

**Bristol City Council**  
**Draft Member Development Strategy 2021-2024**

**Foreword**

**Introduction from the Chief Executive**

*With increasing pressures on local authorities it's more important than ever that we ensure that every elected representative has access to the knowledge and skills necessary to function at a high level. Covid 19 has presented new challenges which have required Members<sup>1</sup> and officers to be even more responsive and flexible as we navigate the way ahead.*

*As Councillors undertake their responsibilities as community leaders, in strategic functions and regulatory roles, we will work to ensure that learning and development is appropriately focused, well delivered and that resources are used effectively to achieve maximum benefit. This will help to ensure that we can all play a leading role in driving forward our recovery in a city of hope and aspiration where everyone can share in its success.*

*The Bristol City Council Member Development Strategy sets out our commitment to continuous Councillor development, our approach and the opportunities that are available to all elected representatives.*

*As a Council, we recognise that the learning and development of Members is crucial to our success and will bring wider benefits to both the organisation and our citizens.*

**Introduction from the Member Development Steering Group<sup>2</sup>:**

*Our cross-party Steering Group has been established to oversee and shape the Member Development programme. As Councillors with a broad range of skills and experience, we understand the challenges faced by the modern-day Councillor, including in the period shortly after election when considerable learning is required during a condensed period.*

*We are committed to our own personal development and the many benefits this brings, and within this document you will find case studies detailing our personal experiences. One of our key pledges is to ensure that all Councillors receive the support and help that they need to succeed in their roles, and we will ensure that equality of access to development and training remains a guiding principle.*

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<sup>1</sup> The term Member means 'Member of Council' or 'Elected Member' and is interchangeable with 'Councillor'.

<sup>2</sup> The Member Development Steering Group is comprised of around 10 Members from all four of the Council's political parties. The Terms of Reference can be found at Appendix C.

## Member Development - the Journey so Far

1. Following the Council's first 'all out' elections in 2016, we provided a comprehensive Member Induction Programme for a wide range of new Members. Many opportunities arose from delivering training and support at a large scale, however, there were also some learning points, particularly with regard to the types of learning available; 'overload' of information; and adapting training and guidance to suit Members with all levels of understanding and experience.
2. As an organisation, we have renewed our commitment to supporting Members with their development needs and we will ensure that the programme of activities for the 21/22 cohort offers learning in a broader range of topics and skills, and meets our commitment to accessibility.
3. When designing the ongoing Member Development Programme, officers and Councillors will work together to ensure that it reflects best practice, and the overarching objective is to achieve South West Council's Member Development accreditation by the end of the 21/22 Municipal Year.

## Purpose and Aims

4. This Strategy sets out the City Council's commitment to supporting Members with their development, and details how we will equip elected representatives with the skills and knowledge they need to fulfil their various roles effectively and to the best of their abilities. It identifies our long-term goals and an action plan (see appendix A) for achieving them. It also covers how we will identify development needs; the ways in which Members can participate in continuous learning and development; and how we will evaluate and measure the success of all learning.
5. The Member Development Strategy will closely align to the [City Council's Corporate Strategy 2018-2023](#) by ensuring that all activities contribute to the delivery of the following strategic themes/key commitments;
  - 5.1 Empowering and Caring  
We will ensure that Councillors are supported to become effective leaders enabling them to empower communities and individuals.
  - 5.2 Fair and Inclusive  
All Councillors will have access to quality learning opportunities, and these will be tailored to suit individual circumstances where required.
  - 5.3 Well Connected  
We will support Councillors to engage with local communities and ensure residents' views are represented in democratic decision making.
  - 5.4 Wellbeing  
Councillors will have access to various tools to help them to support and promote wellbeing amongst their constituents, but also to look after their own physical and mental health.

6. The Strategy will ensure that Members will have appropriate training, support and guidance to assist them with every aspect of their roles. This will include;
  - 6.1 Ensuring compliance with mandatory training (as agreed with the Whips) on areas such as data protection and information security.
  - 6.2 Providing all key policy, procedural and legal information before Members are required to participate in decision making.
  - 6.3 Embedding a framework in order to assist Members with community work, including support with managing workloads and pressures.
  - 6.4 Ensuring Members are able to perform any 'special responsibilities' relating to additional duties and roles they may undertake.
  - 6.5 Offering the opportunity to participate in continuous development through a variety of methods.

### **Aims and Key Performance Measures**

7. Our Aims and Key Performance Measures are:
  - 7.1 To ensure that all Members have consistent and equal access to training and development opportunities, providing the resources required to support those with access needs. We will monitor this with an annual survey as well as feedback on non-attendance and potential barriers.

*We will measure success by achieving the following during the 21/22 Municipal Year;*

    - 100% of Members completing mandatory training*
    - 80% of Members attending the 'strongly recommended' training courses*
    - 60% of Members participating in all the recommended 'core' training opportunities*
    - 80% of Members expressing overall satisfaction with the development programme*
  - 7.2 Broaden knowledge around Council business and ensure that Members feel confident that they have the skills to fulfil all their duties effectively, including ward work, performance management and decision making. We will monitor this via the annual survey to Members.

*We will measure success by achieving the following during the 21/22 Municipal Year;*

    - 80% of Councillors reporting that they feel they have the skills to fulfil all their duties.*
  - 7.3 Evaluate the effectiveness of the training programme to ensure continuous improvement. We will monitor this by asking each training provider to set out the learning objectives for each session offered and asking Members to advise whether they believe they have been achieved.

*We will measure success by achieving the following during the 21/22 Municipal Year;*

*80% of Members reporting that the objectives of each learning/training session have been met.*

7.4 Obtain South West Council's Charter Status accreditation for Member Development by May 2022.

*We will measure success by ensuring that;*

*South West Councils' Charter Status accreditation is secured by May 2022.*

## **Equalities and Inclusion**

### **8. Public Sector Equality Duty**

As a public body we are bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is defined within the Equality Act as:

"A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- *Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
- *Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
- *Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

The Councils' [Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy](#) will underpin how we design and deliver the Member Development programme but in particular we will;

- 8.1 Ensure all Councillors have equal access to training and development opportunities i.e. by providing multiple sessions in accessible formats and at various times of the day.
- 8.2 Offer strongly recommended training on equalities and inclusion to all Councillors on an annual basis. This will provide Members with the skills necessary to comply with the Public Sector Equalities Duties.
- 8.3 Provide advice and guidance to Members setting out how to interpret and evaluate the Equalities Impact Assessments completed for formal reports.

## **Ethical Standards**

9. Members sign up to the City Council's [Code of Conduct](#) upon accepting their term of office, which includes a commitment to upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life, outlining the requirements around ethical standards. Details below;

- **Selflessness**  
Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- **Integrity**  
Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- **Objectivity**  
Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- **Accountability**  
Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- **Openness**  
Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- **Honesty**  
Holders of public office should be truthful.
- **Leadership**  
Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

We will support Members to uphold the ethical framework set out above by doing the following:

- 9.1 Ensure Members are fully briefed about their roles and responsibilities and that all essential requirements regarding compliance with Codes, Protocols and Declarations are met.
- 9.2 Provide ongoing training, advice and guidance to Members in respect of ethical matters as and when required.
- 9.3 Facilitate a range of training and support to assist Members to conduct their roles as effective community leaders.

### **Member Development Programme**

10. The Member Development Programme for 21/22 will be delivered via an induction of intense activity over the first 6 months, followed by ongoing targeted training and support for the remainder of the 3-year term. The Programme will be flexible in order to adapt to meet changing needs in the event of challenging times or disruption to 'business as usual.'

### **Induction**

11. The Member Induction Programme (see Appendix C) will consist of a wide range of introductory sessions into all key Council areas:

- Committee specific (including regulatory) sessions
- Guidance and support for Councillors undertaking specific roles e.g. chairing meetings
- Ward-specific briefings
- Corporate priorities
- The Council's budget
- Partnership working
- Opportunities to meet and work alongside senior officers

### **Personal Development Plans**

12. If Members wish to be supported with their Personal Development Plans, we can offer a structured process for regularly assessing their individual learning and development needs. This will be conducted by officers in conjunction with the relevant Party Group Leader.

### **Training Delivery Methods**

13. We will use a wide variety of in person and/or virtual formats to deliver training, such as:
  - E-Learning courses
  - Demonstration videos
  - Internal training courses
  - Internal briefings – emerging topics
  - Case studies - examples of best practice
  - External conferences, seminars and training courses
  - Personal development planning discussions
  - Peer to peer learning between Councillors and information sharing including with key external partners

Where appropriate, we will work in partnership with other Local Authorities to deliver joint programmes.

### **Communicating New Learning and Development Opportunities**

14. All communications regarding the induction programme of activities will be issued electronically at the start of the Municipal Year and diary appointments will be sent as standard.
15. All training events will clearly set out the goals and objectives of each session and highlight the relevance to Members.

### **Feedback and Evaluation**

16. Regular evaluation of the Member Development offer will be undertaken by officers in conjunction with the Member Development Steering Group. The key performance measures for this Strategy are set out in Section 7.

The following methods will be used:

- Training evaluation forms and other feedback received from Councillors
- 1-1 sessions
- Feedback through Group Offices and Whips
- Statistics on Councillor participation
- Annual Survey

17. This Strategy will be reviewed annually or earlier where necessary.
18. Achievement of the South West Council's Charter Accreditation for Member Development will demonstrate the effectiveness of our offer.
19. The Values and Ethics Sub Committee of the Audit Committee has responsibility for oversight of the Member Development Programme and will be regularly consulted on progress.

### **Resources**

20. An annual budget is allocated for Member development, and to provide administrative support for the delivery of training and facilitating the Member Development Steering Group.
21. The resources available to support Member development are available to all Councillors and do not fund activity specific to a political group.
22. Cost benefit analysis will be conducted to monitor investment in Member Development.

## **Appendices**

- A. Member Development Strategy Action Plan
- B. Member Induction Programme – 21/22 – Overview of Topics
- C. Member Development Steering Group Terms of Reference

## **Members' Case Studies – to be inserted throughout the designed document**

*The induction is a crucial part of understanding our roles as Councillors and how the council is run, but this information is vast, so it's always useful to go back to it during your term and have a refresh. Thankfully the Council has a vast library of online paper free resources available 24/7 via their intranet sites. As well as the online resources, what I found to be the most helpful thing when becoming a Councillor, was finding a colleague to mentor me; a fellow Councillor with experience who could guide me in the right direction. This year the Member Development Steering Group have approved a Councillor Link Scheme to include senior officers, which will provide excellent additional support, especially to new Councillors. **Councillor Don Alexander***

*As a long serving Councillor, I understand the importance and value of member development and the opportunity it brings to feel confident, as well as connected to the services that are delivered across the city. Regular updates on policy and processes have helped me serve my ward better over the years. The induction programme can be a lot to take in so revisiting the resources available really can help. Once you start demystifying who does what, and why, you can start to perform effectively as a Councillor. **Councillor Lesley Alexander***

*My initial focus when becoming a Councillor was understanding the practical things such as using ICT, getting to know officers, and completing induction sessions. After this, the focus fell on understanding the problems in the city by attending regular and incredibly helpful briefings and receiving statutory training to sit on Planning and Licensing Committees (every ward Councillor will receive casework on this!). Other useful training for me has been around improving personal skills such as negotiation, stakeholder working, public speaking, and networking. **Councillor Martin Fodor***

*You might think that Member Development is only for new Members, but as one of the longest serving councillors here, and having held many different positions in the Council, I still highly value all sorts of training, whether delivered by our own Council officers, by national or regional organisations, or by experts outside the local government field.*

*Learning from other local authorities and other councillors is one of the best ways that I know for us to look at what Bristol does, and see how that measures up to other's experience and practice. I always come back from training with questions both to stretch myself, and to ask of professionals.*

*All of this learning can be put to good use in your role as a ward member, on Scrutiny Boards, on formal "quasi-judicial" committees and on Cabinet. Being the best we can be, in whatever role, enhances the value you get from being a representative, and I believe this is important in reputational terms for the Council.*

*All of this helps keep you up to date with the latest developments in policy, best practice, and brings fresh eyes to our work. Grab every opportunity with both hands! **Councillor Helen Holland***

*The best piece of advice I can give any new starter is do not be afraid to ask for help. The member training and induction is there to educate and support you and to help you avoid making assumptions. In the first 3 months you will be introduced to lots of services, BCC staff, party members, people and legislation. The member induction and training will help you make sense of it all. Remember to ask if unsure about something as member development officers will explain and support if you need it. **Councillor Tony Carey***