

COUNCILLOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Introduction

In 2007 Kettering Borough Council's commitment to councillor learning and development was recognised when it was awarded the Regional Member Development Charter. The Council reaffirmed this commitment when it was re-accredited with the Charter in 2011 [and 2014](#).

Since then, ~~new legislation has given more~~ [responsibilities powers have been given powers](#) to locally elected representatives and communities, [and the continuing pressures of “austerity” have meant that authorities have become involved in new areas, such as maximising the use of assets, developing new partnerships within and beyond local government and getting more involved in development schemes](#). This has put training and development of councillors at the heart of service delivery.

Councillors need a whole range of skills in order to embrace the increasing complexity of their individual roles. Since Kettering Borough Council was awarded the Charter in 2007, skills in areas such as working with communities, ~~and~~ [engaging with partners and lobbying](#) have developed to ensure that the Council's elected members not only offer more effective leadership to their communities, but work at the highest strategic level to draw down external funding to improve facilities and services in their local area. Every Councillor has the right to access learning activities that will provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to effectively perform their duties as elected representatives.

The Councillor Learning and Development Policy brings together all the areas that need to be considered for the delivery of a continuously effective learning and development programme for councillors. It is designed to:

- Set out a means of meeting the training needs of individual members and the organisation as a whole.
- Help councillors to gain the skills and knowledge they require to fulfil their role as a councillor
- Raise awareness amongst members of their responsibilities.

The success of the Policy is based on a range of inter-related areas:

- The Council's corporate priorities in relation to sustainable communities, customer service, the environment and community and rural issues

- The Council's commitment to partnership working and fulfilling its commitments as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy
- Councillor learning and development needs, identified through the [Councillor Skills Portal Learning Needs Analysis](#), individual consultations, appraisals and evaluation
- Committee learning and development as identified through ongoing committee consultation
- Sound induction and pre-induction principles and practices for new and prospective councillors
- Encourage and develop citizenship in training, further learning and educational opportunities for all
- Support for community initiatives in wards and areas and the skills to act as an advocate for individuals or groups as appropriate
- An outward-looking Council which has a long-term commitment to working with partners to deliver an easily accessible hub for public services
- A council that connects with regional and national issues and seeks to influence government policy and secure the best possible outcomes for its residents
- A commitment to continuous improvement

Principles and Context

Local

Customers demand high levels of service from their Local Authority and increasingly expect public organisations to work in partnership to deliver services to them. The Council has ~~established ambitious targets to increase~~ continued to and maintain its levels of performance through investing in technology and property and in, identifying what customers want, ~~and by~~ bringing partners together in the delivery of services from a single point of contact. It has extended partnerships in front line service delivery and in back office activities.

The process of identifying training and development needs for councillors and committees will have clear links to corporate objectives and local priorities as expressed in strategic business plans, legal requirements and reports from inspections and/or audits. The process will also take into account any specific needs analysis activities through the ~~Member Development Analysis Tool~~ annual Learning and Development Needs Analysis and ~~the the~~ Councillor Review Scheme. Should the need arise to provide members with information on issues of local significance, or to enhance the representational element of their role, such sessions will be given priority in the training and development programme, which will be drawn up annually to meet the identified needs. The programme will be reviewed at weekly meetings of the Corporate Management Team throughout the year to ensure it meets local priorities in a timely manner.

National

The government has established a challenging agenda for local authorities - the Comprehensive Spending Reviews and grant settlements ~~since 2008 over the last ten years~~ illustrate the reduced resources that are being made available to local authorities. The Council ~~has to demonstrate continuous improvements if it is to~~ must continue to maximise the resources available to it, maintain front-line services and ensure 'added value'.

The local and national context means a period of change for Local Government. Service changes can only be delivered by and through people with the necessary skills, motivation and team behaviours required to meet these challenges.

Equality of Opportunity

All learning opportunities are accessible across all political parties and conform to the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and practice.

Strategic Development Issues

The following Strategic Development issues are important to equip the Council for the challenges ahead.

- 1 Developing political leadership capability to enable the Council's priorities to be achieved.
- 2 Creating shared values and behaviours throughout the organisation in order to work as one team for the benefit of the customer.
- 3 Building adaptability and capacity in order to respond to the changing environment and exploit the benefits of technology and working in partnership with others.
- ~~4~~ Giving priority to addressing basic skills needs ~~and providing ongoing ICT skills development opportunities for councillors.~~
- 54
- 65 Delivering training and development in innovative ways to make the best use of the resources available to the Council.
- 76 Enabling councillors to direct and support community initiatives and act as advocates when appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Council's Commitment

The Council is committed to regularly identifying and supporting the learning and skill development requirements of its councillors to ensure political capacity building and effective management of the authority.

This commitment is underpinned by:

- ~~Maintaining accreditation of the Member Development Charter and aspiring to achieve Charter Plus in the future~~
- Maintaining and supporting a cross-party Member Development Working Group
- Councillors engaging in appropriate learning and development activity when necessary, to ensure their continued effectiveness as community leaders; regulators and monitors; scrutineers; partnership workers; policy developers; strategic decision makers and members of consultation and partnership forums.
- An annual budget allocation for councillor development and adequate resources to meet the training and development needs of councillors to enable them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities collectively or individually
- Promoting an organisation-wide understanding and recognition that councillors have individual learning and development needs
- All Councillors to participate in event evaluation analysis to inform future planning
- The Council to provide adequate officer support to the Member Development Working Group to enable it to meet its objectives

The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee will:-

- Carry out a review of the Councillor Learning and Development Policy every three years
- Ensure that the councillor training and development programme reflects the strategic objectives for Kettering Borough Council
- Ensure that a culture of lifelong learning is developed for all councillors at Kettering Borough Council
- Ensure there is genuine commitment across the council to support the training and development of all councillors

The Member Development Working Group

The cross-party Member Development Working Group will:-

- Facilitate an annual Councillor Review programme and Learning Needs analysis to be undertaken by all councillors
- Introduce and formulate a councillor training and development programme that reflects the vision of Kettering Borough Council and the objectives it is trying to achieve.
- Ensure individual councillors have an individual learning and development record detailing learning activities both internally and externally, and that personal learning and development records are maintained and reviewed yearly by the Member Development Group as a minimum for each councillor through the Councillor Review Scheme.
- Identify organisational learning and development needs, where appropriate.
- Evaluate the effectiveness and value for money of all learning activity by continuously monitoring outcomes and the effective management of the member training budget.
- Explore and identify new methods of learning such as distance learning and e-learning.
- Identify the critical information needs of councillors and the most effective ways of communicating that information
- Act as a co-ordinating body linking all political group learning and development needs
- Promote citizenship and local democracy in the Borough
- Produce an annual programme of training and development opportunities
- Develop and maintain an Action Plan for Councillor Development
- Ensure all seminars, briefings, advice and other formal learning opportunities are designed and delivered in relation to the Council's Corporate Priorities.
- Promote mentoring support for all new councillors and those who require mentoring when changing role.
- Ensure that pre-induction materials and briefings are made available for prospective councillors in the community and an induction programme is offered to every newly elected councillor.

- Implement a structured induction programme for all new councillors and ensure all new councillors attend Core Training and those sitting on relevant committees, eg Planning and Licensing, attend the Mandatory training before they take up their role.
- Identify opportunities for sharing learning activities with officers, partners, the voluntary sector and citizens of the Borough where appropriate.

Act as a consultancy service for all councillors on training and development issues.

Individual Learning and Development

The Councillor Review is a yearly analysis of individual councillors' learning and development need. It takes place as part of a guided learning and development interview with group leaders or members of the Member Development Group. ~~Members can also use the Member Development Skills Portal to conduct 360 degree appraisals and access statistical information regarding skills. The analysis is set against the councillors' current roles and responsibilities and the objectives that they wish to achieve during the coming year.~~ Any of the following may be used to help with the analysis:

- The Council's Corporate Priorities
- Councillor Role Descriptions
- New or pending legislation
- Organisational policies and practices
- European Legislation and developments
- ~~The Member Development Skills Portal~~
- Learning Styles Questionnaires
- Local, Regional and National developments
- Observations of individual current skills and behaviours
- Health and well being
- Career aspirations

The outcome of the analysis of Councillor Reviews culminates in the production of the councillor training and development programme, which is refreshed on a rolling basis, with sessions added as necessary and appropriate.

Councillors conducting reviews are responsible for:

- Assisting councillors to identify training and development needs that reflect organisational and personal objectives
- Ensuring a Personal Development Plan is produced on an annual basis for each member through the Councillor Review process.
- Developing/contributing to councillor and committee training and development plans that reflect equality of opportunity and prioritised needs

- Identifying and encouraging career development opportunities

Committee Learning and Development

Executive

The emphasis is on the political executive being able to:-

- Work closely with senior officers to develop, agree and implement Council strategies
- EncourageSupport scrutiny and respond positively to feedback, challenge and ideas from non-executive councillors
- Work as an Executive team and share responsibility for success and failure
- Achieve their own Portfolio Action Plan for which they are accountable to the Leader of the Council
- Work with Executive officers to collect and analyse complex information to inform budget priorities and performance plans
- Act as Council representatives at a strategic level and represent the organisation in partnership at local, regional and national levels
- Work across political and council boundaries to further communication and encourage co-operation
- Develop others and share best practice
- Represent the Borough's interests externally, including lobbying government, and national and regional agencies and organisations, working constructively with councillors from other councils within the county, and the wider regions we are part of, to secure the best outcomes for our residents.
-
-

Scrutiny

There will be occasions when scrutiny committee members will have sparse knowledge of a particular subject that they wish to scrutinise. At times like these, structured learning events are arranged in order for a successful scrutiny review to be achieved.

Scrutiny Committee learning and development needs are included in the councillor training and development programme.

Scrutiny Committee Members will be offered targeted training as and when required to ensure the following range of skills:-

- To call witnesses (including Executive Members) when appropriate
- To investigate a range of subjects as identified in the Work Programme
- To instigate Council debates
- To request a response from the Executive
- To participate in topic-related Task and Finish Groups

Regulatory

In order for Councillors to comply with legislation and carry out their duties effectively within the regulatory committees, the realisation of their learning needs is seen as vital. Training is mandatory for councillors sitting on regulatory committees, and they will also be required to attend any briefings and refresher training sessions which may be arranged to reflect changes in legislation or policy.

It is inappropriate for Councillors to participate in regulatory committee proceedings unless the relevant training has been undertaken prior to taking up the role.

Councillors need to be able to evaluate arguments according to the evidence that is presented and make independent and impartial judgements. Legal processes have to be followed and councillors are placed in a position to balance public needs and local policy.

Evaluation Strategy

Achieving the organisation's strategic objectives is obviously a positive reflection of effective councillor learning and development.

The councillors' role in the evaluation of learning and development solutions is critical to the continuous improvement of learning events and associated materials. The organisation invests a great deal in learning and development activities and it needs to know that it is spending its money wisely.

Following learning events, it is important to discuss/gather information of the councillors' experience of the learning that has taken place, to inform future planning and in some instances reinforce the learning that has taken place. Reflection and evaluation of learning are critical elements of the learning and development process. Councillors are expected to complete evaluation forms at the end of all learning events that take place in the Council. Where events

are organised by other organisations, councillors are expected to discuss the value of the events on their return and distribute learning materials to others. Evaluation will also monitor councillor access to and take-up of training opportunities.

The most common model of evaluating learning and development identifies four levels:-

- 1. Reaction** Identifies the participant's views and feelings about what they have experienced as this can influence what and how they take the learning forward

- 2. Immediate** Looks at what the participants have actually learned and what they can transfer to their work/life

- 3. Intermediate** Examines the effect of the learning on their job/role performance

- 4. Ultimate** Traces the effect of the learning on the organisation

A summary of event evaluation will be submitted to the Strategic Management Team and the Member Development Group annually.

Impact Assessments

An impact assessment is the process of identifying the anticipated or actual impacts of a development intervention on those social, economic and environmental factors which the intervention is designed to affect or may inadvertently affect.

An Impact Assessment on selected training or information events will be carried out two months after the session to assess the intended, unintended, positive and negative impacts. This will inform any future action required.

The Impact Assessment will be carried out by a senior officer, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder, and will comprise the following steps:-

1. Completion of an Impact Assessment form
2. Consultation with affected stakeholders
3. Summary of preferred option with an implementation plan

The Impact Assessment will provide information on the following:-

- The rationale for the Impact Assessment
- The relevant Corporate Objective(s)
- Description of options for further action under consideration (including 'do nothing')
- Monetised and non-monetised costs and benefits of each option, including administrative burden
- Evidence to justify further action
- Risks and assumptions
- Wider impacts on the community, the environment or the local economy
- Summary and preferred option, together with an implementation plan

Operational Procedures

It is recognised that councillors as individuals have their own preferred learning styles and therefore respond differently to different learning methods that are employed during learning events.

Time is an important factor when considering how to enable learning and development to take place effectively and with maximum access for all.

Joint learning with officers, partners, voluntary sector representatives, etc is always considered and promoted where appropriate.

The Council actively welcomes the attendance of its partners at Full Council meetings, ~~or at committees as appropriate, with time allocated at each meeting for presentations.~~ In this way councillors are kept up to date with emerging plans and the delivery of local public services.

Selected standing items appear on each agenda of the Council's Executive Committee. Examples of such items are responses to the demands of the growth area agenda, ~~town centre regeneration (Suite 16)~~ and maintaining a durable budget. All Councillors are welcome to attend and listen to the presentations by officers in order to remain continuously updated on issues of local significance.

As a result of consultation, the following range of learning and development opportunities have evolved for use in the Council.

- Briefings/explanations of policies (some of which take place at Full Council or at the Executive Committee as detailed above)
- Seminars
- Workshops

- Action learning
- Role plays
- Study or site visits
- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Conferences
- E-learning websites and DVDs
- Discussion forums
- Expert Advisers
- Case Studies
- Networking and shadowing
- Involvement in national working parties and the giving of feedback to others
- Open learning programmes
- Regional Councillor Briefing Programmes [and Events](#)

The Structure of Training

The councillor training and development provision for Kettering Borough Council will include core, mandatory and optional training. The annual programme will include refresher training on Development Control and Licensing. Topic areas covered may include:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction for New Councillors • Good governance and standards • Overview and Scrutiny • Local Government Finance • Employment Committee/JLG Training • Development Control • Licensing • Working with Communities • Case Working • New Initiatives (internally or externally driven) • Sustainability • Performance Management • Health and Safety/Personal Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress Awareness • Speed Reading • Chairing a Meeting • Managing Public Meetings • Confident Speaking • Time Management • Media Management • Political Leadership/Leading Groups • Communication Skills (Listening) • IT Skills • Assertiveness • Project Management • Management of Change • Managing a Portfolio
--	---

Travel and Subsistence Claims whilst Training

Full details are available from Democratic Services.

Attendance

Attendance at in-house training events will be recorded. Printouts will be made available should they be required at the Councillor Review meetings and will be submitted annually to the Strategic Management Team and the Member Development Group.