



## Sheffield City Council

### Member Development Strategy 2021-2025

#### Introduction

Sheffield City Council is committed to continuous improvement, innovation, and best value in the services it provides and encourages both Councillors and employees to develop their full potential.

This four-year strategy is being agreed at a time when the Council's governance model is fundamentally changing for the first time in over 20 years. During this period, four 'Annual Member Development Plans' will be agreed, aiming to prepare Councillors for this change and responding to their needs once it is in place. Alongside this, the Council must not lose sight of all the other usual demands and challenges which make member development crucial in any local authority.

Local Government is set in a fast-changing environment and Members must have the opportunities to develop the tools and skills they need to deliver a challenging agenda. The Member Development Programme aims to provide Members with the tools and ongoing skills they need to mobilise local communities, grow community capacity, support local innovation and to be able to take important decisions and represent their constituents.

The Council's strategy is to differentiate the learning and development opportunities depending on the multiple overlapping roles that individual councillors may play and to align our training and development offer to those roles and responsibilities.

#### The Aims and Objectives of the Strategy

This Strategy sets out the Council's objectives for member development and how those objectives will be achieved so we can effectively support Councillors and help them to develop. The Strategy links to the Council's commitment to openness and transparency and draws on [The 21st Century Councillor](#). It recognises that the appropriate skill set for councillors is changing and that Councillors need support to work in new ways. It aims to provide clear direction and purpose for member development in order to achieve:

- Motivated and skilled councillors
- A consistent approach to member training and development;
- Equality of opportunity; and

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- Confident Members who are well-equipped and able to carry out their roles effectively.

This Strategy provides a framework for a member development programme that reflects best practice and achieves the following objectives:

- Political leadership capability enabling the Council's priorities to be achieved;
- Linking member learning and development to the Council's priorities;
- Creating shared values and behaviours throughout the Council in order to work as one team for the benefit of all;
- Building the capacity to adapt and change in order to respond to the changing environment and exploit the benefits of technology;
- Delivering learning and development in innovative ways to make the best use of the resources available to the Council e.g. e-learning;
- Giving priority to addressing basic skills needs and providing ICT skills development opportunities for Members;
- Enabling Members to support communities and act as advocates as appropriate;
- Increasing skills development to ensure Members can remain as effective Councillors in Sheffield.

## Commitment to the Strategy

The Council will demonstrate its commitment to the Strategy through:

- The formal adoption of this Strategy by the Full Council;
- An organisation-wide understanding and recognition that Members have individual learning and development needs;
- Member Development Sessions, presentations, committee specific training and other formal and informal learning opportunities designed and delivered in relation to the Council's corporate priorities;
- A structured induction programme which is provided for every newly elected member;
- Learning and development activity being shared with Members, officers, partners and other authorities where appropriate;
- An annual budget and resource allocation for member learning and development;
- A variety of learning and development opportunities available to meet individual member's needs, at different times of the day if required; and
- Officer support through Democratic Services who will support the training and development of Members through:
  - Co-ordinating all training for Members;
  - Ensuring that all Members are aware of training and development opportunities;
  - Devising a comprehensive training and development programme.

**What are the roles that members play in the committee-led future council?**

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The role of an elected Member is a rewarding form of public service where individuals can make a difference to the quality of other people's daily lives. Being an effective Member requires hard work where Members must balance the needs and interests of their residents, voters, political groups and the Council. All these interest groups will make legitimate demands on the Member's time on top of their personal responsibilities to family, workplace and friends. It is therefore important that Members understand their role and its demands so they can perform responsibly and effectively for the Council and maintain the quality of their personal lives.

Most members' roles will include the following:

- Representing the ward;
- Decision-making;
- Policy and strategy review and development;
- Regulatory duties; and
- Community leadership and engagement
- Sharing responsibility for specific things such as the Council's role as corporate parent to looked-after children
- Working as part of a political Group
- Working as part of one or more committees

Some members' roles will also include:

- Being Chair of one or more Committees
- Being the Lord Mayor and Chairing Full Council
- Statutory responsibilities such as being Lead Member for Children's Social Care
- Being a specialist on certain areas of policy and decision-making (such as planning)

### **Representing the ward**

The primary role of a Member is to represent their ward and the people who live in it. They also have a responsibility to communicate Council policy and decisions and the reasons for those decisions to people in their ward.

### **Chairing Committees and being chaired**

Some members need to be skilled at chairing and all members need to be skilled at being a member of a committee.

- Policy Committees
- Regulatory Committees
- Other Committees
- Full Council (Lord Mayor)

These require different chairing and committee memberships skills

### **Decision-making**

Members have a central part to play in making decisions that impact on their ward and across the whole area covered by the Council. They will be involved in decision-making through:

- Full Council;

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- Policy Committees
- Regulatory committees such as planning and highways or licensing;
- Local voluntary organisation management;
- Sitting on boards and as school governors;
- Membership of partnership boards; and
- Being appointers of staff on appointments panels and disciplinary or grievance appeals.

## Policy and Strategy

Members influence and determine the development and review of the Council's policy and strategy. They contribute to this through their set of technical skills and subject specific knowledge that members need to sit effectively on these kinds of committees:

- Membership of Policy Committees, and influencing other policy committees via their groups
- Involvement in advisory groups and partnerships;
- Role as a representative on local community groups;
- Role on area forums and committees;
- Case work; and
- Membership of a political group
- Audit
- Governance Committee

## Regulatory Duties

Local authorities provide services and also act as regulators. Members have roles on special committees appointed directly by the Council, such as audit and standards, planning and highways, and licensing committees. They are required to act independently and are not subject to the party group whip. There are a set of technical skills and subject specific knowledge that members need so they are effective on these kinds of committees.

## Community Leadership and Engagement

Community leadership is at the heart of modern local government and councils are taking on new responsibilities for working in partnership with other organisations, including the voluntary, community and faith sectors, to improve services and the quality of life of citizens.

- Survey data?
- What members have told us?
- What areas of the system are changing the most?
- What roles carry greatest risks (eg some roles require decisions which carry greater risks of eg Judicial Review etc, or financial implications)

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### How will we deliver Learning & Development to Members?

- It will be virtual by default;
- Using our internal budget wisely;
- Collaborate with partners – e.g. LGA, CfGS
- E-learning as appropriate;
- Bringing in external expertise where necessary;
- Continued assessment of members' needs (via regular survey);
- Continued assessment of quality of the training delivered (via three point feedback from members ie before, at and after training)

### Expectations around Attendance

The Working Group will monitor attendance and evaluations of member development activity. This is to make sure that attendance and participation are in line with our aspirations to ensure that Member Development is successful and inclusive for all Members.

The following terms will be used to help set the expectations around participation and attendance:

- **Mandatory** – failure to attend would breach the constitution or prevent you from sitting on a specific committee
- **Essential** – Members are expected by their own Group Leaders to attend
- **Encouraged** – Members would benefit from attending and it will be relevant to all members
- **Welcome** – Members would benefit from attending, but it may be less relevant for some.

### The Learning and Development programme

This Strategy will be supported through the development of a Learning and development Programme. This programme will be responsive to:

- Individual needs of Members;
- The regular election cycle and by-elections;
- Legislative and regulatory changes;
- Changing Government priorities; and
- Local priorities.

The programme will comprise five training and development streams:

1. Induction and Committee Specific;
2. Local Area Committee;
3. Local Government Association;
4. Transitioning to a Committee System: and
5. Miscellaneous

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Each of the above is explained in a little more detail below

### **Induction and Committee Specific Training and Development**

Following the election, successful candidates will be provided with an induction pack and general induction aimed to get them 'up and running' in their new role. The induction sessions will be discussion based with plenty of scope for Q&As. They will be well supported with written materials, multi-media presentations and interactive aspects. For newly elected Members there are seven development sessions delivered by officers:

- Introduction to the Council,
- Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding,
- Local Government Finance,
- Emergency Planning,
- Public Health,
- Introduction to Planning for Newly Elected Members and
- Policy and Performance,

Committee specific training would ideally take place before initial meeting of each committee. The induction process will continue with a series of training events focussed on members' specific committee specialisms. These will take place before the first meeting of the respective committees to ensure they are prepared for the work they will undertake. These will include sessions on:

- Planning – All planning Members
- HR Appeals Panels – All appeals panel Members
- Licensing – All licensing Members
- Audit & Standards – All audit and standards Members
- Scrutiny – All scrutiny Members
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion – All Members
- Information Management – All Members

Further committee specific sessions will take place through the year, if required. Refresher sessions will happen immediately prior to the first meeting of a committee each municipal year.

### **Local Area Committee Training and Development**

Initially a programme of development for officers was put together at the request of the Empowering Communities Programme (ECP). Following these sessions the ECP Board felt that Members would benefit from receiving similar development opportunities to assist them in their new roles within the Local Area Committees. There are thirty sessions in total which scope various topics.

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### Local Government Association Training and Development – We still do not have answers!

The Local Government Association (LGA) have offered one year's worth of training and development to SCC. Sessions delivered by the LGA are offered to all Members, however there may be some instances where training is delivered in single party groups. This offer will be utilised where appropriate and when possible.

### Transitioning to a Committee System Training and Development

A list of topics was compiled as to what would be the most imminent needs for training and development are for transitioning to a committee system. The draft list includes, but is not limited to:

- Scrutiny – whether or not a separate scrutiny committee exists in the new governance model, there will be some statutory scrutiny functions to undertake and, as per the Governance Committee's draft design principles, a need to ensure that decision-makers are effectively held to account by whatever system is in place.
- How to be an effective committee member (including 'how to disagree well').
- Chairing and Vice-chairing in Sheffield's committee system.
- Chairing and Vice-chairing Local Area Committees.
- Community Engagement
- Leadership and decision-making in a committee system.
- Lord Mayor Training
- Audit Committee
- Policy and Performance

*Training and development which falls under this stream will only take place this municipal year whilst the transition is in progress.*

### Miscellaneous and Ongoing Training and Development

Through additional discussions with officers and Members a list of further training and development topics have been raised. The intention is not necessarily to offer specific courses relating to each of these issues separately, but to ensure these issues are covered by the member development programme over the coming municipal year and induction cycle.

- Personal Safety – Violence against women and all Members
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Carbon Literacy
- Cultural Awareness including eg racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia
- Media & Technology skills
- Conflict Resolution
- Personal Resilience

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- Climate Change
- Standards and Member Code of Conduct
- How Local Area Committees work
- Appropriate use of Social Media
- Health and Social Care
- Portfolio Leadership

## Delivering the Programme

The Council recognises that Members will have their own preferred learning styles and respond differently to different learning methods employed during training and development events. Similarly, Members will also have differing time requirements because of work or family commitments.

The following range of learning and development opportunities will be explored for the use in the Council.

- Briefings/explanations of policies;
- Seminar/Webinars;
- Workshops;
- Role plays;
- Study visits;
- Coaching;
- Mentoring;
- Conferences;
- E-learning websites;
- Case Studies;
- Networking and shadowing.

## Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

Following each training and development session a short survey is sent via a link to each Member that has attended the session. Members are asked to rate the usefulness of the session to them and also to use the form to follow up with any questions that they may have so that these can be followed up with the relevant officer or stakeholder in order to provide the correct answer.

## Member Working Group

A Member Working Group was formed in mid-September. The group comprises of 3 cross party Members and the hope is that it will expand. The aim of this cross-party group is to discuss Member Development needs, offer informal direction to officers who are developing this programme when consulted, and to help keep members updated on what is happening with development opportunities and what is being planned. These are informal discussions.

## Member Development Site – SharePoint

It was raised by some Members that they would like a central place to access useful resources and information. A SharePoint area was previously set up for Members following

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the Covid-19 Pandemic. This has now been updated and enhanced and is available for access. All Members have been informed of this via email and verbally in some training and development sessions. Instructions have been provided on how to access the site. All resources from training sessions are added to this site alongside useful training videos and links to the LGA. There is a direct link to the Local Area Committees SharePoint site too. This SharePoint site will continually expand with useful resources, links and information for Members.

## **Member Development Plan**

The Member Development Plan is a separate document which outlines the vision for training and development over the next coming year.

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