

# **Councillor Development Strategy**

**October 2015**



# 1. Councillor Development and Support Strategy

## Declaration

The council will ensure its councillors are equipped with the knowledge and skills to fulfil their role in all its many aspects. The council appreciates the important and often complex role councillors have in representing the wider community, influencing policy development and working with partners to achieve shared goals. The development programme will ensure that all councillors have the opportunity to develop the skills to fulfil this role.

## Aims and Objectives of the Councillor Development and Support Strategy

The strategy will reflect the pledges, values and principles set out in the Corporate Plan. These are embedded in the briefings, performance monitoring and reports submitted to committee for decision making.

The key aims and objectives of the Councillor Development and Support Strategy are set out below.

- To support the delivery of the council's strategic priorities
- To respond to the ongoing organisational change within the council
- To respond to councillors development priorities identified within the annual survey
- To support councillors in their role through the provision of resources
- To ensure all councillors have access to recommended programmes

## Aims and Objectives of the Councillor Development Group

The Councillor Development Working Group will lead the council on these development matters, supported by officers in Democratic Services and Strategy.

The Terms of Reference for the Councillor Development are to consider all matters relating to Councillor training and development, including -

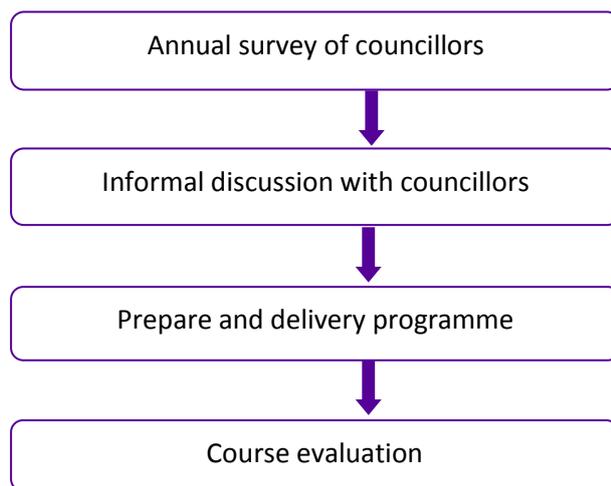
- The role of the councillor in the community ensure all councillors
- The councillor induction programme
- Raising awareness of important local issues affecting the council through briefings and working groups
- The quasi-judicial duties undertaken by specific committees (Planning, Licensing, Decision making and Code of Conduct issues)
- Development of ICT systems to support councillors
- The knowledge and personal skills required to be an effective councillor

The Lead Councillor for Member Development and Support will be the Chairman of the Member Development Working Group. Democratic Services will be the lead council service in the co-ordination and delivery of Councillor Support and Development,

## 2. Councillor Development Programme

There will be an annual survey of councillors in which they will identify the training and development priorities they believe should be considered for the following year. Councillors will be advised of other suitable opportunities for training that arise throughout the year.

The Councillor Development Working Group will approve the annual survey and delivery programme. They also receive the course evaluation to assess the effectiveness and value for money delivered by course events.



The purpose of the development programme is to ensure elected councillors are able to fulfil their role as a representative for their Ward, along with any other council roles they have inside or outside the council, and to enable them to feel confident in understanding the issues facing Local Government. The programme is based on corporate priorities agreed by the Full Council and councillor priorities identified in the annual survey. It will provide a range of different opportunities for attendance through various informal and formal learning events, including conferences, seminars, training courses, briefings and workshops.

### Induction Programme

The council will provide a comprehensive induction package for incoming elected councillors. The induction package will include personal briefings, written material and access to IT facilities, including one-to-one iPad training. All councillors will be given access to the councillors web pages containing guidance, training material and other information that will assist them in their role. Mentoring will be organised and overseen by members of the appropriate political party, supported by a nominated member of Management Team and other officers as appropriate.

The Induction Programme will provide information on

- the functions of the council
- the legal requirements, roles and responsibilities of councillors
- the Codes of Conduct, Protocols, and requirements in respect of ethics and probity
- an overview of council services
- the key aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan and other key strategy documents such as the Local Plan.

Induction sessions will be open to all elected councillors so that those who are re-elected can refresh their knowledge and share their experience with those who have been newly elected.

### **Councillor Briefings**

The council recognises the need for knowledge as well as training. There will be a number of briefings, seminars and workshops held that will provide information in respect of local and national issues. There will also be a range of other events that councillors may wish to nominate themselves to attend, or be invited to attend by officers/service areas, and these events may include external conferences.

### **Attendance Records**

The council will maintain a councillor training attendance database.

### **The responsibilities of Councillors**

Councillors will fulfil their responsibilities by undertaking the following:

- Attending training or briefing events. For certain roles, attendance at these training or development events is compulsory before serving on certain committees, including Licensing and Planning.
- Supporting each other through mentoring and advice
- To gain an understanding of the constitution and law.

## **3. Councillor Support**

The Councillor Development Working Group will oversee all councillor training and development issues. The group will be cross party and will include the council representative on the South East Employers.

Staff from Democratic Services and Strategy will support the councillors on this working group in order to provide assistance and receive feedback on any issues which they identify.

The council will also provide the following to support councillors:

- An advisory service within the Strategy and Democracy team
- An annual budget for Councillor Development to plan for any further training sessions which may arise throughout the year.
- A Councillors area on the internet which summarises news and events, provides useful links to council services
- An induction programme to include training, briefings and written material

- Mandatory training and refreshers for regulatory committees, including Planning; Licensing, Audit.
- A cross party Councillor Development Working Group to lead on development matters and subsequent evaluation of these.
- An annual survey of councillors to establish their training priorities and general views on the support provided.
- Mentors for new councillors to assist them in their role.
- A nominated member of Management Team to whom they can turn for help or advice
- Regular monthly briefings on important topics to ensure they are well informed.
- Provision of iPads to enable councillors to communicate online and undertake their own research.
- Support to representatives on outside bodies and partnerships to enable councillors and representatives to work together on issues.
- Group support for parties to provide co-ordination on local issues and efficient communication.

There will also be support available for Committee Chairmen through the Head of Service of the relevant department.

### Promoting Local Democracy

The council will publish information on how to become a councillor and hold a prospective councillor event in advance of each district local election.

### Equalities and Access

The council will ensure that the diverse needs of all councillors are taken into account, and that all councillors have an equal opportunity to develop, and fully partake in council business. For example, by providing training opportunities at different times of the day, by providing childcare allowances for those who may potentially miss out on various opportunities for development, and by responding to councillor requests for different types of training and information.

We will ensure the council meets the requirements of the Equality Act and complies with its own Equality Policy and Strategy. We will ensure processes are in place for councillors to properly evaluate the impact of decisions on its services, policies and procedures on different sections of the community.

### How to contact us

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