



**MEMBER
DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY
2015 - 2018**

Contents Page

Member Development Strategy Introduction	3
Why do councillors need training?	5
Training Delivery	7
Evaluation Strategy	9
Member Development Steering Group	10
Resources & Support	11
How to become a councillor	12

Member Development Strategy Introduction

Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) is committed to the continuous training and development of its elected members so that they can carry out their executive, non-executive, regulatory and scrutiny roles effectively. The Council is committed to providing adequate resources in order to carry this out.

Top Political and Managerial teams are committed to Member Development and continuously seek opportunities to benefit the Council in achieving its vision and objectives. Annual Performance Indicators are set for councillors' Member Development and these are monitored as part of the Council's performance, by Overview & Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team.

The Council recognises that adopting new roles and new accountabilities and working in a constantly changing environment with changing legislation require new skills. It also recognises that councillors are democratically elected and bring with them a diverse range of experiences and knowledge. To complement this, the Council will provide a range of learning opportunities linked to the skills required by councillors for them to carry out their various duties.

Elected member training and development is essential to the enhancement of the Council's performance. The support provided includes an induction process for all new councillors, statutory training and all areas of development identified through the Development Needs Analysis.

The Council provides equality of opportunity and access to training and development for all councillors. This means that councillors will not receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, race, colour or ethnic origin, religion or belief or their party political affiliation. Training and development will also be provided at different times and in different ways to suit the diverse needs of councillors e.g. classroom based, e-learning, group work.

As part of their continuous professional development, all councillors are encouraged to take part in as many learning activities as possible and to share what they have learned with fellow councillors. An annual Performance Indicator will be set, giving a target number of training sessions attended, for all councillors to seek to achieve.

Development activities will be identified as part of the Personal Development Plan process and needs prioritised in line with the individual councillor's roles and the Council's Priorities.

The training and development identified through the annual Personal Development Planning process will form the Member Development annual programme.

Aims of the Strategy

- Provide a range of learning opportunities linked to skills required by councillors for them to carry out their varied duties.
- Provide equality of opportunity and access to training and development for all councillors.
- Provide training and development at different times and in different ways to suit the diverse needs of councillors
- Ensure learning activities both reflect development areas identified through the Development Needs Analysis and Personal Development Plan process and are prioritised in line with the individual councillor's roles and the Council's priorities
- Implement and pro-actively use E-Learning modules in DORIS

Why do Councillors need training?

Council's Vision: Working in partnership to create a borough which enables the communities of Dacorum to thrive and prosper

Objectives:

- Affordable Housing
- Regeneration & Economy
- Safe & Clean Environment
- Building Community Capacity
- Dacorum Delivers

The Council's vision and objectives were set by the Corporate Management Team and the Cabinet members. They each require members to have the appropriate skills to take decisions and monitor the work of the Council. Set training events will be held to look at different areas of the corporate objectives and the work which is involved.

Training and development is important for all councillors, both new and those more established. Induction for new members is fundamental in providing them with the tools and requirements to be an effective councillor and to give them the basic understanding of life as a councillor. Existing councillors will have the basic skills and knowledge therefore training for them is more about continuing to develop their personal skills, keeping up to date with new and ever changing policies and for potential future new responsibilities. For newly elected councillors a mentoring scheme is in place should they wish to utilise it. There is the option for them to be partnered with an existing, more experienced councillor to assist them in their role.

Community members will expect their local councillor to keep up to date with ever changing policy, external issues and local area needs. Councillors also need to be in a position to respond to constituent casework arising from their role as community leaders within their wards.

Councillor Responsibilities

As adopted by the Council, each councillor must adhere to role descriptions specific to their elected role, as set out in Part 2 of the Council's Constitution. Commitment to Member Development will help towards delivering the Principal accountabilities:

- Adhering to the Members Code of Conduct & the Council's Constitution
- Undertake case work on specific problems raised by their constituents
- To act as 'Community Leaders' within their ward
- Communicate in a variety of ways
- Scrutinise & hold to account the Cabinet and Council as a whole
- To take part on the Member Development Programme to help improve their role as an effective councillor

Training Delivery

How are Councillors Needs Identified?

Once a councillor has been elected they will carry out a basic skills checklist. This will identify any initial training requirements. Every councillor will receive a Personal Development Plan (PDP) in their first year of being elected. This will involve a discussion with a qualified individual to discuss:

- Training previously carried out
- Preferred methods of learning
- Future training needs
- Scope for them to provide others with training
- Aims for the future

Following the PDP interview, each councillor will agree their plan. This will set out a summary of the discussion which took place and will set out actions agreed. Should a councillor express an interest in developing their role further over a period of time and looking at becoming a Cabinet member, it is then that the Leader of the Council (subject to the individual's agreement) could use this towards succession planning. A set training programme could be set for them in order to help them develop the required skills.

How does the Council respond to councillor needs?

Officers responsible for Member Development will receive a training needs analysis for all councillors. This will then be discussed at the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) in order to identify priority topics. Once identified, the training programme for the following year will be set and officers will endeavour to book training facilitators. Members of the Council can request/suggest training sessions throughout the year, to also be programmed. In addition any councillor can request to attend an external course, which officers will endeavour to arrange payment of.

Evaluation forms will be provided at every training session and feedback received will be discussed by the MDSG. Any areas identified for future improvement will be looked into by the MDSG. The MDSG will decide if a development session should be held again or if a provider should be used again, based on the evidence of the evaluation forms. This

feedback will also be provided to the training facilitator in order to help them adapt their material if necessary.

How will training be delivered?

Training will be delivered in a variety of forms, including; evening development sessions, briefings prior to Full Council, brief training at Committee meetings, E Learning (DORIS), PowerPoint presentations and by sharing experiences with each other.

Training will be provided by a mixture of internal Officers and external providers. A list of recommended external providers is available to the officers responsible for coordinating the development sessions. The Herts Member Development Network Group has created a joint list of external providers used by all Herts authorities.

Parish/Town Councillors – invited to relevant training

All Town and Parish councillors will be invited to any training or development opportunity which is relevant to their role. They will also have the opportunity to request any training on internal Council services.

Evaluation Strategy

The authority adopts a robust approach to evaluate the effectiveness of its Member Development investment, which informs future plans and improvement plans.

Aims and objectives are set for each training and development session held. An Evaluation form is then circulated to all who attended and they are asked to rate how they felt the course compared to the set objectives.

The evaluation forms received are then analysed by the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG), who look at how the course was rated overall, the improvements which could be made and the strengths and weaknesses of the course and the trainer. Feedback received is then passed on to the facilitator, whether this is an internal officer or an external provider. In order to ensure the budget is being used efficiently, the MDSG also look at the costs of the course compared to how many councillors attended and the overall rating.

The results of the evaluation process will be considered again when forming future Member Development Programmes. It will help the MDSG determine if a similar session should be run again, possibly with changes/improvements suggested and if a training provider should be invited to run further sessions.

Member Development Steering Group

Member Development at Dacorum Borough Council is supported and led by the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG).

The MDSG meet four times a year and have many roles to fulfil, including:

- Budget monitoring
- Evaluation Feedback
- Future Training programme
- Councillor training requirements
- Training providers

The MDSG encourages all elected members to be involved in training and development in order to develop their own skills. They help to promote Member Development across the Council and within their political groups and feed back any councillor requests or questions. The group strives to achieve the performance targets set for member Development and look at alternative ways to reach all councillors.

Resources & Support

Each year the Council will identify the budget required for Training & Development for elected councillors. This incorporates internal and external courses and conferences and seminars.

The training budget for Member Development at DBC is £9,000; however this is increased to £11,000 for years following Borough elections to assist with essential training and carrying out Personal Development Plans.

The MDSG monitor the budget spending at each of its meetings. It looks at methods of providing training and decides the most cost effective route to take. Courses requiring expenditure must be booked by the Member Support Team and reported to the MDSG.

Member Development has dedicated support from the Member Support team. It is their job to coordinate the Member Development Program, arrange facilitators, collate feedback and promote Member Development across the Council. All councillors are aware of this support and are encouraged to contact the team should they wish to go on a course or look to develop an area of skills but are unsure as to how to go about it.

Officers attend a Hertfordshire Member Development Network Group and benefit from a vast amount of shared learning, ideas and contacts. The group meets an average of four times a year, and the Chairman of the MDSG is invited to attend two of those meetings.

The team also look for areas of specific development and match these to individual councillors, if it has been requested during the Personal Development Planning process.

How to Become a Councillor

Dacorum Borough Council's website provides information for those wanting to become a councillor, and can be found at: <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/council-democracy/elections-and-voting/how-to-become-a-councillor>

Information provided includes:

- The role of a councillor
- Who can become a councillor?
- Standards
- Time commitment
- Support received
- Training
- Equality & Diversity

In addition, information would look to be available prior to an election for potential candidates in order to provide an insight on being a councillor, to introduce them to the Council and to answer any questions they may have.