scrutiny masterclasses
- Briefings prior to or as part of the committee process
- Self-managed learning both paper and web based
- Officer briefings
- The Devon Shared Member Development Service
- Mentoring and Coaching arrangements

Delivery methods will consider inclusivity, access to learning, subject matter and learning styles offering both, face to face and online delivery and incorporating a variety of delivery methods.

### 3.6 Evaluation

Evaluation of all learning and development activities will take place against agreed objectives in accordance with the evaluation strategy (Appendix A). Action will be taken to make improvements based upon this feedback.

### 3.7 SW Charter for Member Development

Charter plus accreditation was achieved in October 2012 and April 2016 and these standards will continue to be applied to the work that we undertake in this field. This followed on from being awarded the SW Charter for Member Development in December 2008. We will continue to seek reaccreditation on a 3 – 4 yearly basis. SW Charter for Member Development is a nationally recognised standard developed by Local Government Improvement and Development and regionally administered by South West Councils.

### 3.8 Shared Member Development Service

Devon County Council has been a partner of the Shared Member Development Service since 2011 and leads on the organisation and development of the offer provided by this service. We will continue to promote and engage with the service taking up learning and development opportunities provided, using tools developed through the service and sharing best practice.

### 3.9 Support and implementation

Supported by a Senior Workforce Development Advisor to develop and facilitate a cost-effective member development programme and the Deputy Manager / Head of Scrutiny.

### 3.10 Access to Development Opportunities

- The Senior Workforce Development Advisor will offer all Members an annual personal development interview to identify individual learning needs.
- Member Learning and Development opportunities will be reported to the Member Development Steering Group for consideration and approval.
- Requests to attend non approved national/local conferences or courses with limited places will be considered in line with the process agreed by the Procedures Committee Minute 33 (5/6/18) requiring the approval of the budget holder, the Head of Democratic Services, in liaison with the Leader of the Council as appropriate and supported by a business case to ensure:
  - There is a fair allocation of opportunity
  - It is aligned with corporate priorities
  - It fits with individual roles and responsibilities
  - There is sufficient budget available to support the request
- Individuals attending the agreed events will need to ensure the:
  - Learning activity is has been identified as part of a personal development interview
  - Learning is shared/disseminated to all Members after the event.
- Information on additional development opportunities and officer briefing sessions will be communicated regularly throughout the year
- All Members should confirm whether or not they will be attending a learning and development session at least 2 weeks prior to the date of the event. In line with good practice Party Whips have asked to be kept informed of any non-attendance on the day, where no explanation or apologies are given.

### 3.11 Member Development Budget

The DCC Member development budget will be made up from two areas:

- An allocation for Learning and Development administered through Human Resources.
- A small allocation for approved Conferences administered through the office of the County Solicitor.

#### **4. Adoption of DCC Member Development Strategy**

The original strategy was approved by Procedures Committee and ratified by full County Council on 08/03/07.

The Member Development Steering Group Committee was first established and appointed at County Council on 25/05/07 to support the implementation of the strategy.

Members were appointed to Member Development Steering group at Full Council 25.06.09 these appointments are made and reviewed on an annual basis.

The Strategy was reviewed and revised in July 2009. approved by Procedures Committee 29.09.09 and ratified by Full Council 10.12.09.

The Strategy was reviewed and updated to a Member Development Policy in March 2013.

The Strategy was reviewed and updated in May 2017

The Strategy has been once again reviewed and is commended for adoption for the New Council with effect from May 2021.