

Newark and Sherwood District Council

Member Development Plan

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Introduction

1. This Plan outlines the support that will be given to Councillors and any co-opted members to help them fulfil their roles and contribute to the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives. It will ensure that a long-term view is taken of Member development but is also one which can flex to fit changing needs and priorities.
2. The Plan acknowledges that Councillors are not employees of the Council and strives to help them seek a balance between their demanding roles, both inside and outside, of the Council.
3. The Council also acknowledges that Members may have transferable skills from their workplace and/or life experiences that can be used to help them perform their Council role.
4. Many people who are elected as Members have their own political views and core social values. Those in political groups will receive leadership and support from their own group.

Aims and Objectives

5. The aims and objectives for the Member Development Plan is for all Councillors (and any co-opted members) to have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their roles in the Council. To achieve this, development opportunities will be available to all Members and will be delivered through methods, at locations (including remote attendance through Teams), and at times, that ensure equality of access for personal circumstances, backgrounds and learning styles.
6. The Plan has the following aim and objectives:
 - i) To create a clear framework for the development of Members based on their individual needs and the needs of the Council as a whole
 - ii) To ensure that all Members have the skills at a level that is suitable for their roles and responsibilities
 - iii) To ensure that Members feel confident and motivated to undertake their roles
 - v) To ensure that Members are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities, including their community leadership role
 - vi) To support the continued development of Members and help prepare them for Council roles that they may fulfil in the future
 - vii) To ensure a consistency of approach to Member development
 - viii) To attract and retain high calibre Councillors from as wide a range of backgrounds as possible

Governance

7. Continuous development and learning for Members can be achieved by raising the profile of Member development through regular engagement with the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee, as well as working with political group leaders to encourage Member take up of the various training opportunities.

Member development must be undertaken and managed if this strategy is to be successful. To do this, it is vital that Councillors play an integral part in the management of the development programme. Member development can also be based on the identified and agreed needs of the individual Councillors through their participation in a Member Development Profile (MDP) process.

8. The Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee will advise the Council on all Member development matters and will evaluate the programme to ensure that it is responsive to Members' needs as follows:
 - At least once a year, the Committee will evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of this strategy. If necessary, it will be updated to take account of lessons learned, Member feedback, latest developments and best practice.
 - Where possible, Members will be asked to complete evaluation forms after each training session in the core programme either via a paper form at the session or electronically afterwards. Members attending externally provided courses will be encouraged to provide feedback to the Council on them to ensure that value for money is obtained.
 - MDP meetings will be offered to all Councillors with reviews taking place annually on request. The review meeting will be undertaken with officers from Democratic Services and include an opportunity for Members to comment on the training provided since their initial review and to assess the impact training has had on their ability and capacity to carry out their role and any ongoing benefits. They may also raise requests for additional training.
 - During the year at least one comprehensive survey of Members will be undertaken to investigate a range of issues relating to their needs and their views of the services provided for them.
 - Where appropriate, exit interviews will be undertaken with Members who have resigned or who are not seeking re-election to determine whether member development opportunities contributed to their decision. Evaluation and feedback will be analysed and will inform the provision of Member training and will shape future policies. Each year, the Committee will review the feedback that is received in respect of Member development and share this information with other Councillors, and if necessary, with Cabinet.
9. It will be the responsibility of the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee and the Democratic Services team to ensure that the Strategy is reviewed and updated to reflect any changes arising from external and internal factors and that it continues to be fit for purpose.
10. The Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee will agree and review training and development for Members. The main purpose of the Committee's role is to:
 - Champion and promote learning and development among Members.
 - Identify and develop suitable learning opportunities to ensure that development needs are met, including the Member Induction Programme and support throughout the term of office.
 - Evaluate the quality of training to ensure that training is delivered to a consistently high standard and offers value for money and make recommendations to Cabinet, the Council or its committees as appropriate.
 - Provide strong leadership and guidance in respect of Member development.

- Ensure that learning and development is effective in building capacity and ensuring that Members have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their community leadership roles effectively.
- To ensure equal access for all Members to training and development and to promote the use of information technology.

Identifying Member Development Needs

11. Member development needs will be identified as follows:

- **Corporate / All Member Training Needs**

The environment in which local government operates may change frequently and fundamentally. This is because of changes in the law, corporate priorities, or changes to local government services / structures. The Council must be alert to these changes and be ready to adapt its learning and development to suit every circumstance, and to fill any gaps in skills and knowledge that arise. There are some mandatory training elements such as cyber security to ensure the integrity of the Council's IT systems and Code of Conduct Training which is required to be undertaken as referenced in the Code of Conduct. It is important that members refresh their training to ensure they remain up to date with changes in legislation or process.

- **Specialist Role Needs**

Many Members will have additional roles that they currently carry out, or roles that they aspire to, in the future and these will require specialist or more focused training. These roles include:

- Chair or Vice-Chair of Committees or Sub-Committees
- Leadership, for example Leader of the Council or Leader of a Political Group
- Cabinet Member or Shadow Portfolio Holders
- Regulatory Committees such as Licensing and Planning which exercise quasi-judicial functions
- Overview and scrutiny
- Audit and accounts
- Civic and ceremonial protocols

- **Identifying Personal Development Needs**

For a truly effective training needs analysis which identifies specific development needs for individual Members, a more in-depth discussion is needed on a one-to-one basis with Democratic Services. This can best be achieved through participation in the MDP process.

This involves:

- Participation in an individual Member Development Profile / plan meeting where Councillors can identify any gaps in their skills / knowledge to inform their development needs.
- Considering other relevant, necessary skills e.g. presentational skills, speed reading, public speaking etc.
- Discussions with Political Group Leaders or the Democratic Services Team.
- Reviewing the impact of learning and development through the MDP process as well as feedback received through course evaluation.
- Councillors maintaining their own personal development / training records and regularly reviewing if there any gaps in their skills / knowledge. Based on the above, an overall Member Development Programme will be developed

each year but will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of Members and the Council.

How Development Needs will be Met

12. To support the diverse development needs of Members a range of options will be made available to suit different learning styles and individual circumstances. In some cases, these can be delivered through the Council's own internal resources or, where necessary, specialist providers with a proven track records in terms of training will be brought in. Potential development delivery methods may include:
 - Training courses
 - Informal in-house briefings and workshops, including joint Member / Officer training where appropriate
 - External conferences and seminars
 - Member briefings
 - Written learning materials
 - Peer Mentors
 - E-Learning packages
 - Distance learning packages
 - Visits to other Councils or relevant partners
 - Shadowing opportunities
 - Sharing of knowledge amongst other elected Members
13. Members will be encouraged to be involved in their development, where appropriate, by leading workshops, disseminating expert knowledge, offering mentoring or by encouraging the take-up of Member development opportunities.

External Development Opportunities

14. As a Council we welcome and encourage wider Member attendance on training events provided by external partners and principally East Midlands Councils who have their own Member Development Programme. In addition, we signpost Members to the Local Government Association as the national membership body for all Councils in England which offers resources, support and training activities for all Councillors. Both bodies will be essential in the lead into new unitary authorities under LGR. Appendix C to this Strategy provides further information.

Conference Attendance

15. The Council also enables appropriate attendance by Portfolio Holders and Chairs of Committees etc. to wider courses and conferences such as the Local Government Association Annual Conference and Exhibition and the Housing Ombudsman Service.
16. Individual Portfolio Holders and Chairs will also liaise with appropriate Directors on further training opportunities they are made aware of which are offered by other providers such as the Local Government Partnership Network and Westminster Insight Events. Attendance at such conferences will be assessed against the perceived benefits in terms of the District Council objectives and priorities.
17. Where Members make requests to attend a specific conference / webinar etc. where there is a financial cost to be met from the Member Training and Development budget,

these will be assessed by the relevant Director in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Chair of the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee against a criteria of offering value for money, meeting any gaps in knowledge and skills and having a corporate benefit.

Attendance at such courses will usually be reserved for those with special responsibilities.

Support for New Members

18. The following specific support will be offered to new Councillors:
- After the elections, each new Councillor will be provided with an Induction Guide providing a more detailed introduction to the Council and practical information about being a Councillor. This will include wider information about the district; the Council's Purpose and Values; and the Council's Priorities and Objectives.
 - A comprehensive Induction Programme will be provided to ensure that newly elected Councillors can quickly participate fully in the business of the Council. This will include an opportunity to meet senior officers, find out about the Council's key priorities, be given information to get them started and receive basic training on key areas such as the Code of Conduct.
 - Details of the Democratic Services Team will be given to provide support with information and signposting in accordance with the Member Support Scheme as Appendix A.
 - Councillors who have been elected at by-elections will be provided with a similar Induction Programme and support.
 - New Councillors will be offered a tour of key locations across Newark and Sherwood.

Resourcing

19. An appropriate budget and resources will need to be allocated to support the Member Development Plan. This budget would be allocated to fund activities such as the ones listed below and for the provision of any internal training as set out in Appendix B.
- Conference / Seminar attendance by specific postholders e.g. Portfolio Holders, Group Leaders, Chair of Committees etc.
 - Opportunities for cross-authority / partner training on a countywide, regional or national basis.
 - Specific training programmes provided by national / regional course providers e.g. the Local Government Association.
 - Relevant opportunities for learning through seminars, conferences or visits hosted by partners.

Appendix A - Member Support Scheme

1. The Member Support Scheme provides all Councillors with a named contact from Democratic Services following their election.
2. The Scheme is not designed to replace the direct contact and access that all Councillors can expect when they wish to speak to their Group Leaders, the Chief Executive, Directors or Business Managers.
3. Democratic Services can offer support and advice, especially during the first year after a Member is elected or if they have been appointed to a new role and can help the Councillor understand the requirements of the role and develop their confidence. The Member Support Scheme enables Councillors to:
 - be more aware of where to go for information and support;
 - feel more confident in their representative and decision-making roles; and
 - be able to make an early contribution to the work of the Council and representing their local community.
4. If Members need factual information about Council services and details about who to contact within the Council, or any other day to day information about Council business, contact can be made with their named Democratic Services Officer or anyone within the Democratic Services Team.
5. What can a Councillor expect from their named Democratic Services Officer?
 - A friendly and prompt response to any questions however trivial they may seem.
 - Support and advice from the Democratic Services Officer, including the use of email, navigation of the Members Intranet, the Council's website and use of the Modern.gov application to view agendas.
 - Signposting to an appropriate Officer or Councillor to take forward a query as needed.
 - A sounding board to help the Councillor reflect on new experiences and issues raised.
 - A response to emails and telephone calls as promptly as possible and to be advised who will respond to queries if the Democratic Services Officer is unavailable
 - A prompt response to requests to meet with the Democratic Services Officer as required
6. In addition, if requested, a peer Mentor who is usually a Councillor from their own political group, can be assigned to help with signposting and providing advice on all issues affecting the life of a Councillor. Once notified of a request for a Peer Mentor, the Democratic Services Officer will contact Political Group Leaders to ask for a nomination as soon as practicable.
7. The Member Support Scheme is informal and intended to be helpful, therefore, Councillors can make as much or as little use of it as they wish.

Appendix B - Internal Training Programme

Training Event	Detail / Notes
All Member training events	2 dates for all Member Training included in the Council calendar each year - scheduled for June and November
Licensing Committee Training	Annual training mandatory for Committee Members
Planning Committee Training	Annual training mandatory for Committee Members
Audit & Accounts Committee Training	Annual Statement of Accounts and Treasury Management training for Committee Members
Policy & Performance Improvement Committee Training	Annual training on the running and purpose of overview and scrutiny, including the operation of working group
Code of Conduct Training	Code of Conduct training for all Members at regular intervals
Social Media	Use of social media training to be offered to all Members
Equalities Impact Assessments Training	To equip elected Members with the knowledge and confidence to interpret and embed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to carry out any of their decision-making responsibility
Media Training	Media awareness for Members, including social media
Member Empowerment Training	To support Members to build confidence, develop practical tools, and feel empowered to express their views more actively in council settings
Funding and Grant Opportunities	To empower elected Members with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to effectively communicate grant funding opportunities and criteria to residents and community groups, thereby improving the quality and targeting of applications
Domestic Abuse Training	All Members to be trained to support the Council's commitment to achieving the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation
Data Protection and Cyber Training	To be scheduled on a regular basis to ensure Members are alert to security concerns around data protection and cyber attacks

Appendix C – External Sources of Training:

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

Detail

The Local Government Association (LGA) has made all of its training modules available on an open access platform so they can be accessed without a username and password. Councillors should still be able to evidence that they have completed the module by completing the certificate of completion.

Subjects Covered

- Commissioning of Services
- Community Engagement and Leadership
- Councillor Induction
- Equality and Diversity
- Facilitation and Conflict Resolution
- Handling Complaints for Service Improvement
- Influencing Skills
- Licensing and Regulation
- Planning
- Police and Crime Panels
- Scrutiny for Councillors
- Stress Management and Personal Resilience
- Supporting Your Constituents
- The Effective Ward Councillor
- Holding Council Meetings Online
- Handling Intimidation
- Supporting Mentally Healthier Communities

Contact Details

Information on courses is available on the Local Government Association website.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership>

Subjects Covered: Dates:

EAST MIDLANDS COUNCILS

Detail

East Midlands Councils (EMC) provides a comprehensive, Councillor Development programme for Member Councils in the East Midlands, of which Newark and Sherwood is one.

Subjects Covered

- Policy/thematic based events for Councillors in the East Midlands, highlighting specific areas, such as a current programme of events on climate change specifically designed for Councillors
- A briefing service with the latest digested news for local government sent via email.
- Skills workshops delivered in-house, online and face to face on areas such as Chairing skills, Time management and Presentation skills
- Networking sessions with Scrutiny and Councillor Development.

- The East Midlands Regional Councillor Development Charter, we support the assessment and validation of Charter, as well as on-going support
- Personal Development Planning for Councillors
- Action Learning Sets for Councillors
- Developing Impact and Influence Workshops for Councillors

Contact Details

Information on courses is available on the East Midlands Councils website.

<https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/Councillor-Information-and-Support>