

Member Development Strategy

The Future of Member Development 2023-2027



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Welcome and introduction



As Leader of North Kesteven District Council, it is my privilege to re-affirm the importance in having a refreshed Member Development Strategy for North Kesteven District Council.

The role of an elected Member is complex and challenging and the political, legislative and local

landscape is constantly changing. Our flourishing communities have high expectations of their elected representatives from the day of their election throughout their period of office.

To ensure that we provide services, support and leadership within our flourishing communities which are both efficient and of the highest standard, requires not only our collective dedication but, as a Council, to continue to be at the very top of our game.

Covid 19 presented new challenges which have

required Members and officers to be even more responsive and flexible. We must continue to embrace the innovative skills gained as we navigate the way ahead.

It remains critical to invest time and effort into member development, utilising existing talents and exploring innovative learning styles to ensure that as a Council we serve the community.

This Member Development Strategy sets out our commitment to continuous Member development and provides an overall framework to support all aspects of the elected Member role.

Councillor Richard Wright

Leader of North Kesteven District Council



As an elected councillor and chair of the Member Development Panel, it is my pleasure to support this narrative.

We, as councillors are committed to our residents. Once elected

we believe it is our duty to maintain levels of understanding with regards to all aspects of North Kesteven District Council's work and its progressions. We strive to improve our knowledge and gain better understanding to then apply to our community work.

Our role as anchor and communicator from residents to local government is paramount to the survival of our thriving neighbourhoods. This strategy provides key, focused information and scheduling, to equip us all to serve our district with confidence, drive and above all respect.

Councillor Nikki Dillon

Chairman of the Member Development Panel



Leadership of the Council encompasses not only management of the organisation but also political management. As a Council, we recognise that the learning and development of our Elected Members is crucial to our success and will bring wider benefits to both the organisation and our flourishing communities.

With increasing pressures on local authorities it's more important than ever that we ensure that every elected representative has access to the knowledge and skills necessary to function at a high level. This Strategy is designed to support and structure the Council's work in this area. Our ongoing commitment is to equip Members with the tools and skills to enable them contribute to the development of our District and make appropriate and lawful decisions.

It is closely aligned to the Council's Corporate Strategy and Plans by ensuring that Member Development activities contribute to the delivery of strategic themes and ambitions and the Council's Corporate Values "High-performing, people- focused and professional".

Ian Fytche

Chief Executive

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

Member Development Panel (2022)



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. Nevertheless, all elected Members will benefit from development support.

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.

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

Aims & Commitment

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.

The Member Development Panel has been closely involved in the preparation of this Strategy with support from officers. Consultation has been sought to ensure it is Member-led.

This Strategy has been endorsed by the Executive Board and approved by Council.

Opportunities for Development

Being Involved

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 or licensing and also to other areas of council services such as safeguarding, code of conduct, equality and diversity.

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.

The type of training will be made clear when the Member Development offer 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

Induction Programme

As Councillors with a broad range of skills and experience, we understand the challenges faced by the modern-day Councillor, including in the period shortly after election when considerable learning is required during a condensed period. In those first few weeks as a new Member there is a lot to do, learn and become familiar with.

The District Council has a strong officer-Member working relationship and so upon taking office, Members both newly elected and returning can expect help and support from officers across the Council.

The Member Development offer after the 2023 District Council elections will be delivered via an induction and refresher programme over the first 6 months, followed by ongoing targeted training and support for the remainder of the remainder of the of the term. The Programme will be flexible in order to adapt to meet any changing needs.

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 support and arrange the provision of an induction programme for individual Members following a District Council By-Election.

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. 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.

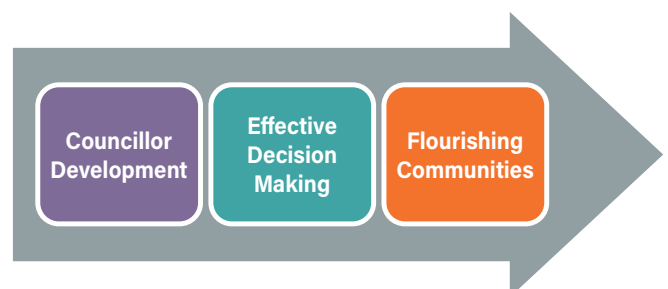
Member Development Programme

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. Development needs identified via the Personal Development Planning (PDP) process will feed into the member development programme.

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

These may include sessions on:

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



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 may include written learning materials, mentoring, webinars and e-learning packages conferences and seminars. 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 or Officers. Attendance at formal training events will be recorded on the Council's website.

Conferences:

Specific requests for attendance at events such as conferences are considered by the Executive Board.

Member Development Resources



People Resources

Officers are regularly involved in the design and delivery of briefings, workshops and training events therefore their time is considered as a named resource for Member Development.



IT Resources

With an increased number of online and virtual events, the IT provision is critical in delivering Learning and Development to Members.

Our preferred conferencing platform is Microsoft Teams. However some other approved platforms can be accessed.



Financial Resources

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.

Personal Development Plans

Personal Development Planning (PDP)

A personal development planning process 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 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

Optional 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.



Induction Evaluation

We will be asked to provide feedback on each development activity included within our induction programme. 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 District Council Elections and By-Elections.

Standard Evaluation Forms

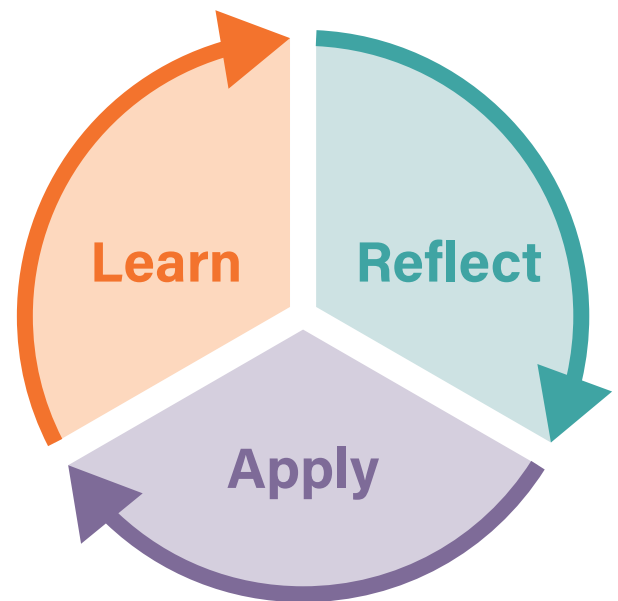
Aims, objectives and learning outcomes are publicised for development events and an evaluation template has been developed, in conjunction with the Member Development Panel. Evaluations are summarised by the Democratic Services team and regularly monitored by the Member Development Panel.

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. We encourage Members to record their development attendance and the benefits of the training.



Regular evaluation of training and development events will help determine whether the intended individual and organisational outcomes have been achieved.

Evaluation will also monitor councillor access to and take up of training opportunities.

The purpose of evaluation is to determine Value For Money (VFM) and measurement of the effectiveness and relevance of training provided to ensure that it meets both Members individual requirements and supports the achievement of the Council's Strategic Priorities.

Members' Link

A range of council related information and articles including Member development is shared through the Members' Link, an e-news bulletin regularly published by the Communications Team.



This will also include some health and wellbeing articles that may benefit Members.

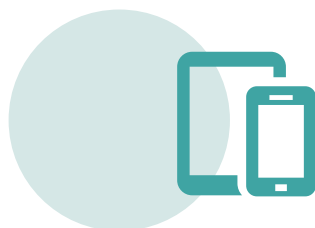
Digital Communication

Every Member is provided with a device e.g. an iPad, which enables us to carry out our District Councillor roles using a variety of apps. 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 (accesses via Mod.Gov) together with other Apps, form an integral part of our councillor daily work.

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.

This can be accessed through the mod.gov app.



Member Development Charter Principle

Overview

The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national membership body for local authorities. It is politically-led and a cross-party organisation that works on behalf of member councils to support, promote and improve local government. The LGA provides help to support and develop councillors through a range of resources and webinars. The LGA also 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.

NKDC Charter



North Kesteven was the first authority in the East Midlands to be awarded the Charter for Member Development and is very proud of its past Charter achievements. It demonstrated the important application of Member development aligning with corporate priorities and delivering capacity to benefit the district.

The Council, despite not holding Charter status at the time of refreshing this Strategy, continues to recognise the importance of the values of the Charter and to apply the key principles of the Charter in supporting Member development.

Support for Prospective Councillors

North Kesteven Council is keen to attract Members from all different backgrounds to join the Council, including those people who are not necessarily part of established political groups. Such people might require some additional information, and support on what it is like to be a Councillor, such as details of the potential time commitments, the benefits of being a Councillor, as well as some of the challenges.

The following specific support will be offered to prospective Councillors:

- Online and media approach to attract and support prospective Councillors will commence at least six months before full District Council elections with drop-in sessions available with Democratic Services colleagues, to provide information on being a councillor.
- A candidate pack will give information on the process for standing for election, with a briefing for prospective candidates, as well as brief details on what it means to be an North Kesteven District Councillor.
- Candidates will be encouraged to observe Council and Committee meetings as members of the public, to further their understanding of how the Council operates.

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New or existing strategy:

Existing Strategy

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