

ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT POLICY STATEMENT

Rochford District Council is committed to the training, development and learning of elected Members in order to assist the Authority in advancing its aims and objectives and to develop individuals for their Councillor role. This is demonstrated by the Council's commitment to achieving the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) Charter for Member Development by December 2010.

Corporate Vision, Objectives and Values

The Council's vision is to make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best possible quality of life for all who live, work and visit here. The Council's objectives are to make a difference to our public, our community, our environment and our local economy.

The Council's values (the way we work to pursue our objectives) are to:-

- Be an open, accountable, listening, responsive Council.
- Put the customer and citizen at the heart of everything we do, delivering services in a caring and sensitive manner.
- Co-ordinate the management of resources with an emphasis on sustainability.
- Value the contribution of partners, employees and citizens, trusting each other and working collaboratively.

Member Development Policy Document

Rochford District Council has a Member development policy document that sets out the working framework within which Member development activities take place. A copy is appended to this policy statement.

The document aims to ensure that Member development activities are aligned with the Council's vision and objectives and follow best practice.

Equality of Opportunity

Rochford District Council recognises its responsibility to provide equal access for all Members to learning and development in accordance with equal opportunities legislation and to provide a range of access routes for learning and development in order to promote a work-life balance for Members.

Budget

The Council provides a dedicated budget each year for Member learning and development. This is continuously monitored and allocated in accordance with the following parameters:-

- The identified learning and development needs of Members, based on the analysis of results of self-assessment questionnaires sent to Members.
- Learning and development needs that are essential to improve and progress the agreed policies and strategies of the Council.
- Evaluation of money spent on learning and development to ensure value for money and performance improvements.

Charter for Member Development Implementation Group

The Council's Standards Committee determines the Member Learning and Development programme. The Committee has established a Charter Implementation Group, with a cross-party membership, to oversee and lead on the process of applying for Member Development Charter accreditation. To achieve accreditation the Council will need to demonstrate that it:-

- Develops elected Members in order to achieve the Council's aims and objectives.
- Adopts a Member led strategic approach to elected Member development.
- Has a Member learning and development plan in place that clearly identifies how learning and development is effective in building capacity.
- Addresses wider development matters to promote work-life balance and citizenship.

Member Learning and Development Support Officers

The following officers have responsibility for the coordination and support of all aspects of Member learning and development:-

Sarah Fowler
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John Bostock
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Michelle Power
Committee Administrator
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MEMBER DEVELOPMENT POLICY DOCUMENT

This document sets out the working framework within which Member development activities take place.

1 The process for identifying and meeting Member Learning and Development needs

- 1.1 Each year 3 phases of learning/development are agreed by the Standards Committee and/or the Charter Implementation Group (CIG). The phases are developed to be responsive to the corporate priorities of the Council as well as catering for the different roles of Members. The phases are as follows:-

Part 1 Induction training – May to July (between 6 and 10 sessions, depending on need). These courses are particularly aimed at newly elected Members of the Council (when appropriate), but serve also as refresher courses for existing Members.

Part 2 Competency training – October to November (approximately 6 sessions).

Part 3 Competency training – February to March (approximately 6 sessions).

- 1.2 In developing the programme for each year account is taken of the views of Members by sending out a self-assessment questionnaire during February/March. In this questionnaire Members' views are sought on the year's training programme to date and they are asked to detail any specific individual training requirements they may have. These individual training requests are assessed and developed in consultation with the CIG. The views expressed in the questionnaire are summarised in the report to the April meeting of the Standards Committee. A copy of the blank questionnaire is also provided to the Standards Committee for its ratification of the questions being asked of Members. In addition, individual Members who wish to attend courses specific to their role can contact the Head of Information and Customer Services (HICS) to see if this is possible within the budget.

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- 1.3 Mandatory training for Development Control, Licensing and Appeals Committee Members is included in the Part 1 (Induction) phase of the programme as training in these areas is considered necessary for the fulfillment of the Authority's stated corporate objectives.
- 1.4 The Council's Senior Management Team (SMT) are asked about courses they are able to offer to Members for Part 1 and to provide course suggestions for inclusion in Parts 2 and 3 of the programme.
- 1.5 The Council's Standards Committee, which consists of cross-party membership and which has an Independent Member as Chairman, oversees the learning and development programme.

2 Equality of opportunity to access Learning and Development

- 2.1 A timetable of dates for learning opportunities is produced and agreed in January for the following municipal year. The training schedule takes account of likely Council and Committee meeting obligations and Ward Member duties. In order to facilitate access to training for all Members, courses are booked in venues on both sides of the District and are run in the afternoon and repeated in the evening. Buffet and refreshments are provided at training sessions and transportation and carer/child care costs are available to Members attending training.
- 2.2 An Independent Remuneration Panel assesses annually the financial support needed for Members.
- 2.3 Handouts from all scheduled training sessions are sent to all Members unable to attend the training.

3 Features of Member learning and development courses

- 3.1 Once a programme of training is scheduled the following are features of the administration:-
 - A training booklet with full course details for each of the three phases of training is produced and sent to Members, with a booking form to be returned to the Committee Section. The training booklet specifies which Members each course is aimed at primarily and how the course objectives are linked to the corporate objectives of the Council.
 - Return of the booking forms is monitored by the Committee Section. Members are sent a reminder by letter or email if they have not returned the booking form and then phoned if the form is still not received.

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- Notices of forthcoming training are placed in the Members' lounge, office and library. Details of all the learning and development courses for the forthcoming week are printed in the Members' Bulletin, which is sent weekly to all Members. A file of training material is placed in the Members' library/office.
- Attendance is monitored and reported to the Standards Committee as an appendix to the report on the Member Learning and Development programme.
- A formal half-yearly review report is made to the Standards Committee in October/November on progress of training to date.

4 Evaluating the effectiveness of Member Development Activities

Evaluation by Members is achieved as follows:-

- Self-assessment questionnaires are issued annually in February/March to each Member and the views/requests for training expressed within are included in the report to the Standards Committee when determining the programme for the forthcoming municipal year.
- End of event evaluation questionnaires are completed by Members and comments noted and actioned where appropriate.
- A follow-up evaluation form is issued at the end of each phase of the programme. This asks Members to appraise the impact they feel the learning has had on their role as Member and how far specific courses have achieved the stated objectives. This is summarised and fed into the CIG and/or the Standards Committee for review.
- Feedback from Members during the course of the year is considered when determining the courses in the Competency training phases of training.
- A half-yearly evaluation report is made to the Standards Committee on progress of training.

5 Methods of Learning Utilised (not exhaustive)

This Policy document is kept in the Members' lounge, office and library for reference by Members and is reviewed periodically to ensure it is up to

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date and that Member development continues to support the aims of the Council.

The Member learning and development programme includes a wide range of learning methods, which are detailed below:-

- Induction training for newly elected Members
- Training courses run by external specialist trainers.
- Presentations and question and answer sessions run by Council officers.
- 'Moots' or mock hearings where appropriate, e.g. for Standards Committee and Licensing Committee Members.
- Interactive training, e.g. for overview and scrutiny training and Chairmanship training.
- Briefings to individuals or small groups of Members by officers on specific topics.
- Training materials available on CD for some aspects of training.
- E-learning facility available for all Members via 'Modern Councillor'.
- Course handouts provided to those Members unable to attend scheduled training.
- Peer mentoring facilitated by Improvement East.
- External courses requested by individual Members, subject to sufficient funding available.
- Member visits to learn.
- Member attendance at training sessions run by neighbouring authorities. Joint training opportunities with neighbouring local authorities is encouraged wherever appropriate.
- All courses are offered to Independent Members of the Standards Committee Relevant courses are offered to the District's Parish/Town Councils.
- Joint training with officers is recognised as advantageous at times.

6 Learning and Development Record Keeping

Records are kept by the Committee Section of the courses offered on the learning programme and of Member attendances at these courses. A report relating to Member attendances is submitted to Standards Committee for evaluation and comment at the end of each municipal year.

