

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

1. Mid Sussex District Council is committed to the learning, training and development of all its Members. This is demonstrated by the delivery of an annual programme of Member Development events and the ongoing work of the Member Development Working Group.

PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGY

2. The purpose of this Strategy is to set out Mid Sussex District Council's approach to helping Members develop their skills and knowledge so Members:
 - can effectively represent the Council and its priorities;
 - act as advocates on behalf of the community and give strong community leadership; and
 - are proactively involved in policy development and in the delivery and scrutiny of its services and those of its partners.
3. For the Council to achieve its purpose and priorities, as outlined in its Corporate Plan, it is important for the Council to offer its Members development opportunities for them to be able to respond to the changing needs of the community and other external factors such as Government legislation.
4. The Council is committed to developing a learning organisation and a culture of continuous improvement, which means that Members and employees can adapt to improve service delivery, and to meet current and future challenges. This matches the approach that is embraced and embedded with staff.

SCOPE

5. This strategy applies to all Members. It also applies to co-opted Members of the Standards Committee who will be included in role specific development opportunities to enable them to fulfil their role.

CORPORATE COMMITMENT

6. The Council commits itself to Member training and development through:
 - the identification of Members' individual training needs;
 - the delivery of a Member Development and Training Programme that ensures that Members can fulfil their responsibilities. The programme will be informed by the aims and objectives of the Council, and will be updated annually;
 - Personal Development Plans being devised by each Member to meet their identified training and development needs and for Members to take personal responsibility to fulfil these;
 - making adequate resources available (both internal and external) to meet Members' training and development requirements within a structured programme;
 - ensuring that all Members have the opportunity to benefit from the learning and development opportunities in accordance with the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme; and

- expressing its willingness to subject its programme to external scrutiny to check its effectiveness and to share information and good practice with other Councils and agencies.
7. Political balance will apply to the Member Development Working Group. The members of the Working Group will act as Member Development Champions. The District Council will nominate an officer to be the single point of contact for training and development, who will work closely with the Member Development Working Group and the Management Team therefore ensuring all parts of the organisation have a stake in the Programme.
 8. The Member Development Working Group will have responsibility for developing and approving the training and development programme, for planning future learning and development requirements, and for induction of new Members. Staff from the Member Services team will support the Working Group to ensure that they are fully resourced for the task.

IDENTIFICATION OF MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

9. Some training and development will be relevant to all Members and the requirement can arise from a number of sources, including:
 - new legislation or obligations placed on the Council;
 - major policy changes or new initiatives by the Council;
 - opportunities to learn from best practice elsewhere;
 - requests from Members for knowledge-based training to provide them with a more detailed knowledge base on particular services; and
 - identified skills based training (e.g. overview and scrutiny skills).
10. There will be other training that will be relevant to some Members but not others. This could be because of the different roles of Members or because of the different knowledge and experience levels of Members in a particular area.
11. To identify individual Members' training and development needs, they will be offered the chance to complete a Personal Development Plan. These will be reviewed every two years for those Members that had been re-elected and annually for newly elected Councillors during their first two years in office, thereby providing more intensive support for new Members whilst they grow into their roles. The Personal Development Plan will also be used to identify Members' knowledge, skills and experience so that the Council may consider the most effective exercise of that expertise.
12. As far as possible, training will take account of Members' current and prospective future roles and responsibilities so that they are prepared for current challenges as well as those they may face in the future, such as training for new Committee Chairmen.

MEETING MEMBERS' TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

13. The Council will endeavour to meet Members' training and development needs in the way that is most appropriate for them. An annual training programme and budget will be agreed at the beginning of each Municipal Year.
14. Some Members, for example those sitting on planning or licensing committees will need essential knowledge based training on an annual basis, therefore all Members sitting on these committees will be required to attend any training identified as 'Essential'. Where a training session has been deemed to be essential, where possible this will be provided

on more than one occasion, to make it easier for all Members to attend. If any Member, for whom the training is mandatory, is unable to attend, they will be expected to make other arrangements to be briefed on the training content. The Member Development Working Group will monitor attendance and if a Member repeatedly does not attend mandatory training, then they may be required to relinquish their position on the relevant committee. This will be a matter for Group Leaders.

15. Other Members may require development on a more tailored basis dependent on roles and changes that affect the Council, e.g. new requirements placed on overview and scrutiny councillors.
16. Development may be through externally or internally provided training in a variety of formats, offered at different times, providing access to training materials or a distance-learning package provided on-line. All training will be tailored to meet the needs of the Council with the engagement of the relevant Heads of Service. Copies of any training materials circulated at these training events will be emailed to Members on request, and a hard copy will be available in the training folder in the Members' Room; all Members will be advised of their availability.
17. Members will have equality of opportunity to undertake training and development, equality of access to all training initiatives and equitable sharing of available resources. The programme of Member development activities will acknowledge Members' commitments and take account of the following factors:
 - the Council's Committee calendar;
 - Member availability due to their working patterns;
 - providing multiple events where possible;
 - held in venues with easy access; and
 - providing sufficient notice of forthcoming events to increase the likelihood of Members being able to attend.
18. Therefore the scheduling of Member development activities will, where possible, provide the greatest opportunity for all of the Council's Members to receive the development they need.
19. Individual Members who have attended an external training event or conference will be encouraged to write a short report on the experience. These will be published in the Member Information Service (MIS) and copies will be made available in the training folder in the Members' Room.
20. Members will be provided with appropriate ICT support to enable them to carry out their role effectively.
21. Where appropriate, Members will be provided with the ability to use on-line learning packages.
22. Wherever appropriate, joint development activities with other local authorities and partner organisations will be undertaken, particularly where they are regarded as best practice. In design of all training programmes consideration will also be given to use of shared Member/officer development activities.

INDUCTION PROGRAMME

23. A comprehensive induction programme will be provided for all Members following the District Council elections and to those Members elected at by-elections. This programme will be developed and monitored by the Member Development Working Group and will encompass the following (some training will be a core requirement for all Members and some will be relevant to specific Members depending on their roles and/or existing skills):
- knowledge based learning i.e. the role of a Councillor, code of conduct, planning or licensing knowledge;
 - skills based learning i.e. IT skills;
 - community issues (including community leadership and planning, equalities, public consultation, dealing with complaints);
 - regulatory functions; and
 - scrutiny process and specific skills required for that function.
24. An officer will be offered as a contact point to assist newly elected Members until they are familiar with the way in which the Council operates. Political groups may also allocate Member mentors for newly elected Councillors.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT ELECTED MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

25. Member Development is resourced from the allocated Member Development budget. This budget will be prioritised to cover needs linked to the Member Development Programme, and corporate learning and development needs.
26. Member entitlements to travel and subsistence for attendance at learning and development events is stated in the Members' Scheme of Allowances set out in Part 6 of the Constitution.
27. The Senior Member Services Officer will administer the Member Development budget.

EVALUATION

28. The Council is committed to obtaining feedback on the effectiveness of training and development undertaken and will use the results in planning future programmes. The Member Development Working Group will evaluate the contribution it makes to meeting the Council's aims and objectives and to supporting and developing individual Members.

REPORTING ON PROGRESS

29. All Members will be kept informed of Member training progress and evaluation through the minutes of the Member Development Working Group. Where issues relating to Member Development arise, reports may also be sent to the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Finance and Performance. Minutes of meetings of the Member Development Working Group will be published in MIS.

SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

30. The Council is committed to sharing with other Authorities good practice in Member Development by the Council and is very willing to learn from good practice developed by others.

REVIEW

31. The Strategy will be reviewed annually.