



Leicester  
City Council

Cabinet  
Council

29<sup>th</sup> September 2008  
2<sup>nd</sup> October 2008

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## Member Development Strategy

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### Report of the Interim Director of Resources

#### 1. Purpose

This report seeks approval for a new approach to member training and development and the launch of a new Member Development Strategy, led by the Member Development Forum.

#### 2. Summary

The Member Development Forum is open to all members of the Council. Over the last few months a number of members have met on a regular basis, their purpose being to improve training and development opportunities for Members. The work has focussed on 3 strands:-

- a) the immediate post election induction period – ensuring that members have sufficient skills from day one and also an awareness of the role prior to being elected;
- b) core skills required by all members – things that every member will need, eg being able to participate in meetings, chairing meetings, knowing about the council and finding your way round;
- c) skills training and development for specific roles – building on the core competencies to pick up a specific skill set for certain roles, eg being a scrutiny task group leader.

Discussions have involved new and experienced councillors, council officers and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and Local Government East Midlands. The work to date has culminated in a Member Development Strategy which is being recommended to Cabinet for approval. Part of the strategy includes a commitment to work towards achieving the IDeA Member Development Charter, which if successful will open up other opportunities for member development.

The approach being proposed to address a) and b) above includes the opportunity for all members to undertake a skills audit, either as a self-assessment or supported by the City Learning Team. This would be on a voluntary basis. Options are being explored to enable completion on-line. Following the skills audit each member would be given a personal development plan which they could follow, again with support from the City Learning Team. Learning could be on an individual basis or in with other councillors, depending on the needs identified.

It is proposed that the Strategy be launched prior to Full Council in November, where members would be given the opportunity to discuss the skills assessment and move forward.

The Member Development Strategy is attached as an appendix to this report.

### 3. Recommendations

Members are asked to:-

- a) agree the Member Development Strategy;
- b) encourage members to take up the opportunities included in the Strategy;
- c) agree to work towards achievement of the IDeA Member Development Charter.

### 4. Financial and Legal Implications

#### Financial

There is provision within Democratic Services budgets for £20,000 for Member Development activities. Other development activities will need to be funded from other existing budgets.

*(Andy Morley, Chief Accountant)*

#### Legal

The Member Development Strategy proposed in this report will strengthen and support the Authority's corporate governance ethical framework.

*(Peter Nicholls, Service Director, Legal)*

### 5. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References within this Report
Equal Opportunities	No	
Policy	Yes	Whole report refers to policy on member development
Sustainable and Environmental	No	
Crime and Disorder	No	
Human Rights Act	No	
Elderly/People on Low Income	No	

## 6. Background Papers

None.

## 7. Consultations

Paul McChrystal, Head of City Learning

## 8. Report Author

Liz Reid Jones, Head of Democratic Services,  
Tel: 39 8899 (internal), 229 8899 (external).

<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Reason</b>	N/A
<b>Appeared in Forward Plan</b>	N/A
<b>Executive or Council Decision</b>	Executive (Cabinet)

# Member Development Strategy

## Foreword

This strategy is the culmination of a year's work involving elected members, Democratic Services officers and staff from the Council's City Learning section.

Our new Member Development Strategy sets out a clear and exciting programme. Its premise is a simple yet immensely important one: that good councillors make a good council.

This has been the guiding principal of our work and has formed the bedrock of the discussions at the Member Development Forum meetings which have led us to this strategy. These meetings have been attended by councillors of some experience; of newly elected councillors; and councillors of different political groups. This in itself is a strength of the work, and illustrates the inclusive and open approach we have taken.

The strategy recognises that each and every one of us comes into elected office with a different range of skills and experience. It also recognises that each councillor's own career in local government will follow a unique pathway. Our strategy is about ensuring all members of Leicester City Council are equipped with the skills needed to be an effective modern councillor and to accomplish their personal goals and ambitions.

However it is also about much more than that; through our Skills Audit process we will bring forward a programme of learning and development opportunities which are tailored to the individual, meaning that every councillor can pursue development opportunities aimed at enhancing their skills and abilities to meet future challenges and aspirations. Every councillor will be offered the opportunity to draw up a Personal Development Plan with specialist, impartial, and confidential support.

This approach is not about forcing Members to participate in learning and training they do not want to do. We want to create learning, training and development opportunities that meet individual needs, and enhance the skills and experience which members have.

To strengthen our Member Development Strategy we are enthusiastic about working with external partners including Local Government East Midlands and the IDEA. We have already begun to develop fruitful relationships with these organisations. We are also committed to working in collaboration with

neighbouring authorities when it will enhance our member development opportunities.

As stated, our guiding principal is that good councillors make a good council. It is also about recognising that as elected politicians we have a responsibility to be the best we can be. This is about more than our performance as councillors and the jobs we do serving our community; it's about the integrity of our politics.

In the past year we have seen a new Local Government Act passed in Parliament. We have also seen very recently the publication of a new Community Empowerment White Paper. Local government is fast changing. Change is exciting, but it also presents challenges.

Locally, the launch of the ONE Leicester vision offers further impetus to drive forward our member development strategy. The *Delivering Excellence* programme will improve how the council works, and that includes the roles played by elected members.

As elected members we have a big role to play as our organisation moves forward. Changes and modernisation in local government mean that our role as councillors is changing. Member Development is central to meeting the challenge of this change.

On behalf of the Member Development Forum we would like to thank all the elected members who have attended meetings and contributed to this work; Charles Poole, Liz Reid-Jones and Peter Cozens from Democratic Services; and Paul McChrystal from City Learning.

Member Development Forum  
August 2008

## ***Member Development - Exciting Opportunities for All Members***

### **1. What are we doing?**

The Member Development Forum is setting out a new, dynamic approach to ensure that members are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to undertake their roles. Our aspiration is to enhance opportunities for every councillor.

This new Member Development Strategy is based on 3 key elements:

- Induction - ensuring the members have sufficient skills from day one, and indeed an awareness of what is required prior to be elected
- Core competencies - things that every member will need, eg being able to participate in meetings, chairing some meetings, knowing about the council and finding your way around
- Skills training and development - building on the core competencies to pick up a specific skill set for certain roles, eg being a scrutiny task group leader.

In summary, we are setting out a path for members to follow, from initial induction, through to a skills audit, culminating in an individual personal development plan and resulting actions. The Strategy is aimed at all members - cabinet leads, scrutiny chairs and task groups leaders and other non executive members. Further details are outlined in section 6.

### **2. Why are we implementing a strategy?**

Whilst we recognise that everyone has different skills and expertise the Member Development Forum is keen to enable members to access as many development opportunities as possible to make them effective in their ever changing role as a councillor. So often help and support is available for members, but they are not always sure how to access this. A more formal approach to member development should go some way to improve this. At the same time, the approach will be flexible, mindful of the fact that individual members will want to address their own development in very different ways.

There is also evidence to suggest nationally that a sound member development programme can contribute to a higher CPA scoring. Member development can have a significant impact on the performance of the organisation.

### **3. How did we get to this point?**

A revised and invigorated Member Development Forum started meeting in October 2007 with membership open to councillors from all parties. Initially there was cross party attendance however this has not been sustained.

The first meeting was informal, starting with a blank sheet of paper and evaluating the post election induction programme. It was evident from an early stage that the programme did not meet the needs of a significant number of councillors and therefore ideas started to form for the next programme (May 2011). At the same time members began to discuss their "post induction" development needs. This gave rise to the concept of an individual skills audit and personal development plans.

Since October the building blocks have been put in place for a strategy. A skills audit has been developed, based on the Welsh Assembly model. The audit has been piloted by 4 councillors on the Member Development Forum, both as a self assessment and a guided assessment. It was felt that both options should be available to members, although the view was that a guided assessment is more productive.

The process is being managed through Democratic Services with direct support for the skills audit coming from the council's Citylearning division. It is crucial that those delivering organisational development play a key role in delivering member development, thus ensuring links can be made between both through the organisational development strategy. It is envisaged that some learning opportunities will be for both members and officers giving the chance to understand more about the role of the other.

Work has also been ongoing to establish links with the IDeA and Local Government East Midlands to ensure best practice is built in to our programmes.

### **4. Where do we go from here?**

We are now in the position to roll out the strategy to all members of the council, with every member being given the opportunity to undertake a skills audit, either by themselves or supported through Citylearning.

Cross party support has been expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, who have scrutinised this Strategy.

The Member Development Forum is also keen to secure the IDeA Member Development Charter. The charter will help the council build capacity amongst its members and formalise much of the work of the Member Development Forum. The Forum will make an assessment of our current position against the charter's requirements and incorporate this into the work programme over the coming months.

## 5. What does it mean in practice?

In practice there will be four stages to member development:-

- Induction
- Skills audit
- Personal development plans
- Action.

The following provides more detail on each stage with a diagram in appendix 1.

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### *a. Induction*

The start point is of course induction.

There will be 2 phases to the induction programme:-

- *pre-election induction*
  - information packs for prospective councillors, containing practical advice - anything from car insurance to childcare and advice for those on benefits;
  - prospective councillor events, where prospective candidates will be able to learn how it really is from existing councillors.
- *post-election induction*
  - "freshers fayre" type events immediately following the election where members will be introduced to the council and get them started on their journey as a councillor;
  - pre-determined programme managed through Democratic Services. Its aim will be to get new members up and running with the operation of the council and with their own responsibilities. It will



include general training, departmental carousel or workshop sessions and member support issues, eg surgeries, web support etc.

The programme will then move on to identify and develop core competencies and skills using the methods outlined below.

### **Citylearning Open programmes**

Members will have a choice about what they do. They can simply access the Citylearning open programmes by self -nomination on line or over the phone. The Citylearning team offer a wide range of very high quality training all of which is free to members.

### **Mandatory Training**

Members will also be advised of the training that is a 'must' for them. Mandatory training will reflect policy and statutory requirements which directly affect councillors. Members sitting on Planning & Development Control and Licensing Committees will have to go through training before the first meeting is held. Existing members will also have to attend refresher training.

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### ***b. Skills Audit***

For members who wish to access more tailored development opportunities a personal development route exists for them. This is available to all members. The words Personal Development are used simply to emphasise the fact that learning takes place in a million and one different ways. It's not just about attending courses.

The process is straightforward:-

- *skills audit using the member skills assessment tool.* Councillors can use this on their own or they can work through it with a member of the Citylearning team.

**c. *Personal Development Plans***

- a *personal development plan* will be created based on the findings from the skills audit, working alongside the City learning Team. This simply records the learning identified, looks at the best way to deliver that learning, who will be responsible for organising it, how it will be paid for and setting a target for when it will be completed.
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**d. *Action***

- *Learning identified will be undertaken.* Members' individual training records will be set up on Resourcelink, (corporate HR system).

Citylearning will look to co-ordinate common training needs to get the most cost-effective solutions.

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**6. How will we monitor progress?**

The Member Development Forum will monitor the progress of the work at its meetings. We will look at the uptake of the skills audit and how members are developing as a result. We will also ask for feedback from councillors, on their experiences of the programme and consider the impact on officer/member relations as a result.

**7. Taking it Forward**

Appendix 1 summarises how the work will be taken forward.

## Taking Member Development Forward

	Action	Who responsible	By when	Comments
1.	Report to Cabinet Briefing, Cabinet and Council	Cllr Cooke	1st Sept - Cabinet Briefing 29th Sept - Cabinet ) 2nd Oct - Council	
2.	Launch Strategy	MDF	27 <sup>th</sup> November	
4.	Offer Skills Audit to Members	Head of Democratic Services Head of City Learning	Following 27 <sup>th</sup> November	
5.	Draw up Personal Development Plans (PDPs) based on skills audits	Head of City Learning	December onwards	
6.	Action PDPs	Head of City Learning MDF	December onwards	
7.	Preparations for 2011 pre-election induction programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pre-election packs</li> </ul> Prospective councillor events	Head of Democratic Services	2010 2010/2011	
8.	Programme for 2011 post election induction	Head of Democratic Services	2010 onwards	
9.	Ongoing member development (not necessarily coming from PDPs but from new government or council initiatives etc.	MDF	Ongoing	

# Member Development

## Induction for new members

### Personal Development

Self  
Assessment  
Member skills  
Assessment  
Tool

Guided  
Assessment  
Member skills  
Assessment  
Tool

### Supported Personal Development Planning

- ◆ Personal Development Plan:
  - Learning needs
  - Learning Methodology
  - Resourcing
  - PD Record
  - Review

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