



## **Member Learning & Development Policy**

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Vision**

That all Members have the necessary skills and knowledge to perform effectively in their current or any potential future role and to enable them to contribute effectively to the delivery of the Joint Strategic Plan and good governance of the Council.

### **1.2. Is Member Learning and Development important?**

1.2.1. A high-quality Member Learning and Development process is crucial to ensuring that all Members have the skills and knowledge to be able to carry out their roles effectively.

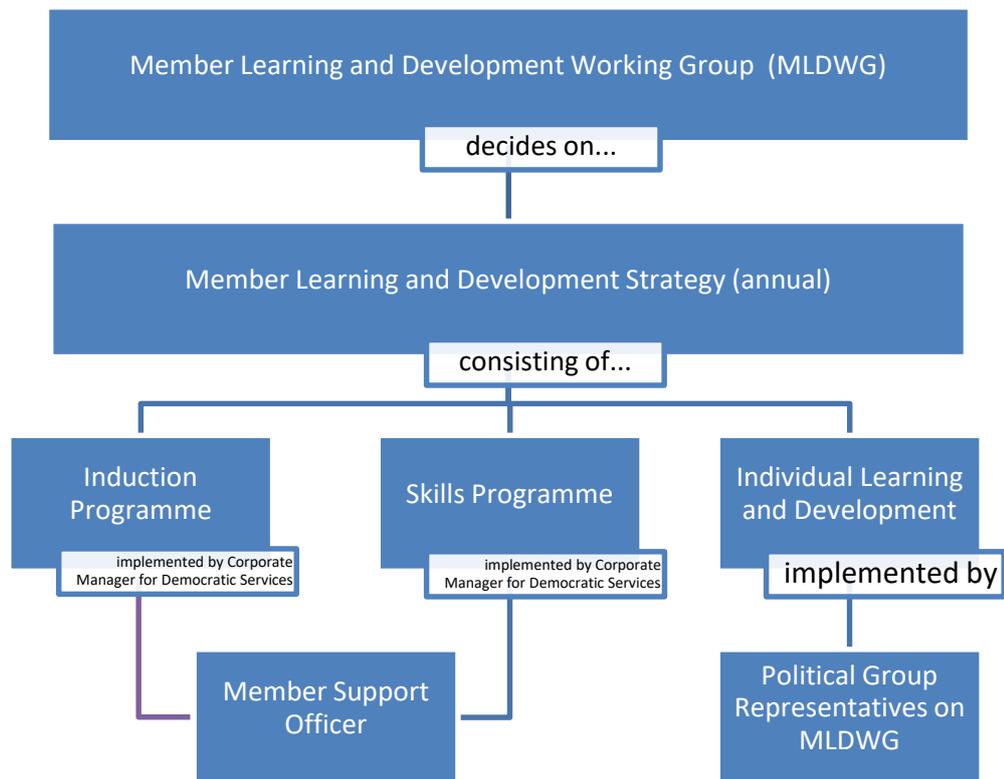
1.2.2. The policy will support Members in a variety of ways to enable them to function successfully as both decision-makers and community leaders. This might take the form of traditional training sessions, such as Chairing Skills, involving workshops and handbooks, as well as more practical 'on the ground' training in line with our Equality and Diversity Policy.

1.2.3. In addition, Members need to respond to external issues such as changing societal and demographic needs, different ways in which public sector organisations work (such as partnerships with external organisations) and changes in the law relating to local government. Members also need to be able to deal effectively with casework arising from the work they carry out as community leaders within their wards. This policy will aim to facilitate Members in all of the above.

### **1.3. Aims and Objectives**

- To create a clear framework for the development of elected Members based upon their individual needs and the needs of the Council as a whole.
- To ensure that Members have the skills and knowledge necessary to lead the delivery of high quality public services.
- To ensure that Members are fully aware of their responsibilities and accountability to the Council and their electorate.
- To support the continued lifelong development of Members to help prepare them for any roles they may have in the future.
- To ensure that training and development of Members is seen as a key factor in the success of the organisation.

#### 1.4. Overview of the basic structure of this policy



## **2. Supporting Framework**

### **2.1. Resources**

Each year the Council will identify the resources that can be devoted to Member Development. These resources will include:-

- **Budget**
- Particularly with regard to the Skills Programme, Member Learning and Development sessions will ideally be delivered by Members themselves, and failing this external trainers (for example from the LGA, Suffolk Association of Local Councils, professional training agencies, or think tanks), rather than Officers. Direct training by officers should only be used when there is no-one else reasonably available with the necessary skills or expertise. This is to ensure that Officers are not directing our elected representatives as to how they should be doing their jobs!
- There will, however, be continuous support from Democratic Services to organise and implement the programme ( Democratic Service Manager and the Officer for Member Development).
- The Leader for each Group will be responsible for Member Learning and Development for their Group.
- Members of the Working Group will, at their discretion, implement an Individual Learning and Development Process (as outlined in section 3.3.) amongst their particular Political Groups, with support from within that political group.
- Places available from sponsored or external funding e.g. LGA.
- Opportunities through attending seminars, conferences or visits hosted by partners.
- Whether or not training is delivered internally or externally depends on the topic, existing in-house expertise and the number of Members who have expressed an interest.
- If external trainers are chosen it is for their knowledge of the subject and experience working with elected representatives.
- Cost effectiveness is continually considered in the planning and evaluation stages.

### **2.2. The Member Learning and Development Working Group**

#### **2.2.1. Key Features:**

- Will consist of representatives from all political groups on BOTH Councils (including independents if they are a group) and be supported by officers.

- Will meet quarterly (although meetings can be scheduled) to agree and review training and development activities for Members and to provide 'general leadership' on the issue.
- Reports to the Cabinet.

#### 2.2.2. Terms of reference:

- To champion and encourage learning and development amongst Members.
- To engage all elected Members in the Learning and Development process.
- To be a reference point for Group Leaders with regards to member development.
- To assist in the shaping and prioritising of member development activities – for example, those sessions included on the Skills Programme.
- To encourage an effective member/officer working relationship that engages all elected Members.
- To ensure that member development and training opportunities relate to the Corporate Priorities of the organisation.
- To ensure that development opportunities are planned to fit in with the family and caring responsibilities of Members as far as possible.
- To develop and implement the 4 year-long Member Learning and Development Strategy, consisting of the Induction Programme, the Skills Programme, and Individual Learning and Development, in the following manner:
  - At the end of each year, to establish a Training Needs Analysis that evaluates the overall effectiveness of the Member Learning and Development Strategy for that year and identifies learning and development needs for the following year, and to receive an annual report informed by that analysis;
  - Informed by the above-mentioned report, to review and decide upon the content of the Member Learning and Development Strategy for that year, and to identify and monitor the budget and other resources required to deliver it;
  - Throughout the year, to regularly review and monitor the Strategy to ensure it meets the needs of Members and the Council as follows:-
    - By regularly monitoring how training is carried out and its effectiveness;
    - By monitoring Member involvement in the training and development;
  - To take any necessary action as regards this.
- As regards individual training:
  - To establish criteria for funding bespoke/individual training and development requests;

- To ensure that information from individual interviews is channelled through the Political Groups to the Working Group, so that it can be representative of the variety of political positions across the Council;
- As part of Individual Learning and Development, to introduce a process for the implementation of Personal Development Plans and offer Members the opportunity to participate in the process.

## **2.3. The Member Support Officer**

### **2.3.1. Terms of Reference:**

- To support the Member Learning and Development Working Group and party leaders in carrying out their responsibilities.
- To commission / organise delivery of training on recommendations from Members.
- To monitor the programme, feeding evaluation back to the Member Learning and Development Working Group and reporting their findings to the Cabinet.
- To publicise events to all Members.
- To create an annual Training Needs Assessment for Members and to ensure that this is statistically representative of the views of Members as a whole.
- For those Members who do not belong to a Political Group large enough to be included on the Member Learning and Development Working Group, to interview said Members to help them develop a Personal Development Plan (PDP).
- To provide Members with the option of a 6-monthly progress review as regards their PDP.

### **3. The Member Learning and Development Strategy**

A Member Learning and Development Strategy should be created on a yearly basis by the Member Learning and Development Working Group, informed by the annual Training Needs Analysis. It will consist of the following core elements:

#### **3.1. Induction Programme**

- 3.1.1. All elected Members and Agents will be given dates on the Member Induction Day.
- 3.1.2. An induction pack will be given to new Members at the Count after the results are announced – how the council works, what is expected of Members.
- 3.1.3. A draft programme is provided to prospective new Members before the election outlining the programme so that they can be aware of timings and make this time available.
- 3.1.4. Existing Members will be invited to any of the sessions as a refresher / to share their own knowledge and experience.

#### **3.2. Skills Programme**

- 3.2.1. Officers organise trainers to implement this. These will ideally be either Members themselves or external trainers (for example from the LGA, Suffolk Association of Local Councils, professional training agencies, or think tanks), rather than Officers.
- 3.2.2. Members will receive a guide of forthcoming training and the full training programme will appear on the Members extranet.
- 3.2.3. Members should be notified of forthcoming training courses via email alerts.
- 3.2.4. In order to support the diverse development needs of Members, development needs will be met through a range of sessions and training methods. In some cases, these will be delivered through the Council's own internal resources. Where necessary, however, the Council will identify and buy in specialist providers with a proven track record of effectiveness and value for money. Where the Council can facilitate joint training with other partners or stakeholders it will do so. The following methods of delivery will be used:
  - Training courses
  - Councillor briefings and workshops

- Conferences and seminars
- E learning
- Peer mentors
- Visits to other stakeholders, partners etc
- Case studies

3.2.5. The following skills sessions should all be included as part of the programme at some point over the next four years:

- Casework and representation
- Charing
- Collaborative and partnership working (see the Local Government Association's 'Political Skills Framework')
- Communication, media relations and social media (see LGA Political Skills Framework for further information)
- Community leadership and engagement (see LGA Political Skills Framework for further information)
- Conflict resolution
- Essentials for aspiring leaders
- Effective meetings
- IT skills
- Influencing skills
- Local government finance
- Planning policy
- Political understanding and integrity (see LGA Political Skills Framework)
- Public speaking
- Presentation skills
- Project management
- Scrutiny and challenging skills (see LGA Political Skills Framework)
- Speed reading
- Understanding of legal responsibilities / protocol (see LGA Political Skills Framework under 'Regulating and Monitoring Skills')
- Workload / time management

3.2.6. Sometimes Members will want to attend events outside of the programme e.g. from their PDP / a skills gap not previously considered. This could, for instance, include conferences, courses or seminars conducted by Universities, the Local Government Association, the Suffolk Association of Local Councils, or external training organisations:

- To attend an ad-hoc course, the Member must agree this with their Political Group Leader or the Chair of the MLDWG and will be subject to budgetary agreement – this will then given to Democratic Services to book.
- Any copies of course notes should be stored in the Library of the members' extranet.

### **3.3. Individualized Learning and Development**

#### 3.3.1. Role Descriptions

- Role descriptions have been formulated to clarify the responsibilities and expectations for prospective Members, newly elected Member and existing Members, members of the public, partner organisations and officers.
- The formal introduction of Member Role Descriptions are intended to guide Members in terms of the expectations associated with their role, to inform the public and officers and provide a useful tool for future Member training and development.

#### 3.3.2. Personal Development Plans:

- Representatives of those Political Groups represented on the Member Learning and Development Working Group are responsible for ensuring that each Member of their particular Political Group develops a Personal Development Plan regarding their current and future development and training needs as Members. The PDP will identify the individual's strengths and clarify the needs of their role that require further training.
- For Political Groups not large enough to be represented on the Member Learning and Development Working Group, individual interviews will be conducted by the Member Learning and Development Officer.
- Members must have a PDP interview with their Member Learning and Development representative, their Group Leader or with officers and attend 12 hours of training to receive their full remuneration package
- Outcomes of interviews retained in PDP folders

## **4. Evaluation**

### **4.1. Continuous review:**

- 4.1.1. Induction training followed by a 6-month assessment of the impact, knowledge or skill gained in helping the Member in their new role
- 4.1.2. Attendance at training and development events recorded to identify and address issues around non-attendance
- 4.1.3. Published role descriptions and a Member Development folder are provided to Members, which are used for self-evaluation at the end of the year
- 4.1.4. PDP process and Member Development folders – targets reviewed at the 6-month review and at the Members next PDP.

### **4.2. Annual Training Needs Analysis:**

- 4.2.1. There will be an annual Training Needs Analysis presented to Council consisting of...
  - The annual Member Learning and Development Survey (reviewed by the Member Learning and Development Officer each year). The survey should include questions on which sessions and styles of learning delivery Members found successful the previous year, what could have been improved, how many sessions they attended, and which sessions and methods of delivery they would like included on the following year's Strategy. There should also be an additional section gathering brief information on cultural and personal circumstances, in order that the content and timings of sessions more adequately fits Members' needs.
  - Data from the survey should be triangulated with anonymised data from PDPs.
  - Feedback data from individual sessions.
  - Feedback taken from officers regarding Member development.
  - Feedback obtained from senior Members of the Councils' Cabinets, especially the Leaders.
  - Feedback from other Councils.
  - Performance Indicators are agreed by the MLDWG – currently they are:
    - Activity indicator – average number of training hours / days per Member;

- Financial indicators –
  - Actual cost per elected Member;
  - Average cost per elected Member;
- Learning outcome indicators:
  - Number of personal performance targets achieved (but this would merely reflect relative, rather than absolute, progress);
  - 90% of Members to undertake PDP meeting;
  - 100% of newly elected Members to take part in the induction process;
  - All Members who attend training events (including ad hoc) asked to complete an evaluation form – these are then collated and used as part of the Training Needs Analysis.

4.2.2. Learning and development events will then be reviewed and changes made where necessary.

Information from annual survey

Feedback from individual training



Member Learning and Development Officer



Training Needs Analysis



Member Learning and Development Working Group



Member Learning and Development Strategy