MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2024

Introduction

The role of an Elected Member / Councillor is both exciting and highly rewarding. With the increasing challenges that Local Authorities face in delivering services effectively, and within budget, Councillors require skills and knowledge in a diverse range of topics and roles. The communities that Councillors represent, also develop and change over time.

A Councillor is expected to carry out many roles ranging from community leader to taking on roles and responsibilities both within the Council and on outside bodies. A Councillor requires to balance the needs and interests of their community, their political party or group if they are associated with a party/group, and the Council as a whole as well as, of course, their personal, family and any employment commitments. This is not an easy task.

Aim and Purpose of the Member Development Strategy

- To ensure that every Member has access to the learning and development they need to perform their role and support their electorate.
- To outline the roles and responsibilities of Members in relation to their commitment to their professional development.
- To outline the roles and responsibilities of Officers in the provision of Member development.
- To underpin and direct the resources required to deliver the Member Development Strategy.
- To promote the importance of learning and development for Members as key element of a Member-Led authority.

Commitment Statement

The Council's People Strategy states that we will develop our Elected Members to fulfil their potential and deliver organisational priorities. Elected Members are integral to ensuring that the strategic aims and objectives of the Council are met in terms of making decisions and delivering better outcomes for the residents of Devon.

Devon County Council is committed to the development of its Elected Members and has produced this Strategy to assist in equipping all Elected Members with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet current and future challenges.

Signed by:

Leader of the Council

Group Leaders

Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, Workforce and Digital Transformation

Chief Executive

Director of Legal & Democratic Services

Roles and Responsibilities

All Elected Members

All Elected Members are responsible for:

- Identifying their own development needs in conjunction with learning professionals.
- Seeking opportunities to improve their effectiveness and increase their skills and knowledge and addressing any gaps therein.
- Attending arranged learning and development opportunities (or catching up with recordings if they are unable to attend).
- Participating in annual personal development interview sessions with a learning professional.
- Sharing their knowledge and skills with their peers.
- Reviewing their learning and development activities.
- Owning the Member Development Strategy.

Political Leaders

Political Group Leaders should encourage all Members from within their group to participate in the learning and development programme and actively support their Members in doing so.

Member Development Steering Group

The Member Development Steering Group will be responsible for setting the strategic direction for Member Development and overseeing the Member Development Strategy.

This is a cross-party group, chaired by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Member Development and made up of Members representing all 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 and is supported by officers from Democratic Services and Scrutiny and officers from HR with Member Development responsibilities.

The Aims of the Member Development Steering Group are as follows:

1. To agree approaches to identifying and meeting learning and development needs to ensure that they are meeting individual and corporate requirements.
2. To collect views from fellow councillors on learning and development issues and to feedback on the achievement of the Member development strategy to their groups.
3. To be aware of what learning and development is planned, based on meeting individual and organisational needs, and the impacts and benefits of learning and development activities.
4. To support and influence the achievement of the standards required for accreditation under the SW charter for Member Development.

Director of Legal & Democratic Services

It is the role of the Director of Legal & Democratic Services (and Monitoring Officer) to arrange for a Member Development Strategy to be created and implemented and the collation of the learning and development needs of Elected Members which will inform the annual training programme and ongoing Member development.

Director of People & Culture

It is the role of the Director of People & Culture to consulted on the Member Development Strategy and the training activity delivered and to arrange for an Officer within the Directorate to support the Member Development Steering Group, Personal Development Interviews and the general Member Development offer.

Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat

The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat will:
- Produce and deliver the elected Member induction programme.
- Arrange and deliver additional training sessions throughout the Council term, including All Member Development Sessions and Scrutiny Masterclasses.
- Oversight and clerking of the Member Development Steering Group.
- Record Members training and development activities during their term of office and regularly report these to the Member Development Steering Group.
- Assist Members with queries and any basic information on their roles and access to development opportunities.
- Ensuring training events (both internal and external) are advertised to Members.

Directors and Directorates

All Directors and Directorates within the Council are responsible for identifying and delivering service specific training to Elected Members. This can be delivered in many forms and examples of services informing Members include:

- Formal group training for all Members where needs arise.
- Participation in the arrangement and delivery of ad-hoc topic or service specific sessions to Elected Members such as Scrutiny Masterclasses.
- Attending Committees to inform Members about specific services/topics.
- Circulating newsletters/factsheets to Member where relevant and a fortnightly bespoke bulletin on matters of interest.
- Keeping Members informed by providing regular updates to them on services, topics and developments.

Delivery of Member Development

All Elected Members regardless of length of service, party or post within the Council will be given equal access to the training and development opportunities. All Elected Members will be given the support and development needed throughout their term to do their role to the best of their ability.

It is also recognised that Members have different roles and need different skills to those of Officers and as such training should always be tailored to meeting Members' needs.

Learning and development activities will be commissioned to meet individual Committee and corporate development priorities and cover:
- 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.

Ongoing Development and Training Sessions

After the Induction Programme and in addition to any mandatory training and Committee development, Elected Members will be invited to a broad range of information and development sessions throughout their term of office. The expectation is that Members continue to develop, not only through on-job activity, but also by attending development sessions.

We will provide learning in a way that meets individual needs through:
- A set Induction Programme after the quadrennial Elections (see Appendix 1).
- Internal learning events delivered by Officers such as Training Sessions, Quarterly All Member Development Sessions or All Member Development Days
- Access to nationally recognised learning programmes and conferences, making use of opportunities with national organisations such as the Local Government Association.
- Scrutiny Masterclasses.
- Access to IT support and training.
- Online resources accessed through the Member's Sharepoint site.

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

It is recognised that not all Elected Members may be able to access these training opportunities in the same way due to work, family, personal circumstances. Officers and Members should always keep in the mind the need to provide training opportunities in different ways, at different times of the day and possibly repeating sessions to allow for the maximum attendance of Elected Members around other commitments.

Many of the training sessions will be recorded to allow Elected Members to access these resources at a time and place that is best for them.

Personal Development Interviews

All Members will be offered an annual personal development interview with a learning professional 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 a Member's 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.

Members should then continue to engage with Officers to ensure their learning and personal development needs are met.

Review and Evaluation

It is expected for the Member Development Steering Group to review the Member Development Programme regularly to identify needs, potential sessions and that the needs of Members are being met. Members on the Steering Group are expected to regularly seek the feedback of training sessions from other Members to help evaluate and improve our offer.

Outside Bodies

All Elected Members who are appointed to outside bodies are provided with contact details and information on the organisation where available. It is not possible for the Council to deal with the specific development requirements of Members appointed to represent the Council on every outside body on which it has a nominated representative. The range and diversity of such organisations are extensive, and their operations are out with the locus of the Council. Should training and development be required this should be provided by the outside body.

Records of Training and Development

The Democratic Services and Scrutiny Team will record the details of Member training and development opportunities.

The Member Development Steering Group will regularly receive a report on the completed training, learning and development opportunities.

Appendix 1: Induction Programme Outline

Pre-election period

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. The Council will make use of existing campaigns and resources to support and promote Democratic activities. Full details will be included on the website as well as media campaigns.

Prior to the quadrennial Elections, there will be engagement with Group Leaders to ensure the Council is promoting the role of Democracy.

Details of the draft Induction programme and any other relevant information will be available.

Post-Election period

The induction programme will cover both mandatory and non-mandatory training in terms of a Councillor's role as well as offer information sharing sessions.

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. It is expected that the Member Development Steering Group are given an opportunity to review the Induction Programme before and after its delivery to review its effectiveness. Senior Leadership Team will also be instrumental in its development and promotion.

The induction programme will normally include a welcome and introduction from the Chief Executive, Director of Legal & Democratic Services and the Strategic Leadership Team, focusing on the Council's objectives and values and opportunities to meet and greet Directors and gain an understanding of the wide-ranging services the Council provides.

Other early sessions will focus on Good Governance, Councillor Codes of Conduct and the ethical frameworks within which the Council operates as well as meetings procedures, locality budgets and practical information to support Members in the early days of Election.

A number of Corporate Training Sessions will give Members information they need and should always consider when carrying out their roles. Examples might include Safeguarding, Corporate Parenting, Cyber Security, Freedom of Information and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

There would also be a Scrutiny Induction open to all Members covering the role and aim of Scrutiny, the ways of working in Devon, questioning skills and creating impact as well as Committee Specific Training open to all Members.

Appendix 2: Example of an Annual Member Development Programme

The sessions below are indicative of examples. Members are also actively encouraged to bring forward ideas and suggestions for these sessions for discussion and consideration.

In the development of this Strategy and consultation with Members, there were a number of key areas that Members wished to be a part of their development and training programme. It is important to note that annual development programmes are flexible and subject to change depending on requirements and the member driven direction.

Regular Training Sessions

- Governance and Code of Conduct
- Keeping safe online e.g. Cyber Security, Data Protection, Freedom of Information and Information Governance.
- Community Engagement and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Scrutiny Skills e.g. Essentials and Questioning Skills.
- Wellbeing e.g. Resilience and Difficult Conversations.
- Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding

IT and Digital Skills

Member consultation in developing the strategy highlighted a clear need for additional training sessions on IT and Digital Skills.

- Digital and Social Media Guidance
- Tips and Tricks in using IT programmes e.g. Outlook, One Note
- How to access information I need e.g. Sharepoint, Power BI
- Keeping safe online e.g. Phishing and Cyber Security

Example 1 of an Annual Member Development Programme					
Training and Development Offer	Topic	When	Who?	Details	Mandatory or Optional?
Internal Training Sessions	Governance / Code of Conduct	April	Monitoring Officer		
	Keeping Safe online	September	Information Governance Team		
	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion		EDI Team		
	Scrutiny Questioning Skills		Scrutiny Team		
Corporate Parenting	TBD	Approx 4 times a year as before Full Council meetings	Children's Services	Topics to be determined by the Service as part of Corporate Parenting Forum meetings	
All Member Development Sessions	TBD	Quarterly		Determined by the Member Development Steering Group, usually have 1 or 2 topics per session.	Optional
All Member Days	TBC	Every 6 months	Chief Executive and SLT		
Scrutiny Masterclasses	TBD	Spread out over the year (in calendars) but some are ad-hoc.	Service Areas	Determined by Committee Members	Optional

Example 2 of an Annual Member Development Programme					
Date	Training and Development Offer	Topic (examples)	Who?	Details	Mandatory or Optional?
January	CIRS Scrutiny Masterclass	Buses		Topic determined by Scrutiny Committee.	
February	Corporate Parenting Forum	SUSU Take over day	Children's Services	Topics to be determined by the Service as part of Corporate Parenting Forum meetings	
March	Children's Scrutiny Masterclass	Fostering		Topic determined by Scrutiny Committee.	
	HAC Scrutiny Masterclass	111 services		Topic determined by Scrutiny Committee.	
	All Member Development Session	Cyber Security		Determined by the Member Development Steering Group, usually have 1 or 2 topics per session.	
April	CIRS Scrutiny Masterclass	Domestic Violence		Topic determined by Scrutiny Committee.	
May	Corporate Parenting Forum		Children's Services	Topics to be determined by the Service as part of Corporate Parenting Forum meetings	
June	Children's Scrutiny Masterclass			Topic determined by Scrutiny Committee.	
	All Member Development Session			Determined by the Member Development Steering Group, usually have 1 or 2 topics per session.	
July	CIRS Scrutiny Masterclass			Topic determined by Scrutiny Committee.	
	HAC Scrutiny Masterclass			Topic determined by Scrutiny Committee.	
August					
September	Corporate Parenting Forum		Children's Services	Topics to be determined by the Service as part of Corporate Parenting Forum meetings	
	All Member Development Session			Determined by the Member Development Steering Group, usually have 1 or 2 topics per session.	
	Children's Scrutiny Masterclass			Topic determined by Scrutiny Committee.	
October	HAC Scrutiny Masterclass			Topic determined by Scrutiny Committee.	
	CIRS Scrutiny Masterclass			Topic determined by Scrutiny Committee.	
November					
December	Corporate Parenting Forum		Children's Services	Topics to be determined by the Service as part of Corporate Parenting Forum meetings	
	All Member Development Session			Determined by the Member Development Steering Group, usually have 1 or 2 topics per session.	