

**MEMBER  
DEVELOPMENT  
STRATEGY  
2020 / 21**

**Derbyshire County Council**

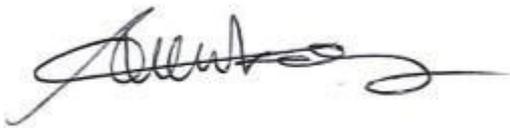
## Welcome to the Member Development Strategy



As Corporate Services Portfolio Holder and a Member Development Champion I strongly believe that we, the County's elected Members, require the opportunity to build upon and enhance our existing knowledge and skills, keeping them fresh and abreast of the ever changing national and local government context. In this way, Members can ensure they effectively provide the Community Leadership that the residents and visitors to our County deserve.

Along with my colleagues in the Member Development Working Group, I will strive to ensure all Members have the best possible development opportunities, when and how they need them.

I am proud to introduce, and fully support, our Member Development Strategy which has been developed by the Member Development Working Group.



*Angelique Foster, Member Development Working Group Chair, Corporate Services Portfolio Holder & Member Development Champion, Derbyshire County Council*



We are jointly and personally committed to the Member Development Strategy which has been developed cross-party to offer the best support and training opportunities to all the elected Members of Derbyshire County Council.

As Leaders of the Council's Political Groups, we will ensure Member Development is a standing item on our respective Group agendas. We will work within our Groups to ensure that Members have access to the training they need to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.



We will have well-trained, reputable Groups of Members as it is an important, personal responsibility in our role of being a Derbyshire County Councillor.

*Barry Lewis, Conservative Group Leader & Leader of the Council, Derbyshire County Council*

*Paul Smith, Labour Group Leader & Member Development Champion, Derbyshire County Council*

*Beth Atkins, Liberal Democrat Group Leader & Member Development Champion, Derbyshire County Council*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Derbyshire County Council's ambition is to become an enterprising and value for money Council enabling people and communities to thrive. To achieve this, and become an Enterprising Council, requires taking forward an ambitious programme of whole Council transformation and cultural change. The One Council approach will ensure that the necessary plans are in place to modernise, innovate, transform and collaborate to meet the Council's ambitions, making identified savings whilst continuing to deliver priorities and achieve better outcomes for local people.
- 1.2 To achieve the Council's ambition, the Council Plan identifies the following priorities:
  - value for money
  - a prosperous Derbyshire
  - empowered and self-sufficient communities
  - a focus on prevention and early intervention
  - high performing council services
- 1.2 Effective Member Development is integral to achieving the Council's ambition and priorities. This strategy sets out a planned approach to how the Council will support its Members and provide them with learning and development opportunities to embrace challenges and assist them in effectively fulfilling their individual, collective and community roles.
- 1.3 The Council recognises that it is essential to support, develop and encourage its Members and that continuous development is vital to ensure that Members update their knowledge and learn new skills to enable them to play an effective role in local government.
- 1.4 This strategy sets out the Council's objectives for Member learning and development and how those objectives will be achieved. It has been created to lay a foundation on which the Council can build in order to effectively support and develop its Members. This strategy also takes into account the development needs of co-opted Members who sit on Council committees e.g. the Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee.
- 1.5 This strategy has been developed through the Member Development Group and in consultation with Members from across all groups. Member Development Working Group comprises each Group Member Development Champion, the Chair of the Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services. This group advises the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services on matters relating to Member Development and is supported as appropriate by Council Officers.
- 1.6 The Chair of the Member Development Working Group will undertake the role of Member Development Champion for the whole Council.

- 1.7 Group Leads and Member Development Working Group members will act as Champions within their respective political groups.
- 1.8 The Council is committed to Member Development (see **APPENDIX 1**) and, following the May 2021 County Council elections, will consider whether to progress with Member Development Charter accreditation.
- 1.9 Should the Council decide to progress with Charter accreditation, the assessment process is expected to commence by December 2021. This timing will provide the opportunity to incorporate assessment evidence from:
  - the 2021 induction programme for the newly elected Council
  - one full cycle of the annual Elected Member Training Needs Discussion (TND) process (to be implemented from October 2020)
- 1.10 As appropriate, the Council will seek re-accreditation in line with the requirements of the Charter.

## **2. The Role of the Elected Member**

- 2.1 Being an effective Member can be challenging. Members have to balance the needs and interests of their residents, voters, political parties and the Council. All these groups will make legitimate demands on the Member's time in addition to their personal responsibilities to family, workplace and friends. It is therefore important that Members understand their role so they can perform responsibly and effectively for the Council and maintain the quality of their personal lives.

Member roles include:

- Representing the Division
- Decision-making by Council and Cabinet
- Policy and strategy review and development
- Improvement and Scrutiny
- Regulatory duties
- Community leadership and engagement
- Dealing with the allegations of Member misconduct through the Standards Committee.

### **Representing the division**

- 2.2 The primary role of a Member is to represent their division and the people who live and work in it. They also have a responsibility to communicate Council policy and decisions to people in the division whilst also ensuring that matters of concern to their residents and businesses are brought forward to the Council.

## **Decision-making**

2.3 Members have a critical part to play in making decisions that impact on their ward and across the whole area covered by the Council. They will be involved in decision-making through:

- Full Council
- Cabinet
- Regulatory committees such as Planning
- Outside bodies appointed by the Council
- Being members of boards and as school governors
- Membership of partnership committees
- Appointing senior management of the authority including Executive Directors and Directors

## **Policy and Strategy**

2.4 Members influence and determine the development and review of the Council's policies and strategies. They contribute to this through their:

- Role in Improvement and Scrutiny
- Involvement in advisory groups and partnerships
- Interaction with and being Members of Cabinet
- Role as a representative on local community groups
- Membership of a political group

## **Improvement and Scrutiny**

2.5 Members have always been required to scrutinise the Council and the Improvement and Scrutiny function is a natural extension of representation. The process has recently become more clearly defined and distinct and the role of Members now includes:

- Holding Cabinet to account through call-in powers
- Monitoring and reviewing policy formulation and implementation
- Policy development
- Performance and Quality review
- Scrutiny of external bodies, agencies and partners
- Considering petitions received by the authority relating to the senior officers of the Council

## **Regulatory Duties**

2.6 Local authorities are not just service providers, they also act as regulators. This involves Members in quasi-judicial roles on committees appointed directly by the Council, such as Planning and Licensing Committees. In these roles, Members are required to act independently. As stated in the Council's Code of Good Planning

Conduct (Council Constitution, Appendix 20), Members will be required to attend the requisite number of planning sessions in order to be a Member of that Committee and maintain membership of the Council's Planning Committee.

## **Community Leadership and Engagement**

- 2.7 Community leadership is at the heart of modern local government and Councils are taking on responsibilities for working in partnership with other organisations, including the voluntary and community sector, to improve services and the quality of life of those within the communities served.
- 2.8 Elected Members play a key role in community leadership and engagement. They are easily identifiable within, and accountable to, the local community. Therefore, the Council will make available learning opportunities which support the development of the skills and knowledge required so that Members can confidently engage with the community they represent and act as local community champions on their behalf.

## **3. The Aims and Objectives of the Strategy**

- 3.1 The strategy aims to provide clear direction and purpose in respect of learning and development in order to achieve:
- Motivated and skilled Members of the Council
  - A consistent approach to Member learning and development
  - Equality of opportunity
  - Well-equipped Members who are confident and able to carry out their roles effectively
- 3.2 The Strategy is designed to provide an overall framework for a development programme that reflects best practice and achieves the following objectives:
- Developing Members' political leadership capability to enable the Council's priorities to be achieved
  - Linking Member learning and development to the Council's priorities
  - Creating shared values and behaviours across Elected Members which align to the Council's values / one Council approach
  - Building the capacity for elected members to adapt and change in order to respond to the changing environment and take advantage of the benefits of technology
  - To respond to changes in legislation and government guidelines in relation to elected members?
  - Giving priority to addressing basic skills needs and providing ICT skills development opportunities for Members
  - Delivering learning and development in innovative ways to make the best use of the resources available to the Council and to meet Members' learning preferences

- Enabling Members to direct and support community initiatives and act as community champions
- An evaluation of the development undertaken in order to demonstrate its value and impact in the decision-making process and to ensure value for money

## 4. Commitment to the Strategy

4.1 The Council will demonstrate its commitment to a Member led strategy through:

- The adoption of the Strategy by the Council's Full Council
- Applying the principles of the East Midlands Regional Member Development Charter as a route for progressive improvement. Charter accredited status, and subsequent retention, will be sought at the appropriate time.
- An ongoing commitment to the Member Development Working Group (comprising the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, the political group Member development champions and the Chair of the Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee). The group will continue to provide the focus for overseeing the strategy and advising on Member development issues.

Specifically the group will:

- ✓ Act as a cross-party reference group to review, develop and improve communication and engagement with Members
- ✓ Act as a co-ordinating body linking all political groups' learning and development needs
- ✓ Act as a cross-party reference group on Member Development
- ✓ Define and implement the Council's core Member Development Skills Matrix
- ✓ Commission organisational learning and development solutions for Members
- ✓ Identify and promote a range of different learning solutions
- ✓ Evaluate the effectiveness and value for money of all learning activities
- ✓ Monitor the annual budget and resource allocation for Member learning and development

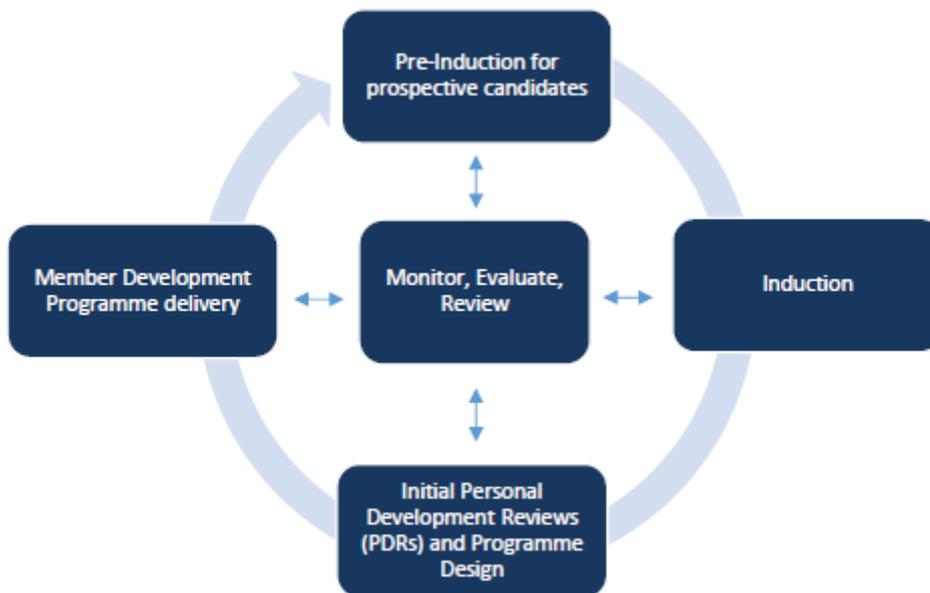
The Member Development Working Group, with the support of relevant officers, will:

- ✓ Promote an organisation-wide understanding and recognition that Members have individual learning and development needs; they will be assisted in identifying those needs by the Training Needs Discussion (TND) process
- ✓ Be responsible for overseeing the delivery and evaluation of an annual communications and engagement plan for Members.
- ✓ Co-ordinate all Council development for Members; ensuring seminars, briefings, academic advice and other formal learning opportunities are designed and delivered in relation to the Council's priorities
- ✓ Ensure effective and timely Member Development solutions are implemented

- ✓ Improve transparency and access to appropriate learning and development to Members
- ✓ Oversee the development of pre-election materials to be made available for prospective Members and a structured Induction Programme to be provided to every newly Elected Member
- ✓ Advocate mentoring support for new Members and those who require mentoring when changing role as this will support succession planning. As appropriate Mentors will be Elected Members or Officers.
- ✓ Implement learning and development activity that is shared with officers, partners and other authorities where appropriate
- ✓ Ensure that all Members are aware of learning and development opportunities and that all learning and development undertaken by individual Members is recorded on Derbyshire Learning Online (DLO)

## 5. Member Development programme

- 5.1 The Member Development programme will take the Member Development Skills Matrix [as its basis and is cyclical. However the programme commences with information sharing with a pre-induction for prospective candidates. This strand stands outside the Skills Matrix but is essential in developing elected Member role understanding for prospective candidates and communicating expectations. Those candidates who are elected will then be supported by a learning and development programme that is delivered against the Member Development Skills Matrix.



- 5.2 The Skills Matrix has been agreed by the Member Development Working Group and designed to deliver consistent skills, knowledge and understanding across the

Council's Members once. It includes development opportunities designed to cover the following key strands for all elected Members:

- The Derbyshire Context
- Leadership
- Continuous development

5.3 Statutory training sessions are mandatory for those Members who wish to serve on the Planning Committee.

5.4 Mandatory training sessions have been agreed that all Elected Members should attend.

### **Pre-Election Arrangements**

5.5 The pre-election process is based around the Council's need to attract a wide variety of persons to stand for election.

5.6 The Council will hold, prior to each election, sessions where prospective candidates can meet Members and senior officers to discuss the duties and responsibilities of being an elected Member. The sessions will comprise:

- An explanation of the Council's political management arrangements supplemented by the agreed role profiles for the differing Member roles within the Council.
- The electoral process.
- Discussion with experienced Members on what it is to be a Member
- Meet the Members (informal chat with a cross section of Members).

5.7 The pre-election events will be advertised through a variety of media including the Council's website, through social media and "Derbyshire Now" magazine.

5.8 Pre-election event materials will be reflected in the Candidates Pack.

5.9 An evaluation of the success of the events to encourage potential candidates to stand for election will be undertaken by Democratic Services following the elections.

### **Induction**

5.10 Following the election, successful candidates will be provided with an intensive induction delivered over the first six weeks of the life of the Council. It will provide a broad overview of the Council to help Members in their new role.

5.11 The precise details of the sessions will be determined by the Member Development Working Group prior to the election with a review of previous experience shaping the design of the new Induction programme. This will be publicised to all prospective candidates via the pre-induction process.

5.12 There is an expectation that all Members, including those returning, will attend certain elements of the induction as defined in the pre-election materials. Members should therefore allow time within the first six weeks of their tenure to facilitate this.

### **Training Needs Discussion (TND)**

5.13 A Training Needs Discussion will be offered to all elected Members within two months of their date of appointment, whether appointed via election or by-election. The TND process is cyclical and will involve annual discussions.

5.14 Group Leaders and Chief Whips will encourage all elected Members within their Group to engage with the TND process.

5.15 The TND is a confidential process and will be undertaken by an officers from either Democratic Services or Learning and Development. It will identify the individual Member's development needs and aspirations. The identified development needs will inform the annual Development Programme and a personal development programme for the Member concerned.

5.16 Subsequent annual discussions will:

- reflect on how effectively development undertaken in the previous year has been applied
- identify the individual Member's development needs and aspirations for the year ahead and
- review how effectively the Member is communicated and engaged with (see 7.5)

### **Development Programme**

5.17 The Development Programme is built around but not restricted to the Skills Matrix. An assessment of each Member's learning needs informs personal development plans which can be addressed either through the core development programme or on an individual basis as appropriate. The development programme will be supported by a range of high-quality learning materials that individual Member can access via Derbyshire Learning Online (DLO) and to be used as a virtual development reference manual.

5.18 In addition, the development programme will be focussed on meeting the needs of the statutory committees and other corporate bodies.

5.19 The programme will acknowledge the time constraints and competing demands faced by Members and will, wherever possible, meet the needs of the majority of Members.

## **Leadership Programme**

5.20 The Leadership programme is contained within the Skills Matrix and is aimed at Cabinet Members, chairs and vice-chairs and those aspiring to such positions. It reflects the Local Government Association's (LGA's) Political Skills

Framework and may include the following modules:

- Local Leadership
- Partnership Working
- Communications Skills
- Political Understanding
- Scrutiny and Challenge
- Regulating and Monitoring

Additional development workshops or seminars related to leadership include:

- Leadership
- Delegation Skills
- Chairing Skills

## **Continuing Development**

5.19 The Skills Matrix and associated development programme aims to provide core competencies for all Members however, as nothing remains static in local government for very long, new learning opportunities will be developed to address any changes. These can be to reflect the introduction of new services, duties and powers, new funding arrangements or legislation including amendments. Providing training and briefing materials for Members as these changes arise helps to ensure Members remain up to date and informed at all times.

5.20 It is essential that Member undertake new learning opportunities that reflect developments in policy or practice so that they can deepen their understanding and strengthen their effectiveness as local leaders within their respective communities.

5.21 Annual Personal Development Reviews will inform continuing development requirements at the personal level.

5.22 Whilst it is recognised that Members have many varied commitments, Members should support and engage with development opportunities in order to enhance their various roles as Members of the authority.

## **6. Delivering the Development Programme**

6.1 The Council recognises that Members will have their own preferred learning styles and respond differently to various learning methods employed during learning and development events. Similarly, Members will also have time constraints due to non-Council commitments.

- 6.2 A range of learning and development opportunities will be explored for use in the Council with delivery designed to reflect the different learning styles of the Members whenever practical.
- 6.3 The Council, in delivering the development programme, will make full use of external funding and opportunities including partnership working.
- 6.4 Using Derbyshire Learning Online (DLO), the Council will create and maintain a programme of development events, together with the material delivered to Members in any presentations, in order to build a comprehensive library. In order to meet the information needs of all Members, reference and publicity material will also be made available in each group room.

## **7. Communication and Engagement**

- 7.1 Effective communication and engagement with Members is fundamental to the successful delivery of the Member Development Strategy.
- 7.2 Communication and engagement with Members supports their primary role as stated in this strategy (2.2):

“The primary role of a Member is to represent their division and the people who live and work in it. They also have a responsibility to communicate Council policy and decisions to people in the ward whilst also ensuring that matters of concern to their residents and businesses are brought forward to the Council.”
- 7.3 Communication and engagement activity also underpins the following aim of this strategy (3.1):
  - Well-equipped Members who are confident and able to carry out their roles effectivelyand the following objective (3.2):
  - Enabling Members to direct and support community initiatives and act as community champions.
- 7.4 Specifically, effective two-way communication with Members will support this strategy by enabling Members to confidently and effectively:
  - Respond to residents’ queries and investigate their concerns
  - Communicate Council policy, decisions and campaigns to their residents
  - Be aware of any issues in their ward
  - Work with representatives of local organisations, interest groups, businesses and other stakeholders.
- 7.5 It is the role of the Member Development Working Group (4.1) with the support of relevant officers, to:

- Oversee the development and delivery of an annual communications and engagement plan and calendar
  - Review any TND data (see 5.14) which could inform improved Member communication and engagement practices
  - Identify gaps and any improvements required.
- 7.6 Communication and engagement will also be a significant element in the delivery of the pre-election arrangements to attract a wide variety of candidates to stand for election in 2021 (5.5).

## **8. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

- 8.1 All learning and development opportunities undertaken by elected Members will be recorded in their personal record via Derbyshire Learning Online (DLO). Records will inform the evaluation and PDR processes, including from return on investment and succession planning perspectives.
- 8.2 In order to get the best out of development opportunities, the Council will evaluate the impact of development opportunities and ensure that any new skills are put into practice.
- 8.3 The Council's approach to evaluation and review will:
- Support the Member Development Strategy
  - Provide information on the success of development undertaken
  - Promote consistent evaluation methodologies
  - Ensure that all services and departments which "touch" upon Member Development consider evaluation issues before providing support and assistance
- 8.4 In addition the Member Development Working Group will oversee the implementation of this strategy and of the development programme. It is proposed that the group will submit periodic reports on attendance and effectiveness of the learning to Cabinet / CMT and minority Group Leaders.
- 8.5 Reviewing the information collated via monitoring and evaluation will inform the refresh / redesign of all aspects of the Council's Member Development offer.

Derbyshire County Council affirms its commitment to the development and enhancement of the skills and professionalism of elected Members through:

- ❖ Publication of an Annual Member Development Plan developed in response to feedback from Members.
- ❖ One-to-one support for Members to identify methods and ideas to develop their capacity to provide effective community leadership and corporate governance.
- ❖ The establishment and maintenance of a Member Development Working Group (MDWG) to oversee and report on all Member Development activities.
- ❖ The MDWG representatives acting as Member Development champions within their Political Groups. They will encourage their peers to engage with, and take advantage of, the available development opportunities.
- ❖ Ensuring Member Development and learning opportunities are evaluated against the Corporate Priorities in the Corporate Plan.
- ❖ Implementing a clear evaluation process to inform the authority of the benefits and 'return on investment' achieved through Member Development. This will include Members providing written evaluations of development undertaken, which will be shared within the authority.
- ❖ On-going commitment towards continuous improvement in Member Development.
- ❖ Commitment to the framework of excellence for development and evaluation embodied in the East Midlands Member Development Charter.
- ❖ The publication and sharing of best practice in Member Development with other authorities.
- ❖ Implementation and monitoring of a continuous Development Plan which identifies learning points / future improvements to the Member Development process.
- ❖ Quarterly reports to Cabinet / Corporate Management Team (CMT) advising on achievements and future priorities.
- ❖ Chair of MDWG to provide updates on the work of MDWG to Governance, Ethics and Standards Committee.
- ❖ Minutes of Member Development Working Group to be shared via the Modern Gov system.