



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council

# Member Development Strategy 2008-2011

July 2008

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08450 450 051

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## Forward

We are pleased to introduce this strategy and its associated training and development programme for elected members.

In South Cambridgeshire District Council we take training and development of our members and staff very seriously, and are always looking for ways to improve our approach and content.

This strategy focuses on elected member development and has been put together following discussions with members. The strategy and associated work programmes will reflect the development needs which members themselves identified through the self-assessment process.

The strategy will assist members to build their skills to enable them to play a full part in the work of the authority and in leading their communities. It will help members to be more effective in their many and varied roles.

This document outlines the approach the council will take towards the development of its members. It adopts a more structured process and proposes a varied range of development opportunities. We are confident the strategy will be of benefit to:

- **Individual Members** – who will have more opportunities to enhance their existing skills and learn new ones.
- **The council** – which will be better able to meet its business objectives and work towards maintaining effective corporate governance.
- **The local community** – which will have a well informed and trained political representation.

Thank you for your commitment to the strategy and its associated programme. We hope you will enjoy the events you attend, continue to provide constructive feedback which will help us to improve future programmes, and give ongoing support to this important area of work.

Member Development  
Portfolio Holder

Chief Executive

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## I. Why a Member Development Strategy is needed

The council is operating in a constantly changing environment, requiring elected members and its workforce to be flexible and responsive to change. The Government's modernisation agenda presents us with an extremely challenging and demanding programme which includes:

- A greater emphasis on working in partnership with other agencies
- A challenging and changing role for elected members
- Continued external inspection and scrutiny from various bodies
- A strong emphasis on continuous improvement and value for money

In embracing these challenges, we must continue to develop our members and organisation into one which:

- Makes the most of its opportunities
- Sets high performance standards and is not afraid to be measured by them
- Makes maximum use of all resources available to it, especially E-Government
- Is an influential community leader and partner
- Is respected as a good employer and seen as a role model by others in the community it serves

All member training and development activity will have a primary aim of achieving and delivering our corporate objectives of:

- 1) *Working in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future*
- 2) *Delivering high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community*
- 3) *Enhancing quality of life and building a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work*

We are building an approach to member development that promotes strong leadership and a high performance culture - a culture which is adaptable to new ways of working, sharing responsibility with our partners for the delivery of good quality services, and continually seeking improvements in our performance.

This strategy has been developed by a Member Task Group set up by the Member Development Portfolio Holder, and has the support of all Group Leaders, Cabinet and the (officer) Executive Management Team (EMT). After the strategy has been adopted, the group's next key task will be to establish a comprehensive and robust member training and development programme which aims to meet the needs of all Members and the authority.

The strategy has been adopted by the Council and is therefore owned by every Councillor. It will primarily be the responsibility of the Member Development Portfolio Holder to ensure that the strategy is reviewed annually.

## 2. Achievements so far

The Council has made significant strides recently in its efforts to improve the quality, frequency and relevance of Member training and development. Between April 2007 and March 2008, we carried out activities in many areas, including:

- New Member induction, comprising a targeted induction day for newly-elected Members which followed the May 2007 and May 2008 elections;
- Basic training in key areas of the Council's services on planning, licensing, employment and risk management issues.
- A member development programme of training modules on key areas of need based on a representative series of interviews with Members. Areas covered included media and communication, chairing skills, scrutiny and overview and community cohesion.
- Attendance by Cabinet and other leading Members on the National Leadership Academy;
- A political group mentoring programme.

We were very grateful to Building Capacity East (BCE) and the IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency) for their support and financial assistance in carrying out many of these initiatives. The Council came close to meeting its performance indicator that 85% of its Members should attend a skills training session during the course of the year (79%) and has set similarly challenging targets for 2008-2009 and beyond. By agreeing a strategy we will be able to maintain this momentum and ensure a greater focus on the quality, not just the quantity, of training opportunities for our Members.

## 3. Objectives

Our objectives for member development are:

- To provide elected members with flexible and responsive training and development that is based on individual and organisational needs.
- To ensure members are in a position to function fully within their roles, working with officers and partners, especially parish councils, in order to achieve the vision and aims of the council.

## 4. Delivery

Responsibility for delivering the Strategy rests with the Member Development Portfolio Holder and Executive Management Team, which will designate one of its number to be Officer Champion for Member development. The Democratic Services Manager shall be responsible for the operational delivery of specific initiatives identified in the annual work programmes. It is the responsibility of the political groups to ensure that their Members take advantage of the training and development opportunities presented. The Portfolio Holder will keep the strategy and annual work programmes arising from it under review and will receive quarterly update reports and feedback on training and development activities for Members. EMT and group leaders will receive reports to ensure that the strategy continues to be relevant, fit-for-purpose and driven from the most senior level of the Council's management structure.

The strategy will be delivered through a Member Training and Development Programme which will be agreed following the adoption of the strategy and reviewed annually

- This programme will be compiled after an analysis of training and development needs highlighted through the one-to-one/self-assessment development review process.
- The Portfolio Holder will develop and agree the annual programme following wide consultation with all Members and the support of a dedicated task and finish group
- The programme will provide a single, comprehensive point of reference for all Member training and development initiatives, including the resource implications of each. The Member Development Portfolio Holder will normally refuse funding for Member training and development events not previously identified in the work programme.
- Links will be made to the corporate training programme for employees as many of the courses listed for them will be entirely suitable for members.
- Any formal training event provided in house will have a certificate of attendance and an evaluation form to complete.
- Partnership training opportunities with other local authorities will be sought.

## **5. Timetable**

The timetable for agreeing the Training and Development Programme each year will be as follows:

- September-October: Annual development reviews completed by Members.
- November-January: Portfolio Holder establishes a task-and-finish group of Members, which will analyse responses and other evidence and will develop the programme for the following year, including the resources required.
- February: Portfolio Holder agrees the annual programme, including detailed costings.
- May: Programme implementation begins

The Democratic Services section will lead on the provision of administrative and other support for this process and will provide the central reference point for the arrangement of training and development initiatives carried out as part of the annual work programme

## **6. Responsibilities**

The Member Development Portfolio Holder and EMT Champion will have responsibility:

- To champion and encourage Member development in the council.
- To keep the Member Development Strategy and the Training and Development Programme under review through shaping and prioritising member development activities.

- To promote the Strategy and training and development activities among all Members of the council.
- To monitor and evaluate training and development activities.

This strategy places responsibility on **all Members** for:

- Improving their own performance.
- Helping others to improve their performance.
- Participating fully in the preparation and maintenance of individual development plans.
- Applying what they have learnt to their council roles.
- Communicating their development needs via self-assessment, or via their group leader, the Member Development Portfolio Holder or officers.
- Ensuring their attendance at courses that have been arranged, to which they have signed up.

## 7. Types of training and development

The Strategy identifies three main types of Member training and development:

### I. Core Skills Programme

The core skills training and development programme will be developed within the following four contexts:

- i. *Strategic Leadership* - this will aim to ensure members understand national developments and policy areas that will impact on their leadership and representational role in South Cambridgeshire. Training/briefings will be on such issues as:
  - o Local government white papers
  - o National policies, strategies and programmes
  - o Local government performance regimes
  - o Roles and responsibilities of local government tiers
  - o Regional working
- ii. *Corporate Governance* - this will aim to ensure members understand the depth and breadth of their roles and responsibilities in governing the district council. Training/briefings will be on such issues as, for example:
  - o Strategic planning within the council
  - o Corporate objectives, and the links ('golden thread') to service plans, team and individual targets
  - o Local government finance
  - o Medium term planning



- o Performance and risk management
  - o Effective scrutiny
  - o Equalities, diversity and community cohesion
  - o Role of elected members within communities
  - o Partnership working
- iii. *Technical Skills* - this will aim to provide specific skills training for members based on their individual needs. We will use the process (see below) to help identify specific training and development needs. Training/briefings/support will include skills training such as:
- o Leadership
  - o Strategic thinking
  - o Scrutiny and questioning
  - o Change management
  - o Media and communications
  - o Chairing and managing meetings
  - o Public speaking/presentation
  - o Negotiation/influencing
  - o Report writing / speed reading
  - o Time management
  - o Managing electronic information
- iv. *Personal Support* - this will aim to provide support within the main political groups and personal support to members through mentoring.

## **2. Development reviews**

- To carry out development reviews (through group and self-assessment) on an annual basis with all members in order to:
  - o Establish their role for that year
  - o Agree their objectives (both personal and organisational)
  - o Identify any support and development required
  - o Agree the most appropriate method of answering that need.
  - o Inform the annual Member Training and Development Programme.
- To run development reviews in conjunction with political group meetings.
- From the annual development review, to produce a training plan for every elected member.
- This training plan to be added to each Member's copy of the Member Toolkit.

### 3. Induction Programme

To have a comprehensive Induction Programme for newly elected (and re-elected) members that is spread out over their first three months and includes the following:

- o An informal welcome to South Cambridgeshire District Council with the opportunity to meet key people from each service.
- o An introduction to South Cambridgeshire District Council, how it is structured, who does what and where, and its corporate objectives and service priorities.
- o An introduction to the Local Strategic Partnership and partnership working.
- o An introduction to how the Council operates financially and the impact this has on elected members.
- o An introduction to the scrutiny function and how to be effective at meetings attended.
- o Mandatory training for members wishing to sit on regulatory committees.
- o To support newly-elected members through their first year with a mentoring system, so that they are partnered with a member of their group to give help and support when required.

### 8. Training methods

We will consider a variety of methods to train and develop our members. Some or all of the following may apply:

- Attendance on national training and development programmes
- Coaching/mentoring (on-the-job), planned and appropriate time put aside to maximise effectiveness
- In-house training courses at times convenient for Members
- CD ROM/on-line computer based learning packages
- Planned experiences outside the organisation e.g. visits to other authorities and participation in partnership learning
- External courses/conferences/seminars
- Distance learning courses
- Library materials
- Group briefings

An annual brochure will be published listing all training and development activities for members, and this will be available in print and electronic forms.

## 9. Resourcing

The strategy will not achieve its aims unless it is adequately funded by the Council. The Member training and development budget for 2008-2009 is around £5,000, and we currently have no staff whose sole jobs are to organise and carry out training and development. The annual training and development programme will identify the resource implications of training initiatives being offered; the programme will need to be cost-effective and budgeted for within the Medium Term Financial Strategy and annual revenue budget.

Wherever possible, the Council will make best use of the talent, skills and knowledge available, and will work with key external partners to carry out training and identify funding and other support which may become available

## 10. Outcomes

The strategy will be effective if the following outcomes, against which it will be measured, are achieved:

- 1) The objectives for member development set out in section (3) above are met.
- 2) It leads to a commitment to member development from all levels of the council and an individual commitment to development from members themselves.
- 3) The member training and development programme reflects individual development requirements, and assists members in achieving the Council's corporate objectives.
- 4) Member training and development contributes to improving the authority's effectiveness.
- 5) Evaluation and feedback from training and development initiatives make members aware of the impact of their investment in their own training and development on the performance of the council.

