

## Appendix C

**London Borough of Sutton****Member Development Strategy****Introduction****Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report**

The London Borough of Sutton Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report of 9 - 12 February 2016 made the following observations in relation to Member development at the Council:

*'In a context of what we highlighted earlier regarding the need to re-balance the focus of elected members on the strategic direction of the borough as a whole and the overall business of the council, there is a requirement to fundamentally re-think the approach to identifying and meeting their training and development needs. At present, the training and development provision for councillors is focused on fairly standard stuff, such as chairing skills, IT, Planning and safeguarding. Even then, the programme is seen to have tailed off recently. The shift of responsibility for elected member development to the Democratic Services function provides the opportunity to develop a different direction and inject new impetus.'*

The Member Development Strategy seeks to address the concerns raised and establish a new focus and direction for Member development at the Council.

**Members' Roles and Responsibilities**

Members have challenging and diverse roles on the Council. Section 2, Article 2 of the Council's Constitution describes the roles and functions of all Councillors and sets out that they will:

- collectively be the ultimate policy-makers and carry out a number of strategic and committee management functions;
- represent their communities and bring their views into the Council's decision-making process, i.e. become the advocate of and for their communities;
- deal with individual casework and act as an advocate for constituents in resolving particular concerns or grievances;
- balance different interests identified within the ward or electoral division and represent the ward or electoral division as a whole;
- be involved in decision-making;
- be available to represent the Council on other bodies;
- maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics; and
- not bring the Council into disrepute.

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A number of expectations are also placed on Members, for example by the Council’s ‘Code of Conduct for all Members of the Council and Co-opted Members of Council Committees’ at Section 5, Part 1 of the Constitution, which in turn refers to the 7 principles of public life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership).

Local Government is an ever-changing environment within which Members have to operate. The University of Birmingham’s 21st Century Councillor project, for example, identified the challenges it considers are reshaping local government and Councillors’ role within it. The challenges identified by the project are:

- Perma-austerity;
- Changing citizen expectations;
- New technologies;
- Different scales of working; and
- Changing boundaries and organisation of public services at local level.

In light of Members’ diverse roles, the varied expectations placed upon them, and the challenging environment within which they operate, it is important that Members are provided with appropriate training and development opportunities to maximise their skills and abilities to support the residents of the borough.

Member Development

The definition of appropriate training and development in the context outlined above might best be considered with further reference to the 21st Century Councillor project. This project identified 5 skill types required by the 21st Century Councillor:

<b>Foundational skills</b>	Practical	Speed-reading, chairing a meeting, public speaking, media training.
	Knowledge based	Policy and portfolio areas and committee roles.
<b>Relational skills</b>	Connective	Influencing, negotiating, listening, connecting and story-telling.
	Digital	Use of new technologies as communicative resources.
	Reflective	To cope with the demands of the position.

What is clear is that the varied nature of a Member’s role requires a diverse knowledge and skills-set. Members require key core skills and knowledge to carry out their roles. Many also require additional specific skills and knowledge relevant to corporate priorities, particular service areas, committee roles or leadership functions. It is important to recognise that these requirements do vary, depending on a Member’s role on the Council, which is likely to change over time. It is also important to value different roles equally - a frontline Councillor

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with excellent knowledge of their community and communications skills, able to gain benefits for their residents through networking and influencing a wide range of agencies, is as valuable to the Council and the borough as an experienced Committee Chair with a deep policy knowledge and the ability to articulate and inspire a clear vision of the future they want for their area.

Future Member development provision shall seek to categorise development activities relevant to all these different roles and to assist Members to identify their own individual development needs. It is recognised that Members come from a variety of backgrounds, with different skills, knowledge and expertise. Individuals will have individual learning needs and styles. Many Members also work full time. With that in mind, a flexible approach is required and feedback will be sought regularly from Members.

**Key Performance Indicators**

Member development provision is currently assessed against 3 key performance indicators:

Title	Target
Percentage of invited Members attending event	35%
Percentage of attendees who responded through feedback forms that the Member development event they attended will help them in their role	80%
Percentage of attendees who completed feedback	75%

A fourth key performance indicator is to be added in relation to use of the Members' Information Bulletin, an e-newsletter to Members. This will assess the average number of Members who opened editions of the Members' Information Bulletin over a 4 week period, with a target of 75%.

Future Member development provision will need to take into account how performance against these indicators could be improved. For example, performance has typically been less successful against the target for attendance. Therefore, activities should particularly focus on improving attendance and increasing engagement with the Member development programme.

**The Member Development Strategy****Content, Variety, Delivery and Convenience**

Options aimed at improving the variety of Member development content and the flexibility/convenience of its delivery have been built into the Strategy.

A number of freely available resources are accessible through the LGA, including a series of workbooks and an e-learning platform. Signposting Members to these e-learning resources

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increases the breadth of training materials available to them and allows greater scope to identify and tailor development opportunities. Another key benefit is the flexibility and convenience with which this learning can be accessed.

The Committee Services team will create a Google Site, to which Members will be granted access. Content will include information on the core Member development programme and suggest additional development opportunities, for example courses/events facilitated by the LGA and LGiU. A Google Site allows convenient access to this information in one place. It also enables review of analytics, which would inform future improvements to the Site.

The Committee Services team has recently re-launched the Members’ Information Bulletin (previously the Weekly Information Bulletin) in a new Mailchimp format. This weekly e-newsletter provides the opportunity to circulate reminders about upcoming Member development events and handouts/slides from past events. Again, a key benefit is Members’ convenient access to this information. Use of Mailchimp also allows access to analytics, which would inform future improvements to the bulletin.

The Committee Services team has also explored the filming of some Member development sessions and video clips have thus far been circulated in the Members’ Information Bulletin. These video clips provide the opportunity for all Members to review content from these sessions, in a flexible and convenient way. They are of particular importance where Members have been unable to attend the sessions.

Finally, to provide a convenient reminder of upcoming Member development sessions, and to encourage improved attendance, the Committee Services team will use text-messaging to send reminder messages to Members.

**The Strategy:**

- All Members will be signposted to the LGA’s series of online workbooks.
- All Members will receive log-in details for the LGA’s e-learning platform and make use of its modules. Committee Services will, from time to time, obtain reports from the LGA on the platform’s use.
- Committee Services will create and launch a Members’ Google Site, grant all Members access and upload content relevant to Member development. Content will include, as a minimum:
  - Information on the core Member development programme.
  - Information on suggested additional Member development opportunities.
  - Members’ feedback articles.
- Committee Services will, on a quarterly basis, access analytics information for the Members’ Google Site and implement improvements indicated by that information.

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- Having created and launched a new MailChimp Members' Information Bulletin, Committee Services will continue to circulate to all Members on a weekly basis and include content relevant to Member development. Content will include, as a minimum:
  - Reminders for upcoming core Member development sessions (where applicable).
  - Handout/presentation materials and video links for previous core Member development sessions (where applicable).
  - Links to Members' feedback articles.
- Committee Services will, on a monthly basis, access analytics information for the MailChimp Members' Information Bulletin and implement improvements indicated by that information.
- Committee Services will use text-messaging to send reminder messages to Members about upcoming Member development sessions.

Quasi-judicial Training Requirements

Following the Planning Peer Review in 2015, the council made a commitment in 2016 that Planning Committee members attendance at planning training sessions be monitored via a point scoring system in order to qualify to sit on the Committee. Members must also attend at least 75% of planning committee training delivered in a municipal year and commit to undertake any training missed within 1 year.

Records of Attendance

The Committee Services team will log Members' attendance at Member development sessions and enter this information on ModernGov. This will allow a history of attendance to be recorded against each Member and published to the Council's website, so enabling public access to this information.

**The Strategy:**

- Committee Services will log Members' attendance at core and ad hoc Member development sessions on ModernGov and publish this information to the Council's website.

Member induction and handbook

Options to improve the accessibility and content of induction and handbook materials have been built into the Strategy.

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A Members' Handbook section of the Members' Google Site will be created and launched. This will allow information to be regularly reviewed and updated by Officers and ensure convenient access by Members. The section will also link to LGA resources, including the LGA Councillor's Guide, thus increasing the breadth of information available. This option will tie-in with induction from 2018 by providing essential information to new members regarding, induction administrative forms, council departments and functions and a directory of key contacts throughout the council.

Learning from previous intakes' induction experience has been that too much was covered in too short a space of time, immediately after the elections when Members have just spent weeks or months in intensive campaigning, and need a period of time to adjust rather than being thrown in at the deep end. A more staggered approach is proposed for 2018, with the basic obligations and some brief orientation being covered early on, including a 'Freshers Fair' style event, followed by a gap to allow Members to settle in and work out how and on what they wish to focus, and then a programme of more in-depth and focused induction sessions, informed by Members' needs and requests via an early Member survey.

The other side to induction is for the Council to learn from newly elected Members, as well as vice versa. Members will have spent considerable time out talking to residents during the campaign and the Council needs to learn from this intelligence. The 2018 induction programme will include opportunities for all Members to brief officers on the issues that have come up 'on the doorstep' to inform the Council's work.

It is considered that a mentoring scheme would also be of benefit to new Members, although it would be at the discretion of each Group to introduce and run such a scheme. The Committee Services team would, however, signpost to relevant training and resources to help with the successful implementation of a mentoring scheme. The LGA Group Offices, for example, are useful sources of information and advice if external mentors are sought, particularly for members newly appointed into particular roles.

**LGA Charter for Member Development**

In order to demonstrate a commitment to Member development, Committee Services will look into achieving Charter status under the LGA Charter for Member Development (a copy is attached as Appendix A).

The Charter, once achieved, is held for 3 years and would help to demonstrate a clear commitment and strategic approach to Member development. This may help to counter some of the comments of the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report in relation to Member development, which indicated a '*...requirement to fundamentally re-think the approach to identifying and meeting their training and development needs*'.

In the London region, assessment for the Charter is carried out by South East Employers. The cost is £3,000 for South East Employers members and £3,250 for non members (plus VAT and expenses), including the cost of assessment and ongoing support/contact.

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The first stage is to work towards implementing the different elements of the criterion as set out in the Charter in the 2017/18 Programme. We should then be in a position ahead of the 2018/19 programme to consider seeking assessment to achieve Charter status over 2018/19.

**The Strategy:**

- Committee Services will seek, over 2017/18, to implement the criterion under the LGA Charter for Member Development 2017.

Budget Allocation

Member development is allocated an annual budget of £11,000. Whilst the budget would be used in the first instance to develop a core programme, seek/retain Charter status and use a text-messaging service (if applicable), allocation of the remainder of the budget will seek to encourage take-up of LGA and other, ad hoc, development opportunities. The LGA has a range of development opportunities available to Members.

It is considered that Members should discuss development opportunities outside of the core programme with their Group leader in the first instance, with Group leaders making requests for funding to the Committee Services Team Leader.

In return for funding, feedback articles will be requested from Members as a means to share learning and encourage greater take-up of opportunities available. To ensure easy access to this information, articles will be circulated in the Members' Information Bulletin and uploaded to the Members' Google Site. Members will be asked to submit an article within 1 month of attending an event.

**The Strategy:**

- Member development is allocated an annual budget of £11,000. This will be used in the first instance to develop a core Member development programme of at least 5 sessions over the course of a year (estimated at £2,000 per annum), develop a Planning member development programme and to use a text-messaging service (if applicable) to send reminder messages to Members. The remainder of the budget will be allocated as follows:
  - 60% for LGA leadership opportunities, to be allocated on a proportionate basis between the Groups; and
  - 40% for ad hoc development opportunities identified by individual Members in discussion with their Group leader.
- Members will discuss development needs outside of the core programme with their Group leader in the first instance. Group leaders will make requests for funding to the Committee Services Team Leader. The Committee Services Team Leader shall have the final decision as to whether funding is granted and will monitor the budget in this respect. The Committee Services Team Leader will prioritise

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applications showing demonstrable need for training taking into consideration councillor roles and responsibilities. The Committee Services Team Leader will take into account previous applications for funding in the interests of fairness, before making any decision.

- Funding for Member development outside of the core programme will be granted on the basis that the attending Member provide feedback by way of an article submitted to the Committee Services Team Leader to be uploaded to the Member Google Site within 1 month of attendance.

**Appendix A**

[Member Development Charter and Charter Plus 2017](#)