



South
Cambridgeshire
District Council

Member Development Strategy 2014-17

September 2014

FOREWORD

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 from all political groups. The associated work programmes will reflect the development needs which members themselves will identify through formal and informal feedback.

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.



Councillor David Whiteman-Downes
Portfolio Holder responsible for
Member Development



Jean Hunter
Chief Executive

Date: September 2014

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Member Development Strategy

1. 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 agenda presents local authorities with an extremely challenging and demanding programme which includes:

- A challenging and changing role for elected members
- A strong emphasis on value for money
- An enhanced commercial approach to service delivery

In embracing these challenges, the Council must continue to develop its 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
- 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 is designed to help the Council to achieve the aims on objectives of its Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan for 2014-19 aims to:

- Engage with residents, parishes and businesses to ensure the Council delivers first class services and value for money
- Work with partners to create opportunities for employment, enterprise, education and world-leading innovation
- Ensure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding quality of life for its residents

The Council is 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.

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

2. Achievements so far

The Council underwent an 18 month reassessment of the East of England Charter for Elected Member Development and on 18 June 2013 was reaccredited due to continually meeting the standards set out in the Charter.

The Council has sought to improve the quality, frequency and relevance of member training and development. Between April 2013 and June 2014 activities have been carried out in many areas, including:

- New member induction, comprising of an induction pack and training for three new Councillors elected in May 2013, two new Councillors elected in subsequent by-elections and four new Councillors elected in May 2014.
- Specific briefings for newly elected members on the Council's Code of Conduct, including predetermination and bias and the Member-Officer Protocol. Code of Conduct, pre-determination and bias refresher training was also provided for members in October 2013 at a joint training event at South Cambridgeshire Hall between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Huntingdonshire District Council.
- Basic training in key areas of the Council's services on finance, planning, licensing and employment.
- Specific briefings for members on key issues affecting the Council, including local government finance and budget setting, South Cambs Ltd (the Council's housing company), the Greater Cambridge City Deal and shared services.
- A member development programme of training modules on key areas of need based on a representative series of interviews with Members.
- Advertising all training courses and seminars through the Councillors' Weekly Bulletin.
- Attendance by Cabinet and other leading Members on the National Leadership Academy.

The Council achieved its 2013/14 performance indicator target of 85% of its Members attending a skills training session during the course of the year, with an impressive 94% of councillors attending at least one training course during the year.

By taking into consideration and building on the recommendations of the original Member Elected Development Charter report, together with the comments received as part of the reassessment process, the Council will be able to continually support and develop its elected members.

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3. Objectives

The Council's 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 Member Development Strategy rests with the Portfolio Holder responsible for Member Development. The Democratic Services team is responsible for the operational delivery of specific initiatives identified in the Member Development Programme. 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 Member Development Programme associated with it under review. EMT and group leaders will 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 formal and informal feedback from councillors.
- The Portfolio Holder will develop and agree the annual programme following wide consultation with all Members.
- The programme will provide a single, comprehensive point of reference for **all** Member training and development initiatives, including the resource implications of each.
- Any formal training event will record attendance and give all attendees an evaluation form to complete.
- Partnership training opportunities with other local authorities and partners will be sought.
- Joint training opportunities identified in the Council's Organisational Development Strategy will be sought.

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5. Responsibilities

The Democratic Services team will lead on the provision of administrative and other support for this Strategy and will provide the central reference point for the arrangement of training and development initiatives carried out as part of the Member Development Programme.

The Portfolio Holder responsible for Member Development will, with officer support:

- Champion and encourage member development in the council;
- Keep the Member Development Strategy and the Training and Development Programme under review through shaping and prioritising member development activities;
- Promote the Strategy and training and development activities among all members of the council;
- Monitor and evaluate training and development activities.

This Strategy places responsibility on **all members** for:

- A commitment to lifelong learning;
- Improving their own performance;
- Helping others to improve their performance;
- Applying what they have learnt to their council roles;
- Communicating their development needs via their group leader, the Portfolio Holder responsible for member development or officers;
- Ensuring their attendance at courses that have been arranged, to which they have signed up.

6. Types of training and development

The Strategy identifies two 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:
 - Local government white papers
 - National policies, strategies and programmes
 - Local government performance regimes
 - Roles and responsibilities of local government tiers
 - Regional working

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- 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:
- Strategic planning within the council
 - Corporate objectives, and the links to service plans, team and individual targets
 - Local government finance
 - Medium term planning
 - Performance and risk management
 - Effective scrutiny
 - Equalities, diversity and community cohesion
 - Role of elected members within communities
 - Partnership working
 - Briefings on forthcoming legislation relevant to the Council
 - Delivering public services in a commercial/business environment
- 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:
- Leadership
 - Strategic thinking
 - Scrutiny and questioning
 - Change management
 - Media and communications
 - Chairing and managing meetings
 - Public speaking / presentation
 - Negotiation / influencing
 - Report writing / speed reading
 - Time management
 - Accessing e-mails and use of ICT
- iv. **Personal Support** – this will aim to provide personal support to members through mentoring.

II. 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:

- An informal welcome to South Cambridgeshire District Council with the opportunity to meet key people from each service.
- An introduction to South Cambridgeshire District Council, how it is structured, who does what and where, and its corporate objectives and service priorities.
- An introduction to partnership working.
- An introduction to how the Council operates financially and the impact this has on elected members.
- An introduction to the scrutiny function and how to be effective at meetings attended.
- Mandatory training for members wishing to sit on regulatory committees.
- To encourage political groups 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.

7. Training methods

The Council will consider a variety of methods to train and develop its 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
- On-line or computer-based learning packages with access to a portal on the Council's Insite (intranet) pages for e-learning
- 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

A list of training and development activities for members will be continually updated and will be available in print and electronic forms.

8. Resourcing

The Strategy will not achieve its aims unless it is adequately funded by the Council. The Member training and development budget for 2014-2015 is around £5,000, and in addition there are separate budgets for training on specific committees, such as the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, Partnerships Review Committee, Licensing Committee and Civic Affairs Committee. 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 internally, and will work with key external partners to carry out training and identify funding and other support which may become available.

9. 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.