

Member Development Policy

Policy statement

The expectations on elected members are higher than they have ever been. Our communities want their authority to deliver high quality services, to be run and managed well and respond quickly and meaningfully to changing demands. This means that elected members have to be effective in their roles – including governance, local representation, having detailed knowledge of relevant law and policy and be knowledgeable about the services we provide.

To ensure that elected members are successful in their roles, training and development cannot be side-lined or treated as an optional activity. Every elected member has a responsibility to ensure their skills are regularly updated and the Council needs to effectively support them in achieving this.

1. Key principles

- There will be a range of learning and development opportunities available to all members irrespective of their political group or independent status
- That member development supports and enhances
- That there is a consistency of approach to member development
- That a culture of learning is encouraged that regards continuous member development as vital to the Council's success
- That learning and development will support the aims of the Council Plan and underpin our values
- Members have ownership of the development programme via the Member Development Working Group

2. Policy implementation

2.1 The policy will be implemented:

- By the Member Development Working Group with support from the Democratic and Scrutiny Team
- With the assistance of group leaders who will actively encourage their members to participate in development activities and give feedback on learning and development
- By monitoring on a regular basis to ensure take up and effectiveness of development activity

3.0 Identification of member development needs

3.1 There are a number of ways in which member development needs can be identified including:

- Member induction programme – this is a comprehensive programme delivered for all new elected members and those returning into office following Borough Council elections and individually after bi-elections
- Committee membership – certain committees have additional development requirements identified to enable members to engage fully and ensure the quality of decision making is maintained
- Overview and Scrutiny – the development of the annual scrutiny work programme and associated project groups often highlights the need for further learning and development including briefings on specific topics. Where possible, learning and development opportunities will be made available to all elected members
- Emerging issues identified by either the political or officer leadership – these may lead to mandatory or optional e-learning and/or briefings
- Via the political group structures – fed in via their representatives on the Member Development Working Group
- By individual members accessing the Council’s e-learning platform (aspire learning) and identifying core skills courses for completion
- By individual members making an application to be considered by their group leader (where appropriate), Service Director – Corporate (Senior Democratic Services Officer as Deputy) and learning and development

3.2 This information will help to build up the rolling member development programme overseen by the Member Development Working Group. The Member Development Working Group terms of reference are attached at Appendix 1.

4.0 Methods of delivery

- Regular member bulletin highlighting member resources available via the Council, Local Government Association, East Midlands Council’s, Centre for Public Scrutiny and other key organisations supporting the sector
- E-learning through aspire learning
- Internal development and training courses

- Development and training courses run in partnership with other authorities and/or partner organisations
- External courses and events promoted by organisations supporting the sector e.g. Local Government Association

5.0 Application for funding from the member development budget and/or a members' expenses contribution

5.1 We are able to source the majority of member development opportunities at no or very low cost, but we do have a small annual budget available for specialist training opportunities to respond to specific needs e.g. media training for cabinet members. The Member Development budget runs from April to March. A proportion of the funding from this budget is pre-allocated for the annual member development plan but we retain some flexibility to respond to requests from individual members to respond to specific needs. At the start of the financial year, 50% of the budget will be allocated to training for all members, through the Member Development Plan. 50% of the funding will be made available for individual training and development requests. We also need to carefully consider requests for training where you wish to claim members' expenses for example for a hotel stay or train tickets even if the training itself is free.

In December the budget spend so far in the financial year will be reviewed and funding may be transferred from one area to another if there has been an underspend or if something is requested that is in excess of the budget area.

5.2 There is a short application form to help us consider individual requests. The form is attached at Appendix 2. All requests are to be e-mailed to Helen Brightmore, Member and Civic Support Officer.

Applications will then be forwarded to the relevant Group Leader for approval (inclusive of any proposed costs which would come out of the Member Development budget).

When approved by the Group Leader and returned to Helen Brightmore these will then be passed to the Service Director - Corporate (or Senior Democratic and Scrutiny Officer as deputy) for final approval. Please allow at least five working days for consideration.

6.0 Communications



6.1 Successful communication is an important part of member development. There will be a weekly newsletter for members which highlights resources available to members and forthcoming learning and development opportunities. The newsletter may also be used to share learning from members attending external courses or events.

6.2 Members are sent calendar appointments and reminders about future events and activities. Group leaders and representatives of the member development group are also asked to encourage members to access opportunities and identify further needs.

7.0 Monitoring and evaluation

7.1 The Member Development Working Group is a forum for discussion, planning and evaluation. After every learning and development opportunity a feedback form is available for members to tell us about their experience with the training, what worked well and what could be improved. A summary of this information will be discussed at the next member development group.

7.2 The Member Development Working Group will also receive a summary of the requests made and approved for individual learning and development courses. They may ask the member attending to write a short piece for the member e-bulletin to help share the learning.

8.0 Resources and support

8.1 This policy will be delivered by the Member Development Working Group with officer support from the Democratic and Scrutiny team within the policy and communications service. A dedicated budget is available for member learning and development and access to members expenses where appropriate. The Council's e-learning platform aspire learning is also available free of charge to members and offers a wide variety of courses including governance, equalities, health and safety and managing people.