

# Report to Standards Committee

<b>Report Title</b>	Member Development Strategy and the Training and Induction Schedule 2025-2026
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Tuesday 11 February 2025
<b>Report Author</b>	Matthew Boulter
<b>Corporate Director</b>	Executive Director Corporate Services/Monitoring Officer
<b>Lead Cabinet Member(s)</b>	Cabinet Member for Resources
<b>Wards Affected</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Identify exempt information and exemption category</b>	Choose an item. Open
<b>Appendices (if any)</b>	1. Member Development Strategy 2025-26 2. Member Training Schedule 2025-26 3. Community Equality Impact Assessment

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the refreshed Member Development Strategy, as well as the Member Training and Induction Schedule for 2025-2026, which underpins the Council's approach to Member development. The report allows Members to review the contents annually and for this year, take note of any amendments to the documents following the internal audit of the Member training offer from the summer of 2024.

## 2. Recommendations

For the reasons set out in this report, the Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Approve the Member Development Strategy 2025-26 attached at appendix 1
- 2.2 In accordance with Section 13 of the Strategy, Standards Committee to make any recommendations to Full Council on the resources and budget available for Member Development for consideration for the 2026/27 year.

- 2.3 Agree the Member Training Schedule 2025-26 attached at appendix 2.
- 2.4 Endorse the application of Member learning pathways attached at appendix 2.
- 2.5 In relation to paragraph 4.7, provide any views on what could be usefully included into a 'Development Day' in May 2025 for Members to attend and how best to market it to Members to ensure attendance.

### **3. Commissioner's Comments**

- 3.1 This report has been shared with Commissioners through January's Governance Recovery Board and has been updated to incorporate the comments and feedback from the meeting. Commissioners welcome the work done to refresh the Member Development Strategy and would strongly encourage all members to prioritise their learning and development by engaging with the Council's strengthened training and development offer.

### **4. Proposals – the rationale and evidence for the recommendations** Member Development Strategy

- 4.1 The Member Development Strategy exists to provide a structure and framework to deliver Member development in the most effective, efficient and accessible way for Members. It is a key document in ensuring consistency in supporting both new and developing Members throughout a year.
- 4.2 In the summer of 2024 Internal Audit reviewed Member Training against a set of controls taken from the National Audit Office's Good Practice Guide entitled 'Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Effectiveness Tool' (May 2022). In summary, the audit review found good progress and made some suggestions for developing the offer to enhance it further.
- 4.3 The Member Development Strategy 2025-26 features a number of amendments following recommendations from this internal audit. These amendments are:
  - a) Member role descriptions have been added at appendix C of the Strategy to identify core skills required for certain roles and to indicate a training pathway for these roles.
  - b) Section 4 (bullet point 4) has been amended to reflect clearer principles on how a learning culture will be facilitated and sustained.

- c) The use of individual Member development profiles as a tool to chart and manage development is enhanced and given greater profile in the document.

#### Member Training and Induction Schedule 2025-26

- 4.4 The Member training schedule 2025-26 is attached as appendix 2 and shows the suite of training sessions available to Members for the year. In addition to the specialist committee training (for example, planning, licensing and audit training among others) the schedule also offers a range of skills based sessions for Members, which include dealing with casework, chairing meetings and decision making among others.
- 4.5 The sessions will be delivered between officers and specialist external trainers. The Council has received funding from the Local Government Association (LGA) for the external training for this year.
- 4.6 Following feedback from Members that the training schedule is a noticeable demand on their time on top of their other council commitments, the sessions have been spread across a longer period (into the autumn of 2025). A number of Member learning pathways have been developed (see appendix 2) to allow Members to identify efficiently which sessions are essential or suitable for them in their specific council and committee roles.
- 4.7 The induction day for May 2025 will likely not be held in its usual form due to the potential cancellation of elections. In January Governance Recovery Board (GRB) supported maintaining a dedicated day in May for all Members to attend a development style day. They suggested that the code of conduct training be delivered on this day in anticipation of all Members attending. The issue was also discussed at the Whips Meeting in January where further suggestions were made about having breakout activity sessions and a guest speaker on Devolution/Local Government reform from a Member perspective. Political assistants have been asked to survey Members on the best days to hold such an event and to get commitment from Members to attend. To ensure value for money in facilitating the day, 50% of the Council's Member would be required to attend.

#### Leadership Academy

4.8 The Leadership Academy is the LGA's flagship training programme and is designed for more experienced or senior Members. The Standards Committee supported the use of the Academy course to continue to develop Members. For 2025-26, the Council has received funding from the LGA to send two Members on the course, who will be identified in consultation with groups.

## **5 Alternative Options Considered**

5.1 The Member Development Strategy has been useful in 2024-25 in setting an approach for both Member/Democratic Services and political assistants to promote and deliver activities to support Member Development and to engage Members more personally on their development journeys. The amendments for 2025-26 come from audit recommendations and officers' experience of the deliverability of the strategy in the previous year. The Standards Committee has the opportunity to make recommendations when considering the Strategy to ensure the Strategy reflects any further desires or needs from the Membership of the Council.

5.2 The Member Training and Induction Schedule has taken into account the feedback given by Members via training feedback forms but also in discussions at an informal feedback session arranged in the summer 2024.

## **6. Consultation**

6.1 The Standards Committee are asked to review the Strategy and Schedule for 2025-26 and agree it is fit for purpose in supporting the development of all Members.

## **7. Financial Implications**

7.1 All additional costs incurred through the use of external trainers will be covered by the LGA Grant award for 2025/26 which has been agreed in principle. The total proposed cost of the external training is £15,000. There are no additional financial implications, and all other costs of delivery will be covered through existing budgets under Members Services Cost Centre PR063.

Implications Verified by Rob Chimani, Interim Finance Manager Date: 9 December 2024

## 8. Risks

The following section sets out the main risks, which should be taken into account when considering the recommendations in this report.

Are there any relevant risks included on the Corporate, Directorate or Service risk register? **NO**

The following additional risks should also be considered:

RISK DESCRIPTION & CONSEQUENCE	MITIGATIONS	RESIDUAL RISK STATUS (after mitigations)
<p>Not delivering the Strategy and Schedule presents the risk of not supporting Members properly in their roles and can, in time, lead to poor community leadership and decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Strategy being considered at a meeting in March each year to allow Member and Democratic Services and political assistants to co-ordinate tasks and assign roles to ensure the Strategy is delivered.</li> <li>▪ A review of the progress and engagement of Members with the Strategy is undertaken each summer with the same officers to pick up on any challenges or learning.</li> </ul>	<p>Green</p>
<p>Failure to implement effective Member training could lead to an extended period of intervention for the Council.</p>	<p>Successful implementation of the Schedule and Strategy using the activities set out in the mitigation above will ensure the meaningful development of the training offer in future years and will give opportunity for the offer to align with organisational requirements annually.</p>	<p>Green</p>

Implications Verified by Kelly McMillan, Project Manager (Risk) Date: 9 December 2024

## 9. Legal and Governance Implications

9.1 The Localism Act 2011 creates the ethical standards framework under which all members and co-opted members of the Council are required to comply

with the Code of Conduct. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for ensuring that appropriate training is given to members on the ethical standards framework and the Code. This includes ensuring that training is provided on induction, and on a regular basis. Under paragraph 8 of the Code of Conduct all members are under an obligation to undertake Code of Conduct training provided by the Council.

9.2 Further the terms of reference for both the Planning and Licensing Committee provide that members of those committees should not participate in decision making until they have undertaken the mandatory training that is provided by the Council and that members should endeavour to attend any other specialised training sessions.

9.3 Otherwise there is not a statutory or constitutional requirement to provide training, however, it is clearly good practice to do so to ensure high standards of conduct and decision making by the Council.

Implications Verified by Helen Nicol, Assistant Director Legal & Governance  
Date 7 January 2025

## **10. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)**

10.1 A Community Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the strategy which will be reviewed to reflect member needs alongside implementation. The Strategy takes into account individual Member learning needs by providing a one to one contact system where an assigned officer can pick up any issues a Member may have accessing training and learning opportunities.

Implications Verified by Natalie Smith, Head of Community Development  
Date 17 December 2024

## **11. Other Relevant Implications**

11.1 None.

## **12. Background Documents**

12.1 None.

## Relevance Check

**Budget Reduction/Service Area: Legal and Governance Services**

**Service Lead: Matthew Boulter**

**Date: December 2024**

In what ways does this Budget reduction have an impact on an outward facing service? How will the service feel different to your customers or potential customers?

N/A

If not, how does it impact on staff e.g. redundancies, pay grades, working conditions? Why are you confident that these staff changes will not affect the service that you provide?

N/A

Is a Customer Impact Assessment needed?

This is part of the Community Equality impact Assessment completed for this strategy.