Member Development Policy

Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this member development policy is to provide a framework to enable Maidstone Borough Council to manage its member development activities for elected members in a coherent and systematic way.

It describes:

- The purpose of member development in Maidstone Borough Council
- The scope of the member development policy
- The member development priorities
- The mechanisms for identifying, planning and delivering member development
- The key responsibilities and resources for member development
- The mechanisms to evaluate member development

It aims to ensure that member development activities are aligned with the visions and priorities of the council.

Purpose of Member Development

Maidstone Borough Council is committed to providing an effective and efficient service to the residents and businesses of and visitors to the Borough. The council recognises the importance of learning and development in supporting all councillors in undertaking their roles in the community and within the council.

Scope of the policy

This policy covers all member development activities. This refers to 'learning' activities for members from which there is a clear and visible transfer of knowledge and skill from the trainer (e.g. a course) and 'development' which covers the complete spectrum of activities that help people learn in and beyond their current role.

This policy covers all members of Maidstone Borough Council.

This policy also reflects the Council's Equal Opportunities Statement ensuring all members regardless of disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, age, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, and sexual orientation or political or other personal beliefs are benefiting equally from learning and development opportunities.

Its aim is that all members will be afforded equal access to learning and development, according to the needs of their role and the council's priorities as outlined within the Strategic Plan and councillor role descriptions. The procedure outlined within this policy is designed to ensure that equal access is achieved.

For the purpose of this document 'Equal Access' refers to:-

- Information relating to member development opportunities

- Selection for participation in member development opportunities
- Access to member development activities

A systematic approach to member development

In line with current best practice the council commits itself to providing a planned approach to member development based on four-stages:

Stage 1 - Identifying learning and development needs
Stage 2 - Planning learning and development activities
Stage 3 - Delivering learning and development activities
Stage 4 - Evaluating learning and development investment.

Stage 1 - Identifying Member Development needs

- Group Leaders are responsible for ensuring that processes are in place within the group to identify individual development needs.

- Members are involved in a development needs analysis which identifies individual and collective learning and development needs. Members are also responsible for identifying their on-going learning needs and bringing new needs to the attention of Democratic Services.

- Development needs that are specific to the work of a particular committee e.g. licensing or planning, will be identified by the officer or Chairman responsible for that committee.

Stage 2 – Planning Member Development

- When all members needs have been identified they are reviewed and prioritised. A member development calendar is created by Democratic Services supported by the Learning and Development Team which incorporate the priority needs within the available funding. The development calendar is incorporated within the Calendar of Meetings which is agreed by full Council and then the budget plan to provide the development requirements is agreed by the Democracy Committee.

- Member Development activities other than those scheduled on the development calendar will be scheduled as far in advance as possible in order to ensure that all members have the opportunity to attend. Development dates from the calendar are set in advance and posted into the member diaries so that forward planning can take place effectively. Activities that are arranged as the need arises will be organised to give members at least 3 weeks' notice wherever possible.

- The selection of providers and the type of development to be used will include identifying the best/preferred learning methods to meet the needs of the members. This will include wherever possible joint learning activities with other councils in order to maximise learning and to share best practice and reduce costs.

- It is an expectation that all members will contribute to their own development to enhance their roles within the council and within the community. Any member development that supports strategic objectives should be attended by all members. Records will be kept and attendance and evaluation of the activities will be forwarded to the Learning and Development Manager for recording and review.

Stage 3 - Delivering Member Development

- This policy encourages the use of a wide range of approaches, methods and timings of programmes to meet the learning and development needs of members and to provide maximum access to learning opportunities.

- These methods may include:-

Formal learning

- Training courses (including internal and external courses, long and short term training),
- Seminars (including CPD),
- Conferences (e.g. skills updating, changing legislation etc.).

Informal learning

- Mentoring,
- Shadowing,
- Coaching,
- Project work (specific or experience),
- Increased responsibility,
- Collaborative learning (e.g. debriefing sessions)

Self-learning

- Videos,
- Reading,
- E-learning,
- Networking,
- Workbooks,
- Manuals,

This list is not exhaustive. Other learning methods may be used where considered to be appropriate.

De-Briefing sessions and information sharing plays an important part in the dissemination of learning and development activities that take place. Once a member has attended such an activity the Learning & Development Information Share Form should be completed within 1 week so that key points can be shared in a timely manner. This information sharing activity provides the following benefits:

- Enables those members who were unable to attend to gain key information
- Provokes further discussion on new topics
- Provides an avenue to further identify learning needs
- Assist us in evaluating the effectiveness of our delivery methods
- Builds consistency of approach

This information form will be available in the following areas in order to maximise access for all members:

- Members Web Lounge
- Briefings at group and committee meetings

- Delivered in the member mail envelopes

Stage 4 - Evaluating Learning and Development Investment

- Evaluation of learning and development will mainly be carried out through the Learning and Development Evaluation Questionnaire. These will be completed at the end of any programme or activity. The evaluation form will review how the learning and development activity satisfied the skills, knowledge or behaviour gaps and how these newly learned skills, knowledge or behaviour can be utilised in their role. These will be summarised and evaluated by Democratic Services.

- Information gathered from all evaluation processes will inform future learning and development strategies including methods of learning and development activities at all levels.

- Information gained at conferences and seminars will be disseminated by those members who attend and key learning points or information highlighted on the Learning & Development Information Share Form (see APPENDIX 3). This information will then be shared with other councillors and officers, as is most appropriate, in one or all of the following ways:

    o Delivered in the member mail envelopes
    o Posted onto the members web lounge
    o Discussion at committee / group meetings

Learning records

Records of all learning undertaken by members will be kept on a database by the Learning and Development Team.

This database includes the following:

- Name
- Name of course/conference/seminar attended
- Date of course/conference/seminar attended
- Outstanding learning needs

Information on member development is required by the organisation to ensure accurate planning and evaluation. The Learning and Development Team will collate and evaluate this management information on a regular basis.

Learning priorities

Once elected, new members will have the following learning opportunities:

Corporate Induction

All new members will receive induction from the moment once they are elected to Maidstone Borough Council. Corporate Induction will include:

- Introduction to the Management team of the council

- Overview of Learning & Development activities and introduction to the Democracy Committee and its role
- Issue and training on laptops and members web lounge
- Issue of members handbook/welcome pack and induction CD Rom
- Tour of Borough and council offices
- Overview of the role of Scrutiny
- Code of conduct and constitution
- Local Government Finance

Members will receive an induction pack and a record of the completed induction programme is placed on the member development database by the Learning and Development Team. Each new member will be given a **senior officer** as a key contact who will act as a central point for that member helping them to understand how the Council works and their role within the organisation. This will complement the role of the Member mentor mentioned below.

Political Group Induction

Each new member will be inducted into their Political Group and be assigned a 'buddy'. The role of the 'buddy' is to introduce the new member to other councillors and act as a source of information, support and advice to help the new member become effective in their role as soon as possible.

Committee Members

Development is on-going for most committee members depending on new legislation and requirements as identified from time to time. New members who take up a position on a committee are required to undertake development to give them a working knowledge of the particulars relevant to the committee and to be able to continue on the committee. This development is sometimes undertaken informally at the meeting or more formally such as in the Planning Committee, with scheduled development sessions held early in the municipal year as well as throughout the year. These sessions are scheduled as part of the member development calendar.

Resources to support learning and development

The Council allocates appropriate resources to Democratic Services to cover the costs of priority needs relating to member development linked to the Strategic Plan and individual role requirements. The full cost of all member development will be identified, approved by the Democracy Committee and monitored by Democratic Services.

Bookings on courses, conferences and seminars will be handled through Democratic Services; and records will be maintained by the Learning and Development Team. Information on development opportunities will be communicated to all members using the intranet and diaries. Expenses incurred for attending member development activities will be paid according to the council policy on claiming expenses.

Roles and responsibilities

Maidstone Borough Council has allocated responsibility to agree key policies, procedures and plans for member development activities to the Democracy Committee. It is recognised that the responsibility for member development is a joint responsibility

between officers and members. Given the importance of the quasi- judicial committees there is an agreement regarding mandatory development for members.

Members

Responsibility of all councillors

- To ensure that they understand their role in relation to both the work within the council and their ward.
- To actively seek feedback on the performance of their role.
- To work with Political Group Leaders to agree their development plan.
- To commit to on-going professional development for their role as a councillor
- To fully participate in any mandatory development required for particular committees or roles (continued non-attendance will result in removal from the Committee).
- To complete the request form for attendance at any external conferences/seminars (Appendix 2) and to feedback their learning to other members and relevant officers using the share form (Appendix 1).

Responsibilities of Political Group Leaders

- Responsible for encouraging formal and informal development within their group.
- Ensure that buddies are assigned to all new members and that the role is carried out effectively with the support of the relevant officers.
- Ensure that any Members appointed to committees are committed to and fully understand the development requirements and, where necessary, replace those Members failing to comply with their commitment.
- Carry out the annual review discussions to assist in identifying future learning needs and inform the council's annual Member development plan.

Responsibilities of the Democracy Committee

- To consider and approve resources and budgets are allocated to member development

Officers

Responsibilities of the Principal Committee Advisors

Principal Committee Advisors are those Officers primarily responsible for advising a particular committee e.g. Head of Audit for the Audit Committee

- Ensure that members of their committee have the support to be competent and feel confident in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities
- Ensure that members of their committee receive appropriate and timely development as informed by legislation, statutory guidance, best practice and as identified by individual members
- Ensure that there are effective systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of their specific member development
- Advising Democratic Services of any outstanding learning needs and development that members need to attend in order to keep the knowledge and skills of committee members up to date

Responsibilities of the Learning and Development Manager

- Advise officers, group leaders and individual members on the most effective learning methods;
- Commission programmes or events required to meet identified learning needs;
- Support Democratic Services with the production of the annual development calendar for members;
- Maintain accurate records of member attendance

Responsibilities of Democratic Services

- Identify learning needs and collate a programme of member development activities aimed at meeting current and future learning needs based on feedback from Group Leaders.
- Evaluate and prioritise all member development activities to ensure needs are met and value for money is achieved
- Present proposals for the budget to the Democracy Committee
- Feedback any compliance issues to the Democracy Committee and Group Leaders
- Report to the Democracy Committee on the member development programme indicating levels of attendance, evaluation and impact

Supporting documents and appendices

Appendix 1:   Learning & Development Information Share Form
Appendix 2:   Request to attend Conference/ Seminar
Appendix 3:   Mandatory development

Appendix 1

Learning & Development Information Share Form

Title: Date & duration of event:

Compiled by: Date compiled:

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v   What were the main aims and objectives (please list)

v   What were the key messages or learning points that you feel were most important
and relevant:

v   How can members use this information to assist them in their role:

v   Further information can be found (please list any contacts and or web site
addresses etc that may be useful)

(Please send this form and any photos, flyers or additional information to the Learning and
Development Team for distribution)

Appendix 2
Attendance at Conferences and/or Seminars:

If a member/committee/officer feels that it would be beneficial / important to attend a conference or seminar an application should be made using the attached form and sent to Democratic Services.

Request to attend Conference / Seminar

Name: Role (Committee etc):

Conference / Seminar title: Duration:

Cost of event:

Estimated costs of extras e.g. travel etc:

1. What are the main aims / objectives of the conference / seminar? (please list)

2. How was this conference / seminar identified as being of value?

3. How will this conference/seminar improve your ability to perform in your role?

4. Who is responsible for transferring the knowledge gained and completing the conference/seminar information sheet?

Sign: Applicant: ……..………….….…………………….   Date: …….….………

Sign: Democratic Services ………….……….….………….…   Date: ……….……..

Appendix 3

Draft for consideration by relevant Committees

Mandatory Development

All Members

Induction – council and political group induction
Governance
Code of Conduct
Health and Safety matters

Planning Committee Members

The Development Plan/Supplementary Planning Documents & Government Policy
Use of Planning Conditions and Reasons for Refusal
Planning Enforcement

Licensing Committee Members

The Licensing Committee agree the development requirements for the year and this is incorporated into the Calendar of Meetings agreed by Council. All new Committee & Substitute Members must attend the following development:
Induction
Licensing Act 2003
Street Trading
Sexual Entertainment Venues
Gambling
Taxis/Private Hire Vehicles

Audit Committee Members

Induction training
Finance and Budget
Regulatory framework
The importance of risk management

Scrutiny Committee Members

Basic Overview & Scrutiny skills
Questioning Skills

Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman
Chairing Skills (all should have attended before becoming Chairmen)