

Draft Member Development Strategy 2024-2028

Text only version for Design Team

Foreword

Introduction from the Director of Legal and Democratic Services

We were proud to achieve the Local Government Association's Councillor Development accreditation in March 2022, awarded by South West Councils, in recognition of Bristol's clear commitment and strategic approach to continuous Councillor development. Building on these foundations we intend to reapply for the Charter Plus standard in 2025.

The Bristol City Council Member Development Strategy 2024-2028 sets out our approach to build upon recognised best practice; how we will work to ensure that learning and development is appropriately focused and well delivered; and use limited resources effectively to achieve maximum benefit in preparation for the Committee Model of governance.

The Member Development Programme aims to provide Members with the skills, knowledge and capacity they need to undertake their democratic duties and responsibilities as strategic decision makers and city partners, as community leaders and in their regulatory functions; to be able to take important decisions, represent their constituents, and deliver effectively in their roles.

Introduction from the Member Development Steering Group

Our cross-party Steering Group has been established to oversee and shape the Member Development programme as we move to a Committee Model of Governance in May 2024.

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 and diverse range of 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 equity of access to development and training remains a guiding principle.

[Insert Case Study 1]

Purpose and Aims

Building on the foundations of the Member Development award, this strategy sets out how we will ensure that the quality and relevance of the programme from May 2024 offers appropriate and effective training for Members in preparation for the change to a committee system model of governance; 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.

The Member Development Strategy will closely align to the [City Council's Corporate Strategy 2022-2027](#) by ensuring that all activities contribute to the delivery of the following strategic themes/key commitments:

- Children and Young People
- Economy and Skills
- Environment and Sustainability
- Health, Care and Wellbeing
- Homes and Communities
- Transport and Connectivity
- Effective Development Organisation

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;

- Ensuring compliance with essential training (as agreed with the Whips) on areas such as data protection and information security.
- Providing all key policy, procedural and legal information before Members are required to participate in decision making.
- Embedding a framework to assist Members with community work, including support with managing workloads and pressures.
- Ensuring Members can perform any 'special responsibilities' relating to additional duties and roles they may undertake.
- Offering the opportunity to participate in continuous development through a variety of methods including through Personal Development Plans.

[Insert Case Study 2]

Member Development Programme

The Member Development offer for 2024/25 will be delivered via an induction and refresher programme of scheduled activity over the first 6-9 months in a phased approach, followed by ongoing targeted training and support for the remainder of the 4-year term. The Programme will be flexible to adapt to meet changing needs in the event of challenging

times or disruption to 'business as usual'. In addition, the programme will be responsive to legislative and regulatory changes; the individual development needs of Members; the regular election cycle and by-elections; and local priorities.

All online sessions will be recorded, where possible, and stored in the Members online resource area, so they can be accessed at any time by Members to refresh their learning over their 4-year term. Where sessions are refreshed annually e.g. for regulatory training, the Members SharePoint site and Councillor training records will be updated accordingly.

Key areas the programme will cover include:

- Induction sessions
- Working effectively in a Committee System
- The Council's budget and strategic priorities
- Policy Committees
- Other Committees (Regulatory/Audit/HR etc.)
- Partnership working
- Ward-specific briefings

In addition, a range of guidance and support will be provided for Councillors undertaking specific roles e.g. chairing meetings, and there will be opportunities to meet and work alongside senior officers e.g. via the Councillor Link Scheme.

A summary of each element of the Member Development Offer can be found at Appendix B.

[Insert Case Study 3]

Key Performance Measures

Our Key Performance Measures are:

1. To ensure that all Members have consistent and equal access to training and development opportunities, providing the resources required to actively remove known and reported barriers to learning. We will monitor this with a satisfaction survey as well as via feedback on non-attendance and potential barriers. We will measure success by achieving the following during the 24/25 Municipal Year;
 - 100% of Members completing their relevant essential training.
 - 80% of Members attending one or more of the highly recommended training courses.
 - 60% of Members participating in one or more of the recommended training opportunities.
 - 80% of Members responding, expressing overall satisfaction with the development programme.
 - 80% of Councillors responding, reporting that they feel they have the skills to fulfil all their duties.

- 80% of responding Members reporting that the objectives of each learning/training session have been met.
2. Retain the Southwest Council's Charter Status accreditation for Member Development in 2025.

Equalities and Inclusion

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' [Equity and Inclusion Strategic Framework \(2023-2027\)](#) sets out how we will achieve the aims and commitments of our Equity and Inclusion Policy and fulfil our legal duties in line with the Corporate Strategy timeline. Councillors and senior officers have a particular responsibility because active, visible leadership is essential to promoting equity.

The framework underpins how we design and deliver the Member Development programme and we will;

- 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.
- Offer highly recommended training on equalities and inclusion to all Councillors on an annual basis to support effective decision making. This will provide Members with the skills necessary to comply with the Public Sector Equalities Duty.
- Provide advice and guidance to Members setting out how to interpret and evaluate Equalities Impact Assessments completed for formal reports.

[Insert Case Study 4]

Code of Conduct and Standards

Members sign up to the Council's Members Code of Conduct upon accepting their term of office, which is in the process of being updated to the Local Government Association (LGA) Code of Conduct. The code of conduct includes a commitment to uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life which outlines the requirements relating to ethical standards as detailed below;

- a) *Selflessness* - Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- b) *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.
- c) *Objectivity* - Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- d) *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.
- e) *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.
- f) *Honesty* - Holders of public office should be truthful.
- g) *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:

- Ensuring Members are fully briefed about their roles and responsibilities (See Appendix C) and that all essential requirements regarding compliance with Codes, Protocols and Declarations are met.
- Providing ongoing training, advice and guidance to Members in respect of ethical matters as and when required.
- Facilitating a range of training and support to assist Members to conduct their roles as effective community leaders, including public speaking, chairing effectively and use of social media.

How we will deliver Learning and Development to Members

We will use a wide variety of virtual and in person formats to deliver training and supporting information, 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
- Elected Members Welcome Pack
- Information Guides
- Councillor Resource Area on SharePoint

- Peer to peer learning between Councillors and information sharing including with key external partners
- Personal development planning discussions

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

All training events will clearly set out the goals and objectives of each session and highlight the relevance and impact to Members.

[Insert Case Study 5]

Feedback and Evaluation

Evaluation of the Member Development offer will be undertaken by officers in conjunction with the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG). The key performance measures for this Strategy are set out above under Key Performance Measures.

The following methods will be used:

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

The MDSG will monitor attendance and evaluations of member development activity. This is to make sure that attendance and participation are in line with our aspirations, and to ensure that Member Development is successful and inclusive for all Members.

The following terms will be used to help set the expectations around participation and attendance:

Essential – Failure to attend would prevent Members from sitting on a specific committee or access to the Council’s network

Highly Recommended – Group Leaders will expect their Members to attend these sessions, as they will provide the knowledge required to make effective decisions and an increased understanding of Members’ roles and responsibilities.

Recommended - It is recommended that Members attend these sessions, as they will provide the knowledge required to make effective decisions and an increased understanding of Members’ roles and responsibilities.

Reattainment of the Local Government Association’s Council Development Charter accreditation will demonstrate the effectiveness of our offer.

The Values and Ethics Sub Committee of the Audit Committee has responsibility for oversight of the Member Development Programme and will be consulted on progress.

This Strategy will be reviewed at the end of each electoral term or earlier as necessary.

Resources

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.

The resources available to support Member development are available to all Councillors and do not fund activity specific to a political group.

Cost benefit analysis will be conducted to monitor investment in Member Development.

Appendices:

Appendix A - Member Development Action Plan

Appendix B - Member Development Offer

Appendix C - Roles and Responsibilities

Appendix D - MDSG Terms of Reference