

The Member Development Charter

The East of England Member Development Charter

Report by Cllr Martin, the Leader of the Council

Enquiries to Joanna Boaler, Member Support Manager. Telephone 01245 430380

Purpose of report

To consider formally committing to the East of England Member Development Charter and the objectives of the Charter.

Recommended:

- (1) That Essex County Council formally commit to the East of England Member Development Charter and the objectives of the Charter.
- (2) That the Member Development Strategy as set out in Annex “A” to this Report be agreed as the Essex County Council Member Development Strategy and that any revisions or amendments be agreed by the Member Development Steering Group.
- (3) That it be noted that the Member Development Steering Group will continue to oversee member development and progress towards achieving Charter accreditation.
- (4) That it be noted that Councillor John Aldridge will continue to act as the Chairman of the Member Development Steering Group.

Background and Context

The East of England Member Development Charter has been developed in partnership with the East of England Local Government Group. The Charter aims to promote best practice in member development.

The East of England Member Development Charter has a number of objectives:

1. Being fully committed to developing Elected Members in order to achieve the council's aims and objectives;
2. Adopting a Member-led strategic approach to Elected Member Development;
3. Seeing that learning and development is effective in building capacity [of Elected Members in undertaking their roles and duties];
4. Addressing wider development matters to support Elected Members.

Essex County Council already has a Member Development Programme in place. This is overseen by the Member Development Steering Group, chaired by Councillor John Aldridge. If the Council agrees the recommendations in this Report the membership of the Group will be enhanced in recognition of the importance of the work to be undertaken. By committing to the Charter, the Council will be formally endorsing the objectives of the Charter into the Essex County Council Member Development Strategy.

Within the Constitution the duties and responsibilities of all Members include the following:

- To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the Council's services, management arrangements, functions/duties and constraints, and to develop good working relationships with relevant officers of the authority.
- To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the other organisations and services which serve the County.
- To identify individual learning and development needs and participate fully in training opportunities provided.
- To contribute constructively to open government and democratic renewal through active encouragement to the community to participate generally in the democratic process.

These responsibilities demonstrate a commitment by Members of Essex County Council to Member Development; it is envisaged that the steps to achieve Charter Status will enhance Members' abilities to meet these duties.

In achieving the Charter, Essex County Council will move through the following stages:

1. Signing up to the Charter and an Action Plan
 - Self assessment is undertaken against the Charter criteria and an Action Plan developed

2. Improving the development of Elected Members
 - Work towards achieving the Charter and meeting the requirements of the Action Plan
3. Assessment
 - An on-site assessment will be carried out by a trained team of elected members and officers. A comprehensive report will be produced following the visit.
4. Awarding the Charter
 - Once accessed and awarded Charter Status, a certificate will be issued by South East Employers
5. Re-assessment
 - After three years, reassessment will take place to ensure commitment to the Charter has been continued.

Attached as Annex “A” to this Report is the draft Member Development Strategy which also sets out the Terms of Reference and proposed Membership of the Member Development Steering Group.

The cost of the Charter is £3,000 plus VAT, this includes the cost of assessment, as well as ongoing support from South East Employers. This will be financed from the Member Development Budget.

It is anticipated that Essex County Council will achieve Charter Status by 1 April 2013.

Member Development Strategy

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1. Foreword



The role of an elected Member is changing more quickly today, than ever before. The Essex County Council recognises it faces difficult challenges ahead and believes that the personal development of all Members is essential to the successful achievement and delivery of its strategic priorities on behalf of the people they represent and serve. This requires a proactive member development plan to enable members to understand the key issues facing the Council and respond to the ongoing organisational change.

Ensuring that every Member has the information and the skills required to represent their Division and undertake their role as a Councillor in regulatory roles, strategic functions or scrutiny, is vital to delivering better value for money services for Essex residents.

Members have a vital role to play in the changing landscape of local democracy and it is essential that we all have the skills to play a leading role in our communities. I would, therefore, encourage all Members, even those with many years of experience, to take full advantage of the range of development opportunities which are now on offer.

The **Member Development Strategy** sets out the objectives of member development, the development offer and how the Council will support its delivery to all Councillors.

A handwritten signature in orange ink, appearing to read 'John Aldridge', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Councillor John Aldridge,

Chairman of the Member Development Steering Group, Essex County Council

2. The aims and context

The aims of this strategy are:

- to ensure that there is support in place for every Member, to enable them to acquire and develop knowledge and a full range of skills to support their communities
- to clearly define Members responsibilities to Member Development
- to clearly define officers responsibilities in relation to Member Development

- to identify adequate resources to meet the objectives of the development programme
- to achieve Member Development Charter Status by 2013.

Member development opportunities will help support our EssexWorks vision and priorities to make our County a place which provides the best possible quality of life for all who live and work in Essex.

‘There is a special role for Councillors as democratic champions for their communities. We will support and enhance the role of Councillors to act on the concerns of their constituents as community advocates’. EssexWorks¹.

Member development is an integral part of achieving that goal. In fulfilling these aims the following principles will be followed:

- provide a Member-led planned approach to Member Development
- involve Members in their development, from planning the member development programme through to
- support individual Member Development needs, valuing and recognising the skills and experiences that Members already have or need to acquire
- ensure the a member development programme has objectives and links to the aims of the Council, the roles and functions of Members
- deliver development in innovative ways to make the best use of the resources available.

Member development is owned by Members through the Member Development Steering Group, which is responsible for development and delivery of the Strategy amongst all Members.

A comprehensive induction process is already in place so that Members feel equipped to represent their communities appropriately and undertake the other roles and responsibilities.

Through regular information sharing, Members are given the knowledge and support they require to respond to residents enquiries and to make informed decisions.

The Member Development Strategy has been developed using detailed feedback from Members since 2008, and through discussions at the Scrutiny Board, and Member Development Steering Group.

In recognising the important roles that Members play within their communities, the Council is committed to provide a comprehensive flexible approach to development opportunities for all elected Members.

¹ EssexWorks, Excellent services, empowered communities: Towards a new Vision for Essex – 14 November 2007 Page 17

3. Roles and responsibilities

The Member Development Steering Group (MDSG)

Essex County Council is committed to supporting and developing its Members and it is important that all Members are engaged and understand the direction the Council is taking so that communities can be supported.

The Member Development Steering Group is made up of Members and officers who are ambassadors for member development working with all Members to identify their needs and encouraging Members to attend various development sessions on offer. The terms of reference for the Member Development Steering Group can be found as Appendix 1 to this document.

The group will:

- ensure that all new Members receive a comprehensive induction programme;
- identify the development needs of Members
- provide direction and guidance to officers in respect of all member development issues
- promote best practice amongst all Members
- encourage participation at member development sessions
- develop the Member Development Strategy to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and continues to support the Council's strategies and the needs of Members
- support the Council's commitment to the East of England Member Development Charter.

Officer support

The Member Support Manager is the officer with responsibility for Member Development, she will:

- a) provide dedicated officer support for all member development activities
- b) ensure that all Members are made aware of all development opportunities through appropriate publicity and promotion
- c) devise and deliver a comprehensive induction programme for new Members
- d) deliver a comprehensive annual development programme for all Members
- e) provide administrative support, and evaluation of Members needs
- f) undertake Personal Development Planning (PDP) with Members, including maintaining plans
- g) record instances of member development attendance on CMIS² to support Members when compiling their annual report
- h) advise and support the Member Development Steering Group
- i) lead and support the work towards achieving the East of England Member Development Charter – 'Charter Status'

² Essex County Council Committee Management Information System

- j) research and provide feedback on development opportunities
- k) research alternative learning provision and its feasibility with Members (e-learning, DVDs etc)
- l) liaise with officers with regard to member development activities
- m) consider opportunities for joint working
- n) maintain and update the Member Development pages of the intranet Member Zone
- o) with the Member Development Steering Group review the Member Development Strategy on an annual basis.

The individual Member

Whilst the Council will offer practical support, encouragement and resources, as appropriate, for training and development, we would encourage each individual Member to take responsibility for their own development needs.

Part 3.8.2 of the Constitution covers duties and responsibilities of all Members. The following points relate to member development.

Members of the Council shall be responsible for the following duties and responsibilities

- (vii) To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the Council's services, management arrangements, functions/duties and constraints, and to develop good working relationships with relevant officers of the authority.
- (viii) To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the other organisations and services which serve the County.
- (xiii) To identify individual learning and development needs and participate fully in training opportunities provided.

4. The Member development offer

Key themes

Member development at Essex County Council is split into themes:

- Frontline Councillor (including community engagement/leadership)
- Corporate Governance and legislation
- Essex County Council: the organisation
- Transformational
- Member Support (including IT support)
- Personal Development

In addition development opportunities are offered on the following subjects:

- Induction programme

- Overview and Scrutiny
- Committee development

Member Induction

The induction programme is essential for all new Members of the Council. The overall aim is to make new Members feel welcome and to “*fast track*” them into their role so that they can effectively support their communities and undertake Council roles and responsibilities.

The induction process for new Members was developed for the County Council elections in 2009. An Induction Pack including the Members’ Handbook was given to all Members elected. This included details of the full training programme and appropriate officer contact details.

The induction programme lasts three to six months.

Copies of all materials from the 2009 election have been kept, to ensure that if the membership of the Council changes mid-term we can easily provide a comprehensive induction programme as well as for the next scheduled County Council elections in 2013.

Member Development Sessions

Three successful Member Development Weeks were held in 2009 and 2010. Following feedback from Members and a restructure in Policy, Community Planning and Regeneration, (now Strategic Services), the Member Development Steering Group has agreed that we will not organise full Member Development Weeks but will schedule relevant sessions in a timely manner throughout the year.

Members have the opportunity to attend a range of member development sessions annually including briefings, seminars and workshops. The overall aim is to ensure Members feel that they can continue to develop their knowledge on specialised subjects.

Member development sessions will be held regularly throughout the year. They will wherever possible be scheduled to take place after meetings which involve a significant Member attendance; such as after Full Council Meetings. This seeks to achieve maximum attendance by reducing barriers such as travelling time within the County and the number of Members who sit on another Council. Member development opportunities with other authorities will also be explored, together with greater recognition and linkage of activities which Members undertake at other Councils.

Specific sessions³, where it is important for Members of a particular Committee to attend, will be held as part of or following the meeting wherever possible.

³ E.g. District Council, PCTs etc.

Copies of all Member development session presentations are available in the Members Work Room, from the Member Support Manager, within Group Offices and on the [Member Zone](#) (*intranet home page/How We Get Things Done/Member Zone/Development*).

Delivery Techniques

A number of methods will be utilised in delivering Member development, these will include:

- In-house briefings, workshops and seminars run by senior managers and specialist officers
- Skills sessions
- External conferences and seminars
- Peer coaching and mentoring
- Visits to other authorities and meetings
- E-learning packages
- DVDs, CDs and other electronic media
- Training with partner organisations and agencies
- Personal Development Plans/discussions

Enabling Members to find the time to undertake learning and development activities will be a key priority. To do this it is proposed that:

- Formal sessions will where possible, be programmed in advance to ensure that they do not clash with the committee meeting cycle
- Activities, if required, will be programmed at different times of the day and days of the week to accommodate individual commitments and to take into consideration the responsibilities of Members who sit on another Council
- Limited activities will take place during peak holiday periods.

Personal Development Plans

Personal development planning should be seen as a means to help Members update their knowledge and learn new skills to help them to be more effective in supporting their communities.

In personal development planning, Members should have regard to their future aspirations as well as their current position.

A personal development plan questionnaire (PDP) and a confidential, individual meeting will be offered to all Members; it is then up to them to decide how they wish to take this forward.

The personal development plans will feed into the Annual Member Development Programme and the process will be reviewed by the Member Development Steering Group.

Appendix 2 [to be added] copy of the PDP questionnaire.

Equality of access

When developing this strategy and the annual programmes, access to all Members is an important factor. One of the key factors which shape Member development is the number of Members who have commitments at District/Borough Councils. Therefore the majority of Member sessions will take place during the day to coincide with other Council meetings and to ensure that all Members have sufficient opportunities to attend the Member Development Steering Group undertake to:-

- Repeat key sessions throughout the year
- Provide advance notice of sessions where possible
- Limit sessions later in the day, taking into account Members commitments on District/Borough Councils
- Repeat key induction sessions at different times of the day and different days of the week
- Restrict sessions to weekdays only
- Provide opportunities for Members to obtain copies of the materials used during the session and notes taken
- Develop and improve through evaluation and feedback from Members
- Trial different methods of learning
- Provide regular briefings on key issues

In addition to discussions that take place as part of the induction process and the Member evaluation of individual sessions, Members will be given the opportunity to provide comment on scheduling of meetings through the personal development planning process.

5. Evaluation

It is important that all development activities are evaluated to ensure that the Member sessions meet Member's needs and identify future opportunities and all external courses/training provided will be analysed to establish their relevance and effectiveness.

Members will be encouraged to complete a short evaluation form, providing feedback on all development sessions organised by Member Support. Member Support can only provide a programme which meets the needs of Members if sessions are well attended and feedback is given to officers.

If in future we hold a Member Development Week and for future Induction programmes, a further questionnaire will be provided to all Members to ask for an evaluation of the whole programme and what they would like to see incorporated in the future and how they would like to see it structured.

On a six monthly basis, the Member Development Steering Group will assess and evaluate Member development. The Group will also review the strategy and update it, taking Member feedback, latest developments and best practice into account.

6. 2011- 2013 Member development programme

In 2011 the following sessions have already taken place/are scheduled to take place:

• Friday 21 st January	Census Briefing
• Tuesday 8 th February	Digital Switchover
• Tuesday 8 th February	Census Briefing
• Monday 28 th March	European Funding
• Friday 1 st April	Transformation (1)
• Tuesday 5 th April	Freedom of Information Requests
• Tuesday 10 th May	Emergency Planning Exercise
• Wednesday 8 th June	ePayroll
• Thursday 16 th June	Partnership Working and Locality Boards
• Tuesday 21 st June	ePayroll
• Tuesday 21 st June	Partnership Working and Locality Boards
• Thursday 30 th June	Partnership Working and Locality Boards
• Tuesday 12 th July	Corporate Vision
• Tuesday 19 th July	Health and Social Care Briefing
• Thursday 1 st September	Essex Funding Team
• Tuesday 6 th September	ePayroll
• Tuesday 11 th October	Highways Strategic Transformation
• Tuesday 25 th October	Council Protocols
• Thursday 27 th October	eBooks
• Thursday 24 th November	ICT at ECC (and Cloud Computing)

The dates for session taking place in 2012 can be found as Appendix 3.

In 2013 it is likely that the County Council election will take place on Thursday 2nd May.

7. East of England Member Development Charter

Background to the Charter

The East of England Charter for Member Development helps councils to build elected Member capacity. The Charter underpins good practice; guidelines were originally developed by Local Government Improvement and Development and the nine Regional Employers Organisations.

The East of England Member Development Charter has a number of objectives:

5. Being fully committed to developing elected Members in order to achieve the council's aims and objectives
6. Adopting a Member led strategic approach to elected Member Development

7. Seeing that learning and development is effective in building capacity [of elected Members in undertaking their roles and duties]
8. Addressing wider development matters to support elected Members.

Current position

Commitment to the East of England Member Development Charter will be taken to Council in December 2011.

8. Action Plan

An action plan setting out the work areas required over the next year has been drafted and is included for information at [Appendix 4](#). This will be updated annually in consultation with the Member Development Steering Group.

9. Contact details

For further information please contact Joanna Boaler, Member Support Manager by email joanna.boaler@essex.gov.uk by telephone 01245 430380 or extension 20380 or in person in C116, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1LX

Appendix 1: Member Development Steering Group Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Group will oversee Member Development at Essex County Council and progress towards achieving Charter accreditation.

Membership

The Member Development Steering Group will include a cross section of Councillors:

The Members:

- Chairman of the Group (Cllr John Aldridge)
- Deputy to the Portfolio Holder for Member Support (Cllr Norman Hume)
- Leader of the Opposition (Cllr Tom Smith-Hughes)
- Conservative Group Whip (Cllr Bill Dick)
- Conservative Member (Cllr Michael Lager)
- Liberal Democrat Member (Cllr Theresa Higgins)
- Labour Member (Cllr Tony Durcan)
- Non-aligned Member (Cllr Chris Pond)

The Officers:

- Assistant Director for Corporate Law – Monitoring Officer (Terry Osborne) – Ex-Officio
- Lead Governance Officer (Colin Ismay) - Ex-Officio
- Member Support Manager (Joanna Boaler)

Additional officers will be approached to attend as necessary.

Meeting Frequency

The Steering Group will meet on a bi-monthly basis.

Terms of Reference – Member Development Steering Group

1. To develop and review the Member Development Strategy at Essex County Council
2. To identify the development needs of Members at Essex County Council
3. To develop, monitor, evaluate and review the Annual Member Development Programme
4. To promote improved community leadership through Member Development
5. To provide direction and guidance to officers in respect of all Member Development issues and activities
6. To communicate with Members of the Council on issues of Member Development
7. To promote best practice in respect of Member Development amongst all Elected Members of the Council
8. To encourage the highest level of participation and engagement by all Members in the Member Development Programme
9. To lead and oversee Essex County Council's commitment to the East of England Member Development Charter with a view to achieving Charter Status by 1st April 2013
10. To monitor the Member development budget.

Appendix 3: 2012 Member Development Dates

- Tuesday 10th January, 11:15-12:30, Committee Room Six
- Thursday 12th January, 14:00-16:00, **Residential Home Visits**, Committee Room One
- Tuesday 7th February, on rise of Full Council– 13:30, **IT drop-in**, Committee Room Two
- Tuesday 7th February, 14:00, Committee Room One
- Wednesday 29th February, 11:15-12:30, **Embedding Equality into everything we do**, Committee Room Two
- Thursday 29th March, 11:15-12:30, Committee Room Two
- Tuesday 25th April, 11:15-12:30, Committee Room Two
- Tuesday 8th May, On rise of Full Council– 13:30, **IT drop-in**, Committee Room Two
- Tuesday 8th May, 14:00, Committee Room One
- Tuesday 29th May, 11:15-12:30, Committee Room Two
- Thursday 21st June, 11:15-12:30, Committee Room Two
- Tuesday 10th July, On rise of Full Council– 13:30, **IT drop-in**, Committee Room Two
- Tuesday 10th July, 14:00, Committee Room Two
- Wednesday 25th July, 11:15-12:30, Committee Room Two
- Thursday 30th August, 11:15-12:30, Committee Room Two
- Tuesday 25th September, 11:15-12:30, Committee Room Two
- Tuesday 9th October, On rise of Full Council– 13:30, **IT drop-in**, Committee Room Two
- Tuesday 9th October, 14:00, Committee Room One
- Wednesday 31st October, 11:15-12:30, Committee Room One
- Thursday 22nd November, 11:15-12:30, Committee Room One

- Tuesday 11th December, On rise of Full Council– 13:30, **IT drop-in**, Committee Room Two

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Appendix 4: Action Plan

ACTION	TARGET DATE	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	PROGRESS TO DATE/ACTIONS
Present strategy and action plan to Member Development Steering Group for approval	September 2011	Member Support Manager	The draft Strategy was presented to Members of the Steering Group – 25/10/11 Final version needs to be signed off by this Group – by email circulation/at next meeting 24/11/11.
Schedule 2012 Member Development Steering Group Meetings	24/11/11	Member Support Manager	Draft dates identified to coincide with Member Development Sessions.
Complete Self Assessment and Action Plan for Member Development Charter	December 2011 (for Full Council Meeting)	Member Support Manager	The self-assessment work has been started. Draft to be circulated in advance of the MDSG meeting 24/11/11.
Prepare papers for the Council Meeting on the Member Development Charter	December 2011	Member Support Manager	Work with the Lead Governance Officer on the information required for the Council issues report
Circulate the Strategy and Action Plan to all Members of the Council	December 2011	Member Support Manager	To be circulated to all Members as a background paper to the Member Development Charter in December 2011
If the Authority commits to the Member Development Charter: Incorporate and undertake the actions within the action plan from the self-assessment and this action plan.	January 2012	Member Support Manager	
To rollout Personal Development Planning (PDP) questionnaires to all Members. To offer all Members a	Template and rollout to be agreed by the	Member Support Manager	Produce PDP questionnaire and schedule individual 1-1s.

personal invitation for a 1-1 personal development plan planning session.	MDSG in January 2012.		
Explore the possibility of sharing resources and training and development opportunities with other local Councils	Early 2012	Member Support Manager with the Lead Governance Officer	Use the Essex Scrutiny Network as a platform to initially explore this.
To rollout Personal Development Planning (PDP) questionnaires to all Members. To offer all Members a personal invitation for a 1-1 personal development plan planning session.	Template and rollout to be agreed by the MDSG in January 2012.	Member Support Manager	Produce PDP questionnaire and schedule individual 1-1s.
Explore the possibility of increasing E-Learning opportunities and resources	April 2012 (report to the MDSG May 2012)	Member Support Manager	Conduct a review of the Corporate Governance Modules to assess the appetite and value of increasing e-learning opportunities.
To effectively monitor and review personal development plans with Members	July 2012	Member Support Manager	Six months after the start
Preparations for the Induction programme for the 2013 County Council Elections begin	January 2013	Member Support Manager	Records from the 2009 Election and Induction Programme have been saved in both hardcopy and electronically for use in future years.

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Published November 2011