

7 June 2023

Report of	Democratic Services Manager	Author	Matthew Evans
Title	Councillor Personal Development Plan Proposal		
Wards affected	Not Applicable		

 507832

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposal for a Personal Development Plan applicable to all Councillors, following a recommendation made by the Member Development Group. It sets out the details of the proposed scheme, together with suggestions as to how the scheme could be most effectively implemented.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 That the proposed Personal Development Scheme set out in the report, with any modifications considered necessary, be implemented.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The introduction of system of Personal Development Plans would help support Councillors and enable them to fulfil their duties and responsibilities effectively. It would help Councillors identify areas where training and development was required and provide a process where it is easier for those needs to be met.
- 3.2 Colchester City Council recently retained its Councillor Development Charter Status, and the Member Development Group has indicated that it wishes to apply for Charter Plus status, which requires the implementation of a Councillor Personal Development Plan.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 No alternative options are proposed.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 Following Colchester City Council's successful retention of its Councillor Development Charter Status, the Council's Member Development Group indicated that at the next occasion when Charter Status was to be renewed, it should seek accreditation at Charter Plus level, although it is accepted that this will be decision for Cabinet to take in due course. A key element of Charter Plus is implementation of Councillor Personal Development Plans. At its meeting of 7 November 2022, the Member Development Group resolved that comments be sought from Group Leaders in relation to the proposal, and that Cabinet be asked to approve the scheme as outlined in this report. The notes from this meeting are attached to this report at **Appendix 1**.
- 5.2 The Council has, in the past, attempted to introduce Councillor Personal Development Plans (PDP) with somewhat patchy levels of engagement. Feedback was that the system previously introduced was perhaps overly rigid. It is now hoped that changes in ways of working, including the flexibility to engage more remotely, and online forms becoming a more efficient way to collect information from Councillors, coupled with a greater political desire to drive Councillor development forward mean that a Councillor PDP would now be implemented successfully.
- 5.3 Democratic Services Officers have liaised with officers at Essex County Council who have maintained a Councillor PDP scheme for some years, and this discussion has been used to inform the current proposal, which it is hoped has been tailored to meet the needs of Colchester City Council.
- 5.4 It is proposed that the current electronic training needs analysis form (which had achieved a high level of Councillor responses) be amended to incorporate a section relating to a PDP. The responses to the questionnaire would be used to populate a PDP for each Councillor, unless they specifically opted out of this process. Councillors would then be invited to meet with a Democratic Services Officer or their Group Leader either in person or online to finalise the PDP, which would remain in effect for their term of office. The PDP would be monitored and updated when specific goals had been met. A link to the updated draft electronic questionnaire can be found here: [Training Needs Analysis Questionnaire](#)
- 5.5 A number of different methods would be used to support Councillors in fulfilling their PDPs, as it is recognised that although it is hoped that a significant portion of the required learning and development would be delivered by training and briefing sessions arranged by the Council, additional support and learning is likely to be necessary. Details of external information sources (for example the Local Government Association), training sessions and assistance that is provided by other organisations would therefore be collated by Democratic Services in order that Councillors can be directed to resources that help them to meet their identified development needs.
- 5.6 A detailed overview of the PDP process has been developed and is attached at **Appendix 2** to this report. It sets out the purpose of the PDP and contains the PDP form itself, which it is hoped will be very straightforward to complete.
- 5.7 The PDP form contains specific guidance on how continued professional development should be of benefit to all Councillors, whatever their aims are while they are in office, and it is considered essential that the value of the process for all members should be emphasised at every opportunity to maximise the numbers of Councillors participating in the scheme. For this reason, it is intended that when the PDP scheme is adopted, it would be referenced regularly in communications with Councillors, and included in information which is sent to new Councillors. The support of Group Leaders and the

Member Development Group itself is also considered to be of key importance in both raising the profile, and promoting the benefits of the scheme.

5.8 It is proposed that subject to final preparation and agreement of the paperwork, the scheme would be implemented at the start of the 2023/24 municipal year, ready to be utilised by new Councillors, and with as many existing Councillors as possible encouraged to sign up.

5.9 In accordance with the wishes of the Member Development Group, comments on the proposal were sought from Group Leaders, and the responses which were generally positive, although some concern was expressed by one Group Leader about the potential impact on the workload of Councillors. However, a number of non-executive Councillors have also expressed an interest and support for the introduction of PDPs.

6. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment for the Member Development Policy has been completed and can be found on the Council's website via the pathway Colchester Borough Council / Policies, Strategy and Performance/ Equality and Diversity/ Equality Impact Assessment/ Corporate Management. It can be accessed via the link below:-

[Councillor Development Policy EIA](#)

7. Standard References

7.1 There are no particular references to the Strategic Plan; consultation or publicity considerations or financial; community safety; health and safety or risk management implications.

7. Strategic Plan References

7.1 There are no direct references to the Strategic Plan but the provision of high-quality member development indirectly supports all the priorities in the Strategic Plan.

8. Consultation

8.1 No consultation is proposed, save for that already carried out via the Member Development Group and Group Leaders.

9. Publicity Considerations

9.1 As detailed in the report, the proposed scheme will be publicised internally to all Councillors, and it is not considered that there are any additional publicity considerations.

10. Financial implications

10.1 As set out in the report. There are no specific financial implications, although the implementation of the scheme will require Democratic Services officer resource. Any proposals for training in the 2023-24 municipal year will be met from the 2023-24 member development budget.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 It is not considered that the proposal will have any direct Health, Wellbeing or Community Safety Implications, save for supporting Councillors to further develop their skills to assist their constituents.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 It is not considered that the proposal will have any direct Health and Safety Implications.

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 It is not considered that the proposal will have any direct Risk Management Implications.

14. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 14.1 It is not considered that the proposal will have any direct Environmental and Sustainability Implications.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Notes from Member Development Meeting of 7 November 2022.

Appendix 2 – Personal Development Plan overview.