



Member Development Strategy 2017-2021

Introduction

Ashfield District Council recognise that to succeed in delivering high quality, cost effective services to the people of Ashfield, it needs well motivated, proactive Councillors with the skills and expertise to drive forward the Council's agenda.

Continuous member development is key to achieving this as all Councillors have a responsibility to learn new skills in line with the ongoing changes in local government. The overarching aim of the strategy is, therefore, to ensure that there is support for all members to enable them to acquire sufficient knowledge and a full range of skills to maximise their ability and capacity.

Arising from this overarching aim the Council has identified the following principles that will underpin how member development is delivered.

- Members will be offered opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills and expertise they need to perform their roles effectively.
- Members will be encouraged to take responsibility for and actively seek opportunities for their own learning and development.
- Training and development applies to all members, even those that have been members for some time and feel that there is nothing new to learn.
- Members who take advantage of the opportunities available will be actively encouraged and supported.

This strategy sets out how the overarching aim will be achieved using these principles as the basis for doing so, for example in how access to learning will be ensured.

Strategic Context

This Corporate Plan 2016 -2019 sets out an ambitious programme for the Council over the next three years. It identifies our purpose as;

- The Council exists to serve the communities and residents of Ashfield;
- We will provide good quality, value for money services;
- We will act strategically and plan for the future.

The Values identify a clear commitment to Councillors, stating;

- We value the democratic role that Councillors have in representing the people of Ashfield;
- The Council recognises that the role of a Councillor is challenging and will support Councillors with training to help them deliver their roles;
- The Council will ensure that there is good governance in our democratic processes;
- The Council will keep Councillors of all political parties updated on key issues.

Aim of the Strategy

This Strategy is designed to provide an overall framework for member development that reflects best practice and achieves the following objectives:

- Provide a range of learning opportunities linked to skills required by Councillors for them to carry out their varied duties;
- Support and enhance the skills of all Elected Members through learning and development;
- Provide equality of opportunity and access to training and development for all Councillors;
- Encourage all members to take advantage of the learning and development opportunities available;
- Ensure that all newly elected members are properly inducted into the Council;
- Raise the profile of Ashfield by ensuring each member has access to training and development which will improve the quality of their role and the service they give to the public;
- Provide training and development at different times and in different ways to suit the diverse needs of Councillors;
- Contribute to the Council's corporate priorities through learning and development.

Roles of Elected Members

Councillors have personal, individual and collective responsibilities for their council's activities. In addition, as members of political groups or as independents, Councillors will express political values and support the policies of the group to which they belong.

Councillors who are Committee/Panel Chairs or Portfolio Holders have more specialised roles in promoting particular policies, representing the council while at the same time working with other agencies to tackle issues. Members roles include;

Representing the ward

The primary role of a member is to represent their ward and the people who live in it. They also have a responsibility to communicate Council policy and decisions to people in the ward.

Decision-making

Members have a central 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:

- Council

- Cabinet (Cabinet Members only)
- Regulatory committees such as Planning or Licensing
- Sitting on boards and other groups as appointed to outside bodies

Policy and strategy development and review

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

- Role in Overview and Scrutiny
- Involvement in advisory groups and partnerships
- Interaction with Cabinet Members
- Role as a representative on local community groups
- Case work
- Membership of a political group.

Overview and Scrutiny

The Overview and Scrutiny role of Members includes:

- Monitoring and reviewing policy formulation and implementation
- Policy development
- Quality review
- Scrutiny of external bodies and agencies
- Providing a check on the activities of the Cabinet through call-in powers

Regulatory Duties

Local authorities also act as regulators within certain functions and Members may be appointed to special committees that carry out these functions, such as standards, planning and licensing committees. In these roles, members are required to act independently and are not subject to the party group whip. Regulatory committees require Members to undertake mandatory training to carry out the regulatory function of those committees.

Currently Members are required to undertake the following mandatory training;

- Planning
- Licensing (and its sub-committees)
- Standards and Personnel Appeals Committee (and its hearing sub-committee)
- Chief Officers sub committee
- Safeguarding
- Code of Conduct
- Ethical Governance
- Equalities and Diversity
- **Any other training that the Council deems as required**

Community Leadership and Engagement

Community leadership is at the heart of modern local government and councils are taking on new responsibilities for working in partnership with other organisations, including the voluntary and community sector, to improve services and the quality of life of citizens.

The process for identifying Members' development needs and priorities will be Member-lead with officers bringing to Members' attention any training which is beneficial in carrying out their role. Learning and development priorities will also be assessed collectively in relation to the needs of specific committees and legislative and regulatory requirements.

Note for Members: Members could be asked to complete a Training Needs Survey each year to identify what learning and development activities they have found to be effective and to assess what priorities they have for learning and development in the next year. This will then be used to develop and deliver the Member Development Training Plan.

In identifying their priority learning and development needs, Members will be asked to consider outcomes they would like to achieve in relation to the requirements of the Council and achieving the Corporate Plan, personal aspirations and developing core skills.

Note for Members: Members may wish to consider an appropriate financial threshold for individual Member training courses. For example £500 equates to 5% of the entire Members training budget.

How will training be delivered?

Training will be delivered in a variety of forms, including in-house Member Seminars, briefings training at Committee / Panel meetings, E Learning, PowerPoint presentations and by sharing experiences with each other. Bespoke training will be provided by a mixture of internal Officers and external providers as and when necessary.

Additionally, Members can identify themselves external training that may enhance their knowledge and improve their skills in carrying out their role. In these instances Members should notify the Democracy Manager of the training, including details of nature of the course, location and cost.

Note for Members Consideration: It may be useful to identify and agree requirements / evaluation method needed to assess relevance of the course and contribution it will make to enhancing Members skills to carry out their role. **Please see Appendix B**

The suggested Training Needs Survey will also be used to develop and deliver a Member Development Training Plan.

Resources and Support

The Democracy Manager will monitor the budget for Member training and development and evaluate whether it meets the objectives identified within this strategy for Member Development. The 2016/17 budget for Member training and development is £10,000. This incorporates internal, external courses and conferences and seminars.

Courses requiring expenditure must be booked by the Democratic Services Team and reported to the Democracy Manager. Member Development has dedicated support from the Democratic Services Team. It is the role of the Democracy Manager to coordinate the Member Development Program, arrange facilitators, collate feedback and promote Member Development across the Council.

All councillors are aware of this support and are encouraged to contact the team should they wish to go on a course or look to develop an area of skills but are unsure as to how to go about it.

Delivering the Member Development Programme

Member learning and development activities are open for all Members to attend and it is intended that all such activities should be equally accessible and conform to the Council's equal opportunities policy and practice.

In recognition of the varying development needs and preferred learning styles, the member development programme will include a range of delivery methods including workshops, presentations, written resources, and e-learning.

Timing of in-house Training

Meeting arrangements are flexible in order to provide sessions to accommodate the needs of Members. When additional training or briefing sessions are organised, consideration will be given to the best time of day to schedule the meeting and Members will be consulted where appropriate.

Access to Information and Resources

All presentations and other materials from development activities and briefing sessions will be made available to all members, including those who could not attend.

Information about up-coming events is provided in writing and by email. Flyers may also be placed in the Members Rooms.

Working in Partnership

The Council may work with Mansfield District Council to share best practice and deliver training locally to members in the two authorities. The Council will look to share training opportunities with its partners and other local councils such as parish and town councils, as appropriate.

Members' attendance on external training courses is supported where the course is relevant to the member's learning and development needs and is cost-effective. Details of courses and development opportunities will be circulated to all Members to ensure they are available on an equal basis.

Requests for external training will be determined by the Democracy Manager. Requests for training or development which have significant financial or policy implications will be submitted to the Assistant Chief Executive, Governance.

Evaluation of Member Development

All learning and development activities should be evaluated to provide information on effectiveness and value for money. Evaluation of learning and development activities will seek to assess the impact of the training in relation to achieving Members' priority training needs and the impact on the Council in achieving the aims of the Corporate Plan. Following the conclusion of events, Members will be asked to complete a feedback form, which will be issued by the Democracy Manager.

Where appropriate, follow-up feedback forms, giving Members an opportunity to reflect on how they have put the learning into practice, may be given to Members to complete a few months following a learning and development event, either on paper or electronically.

Other Member Development Support

The Council recognises that effective member development includes support and opportunities in addition to training. The Council will, therefore, provide the following to Members;

- Advice and support within the Democratic Services Team
- Access to IT equipment, information, stationery and office space in the Members' Room / Group Rooms
- Access to relevant Council and other information electronically through the Members Digest

Appendix B – Draft Pre-Course Evaluation Form



Note: To be completed by Councillor and returned to the Democracy Manager prior to the booking of any training / seminars / courses. This form is designed to help assess the added value of courses in carrying out your role as a Councillor for both constituents and the Council.

Course	
Cost Of Course	
Position	Leader / Portfolio Holder / Chairman / Opposition / Scrutiny Member etc etc
How will this course assist you in carrying out your Member role	
How does this course contribute to the Councils priorities	