

APPENDIX 3 - COUNCILLOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1. STRATEGY

- 1.1 All political groups will commit themselves to training and development for all councillors according to their needs in accordance with the Policy Statement of Intent for Member Development at Section 13. The political group leaders will signify their commitment by signing a charter.
- 1.1.1 The Council realises the importance of councillor training and development in the context of community representation and leadership. Training events and development opportunities will be made available to all councillors irrespective of party or group membership. Priority for developmental courses will be given to the Leader of the Council and councillors appointed as chairmen of committees and panels.
- 1.1.2 Training will be provided for all councillors following a district-wide election. Councillors elected following a by-election will receive individual induction training as soon as possible after their election.
- 1.1.3 The Council interprets 'training' as instruction that will provide the basic knowledge for each councillor to operate effectively as an elected councillor. 'Development' will be geared to the individual attributes of each councillor to improve their knowledge and expertise. This will further their understanding of topical issues and help them to understand their role in the community and wider environment.
- 1.1.5 Councillors will be involved at every stage in designing the framework, from planning through to delivery and evaluation. The Member Development Group and Head of Paid Service will oversee the strategy and identify the skills that councillors need to manage the strategic issues facing the Council.
- 1.1.6 Democratic Services will co-ordinate the programme and organise events in line with the priorities identified by the Member Development Group and Head of Paid Service.
- 1.1.7 The scrutiny role of the Council is vital to modernising local government and it is recognised that councillors need to be properly trained and supported to fulfil this critical role.
- 1.1.8 An annual councillor training and development plan will be produced which will take account of new initiatives and national directives. The programme will be linked to the priorities in the corporate plan and community plan.
- 1.1.9 The Council will identify adequate resources for councillor training and development.

- 1.10 The Member Development Group will evaluate the contribution made by the councillor training and development strategy in achieving corporate objectives.

2 IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

- 2.1 The Member Development Group and Head of Paid Service will assess the training and development opportunities available to councillors and consider the most appropriate ways in which these should be provided. The objective will be to identify relevant topics and the most effective means for delivery, having regard to the demands on councillors' time.
- 2.2 Committees or panels may refer specific training topics for inclusion in the annual councillor training and development plan.
- 2.3 The training events will include presentations on specific services and functions undertaken by the Council. Training will be mandatory for quasi-judicial committees, for example the development management and licensing committees.
- 2.4 Political group leaders will encourage councillors to attend training and development events.
- 2.5 Quarterly training and development schedules will be produced by Democratic Services. These will provide details of the dates, times and venues for individual events.
- 2.6 Evaluation forms will be issued to councillors following attendance at events. The views expressed by councillors will be assessed by Democratic Services and appropriate action taken in running future events.
- 2.7 Training events attended by each councillor will be recorded on their personal files held by Democratic Services.
- 2.8 Training hours per elected councillor will continue to be recorded by Democratic Services.
- 2.9 Every councillor will have an opportunity each year to meet with the Head of Paid Service or his/her nominated deputy and their political group leader to discuss their training and development needs. This will also provide an opportunity for group leaders to identify members for particular roles in the future.
- 2.10 Councillors who have received the benefit of any development course will be available to act as mentor to any other member who wishes to receive similar developmental training, irrespective of party or group membership.

- 2.11 Staff training courses will be open to councillors when numbers permit. As such vacancies can occur at short notice; councillors will be notified of availability of places by email.
- 2.12 The Democratic Services Manager will have responsibility for managing the Councillor training budget.

3. POLICY STATEMENT OF INTENT FOR MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Forest of Dean District Council is committed to the continuous training and development of its Elected Members. The Council recognises that member development is critical to being a learning organisation and helps members to maximise their full potential.

3.2 A key objective in this will be achieving the vision of:

“Ensuring that all members are fully supported in their learning and development so that they have the necessary skills to deliver the council’s priorities for the benefit of their communities”.

3.3 To achieve this vision the council will develop a comprehensive Member Development Strategy, Annual Training Schedule and Quarterly Member Development Programme, which will balance group and individual needs with Council priorities.

3.4 The Council recognises that learning is continuous and that complex roles, demanding accountabilities and working in a constantly changing environment, require a range of skills and knowledge. It also recognises that councillors are democratically elected and bring with them a wide range of skills and experience. To complement these, the Council will provide learning opportunities as part of building elected member capacity.

3.5 Elected member training and development is essential to the Council’s performance and continuous improvement. The support provided includes:

- An initial 1:1 interview, post induction, to agree personal development objectives and on-going support;
- Development of Cabinet and scrutiny roles;
- Development of community governance role;
- Development of skills and knowledge for roles in other specific functions such as development management and licensing;
- Development of strategic and performance management skills;
- Awareness building of Council policy, current issues and major challenges;
- Personal development in a range of skills, including using computers;
- Induction training for newly elected members and those taking on new responsibilities.

- 3.6 The Council provides equality of opportunity and access to training and development for all councillors. This means that they will not receive less favorable treatment on the grounds of age, gender, sexuality, marital status, disability, race, religion, colour or ethnic origin or by their party political affiliation.
- 3.7 As part of their continuous professional development, all councillors are encouraged to take part in learning activities on a regular basis. There is an expectation that a minimum of 3 day's training per annum will be undertaken by each councillor. This may include training, which is a requirement for specific roles they carry out. Development activities may be identified as part of the personal development interview and needs to be prioritised in line with the individual Member's roles, Council policy and Council plans.
- 3.8 Training and development is a shared responsibility between individual councillors and group leaders of the political parties. In addition, the Member Development Group is responsible for monitoring and evaluating this policy.