

Member Development Group: Report to Cabinet 2022-23

1. Introduction

The purpose of the Member Development Group is to provide a forum where members can advise on the planning, delivery and evaluation of member development activities. The Group is made up of a member of each political group and is chaired by the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for member development. In 2022-23 this was Cllr Adam Fox, Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Transformation.

The Group is required to report to Cabinet on an annual basis. This report meets this requirement and summarises the work of the Group during the 2022-23 municipal year.

2. Terms of Reference

The Group's Terms of Reference are as follows:-

The Member Development Group will advise on the planning, delivery and evaluation of member development activities and make recommendations to Cabinet where appropriate. The Member Development Group will report to Cabinet on an annual basis.

The membership of the Member Development Group will be the relevant Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Member Development and one member from each political group represented on the Council. The Group will be chaired by the Portfolio Holder. Members of the Group will be responsible for the promotion of Member Development within their political group.

The Member Development Group will:-

- oversee the provision of member development opportunities;
- advise on policies and procedures relating to member development; and monitor their implementation and effectiveness;
- regularly review the level and allocation of the Councillor development budget;
- oversee the evaluation of member development opportunities and assess the contribution of member development opportunities towards the Council's corporate objectives;
- ensure that Councillor Development Charter Status is maintained and monitor the progress of the implementation of the recommendations from the Charter Assessment.

3. Composition

The membership of the Group in 2022-23 was as follows:-

Councillor Adam Fox, Portfolio Holder for Local Economy and Transformation, Chair
Councillor Mark Cory

Councillor Robert Davidson
 Councillor David Harris
 Councillor Richard Kirkby-Taylor

The Group has been supported by Richard Clifford, Democratic Services Manager and Matt Evans, Democratic Services Officer.

The Group has met on three occasions in 2022-23: 30 August 2022, 7 November 2022 and 13 March 2023.

4. Main Areas of Work

4.1 The Provision of Member Development

Details of attendance at member development sessions for 2022-23 is at Appendix 1. The attendance figures are positive and have grown significantly since the previous year. This is at least part due to the continued practice of hosting member development sessions and briefing online which makes attendance for Councillors easier. The figures continue to demonstrate a healthy interest in training and development across the Council.

Measurable objectives were established by the Group to help measure the provision of and attendance at member development sessions and performance against these objectives is shown below. The figures for 2021-22 are also included for comparison and to indicate trends.

	Target	2021-22	2022-23
Number of Councillors attending one or more Development Session	80%	94%	96%
Number of Councillors attending 5 or more Development Sessions	25%	78%	78%
Number of Development Sessions or Briefings provided for Councillors over the course of a municipal year	10	28	36
Number of Councillors who have completed Leadership Academy programme during the course of the Municipal Year	1	-	-

The programme of member development has provided briefings to keep members up to date on key Council projects and initiatives.

A key initiative launched this year has been the introduction of Chief Executive briefings. These were regular briefings for all members where the Chief Executive took the opportunity to update members on key issues. The subjects covered have included Electoral Reform, the Town Deal and the Levelling Up Fund and Community Development.

Another key element of the member development programme in 2022-23 has been the continuation of the budget workshop programme successfully introduced in the previous municipal year. The workshops have provided a forum to enable all Councillors to discuss the serious budget challenges for 2023-24 and the Medium Term Financial Forecast. The workshops have become an integral part of the engagement on the budget. Two workshops were held over the course of the municipal year and engagement with the sessions was high.

A number of briefings have been held to keep members up to date on “hot topics” and important initiatives by the Council and partners such as the cost of living crisis support for residents, devolution and new voter identification requirements. Some of these sessions directly enable members to better help the residents they represent.

In December 2022 the Council adopted a new Model Code of Conduct. This was supported by a series of briefings by the Monitoring Officer. Twenty nine Councillors attended one of these sessions and a recording of one of the sessions was made available for those who did not attend.

Planning and licensing training has also been provided to ensure that members are kept up to date with developments in these fields and to ensure that there is a wide pool of members able to sit on the Planning and Licensing Committees. Specialist training has also been held on planning issues, including planning enforcement and section 106 arrangements. The Group was also involved in the planning of the induction process for new councillors elected in May 2023.

4.2 Councillor Development Charter

The Group has responsibility for overseeing and monitoring the work in respect of the Councillor Development Charter. The Council was successfully reassessed for the Charter in April 2022. This is the fourth time that the Council has been successfully assessed against the Charter standard.

The Group has been taken some of recommendations made by the Assessment Team including the following:-

- *To relaunch, rebadge and have a brand for member development, to raise its profile and to include access to the LGA virtual learning modules.*
- *To take forward more joint development between Executive Management Team and Cabinet.*
- *To develop an approach to Personal Development Plans for Councillors through conversations via MS Teams to support individual development.*

Proposals for the introduction of Personal Development Plans for Councillors endorsed by the Group will be submitted to Cabinet in June 2023.

Looking forward, the Council will be subject to a light touch reassessment to check direction of travel in October 2023.

4.3 Member Development Budget and Resources

The expenditure on the member development budget for the 2022-23 municipal year was £3003. This is a considerable underspend on the budget of £8000. The emphasis on training is to use in house resources where possible, and only commission external specialist training when absolutely necessary and this has contributed to the underspend on the budget. For instance, this year licensing training was provided in house rather than commissioning the consultants used previously. In addition, the Council did not nominate a member to attend Leadership Academy this municipal year, which would normally cost in the region of £1000.

The major expenditure on the budget has been the provision of scrutiny training which was commissioned from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

Member development is supported by the Democratic Services Team. Considerable time and effort is put into providing sessions and development by officers right across the organisation. The Group wishes to formally record its appreciation for the time and effort that officers and partners put into providing development opportunities for Councillors.

5. Conclusion

The Group's view is that a wide ranging and interesting programme of member development has been provided over the course of the 2022-23 municipal year. The programme of Chief Executive briefings and budget workshops have been particularly welcome and useful in keeping members informed and updated in a period of considerable challenge.

