

Member Development Strategy

Developing our Members to Develop our District
2019 - 2022



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Welcome and introduction



As Leader of North Kesteven District Council, I am very pleased to introduce the Member Development Strategy for North Kesteven District Council.

The challenge before us as elected Members is to ensure that we offer services, support and leadership within the community which are both efficient and of the highest standard.

This requires not only our collective dedication but as a Council - to be at the very top of our game. Therefore, it is critical to invest time and effort into member development, drawing on the talents we already have and exploring innovative learning styles to ensure that as a Council we are striving for excellence at every opportunity to serve the community.

There is a constant need to develop as elected Members. A wide range of skills is required in a complex and ever-changing environment and this Strategy provides an overall framework to support all aspects of the elected Member role.

Councillor Richard Wright
Leader of North Kesteven District Council



As the Chairman of the Member Development Panel I thoroughly endorse this innovative Strategy. As elected Members, whether new or long-standing, we have a responsibility to ourselves, our fellow Members and our

electorate to ensure we have the skills and knowledge to carry out our wide range of roles and responsibilities as ably and effectively as possible. This Strategy is designed to support and structure NKDC's work in this area. It is imperative upon each of us to take personal responsibility for our own learning and development; "the more you put in, the more you will get out!"

The Member Development Panel encourages all elected Members to use this Strategy as a foundation to become well rounded councillors to better serve their electorate and all the residents of North Kesteven.

Councillor Mrs Tarry
Chairman of the Member Development Panel



Leadership of the Council encompasses not only management of the "business" but also political management.

Members must be equipped with the tools, training and support to enable them to provide the strategic direction for the Council and make appropriate and lawful decisions.

This Strategy is designed to support and structure the Council's work in this area. Our commitment to equipping Members with the skills to contribute to the development of our District is directly reflected in both the Council's Corporate Priority 'Our Council' and the Council's Corporate Values "High-performing, people- focused and professional".

Ian Fytche
Chief Executive

Context and Introduction

- Context
- Vision and Mission
- 'Our People' Strategy
- Aims
- Commitment and Endorsement
- Opportunities for Development
- Equality of Opportunity

Member Development Delivery

- Learning and Development Opportunities
- Induction Programme
- Member Development Programme
- Mentoring
- Methods of Learning and Development
- Member Development Finances
- Personal Development Planning
- Political Skills Framework
- Ongoing Commitment to Member Development

Evaluation

- Induction Evaluation
- Standard Evaluation Forms
- Training Reflection

Member Development Support

- Newsletters
- Really Useful Guide
- Digital Communication

East Midlands Member Development Charter

- Overview
- NKDC and the Member Development Charter

"Politics is perhaps the only profession for which no preparation is deemed necessary."

Robert Louis Stephenson (1882)

While the essence of this quote remains true in that politicians don't require training or qualifications to become elected representatives – there is now much greater recognition of the need to support elected representatives who take on multiple and varying responsibilities in government.

Context and Introduction

Context

Professional development is extremely important in any job or position. As elected Members of North Kesteven District Council, we must decide how best to serve the needs of our electorate.

Elected Members are not employees of the Council, however, the Council strives to support elected Members to seek a balance between the increasingly challenging roles within the Council and external commitments.

As elected Members, we will each bring differing skills, knowledge and experience to our roles, and will have our own views and core social values. We need to comply with certain rules, regulations and procedures and we are likely to have diverse learning needs.

This Member Development Strategy details the learning provision and support that we, as elected Members will receive to help us fulfil our roles and contribute to the delivery of the Council's priorities, objectives and ambitions. It recognises that development and learning requirements for elected Members will arise as a result of changes in corporate priorities, new legal requirements and changes in local government structures or funding and the range of support aims to ensure that local politicians are confident and capable.

Those Members who are aligned to a political group, are likely to receive political leadership and guidance from that group.

Vision and Mission

As democratically-elected local representatives, we have a unique and privileged position to make a difference to people's lives.

This Member Development Strategy aims to provide a clear and ambitious commitment to Member development to help us achieve our potential as elected Members. The ethos of this Strategy is that Member development is owned and driven by us, as elected Members. Administrative support is provided by the Democratic Services Team and more widely from the Senior Management Team and divisions within the Council.

By "developing our Members to develop our District" North Kesteven District Council advocates that investment in Member development supports the development of the District. This ethos ensures that we, as Members, are fully involved in our own personal development and learning, enabling us to effectively represent our NK district of flourishing communities.

'Our People' Strategy

North Kesteven as a responsible employer has developed the 'Our People' Strategy that reflects the Council's culture of excellence. It also adopts a number of important values and behaviours which apply to all who work for the Council. These are designed to ensure that the Council's customers and colleagues are treated with respect, that their expectations and concerns are treated seriously and that all act to achieve the best possible outcomes. The Member Development Strategy is linked to the 'Our People' Strategy as this inclusive learning culture extends to us as elected Members.

Context Facts and Figures

Number of Members	43
Vision of the Council	A District of flourishing communities
Corporate Priorities	Our Communities, Our Council, Our Economy, Our Environment and Our Homes

Context and Introduction

The delivery of Member development supports the ethos that leading the community with greater knowledge and understanding should help the Council achieve its corporate priorities.

Aims

1. To communicate a clear vision for Member development at North Kesteven District Council.
2. To provide a consistent framework for Member development which addresses skills and knowledge required for modern Member practice (individual and Council-wide).
3. To foster and develop a Member-led culture where continuous learning and development, linked to identified good practice, is central to our elected Member role.
4. To ensure that all Members, new and experienced, build knowledge and skills to help us in current roles and to prepare us for roles that we may fulfil in the future.
5. To regularly evaluate Member development to ensure that it continually evolves to meet individual and Council needs.
6. To ensure that we, as Members (and potential Members), are aware of the Council's expectations of us, to take personal responsibility to engage and participate in learning and development opportunities.
7. To encourage citizenship in the community and promote the role of Members.
8. To seek to achieve value for money in providing Member development.

Commitment and Endorsement

As Members we undertake varied roles both within the District Council and as leaders in the communities we serve. We are expected to play an increasingly important role as decision makers, regulators, enforcers and to work in partnership to deliver the Council's ambitious corporate priorities.

North Kesteven District Council is committed to the continuous support and development of all its Members. Co-opted Members will be supported with development opportunities that are specific to their role.

It is important to note that the Member Development Panel has been closely involved in the preparation of this Strategy and consultation has been sought throughout to ensure it is Member-led. This Strategy has been endorsed by the Executive Board and approved by Council.

As Elected Members, we have to make informed decisions, confidently and accurately guide and inform constituents, and report concerns. In that respect, we need to understand that attendance at some development events will be essential (compulsory). The nature of an event will be clearly stated in communications with Members - **essential** (attendance is compulsory) or **beneficial** (attendance is strongly encouraged but optional).

Opportunities for Development

Except where specific training is defined as 'essential', the offer of learning and development will be presented as an opportunity to become more informed about a council service or responsibility. Various resources and activities will be offered and timely reminders sent, but it will be for us, as Members, to personally decide how we wish to engage with Member development.

We must play an active role in our own personal development with the support and guidance of the Council. The challenge for all those involved in Member development is to make the offer as attractive and engaging as possible, whilst ensuring that a balance of relevant new development sessions and refresher sessions are provided. Councils are operating in financially difficult times and so it is incumbent upon us as Members to embrace the opportunities presented and to provide important feedback to help shape future development programmes.

Cross-party representatives on the Member Development Panel will champion and promote learning and development opportunities among their respective political groups.

Essential Training:

It will be compulsory for a Member to attend an event designated as 'Essential'. This will apply to being a Member of a committee such as planning and licensing, and also to other areas of council services such as safeguarding and code of conduct. The type of training will be made clear when the Member Development offer is shared with Members.

Beneficial Training:

Members will be strongly encouraged to attend development events that are designated as 'Beneficial'. These events will be delivered because there is important information to share and enables Members to be kept informed. Again, this type of training will be made clear when details of the Member Development event is shared with Members.

Equality of Opportunity

North Kesteven District Council is committed to the principle of equality in the learning and development opportunities and activities for all Members - irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital status.

Members are busy people and have many demands on their time, so where possible development activities will be provided at different times to accommodate various needs. Additionally, everyone has different learning preferences. Therefore, the Council will aim to provide development materials in a variety of forms including paper workbooks, e-learning and DVDs. A library of resources is available to Members in the Members' Room.

Member Development Delivery

Learning and Development Opportunities

North Kesteven District Council will offer a variety of learning and development opportunities to ensure there is a blended approach. The majority of events will be classed as beneficial but some will be categorised as essential. Essential training will mostly relate to your appointment to a committee or a role, however, the nature of the development offer will be made clear in correspondence with you.

Induction Programme

During the first few weeks as a new Member there is a lot to do and learn. The District Council has a strong officer-Member working relationship and so upon taking office, Members can expect help and support from officers at all levels.

The development activities included within the induction programme will be reviewed and approved by senior political and managerial leadership and those involved with formulating the induction framework to ensure a targeted and effective programme is delivered. The Member Development Panel also contributes to the format of the Councillor Induction Programme.

The Democratic Services team will also support and arrange the provision of an induction programme for individual Members following a District Council By-Election.

Member Development Programme

A Member Development Programme is developed by the Democratic Services team and monitored by the Member Development Panel. The purpose of the Member Development Programme is to bring together all learning and development opportunities available to individuals, committees and political leadership, which are considered and prioritised against specific needs and resources.

Throughout your term in office, all Members will be expected to attend core learning events/briefings on key topics. These may include sessions on:

- Equality and Diversity
- Scrutiny
- The budget and local government finance
- Code of Conduct
- Community engagement
- Risk management
- Planning
- Safeguarding
- IT skills

Mentoring

Peer mentoring is a mutual way of enhancing and enriching learning that can improve inclusivity and the experience of being an elected Member. As Members, we are encouraged to share our knowledge with our peers. Mentoring by an experienced Member is another support mechanism, particularly for new Members or those of us aspiring to different roles. Such mentoring arrangements are managed directly by political groups.

Member Development Delivery

Methods of Learning and Development

A variety of learning methods will be used for both essential and beneficial development activities including, but not exclusively - in-house training courses, briefings and workshops. Other methods of learning offered to you will include conferences and seminars, written learning materials, mentoring, webinars and e-learning packages.

In addition, Members may learn from visiting other Councils as well as meeting with relevant partnership bodies.

To ensure clarity between training courses, briefings and workshops, definitions have been devised to support Members to understand how learning and development activities will be delivered:

Briefing:

The purpose of a briefing is to give information or instructions. Briefings will usually be presented by internal colleagues at North Kesteven District Council.

Workshop:

The purpose of a workshop is to involve participants in learning. Workshops are sessions where participants/attendees are involved in interactive activities or group tasks.

Training:

The purpose of a training session is to teach somebody a specific skill or type of behaviour. Training sessions are likely to be delivered by external suppliers.

Member Development Finances

The Council sets aside an amount for Member development each year as part of the Council budget exercise. Expenditure is monitored by the Member Development Panel, and the Democratic Services Manager is the budget holder. Events arranged by the Democratic Services Team for all Members will be funded through this budget. Specific requests for attendance at events such as conferences are considered by the Executive Board.

Personal Development Planning (PDP)

A personal development planning procedure exists to support Member development at North Kesteven District Council. The Personal Development Plans support us as Members to reflect on our learning and development, previous experience, and to assess against the political skills framework and plan for future activities. Development activities need to be targeted, effective and meet the needs intended, therefore the PDP process feeds into a rolling Member Development Programme used to inform and schedule future development activities offered to Members corporately.

Using the PDP process should ensure that all Member development training is appropriate and specific to the needs of the Council and to ourselves. Ultimately we are responsible for our individual participation in development, learning assessment and associated activities.

It is important to know that all PDP information is kept confidential with the responses collated by Democratic Services only. The PDPs will be reviewed to identify common areas for future development which will be used to inform the Member Development Programme.

Political Skills Framework

Beneficial learning and development activities identified through the PDP process are likely to be linked to the Local Government Association's political skills framework. The skills framework details six core skills areas for Members which are:

- Local Leadership
- Scrutiny and Challenge
- Communication Skills
- Political Understanding
- Partnership Working
- Regulating and Monitoring

When learning and development activities are offered to Members, the invitation will state which core skills and corporate priorities (where applicable) the learning activity relates to.

Ongoing Commitment to Member Development

North Kesteven District Council is committed to the development of Members. Members at all stages of their elected term will need access to opportunities to refresh existing skills and develop new ones to keep up to date with initiatives and changing priorities. However, it is essential to reinforce that Member Development must be owned and be driven by us, as elected Members, with responsibilities to those we serve.

Separately, Democratic Services provide a 'Buddy' support to newly elected Members, on the practical aspects of being a Councillor, as they become familiar with the services, processes and contacts within the Council.

Further information is included within the Really Useful Guide (RUG) for Councillors.

Induction Evaluation

We will be asked to provide feedback on each development activity included within our induction programme. This includes the essential (mandatory) activities, as well as the beneficial (optional) training. The Democratic Services team will collate the results and present them to the Senior Management Team and appropriate officers; using the outcomes to continuously develop the induction programme for future years. The Member Development Panel will review the feedback from the induction programme following full council elections.

Standard Evaluation Forms

Aims, objectives and learning outcomes are publicised for development events and an evaluation template has been developed, in conjunction with the Member Development Panel. Evaluations are summarised by the Democratic Services team and regularly monitored by the Member Development Panel.

The Democratic Services team also provide feedback to those delivering the training; comments noted on evaluation forms will be considered and acted upon to improve development activities and to shape future development programmes.

Where you are unable to attend an event, it is always helpful to understand the reason why. This can help inform future development arrangements to improve development activities and to shape future development programmes.

Training Reflection

To ensure Member development initiatives are effective, it is important that we spend time reflecting on the development activities that we have attended. To support this, a Member development training log is given to each of us to record learning and development events that we have attended and to make our own appropriate notes. This can be a useful aide memoire and we are encouraged to complete it. This can be found in both the RUG and the Library (ModGov library).

Newsletters

Democratic Services publish 'Member Development News,' in conjunction with the Member Development Panel. These newsletters provide summaries of recent training events, and details of upcoming events.

The newsletters also contain other useful information for Members. It is provided in electronic format, but hard copies are also available, where requested. Member development information is also shared through the Members' Link, an e-news bulletin regularly published by the Communications Team.

Digital Communication

Every Member is provided with a device e.g. an iPad, which enables us to carry out our District Councillor roles. This not only supports the reduction in use of paper but also provides quick access to important information, making us more responsive in how we interact with the Council and our communities.

The Council uses a software system called Mod. Gov to manage a number of democratic activities such as the publication of meeting agendas, reports and minutes, Register of Interest forms, attendance at meetings, Member biographies, election results and Outside Body appointments.

The Mod.Gov App and the Library (accessed via Mod.Gov) together with other Apps, form an integral part of our daily work as a Councillor.

Members are supported in accessing and using these resources through various approaches such as 1-2-1 training, guides from relevant teams, demonstrations.

Really Useful Guide

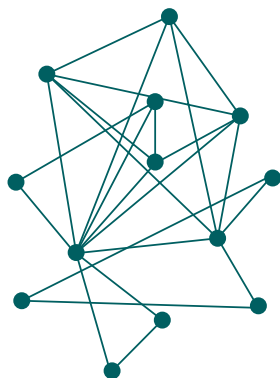
Upon election, each Member is provided with a copy of the Really Useful Guide for Councillors. The guide includes:

- Information on the District
- Useful contacts within the Council
- Information on decision making
- Guidance on ethical standards
- And much more!

The Member Role Guide aims to set out the main Member roles within the Council and the key skills that we, as Members, use to carry out these roles and provides clarity for both Members and officers about what is expected from these roles. It also broadly outlines some of the skills and attributes that may be required to help to develop these, so we can easily identify any gaps in our skills and knowledge, which might impact on our effectiveness in carrying out our roles.

The Member Role Guide is contained in the Really Useful Guide for Councillors.

East Midlands Member Development Charter



Overview

The Local Government Association works with regional employers and organisations to establish and support the Charter for Member Development. The Charter signifies a commitment from an authority to introduce a policy that supports and encourages Member development. All nine UK regions have signed up to the Charter and increasing numbers of councils are pledging to introduce it for their Members.

NKDC Charter

North Kesteven District Council was the first authority in the East Midlands to be awarded Charter status in 2006 with successful re-accreditation in 2009 and 2013. This award reflects the Council's culture, ethos and approach in ensuring that all Members are appropriately developed and supported so that they can be effective in their roles. The Council is very proud of its Charter achievements demonstrating the important application of Member development to align to corporate priorities and deliver capacity to benefit the district.

At the time of approving this Strategy, the Council's Charter status has lapsed. However, North Kesteven District Council continues to recognise the importance of the values of the Charter and to apply the key principles of the Charter in supporting Member development.

Date of publication:

January 2019

Date of Approval:

December 2018

Approved by:

Council

New or existing strategy:

Existing Strategy

181024-JA1