

Cheltenham Borough Council

Council – 16 December 2024

Member Development Strategy

Accountable member:

Councillor Jackie Chelin, Chair of the Member Development Panel

Accountable officer:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance and Customer Services

Ward(s) affected:

n/a

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

This report seeks approval of the Member Development Strategy.

Recommendations:

To approve and adopt the Member Development Strategy.

1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

No direct financial or property implications of the recommendations in the report.

Signed off by: Gemma Bell, Director of Finance and Assets (Deputy Section 151 Officer)

gemma.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendation of this report. The

implementation of a member development strategy and training arising from the strategy will ensure members are briefed on the obligations placed upon them in undertaking their role and meeting any legal requirements.

Signed off by: One Legal – legal.services@onelegal.org.uk

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

There are no direct environmental implications associated with this report. Training opportunities relating to climate change are available to Members at the induction stage, continuous development stage and e-learning module for self-directed learning.

Signed off by: Maizy McCann, Climate Officer, Maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Making Cheltenham the Cyber Capital of the UK
- Working with residents, communities and businesses to help make Cheltenham #netzero by 2030
- Increasing the number of affordable homes through our £180m housing investment plan
- Ensuring residents, communities and businesses benefit from Cheltenham's future growth and prosperity
- Being a more modern, efficient and financially sustainable council

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows: A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. 31. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. The new Member Development Strategy will be sensitive to the protected characteristics of the councillor cohort, and considerate of their diverse needs (eg. making training sessions accessible). In addition, equality will continue to be one of the components of member training in order to ensure that the organisation fully understands its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

This is outlined in paragraph 8 of the draft Member Development Strategy at appendix iii.

2 Background

- 2.1 The role of a local councillor is becoming ever more challenging with the skills required by councillors to fulfil their roles becoming more diverse. The council is committed to ensuring that Members have access to the learning and development they need to perform effectively in their vital role in representing residents and taking decisions on behalf of the community.
- 2.2 The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge held in July 2023, recommended that the Council improve Member Induction to support Members in understanding their roles and responsibilities and to look to refresh scrutiny training to give Members confidence to add value and constructive challenge.'
- 2.3 The Member Development Panel (MDP) was established in June 2023. The first task of the MDP was to consider the Member Induction Plan for the whole council elections in May 2024 where the feedback from the LGA Peer challenge was taken on board. It has worked closely with councillors and officers to prepare a strategy to set out the council's approach to learning and development of Members. Having a Member Development Strategy in place is one of the requirements for achievement of the South West Councils Councillor Development Charter which the council is seeking to attain in 2025.

3 The Role of the Member Development Panel

- 3.1 The Member Development Panel is a cross party group and currently includes councillors of varied positions including committee vice chairs, Group Leaders and councillors elected at the 2024 local elections. The Member Development Panel is chaired by Councillor Jackie Chelin and membership includes Councillor Ashleigh Davies and Councillor Dr Helen Pemberton. The group is supported by the Director for Governance and Customer Services and Democratic Services.
- 3.2 Since its establishment in 2023, the Panel has reviewed the overall position in respect of learning and development activities for Members and approved the comprehensive Member Induction Plan for 2024, the feedback from which is currently being evaluated. A further survey will be issued to Members in due course on their overall experience which will help inform the Panel's approach going forward and into the 2026 elections as well as skills training and development.
- 3.3 Importantly the MDP has developed a draft member-led strategy to ensure that there is a framework for continuous development.

4 Member Development Strategy

- 4.1 The overarching aim of the strategy (Appendix iii) is to ensure 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.
- 4.2 The objectives of the strategy are to:
- 4.2.1 Ensure all Members have consistent and equal access to training and development opportunities that take into account different learning preferences;

4.2.2 Provide support for all Members to acquire sufficient knowledge and a full range of skills to fulfil all their duties confidently and effectively;

4.2.3 Ensure mechanisms are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the development programme and

4.2.4 Obtain South West Council's Charter Status accreditation for Councillor Development.

4.3 The strategy sets out the approach towards continuous development and also identifies an approach to the following areas of importance:

4.4 Identifying member development needs: Improving the identification and assessment of training requirements will provide additional governance to the democratic process and ensure that Members gain the necessary skills to carry out their roles effectively.

4.5 Meeting development needs: in recognition of the varying development needs and preferred learning styles, the strategy sets out a range of delivery methods that should be considered including workshops, written resources and E learning.

4.6 Feedback and evaluation: Training providers will be asked to set out the learning objectives and Members will be asked to feedback whether they believe the learning objectives have been achieved and whether the training delivery method was appropriate for the topic. This will ensure that the Member development offering is continuously improved.

4.7 Performance Measures: By putting in place a Member Development Strategy, the council can take a structured approach to measuring the effectiveness of member development and our effectiveness at meeting Members' training and development needs. The performance measures are included in the strategy at paragraph 8.

5 Resources

5.1 The budget for Member development is currently set at £5,000 per year. Democratic Services will seek ways to use the budget in the best way to meet the training needs of Councillors. Where the council has in-house skills and capability to deliver sessions, these will be progressed. External providers have delivered sessions in the 2024 induction and we will look for training support from national/regional providers such as the LGA/South West Councils or coordinate with our neighbouring authorities to minimise costs.

6 Reasons for recommendations

6.1 If the strategy is approved, the MDP will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the strategy and the delivery of the programme of learning and development. The Member Development approach and performance measures will be reviewed on an annual basis.

6.2 The strategy includes a commitment to work towards South West Council's /LGA Member Development Charter. Charter status will emphasise the continuing importance of training and development for Members to ensure future provision is based on need, quality of training is monitored and training is provided to members on an equal basis. Work towards the Charter status has already commenced.

7 Alternative options considered

7.1 To not adopt a member development strategy. This is not recommended. Local councils are strongly encouraged, by the Local Government Association (LGA), to create and adopt member development strategies to facilitate continuing professional development of our local councillors.

7.2 Continue with our programme of member briefings, induction, role specific and mandatory training, unguided by a member development strategy. This is not recommended. Putting in place a member development strategy provides a clear framework and commitment to investing in members' ongoing professional development.

8 Consultation and feedback

8.1 Member Development Panel and Group Leaders

9 Key risks

9.1 Please see Appendix i.

Report author:

Bev Thomas, Democratic Services Team Leader - bev.thomas@cheltenham.gov.uk

Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Equality Impact Assessment – Screening
- iii. [Draft Member Development Strategy](#)

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner
If there is not a Member development strategy in place this potentially leaves our elected members unable to fulfil their electoral mandate to the full.	Claire Hughes, Director of Governance and Customer Services	3	2	6	Control	As a member led authority, we will gather evidence on the skills and experiences our current cohort of members possess; where gaps are identified by our Members we will seek to address this by providing training and development opportunities. By agreeing this strategy and subsequent training programme, the council has the scope to apply for South West Councils/LGA charter status, a recognised standard in local authority member development practice	Director of Governance and Customer Services

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment (Screening)

1. Identify the policy, project, function or service change

a. Person responsible for this Equality Impact Assessment

Officer responsible: Bev Thomas	Service Area: Democratic Services
Title: Democratic Services Team Leader	Date of assessment: 19 November 2024
Signature:	

b. Is this a policy, function, strategy, service change or project?

Strategy

If other, please specify:

c. Name of the policy, function, strategy, service change or project

Member Development Strategy

Is this new or existing?

New or proposed

Please specify reason for change or development of policy, function, strategy, service change or project

To provide a framework to ensure there is support for all Members to enable them to acquire sufficient knowledge and a full range of skills to maximise their ability and capability in their roles.

d. What are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes and who is likely to benefit from it?

Aims: To provide a framework to ensure there is support for all Members to enable them to acquire sufficient knowledge and a full range of skills to maximise their ability and capability in their roles.

Objectives: Ensure all Members have consistent and equal access to training and development opportunities that take into account different learning styles;
Provide support for all Members to acquire sufficient knowledge and a full range of skills to fulfil their duties confidently and effectively;

	<p>Ensure mechanisms are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the development programme and</p> <p>Obtain South West Council’s Charter Status accreditation for Councillor development.</p>
Outcomes:	Members are briefed on the requirements of their role and have access to necessary training.
Benefits:	Members can develop a full range of skills and knowledge to fulfil their duties confidently and effectively

e. What are the expected impacts?

Are there any aspects, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could have an impact on the lives of people, including employees and customers.

Yes

Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative?

Positive

Please provide an explanation for your answer:

A structured approach to Member development will be of benefit.