

# MEDWAY COUNCIL

## MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2007-2011

### 1. Introduction

Medway Council recognises that Councillors have a pivotal role in taking forward the Community Strategy and that its success will be dependent on elected members having the capacity to help to provide the best possible services to its citizens. By the nature of their role, Councillors are responsible for making decisions on a wide range of issues affecting their communities. For this reason, effective member development is essential to ensure that councillors update their knowledge and learn new skills and behaviours. The Council addresses this issue with a planned approach to learning and development for Members. This strategy is based on the vision that all elected members will be given equal access to development opportunities that will enable the council to deliver the priorities set out in the community involvement agenda.

This strategy outlines the principles and key themes for Members' development over the next 4 years.

### 2. Background

Feedback from Members on the training provided by Learning and Development has been positive, indicating that the training has been beneficial in assisting them to carry out their specific roles. Previously these learning and development activities were planned across the financial year on an annual basis. This strategy responds to feedback from members that there is much to be gained by developing a rolling programme that covers a four-year term of office.

The importance of a partnership approach to learning and development was recognised, and therefore, in June 2006, Members and Officers showed their commitment to Member Development by signing up to the IDeA/South East Employers' Charter for Member Development. It is agreed that for a learning and development programme to be successful it will require support from individual Members and political groups as well as input from directorates, corporate learning and development and member support.

A Member Development Advisory group consisting of member representatives and officers was established in July 2006. This group aims to promote, oversee and monitor Medway Council's Member Development Strategy and programme.

### 3. Principles

The Council undertakes to adhere to the following principles in relation to Member learning and development.

- The member development strategy will be led and owned by Members.
- The key themes will be developed with Members and aimed at ensuring that they can fulfil their responsibilities to the local community and provide clear leadership and effective scrutiny of council and partnership functions.
- The programme will reflect the local agenda, regional agendas and national issues when relevant.
- Members will be provided with a wide range of learning opportunities and will be encouraged to engage in learning activities to promote continuous development.
- Where appropriate, Member development will link with Officer development and joint activities will be encouraged.
- Where appropriate full advantage of the Kent Improvement and Efficiency project will be taken. This identifies joint procurement of training and developing economies of scale.
- Access to qualifications will be made available, if appropriate and relevant i.e. BTEC in Local Governance.
- All learning and development activities will be subject to review and evaluation.
- A variety of learning methods will be provided and where possible those with family responsibilities will be provided with suitable allowances and support.

#### **4. Key Themes for the Programme**

The key themes for member development are:

- Induction
- Personal development
- Leadership development
- Regulatory committee training and development
- Cabinet Training
- Corporate Development i.e. risk management/procurement
- Overview and scrutiny development
- New legislation
- Audit and governance including ethics and standards
- Community engagement
- Partnership working
- Broader Community Leadership role
- ICT training

The learning and development programme for Members will be delivered over the four-year term of office period with a combination of activities. The programme will be divided into five main areas:

- Core Skills
- Service Committee issues
- Service specific issues
- Corporate Development
- Individual Needs

The core skills' programme will form the basis of the induction programme for new Members and will also be available for more experienced Members. The programme will include:

- Local Government financial and financial responsibilities
- Democracy and Governance – how the council works (decision-making)
- The role of Councillors and corporate parenting
- Legal/constitutional framework
- Value for money
- Core values
- Diversity and equality
- Practical IT skills
- Managing case work
- Data Protection and Freedom of Information
- Managing ward work
- Directorate/service specific

The Corporate Development elements will include:

- Community Leadership and Partnership working
- Community Engagement
- Code of conduct and probity
- Getting ward work done – Ward Improvement Fund
- The Representative Role
- Partnership Working
- The impact of the White Paper
- Overview and Scrutiny
- Strategic Planning
- Risk management and emergency planning

In addition, individual Members will identify learning and development needs relevant to specific committees i.e. Planning, Licensing, Standards and Audit and these can be met in-house if there is sufficient demand or through external courses and/or training packages.

## **5. Induction**

- The induction process for new Members is an essential part of learning and development. In addition to welcoming new Councillors the programme will provide basic information on the working of the Council. This will enable Members to become fully aware of their duties and responsibilities and develop their role within the council. A planned and systematic induction programme will be provided for all newly elected councillors. This will include the key elements of the core skills and the corporate development programmes
- The induction programme will last three to six months and mentoring by more experienced Members will be encouraged.

## **6. Training Needs Analysis**

Learning and development activities will be tailored to the needs of individuals to enable them to fulfil their role as elected Members. Role descriptors and the associated skills are available for all councillor roles. This enables individuals to specify their needs and to differentiate between training that is essential to their current role and that which is desirable. To ensure that this happens, individual training needs analyses will be carried out on an annual basis. This could either take the form of focus group discussions or by an annual survey by questionnaire and/or telephone/personal interview. New members would have the opportunity for a training needs' discussion every six months in the first year of office.

The Member Development Advisory Group members, through their regular meetings, will develop and support the annual survey, review past activities, help plan for future needs and sign off the Member Development Programme. The Learning and Organisational Development Officer, in liaison with the Group Leader, will be responsible for nominating individuals for learning and development activities where there are a restricted number of places.

In addition to this, officers and members of the Planning, Standards, Audit and Licensing Regulatory Committees will have the opportunity to influence the programme. Annual discussions will take place between the Learning and Development Officer and appropriate lead officers and Committee Chairs and spokesperson to determine themes and topics to be scheduled into the development plan.

## **7. Delivery Techniques**

A number of learning methods to fulfil development needs will be utilised in a positive attempt to address differing learning styles and include:

- External conferences and seminars
- In-house briefings and workshops presented by senior managers and specialist officers
- Learning manuals and literature
- Peer coaching and mentoring
- E-learning packages - Members will also be encouraged to access the corporate e-learning system to meet individual training needs (i.e. IT skills).
- Visits to other authorities
- Joint Member and Officer training
- Training with partner organisations and agencies
- Sharing knowledge and best practice using the Member Development site on the intranet and taking advantage of the securedoor facility.

Enabling Members to find the time to undertake learning and development activities will be a key priority. To do this it is proposed that:

- Formal sessions will be programmed in advance to ensure that they do not clash with the committee cycle.
- Activities, if required, can be programmed at different times of the day to accommodate individual commitments where possible.
- Where appropriate open learning materials and new technology will be used.

- The Members' Development area on the Council's intranet will offer a range of services (course information/feedback opportunities/forums/links to external websites of interest/external course information etc.)

Experienced Members will be encouraged to coach and mentor new Members and provide regular support and guidance.

## 8. Planning Timescale

November 2006	Member Development Advisory Group agree Member Development Strategy Initiate member involvement in the development of the induction programme
January 2007	Member Development Advisory Group agree Member induction and strategy
May/June 2007	Induction for New Members begins Training Needs Analysis with Focus Groups for all Members Design Member Development Programme (including individual learning and development programmes and activities) Year 1- 4
July 2007	Advisory Group review/approve development programme year 1- 4
Sept 2007 – July 2008	Deliver Year 1 programmes and ongoing induction
Feb 2008	Six month evaluation and review Hold review meeting with Member Development Advisory Group
April 2008	Annual training needs analysis survey Review meeting with Member Development Advisory Group Review/adapt Member Development Programme Years 2-4 if necessary following evaluation and feedback from TNA survey. Hold budget discussions
August 2008	Full evaluation of year 1 programme
Sep 2008 – July 2011	Deliver programmes Six monthly evaluations Reports and review by Member Development Advisory Group

## **9. Budget**

The current budget for Member learning and development is £30,000 per annum. It has been agreed that £9,000 is allocated to external conferences. These amounts will be funded from the corporate learning and development budget.

## **10. Evaluation**

A report on learning and development activities will be presented to Members annually. This will be based on quarterly performance reports to the Member Development Advisory Group and further discussions with Group Leaders, corporate managers and post learning information provided by individuals. The quarterly performance reports will include a financial report of Member development, feedback on attendance, together with evaluation of outcomes against agreed objectives. The annual report will be the accumulation of these quarterly reports.

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