

Cheltenham Borough Council

Draft CBC Member Development Strategy

Member

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Responsible officer

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Revision date	Version	Description
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Consultees

Internal

- Member Development Panel
- Leader
- Group Leaders

External

- text or N/A

Distribution

Democratic Services and Elected Members

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1. Introduction and purpose of the strategy

Members of the Council and community leaders represent the wards in which they have been elected. The work of a Councillor includes decision making, developing and reviewing policy, considering issues such as planning and licensing applications and ensuring that businesses comply with the law.

Members are accountable for the delivery of the priorities of the Council. This relies on them having the key skills and knowledge to help provide the best possible services to residents and communities.

Key Priority 1 : Enhance Cheltenham’s reputation as the cyber capital of the UK.

Key Priority 2 : Working with residents , communities and businesses to help make Cheltenham Net Zero by 2030.

Key Priority 3 : Increasing the number of affordable homes through our £180 m housing investment plan.

Key Priority 4 : Ensuring residents, communities and businesses benefit from Cheltenham’s growth and prosperity.

Key Priority 5: Being a more modern, efficient and financially sustainable council.

Cheltenham Borough Council recognises the importance of learning and development and is committed to providing high quality development to its elected Members. This Member development strategy will ensure that every Member has access to the appropriate learning and development they need to effectively fulfil their role, now and in the future.

2. Objectives

This strategy sets out the Council's commitment to supporting Members with their development, and details how elected representatives will be equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to fulfil their various roles effectively and to the best of their abilities. It also covers how development needs will be identified; the ways in which Members can participate in continuous learning and development; and how the success of learning is measured and evaluated.

The overarching aim of the strategy is, therefore, 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.

The following principles will underpin how member development is delivered.

- **Members will be offered maximum opportunity** to acquire the tools and training that are needed to perform their role effectively.
- **Members will be actively encouraged to take responsibility** for their own learning and development and to seek opportunities for themselves.
- **Training and development applies to all Members** – regardless of their time in post.
- Members are expected **to attend mandatory training** and evidence continuing professional development.

The objectives of the Member Development Strategy are to:

2.1 **Ensure all Members have consistent and equal access to training and development opportunities that take into account different learning preferences:**

- a. Ensure all newly elected Members are properly inducted to the Council;
- b. Ensure compliance with mandatory training;
- c. Offer the opportunity to participate in continuous development through a variety of methods;
- d. Provide training and development at different times and in different formats to ensure equality of opportunity.

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:

- a. Encourage all Members to take advantage of the learning and development opportunities available;
- b. Ensure Members are able to perform any 'special responsibilities'; e.g. any regulatory (planning or licensing) or scrutiny tasks
- c. Ensure Members feel confident to undertake their roles;
- d. Support the continued development of councillors to prepare them for roles they may fill in the future.

2.3 Ensure mechanisms are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the development programme:

- a. Provide a clear evaluation framework for councillor development based upon individual, organisational needs or key area of the council's work.

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

3. Member Development Panel

The Member Development Panel (MDP) was established to oversee the Member Development Strategy to ensure that development is Member led and is accountable to the council, supported and advised by council officers.

The Panel is a cross-party group and includes councillors of varied positions including vice chairs, group leaders, and councillors elected at the last local elections.

The MDP has a renewed commitment to supporting Members with their development needs and will ensure that the programme of activities for the 2024 cohort offers learning in a range of topics and skills whilst taking into account their previous feedback.

Along with the Member Development Strategy, the MDP will have responsibility for:

- Encouraging member participation and take up of learning and development opportunities;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy and update as required to ensure it continues to meet Members' needs; and
- Engaging with Members individually and collectively to identify their learning needs and priorities.

4. Member Induction and Development Programme

Following the whole council elections in 2024, a comprehensive Member Induction Plan was provided for 12 new Members.

The MDP reviewed the member development offer and Induction Plan for 2024 and is currently assessing the feedback provided by these new Members. This will inform the approach to learning content, induction, member development sessions, training delivery and personal development planning.

The Induction Plan for 2024 was delivered via a program of concentrated activity over the first 6 months and is followed by ongoing targeted training and support for the remainder of the two/four-year term. The Plan will be flexible to adapt to meet changing needs.

4.1 Induction and Refresher Programme

It is recognised that the period following an election can be challenging and overwhelming for returning councillors and newly elected councillors, in particular. Considerable learning is required during a condensed period. During this period, it is important that councillors receive the appropriate level of information, support and help they need. The induction plan is therefore rolled out across several months, so it does not feel onerous or overwhelming.

The plan for new and returning councillors is relevant for all Members and consists of a wide range of sessions providing overviews, legislative and policy updates to all key council areas including:

- Cabinet Member/Committee specific (including regulatory) sessions
- Guidance and support for Councillors undertaking specific roles.
- Council priorities
- The Council's budget
- Opportunities to meet senior officers
- Partnership working with local organisations

Some training events will highlight whether the training is 'mandatory' or 'strongly recommended' to help Members prioritise attendance at training.

4.2 Regulatory Committees

Members who are part of a regulatory committee are required to attend training before taking part in decision making. Planning Committee Members and any Member who may sit as a substitute will be required to attend a minimum of 2 training sessions each municipal year. Members who fail to attend the minimum training will be excluded from meetings of Planning Committee until appropriate training has been completed. any Member or substitute member who is on the Licensing Committee must take part in training organised by the relevant director either before the first meeting of the Committee or within 3 months after being nominated to serve on the Committee, whichever is the later. If they do not, or cannot, they must step down. Members and substitute members will be given regular updates and offered refresher courses to keep them informed of important changes in legislation, procedures or



practices either orally, at training sessions, or as briefing notes.

4.3 Mandatory Training

There is an identified amount of training that must be completed by all Members:

Session	When	Type of Training	Purpose
Code of Conduct training	Upon election	In person, delivered by the Monitoring Officer	To reflect on the importance of standards in public life; To outline the provisions of the Gloucestershire code of conduct for members To understand the requirements around registering and declaring interests
Cultural Awareness and Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion	Within the first few months of being elected Annual		To include: Understanding Culture, UK's Cultural Diversity, Stereotypes and Biases, Effective Communication across Cultures, Cultural Intelligence and case studies
Safeguarding	Within first 12 months of elected term To be completed every two years	E-Learning or Face to Face	This training covers the legislative framework and legal expectations of elected Members in relation to safeguarding. The training will help develop knowledge of how to recognise, report and record concerns about a child or adult at risk.
Cyber Security and Data Protection	Annual	E-Learning	To ensure Members are aware of the importance in making sure all online activity is undertaken securely and the common threats the council faces from cyber-crime.
Health and Safety	Annual	E-learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gain a better understanding of everyone's health and safety responsibilities Be able to identify the different types of safety signs and what they mean Gain a better understanding of the

			types of risks and hazards in a workplace and learn how you can prevent accidents and injuries
Prevent	Annual	E-learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Prevent duty • different forms of extremism and terrorism • the risk around radicalisation and your supportive role • making a Prevent referral that is both informed and made with good intention • the interventions and support available

4.4 Continuous Development

Continuous member development is key to delivering high-quality, cost-effective services to the borough of Cheltenham. All Members have a responsibility to learn new skills in line with the ongoing changes in local government.

Development opportunities will be made available throughout the term based on the following categories:

- **Committee specific** training
 - **ICT skills** training to support Members with the launch of new ICT initiatives or ways of working e.g., Modern.gov.
 - **New Legislation/Policy** training to brief Members on new or updated legislation and relevant changes to service delivery.
 - **Emerging priorities** training to support Members in their role such as climate change, working with community groups etc.
 - **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** training to provide Members with an increased awareness of equality and diversity issues.
 - **Development needs** as identified by individual Members
- **4.5 Personal development and self-directed learning**

The responsibility for identifying learning and development needs rests with individual Members. Members should consider whether they have an area they would like to strengthen their knowledge, skills and understanding in a way that is not possible through internal provision and should consider seeking out



additional opportunities through the Local Government Association (LGA) and other relevant professional bodies and trainers.

In assessing the responses to training needs assessment, Democratic Services will identify training opportunities to be included in a continuous development programme for Members.

There are other self-directed learning opportunities available, including:

- The Member handbook (particularly useful immediately upon election)
- E-learning
- LGA Workbooks: the LGA offers a wide range of development resources to councillors www.lga.gov.uk
- The Members' Hub: the Hub includes signposting to learning resources and/or training recordings and documents where appropriate. Members can also request for their own guidance documents to be added to the Hub or make requests for topics to be added.

4.6 Member-led training

Members can identify learning opportunities that they can make available to other Members including:

- Sharing of knowledge and good practice
- Buddy/mentoring – experienced Members providing support to those new to the role (mentoring is usually provided within political Groups but Leadership Team act as buddies for new Councillors)
- Case-work management

Democratic Services will be available to support any member-led training events by promoting the training and providing a suitable meeting space including a virtual space, e.g. for sharing notes from any training Members may have attended on the Members' Hub.

5. Methods of delivery

A wide variety of in-person and/or virtual formats will be used to deliver training, such as:

- **Training:** the purpose of a training session is to teach somebody a specific skill or type of behaviour. Training sessions are likely to be delivered by service managers, technical officers or external providers
- **Online:** E-learning modules may be used at times to impart important information or teach a specific skill.
- **Workshop:** the purpose of a workshop is to involve participants in learning. Workshops are sessions where participants/attendees are involved in interactive activities or group tasks.
- **Briefing:** the purpose of briefing is to give information or instructions.



Briefings could be presented on Teams or via written briefing notes.

Where appropriate, we will work in partnership with other local authorities to deliver joint sessions.

6. Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity

As a public body we are bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is defined in the Equality Act as:

“A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Councils' Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will underpin how we design and deliver the Member Development Plan and in particular will;

- Ensure all Councillors have equal access to training and development opportunities, i.e. by providing multiple sessions in accessible formats and at various times of the day and having regard to religious and cultural holiday periods
- Offer strongly recommended training on equalities and inclusion to all Members on an annual basis. This will provide Members with the skills necessary to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duties.
- Provide advice and guidance to Members setting out how to interpret and evaluate the Equalities Impact Assessments completed for formal reports.

7. Feedback and Evaluation

Evaluation of learning development activities will seek to assess the impact of the development strategy. Training providers will be asked to set out the learning objectives for each session and Members will be asked to complete a feedback form asking whether they believe the learning objectives have been achieved, whether the training delivery method was appropriate for the topic and other relevant feedback such as the timing of the sessions.

Regular evaluation of the Member Development offer will be undertaken by Democratic Services in conjunction with the Member Development Panel.

The following evaluation methods will be used:

- Training evaluation forms and other feedback received from Members.
- Feedback through Democratic Services and the Member Development Panel.
- Statistics on Member participation.

- Annual survey to Members.

Following its completion, the Member Development Panel will review the effectiveness of the induction programme, make recommendations for any changes to future induction programmes and will also recommend follow up areas for training and development.

8. Performance Measures

A structured method to measuring the effectiveness of member development will ensure that our approach and content are fit for purpose and meet Members' needs as well as the needs of the wider council and communities they serve.

Our Key Performance Measures are (the figures represent a starting point with the expectation that there is an increase year on year):

- i. Ensure all members have consistent and equal access to training and development opportunities that take into account different learning preferences:**
 - 100% of Members completing mandatory training;
 - 70% of Members attending the 'strongly recommended' training courses;
 - 80% of Members expressing overall satisfaction with the development programme.
- ii. Provide support for all Members to acquire sufficient knowledge and a full range of skills to fulfil all their duties confidently and effectively:**
 - 80% of Members reporting that they feel they have the skills to fulfil all their duties;
- iii. Evaluate the effectiveness of the training programme to ensure continuous improvement:**
 - 80% of Members report that, on the whole, the objectives of training sessions have been met.
- iv. Obtain South West Council's Charter Status accreditation for Member Development by May 2025:**
 - South West Council's Charter Status accreditation is secured by May 2025.
- v. Monitor the Member Development budget to ensure it is appropriately spent**

9. Support for Prospective Councillors

The council is keen to attract Members from all different backgrounds to join the council, including those who are not necessarily part of established political groups. These prospective candidates might require additional information, and support on what it is like to be a councillor, such as details of the potential time commitments, the benefits of being a councillor and supporting communities, as well as some of the challenges.

The following specific support will be offered to prospective councillors:

- A Candidate pack will provide information on the process for standing for election as well as details on what it means to be a councillor and details regarding the member induction plan;
- Candidates will be encouraged to observe council and committee meetings to further their understanding of how the council operates.