

Appendix 2: Maidstone Borough Council Member Learning and Development Charter

Maidstone Borough Council Member Learning and Development Charter

This member learning and development charter has been produced on the basis of the Local Government Association Member Learning and Development Charter. The Charter was considered by the Democracy Committee and amendments were made to suit circumstances and the wishes of members in Maidstone. The Charter gives a clear commitment and approach to Member Learning and Development in Maidstone, and is designed to be used by officers and members to understand their respective responsibilities.

The Charter is split into three criteria:

1. There is a clear commitment to councillor development and support
2. The council has a strategic approach to councillor learning and development
3. Learning and development is effective in building capacity

Underneath each of the criteria are a number of elements and commitments to demonstrate that the elements are being adhered to.

Criterion 1: There is a clear commitment to Councillor development and support

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1.1 Political and managerial leadership is committed to the development of councillors

- Clear commitment from the top political and managerial leadership through a recurring item at the Leader's Forum to identify learning and development needs of members
- Regular consideration of learning and development needs by the Democracy Committee
- There is a clear councillor development charter which is embedded into practice and regularly reviewed
- Democratic Services Manager is responsible for councillor development
- Subject to a technological solution, attendance at training for all councillors will be displayed online

1.2 The council is committed to ensuring equal access to learning and development for all councillors

- A statistical analysis of cultural and personal circumstances should take place
- Timing of councillor development should take account of cultural and personal circumstances
- Development opportunities will take place at a range of times (i.e. daytime and evening) and dates to ensure all councillors have an opportunity to attend a variety of training sessions
- The development programme includes a range of delivery methods to meet the different learning styles of councillors
- Councillors are regularly updated on councillor development activities
- Technological solutions to encourage participation in learning and development should be investigated
- Appropriate notice (at least one month) will be given to members of learning and development events

1.3 The council has a designated budget for councillor development which is adequate to meet priority development needs

- Budget is explicit and clearly identified and monitored
- Specialist conferences and learning and development events will be paid for by the Council for individual councillors subject to budget being available and subject to the Councillor relaying this learning to other relevant members. However the priority for the L&D budget is for learning and development events to benefit all members

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- If the council is not able to fund a place on a specialist course then councillors are able to book on for a discounted rate (if available) through the council

1.4 Designated officer/s of the council have responsibility for coordinating councillor development

Appropriate and adequate officer resources are in place to support councillor development

Criterion 2: The council has a strategic approach to councillor development

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2.1 The council has a councillor development charter in place

- The charter is developed and monitored by the Democracy Committee
- The Charter identifies priority development needs and makes stated and clear links with the council's corporate/strategic objectives
- The charter is regularly reviewed by the Democracy Committee
- There is an induction process that is evaluated after each election
- New committee members should receive a Committee induction

2.2 The various councillor roles are clearly defined and outline how they contribute to the achievement of community, political and council objectives

- Councillors are provided with the information they require to carry out their role effectively
- Councillor role descriptions exist for all key roles
- Councillors are clear about what the council is trying to achieve and the key role they play in this as councillors

2.3 The council has a structured process for assessing current and future leadership and executive team development needs

- Political Parties have a role in identifying future leadership candidates – the Council has a role in identifying appropriate training for those candidates
- A development plan is in place that supports the top political and management teams in learning about each other and working effectively together
- Leadership development is used to support future succession planning

2.4 There is a corporate councillor learning and development plan in place

- Councillor learning and development plan links to council's corporate objectives and the development of councillors
- The councillor learning and development plan includes individuals, committees and political leadership needs

Criterion 3: Learning and development is effective in building capacity

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3.1 Investment in learning and development is regularly evaluated in terms of the cost benefit and impact

- Evaluation strategy is in place to analyse the cost and benefits of councillor development
- Political and managerial leadership display a good understanding of both the costs and benefits of development activities
- Councillors are encouraged to complete a feedback form following training course attendance
- The Democracy Committee should review feedback each year on evaluation of training, feedback from members, the political and managerial leadership's understanding of the costs and benefits of development activities and attendance at learning and development events

3.2 Learning is shared with other councillors and where appropriate, with officers and stakeholders to encourage capacity building in the council and a learning organisation culture

Knowledge and learning is shared with councillors' peers, officers and others

3.3 The council demonstrates a commitment to an effective councillor learning and development programme by implementing improvements to learning and development activities as they are identified

Continuous improvement in the approach to developing councillors is identified and implemented – it is Democracy Committee's duty to ensure this happens