

Leeds City Council
Member Development Strategy
2020-2025

Supporting Continuing Professional Development for
Leeds City Councillors

Foreword

As Elected members we provide a vital interface with citizens; undertaking leadership, advocacy, decision making, oversight and scrutiny roles.

The environment in which we work is complex and in constant state of evolution; to meet the expectations of residents, businesses and partners we've got to keep pace with it. Our role is very demanding, complex and constantly changing.

This Strategy will contribute to our Best Council and Best City Ambitions and reflects our council values. It seeks to provide fair and consistent access to a range of learning and development activities to provide the knowledge and skills which support us in our role.

This strategy enables us to access a flexible framework which recognises that a broad range of personal development needs and requirements need to be met.

The strategy presents a core set of learning and development opportunities covering generic areas of knowledge for us all and in addition, sets out a training offer to equip us in our often specialist roles.

The strategy also recognises the developing challenges faced by Members active in 21st century local government, including the step change in the digital agenda.

Key elements of the strategy include:

- induction for new members shaped by the experience of recent cohorts of new Councillors;
- a longer term strategy that offers learning beyond induction and sets out key learning areas for all members;
- recommended training to ensure Members remain up to date on issues such as Information Governance; 'safe' both in terms of compliance with relevant legislation and personal safety; and appropriately trained to participate in quasi-judicial committees such as plans panels and licensing committee.
- ad hoc and responsive learning to deal with legislative changes and local policy direction; and
- participation in external training to complement the local offer and provide valuable opportunity to learn from and share with peers.

We will keep our strategy under review and use the methodology of Member Development Charter and Charter Plus as a guide and a benchmark against which to strive to maintain continuous improvement in our Member Development offer.

Cllr J Dowson

Chair of Member Management Committee

Cllr J Lewis

Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Resources

Planning and Delivering Development Opportunities

We are mindful that Members have varying levels of availability, with many having work or personal commitments in addition to the requirements of their role as Councillors. We are therefore committed to developing a range of learning and development opportunities across a variety of media to ensure that Members are able to engage in a way that suits their availability; work pattern and learning style.

Personal Development

We are mindful of the differing development needs of elected members which arise from their background and experience; the roles to which they are appointed; and any personal ambition. We will seek to develop arrangements which enable Members to plan and influence their own training and development based on their own identified needs and aspirations.

Development and Learning Delivery

We will seek to provide e-learning and written material which is continuously accessible to Members and will provide both new learning and opportunities to revisit and refresh as Members require. In order to support this we will work to develop the Members own resource platform for access to learning and development material in support of this strategy.

However we recognise that classroom based learning can provide opportunity to question and explore information in greater depth, and to apply that information to the experience of the councillor's role. In addition the role of a Councillor can be isolating and group based learning can provide a welcome opportunity to meet and engage with peers.

The Member Development Programme, will include a range of delivery methods to meet the different learning styles of councillors.

Set annually in consultation with the Member Management Committee the programme will incorporate:

- face to face sessions which are
 - kept short, preferably an hour unless content dictates that they must be longer;
 - designed around member engagement and case studies etc. to keep the information relevant and accessible to Members;
 - held in different locations to facilitate attendance and help Members orientate to the Council's presence in the city;
 - held at times designed to facilitate attendance of Members;
 - backed up by easy to follow notes,
- digital training using a variety of formats (for example webinars, e-learning, blogs etc.)
- sign posting of relevant and valuable external learning resources and opportunities.

Induction for Newly Elected Members

Each year in which an election takes place we will deliver an induction programme. This will be designed to provide key sessions to meet the immediate needs of a newly elected Member, and to have longer term benefits and sustainability as those Members develop in their role and experience.

The programme will begin with an intensive programme set over a short period; and continue for the first twelve months of a Councillor's first term of office with a variety of opportunities to develop the essential skills and knowledge to underpin the role of elected Member. The early need and longer term sessions will be opened to all councillors who are interested in the content, whether as new learning or a refresh which will further enhance the opportunity for new Members by enabling engagement with their more experienced peers.

Immediate core sessions:

A series of face to face sessions will be arranged to take place between the date of the election and the annual council meeting. Aimed at assisting new Members to meet necessary legal obligations and to gain core skills to be able to respond quickly to their constituent queries, sessions will include:

How the council works & Corporate Responsibilities	Practical skills
Meet the Corporate Leadership Team – Members will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet with the Chief Executive and the Corporate Leadership Team • receive an overview of the Council's ambition and values and • receive an overview of the work of the different directorates 	
The Council and Decision Making - This session will focus on the different roles of a councillor in council decision making including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of council and executive • The council's committee structure • How committees work • Officer decision making • Scrutiny 	ICT- This session will include collection of ICT kit; together with training to enable Members to get started – for example basic document management protocols – use of outlook etc.
Standards and Conduct -This session will introduce the Members' Code of Conduct the session will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the principles of conduct in public life; and • the registration and declaration of interests 	Group support & practicalities (Members will get an overview of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group office support • Members allowances • Functions of various committees

How the council works & Corporate Responsibilities	Practical skills
Annual Council Meeting. This session will prepare Members for what to expect at the Annual Council Meeting and will include a tour of the Civic Hall (a plan will be provided)	Casework Management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member will have opportunity to work through typical casework scenarios and be able to create a crib sheet of main contacts • Attain details of the support and staff available to assist with casework • Speed reading skills

In addition to these sessions newly elected Councillors will receive a 'New Members Information' handbook. This contains useful contacts and information which will help Members as they settle into their new roles. For example the handbook contains a summary and introduction to all group office staff, a list of casework contacts, contacts and responsibilities within the Group, examples of common casework and how to resolve it as well as other general information.

Extended induction sessions for new Members¹:

Further training will be delivered in the first six months of the Councillor's term of office aimed at assisting Members to get up to speed with their role-specific responsibilities, and to build their confidence whilst keeping them safe. Sessions will include,

How the council works & Corporate Responsibilities	Practical skills
Corporate parenting and safeguarding of children and adults: this session provides an overview of Members functions and responsibilities in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of corporate parent; • The safeguarding of children; and • The safeguarding of adults 	Personal Health and wellbeing: this session will provide awareness of the importance of personal health and wellbeing. There will be opportunity to learn useful tips including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time management skills • Prioritisation strategies and awareness of support available by council for Members including discount schemes.

¹ These opportunities will be open to any Member wishing to attend

How the council works & Corporate Responsibilities	Practical skills
<p>The ethical framework – this session builds on the Member Code of Conduct session providing wider information in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of Standards and Conduct Committee, • role of MO, • LCC codes and protocols, • Roles and relationships between Members and officers, • complaints, • Role of the Independent Person 	<p>Speaking and influencing skills: This practical session will provide Members with useful techniques for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • managing and participating in meetings; • speaking in council or committee; and • presenting effectively in the council chamber
<p>Information Governance: This session will cover Members' roles and responsibility under the GDPR rules. The training will provide members with the awareness to avoid any pitfalls. <i>It is recommended that this session is attended by all councillors at the beginning of each term of office to ensure that they are up to date with changes in national legislation and local policy.</i></p>	
<p>Social Media: This session will provide opportunity for Members to understand the council social media policy and overview of different social media platforms, and to explore their value as a casework tool.</p>	

Continuing Development for All Members

This programme will seek to build on induction for new members but will also be available to all members and will be delivered over a 12 month period. The scope of this will be more wide ranging and not just focussed on a 'getting started' model. For example this will cover sessions on unconscious bias and equalities, personal safety, social media, and key policy areas such as the climate emergency. Other areas will also be covered to ensure that members are up to speed on evolving issues such as information governance and adult/child safeguarding.

This strategy recognises that Members need to remain up to date in their understanding of policy issues both nationally and locally. The annual State of the City event reflects key political themes and developments; with opportunity to hear insights from leading specialists and to engage in meaningful debate and development.

In addition the Member Development Programme will remain responsive to changes and developments through the course of the municipal year. Opportunities will be arranged as necessary for ad hoc sessions to address forthcoming changes in legislation that will impact local government or significantly impact Leeds residents. Similarly sessions will be delivered to address changes in Council policy that will impact members and how they operate.

How the council works & Corporate Responsibilities	Practical skills
<p>Local Government finance: this session will provide an awareness of the council's Financial Regulations and the significant financial processes and procedures.</p> <p>The Session will cover how the Council is funded, how this funding is utilised and directed towards priorities for the Council and what the financial risks are that the Council is facing.</p> <p>The session will prepare Members for setting and considering the budget for the Council.</p>	<p>Equalities and Unconscious Bias: in addition to an overview of the council's equality framework this session will provide awareness of responsibilities under the legislation and insight into their behaviours and develop skills to identify and avoid any pitfalls</p>
<p>Corporate strategies: this session will develop Members' awareness and understanding of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Best City and Best Council ambitions; • The council's values; and • key policies and strategies , including the Best Council Plan, Inclusive Growth, and Health & Well- Being. 	<p>Personal Safety: this session is designed to enable Members to keep themselves safe whilst undertaking ward duties and surgeries. The session will include de-escalation techniques, cyber safety and personal self-defence and will be delivered by Safer Leeds in conjunction with West Yorkshire Police</p>
<p>Climate emergency: sessions will provide information about latest developments around climate change.</p>	<p>Digital: the Members ICT training offer will be responsive to changes in systems; software and equipment.</p>

How the council works & Corporate Responsibilities	Practical skills
<p>Council structures and decision making: this session will provide a detailed understanding of the way council structures underpin the democratic mandate, and the ways in which Members take, influence and have oversight of decisions.</p>	<p>Press and broadcasting: This session will introduce the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authority Publicity.</p> <p>The session will also give members the skills to deal with the press and broadcasters and outline the support available in group offices to assist with press matters both in terms of preparation for interview and production of press releases on their behalf.</p>
<p>Legislative and regulatory changes: sessions will be offered to enable Members to be up to date in relation to changes in legislation or government policy and guidance that directly impact on the council and its functions or services or on Members directly in terms of their personal responsibility (e.g. information governance, code of conduct).</p>	
<p>Emergency Planning: sessions will include information in relation to the council's emergency planning framework and the role of Members in an emergency response and the following recovery.</p>	
<p>Council Complaints and the Local Government Ombudsman: this session outlines the role of the various ombudsman and the designated person role as well as providing an overview of the Council's complaints procedure.</p> <p>The session will provide Members with information and skills necessary to their roles within the complaints process in Leeds.</p>	

We acknowledge that there is much to be learnt from the experience of others and we are committed to wider engagement with external training opportunities for Members. In particular we will signpost and promote the **LGA learning programme**, and the potential for elected members from Leeds to obtain recognised qualifications through the LGA.

Bespoke Role Development

We have identified a number of collective training requirements in relation to required knowledge and skills that can be met through bespoke designed and delivered learning programmes. The need identified may arise as a result of a Member's appointment to a particular committee or to a particular role, and we are committed to ensuring that bespoke training is provided to meet that particular need and equip the Member to carry out that role.

The bespoke offer will include:

Bespoke Provision for	Provision made
<p>Members of Community Committees; and those appointed as Community Champions and Community Leaders. Content and method of delivery will be determined by the Chief Officer Communities in consultation with the Executive Member for communities and community committee chairs.</p>	<p>Training will be provided to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce new members to the role, functions and processes of community committees; • Develop understanding of how Community Committees function, and resources available to support local activity; • Develop understanding of the role of community champions and the skills necessary to carry out the role; • Developing the community role of local ward members as facilitators and enablers with their communities (schools, businesses, faith groups, charities etc.)
<p>Members of planning panels (plans panels and development plan panel) or nominated by whips to the pool of substitutes. Content and method of delivery will be determined by the Chief Planning Officer in consultation with planning panel chairs and legal services.</p>	<p>Prescribed training (this training must have been undertaken before any Member can participate (as member or substitute) in any planning panel. The training will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An introduction to the terms of reference of the planning panels and an explanation of their different powers and functions; and • Key concepts and legal framework underpinning robust decision making in relation to planning matters. <p>Update and development training (this training will be offered to planning panel members in order to enhance their knowledge in relation to important planning issues and trends.</p>

Bespoke Provision for	Provision made
<p>Members of licensing committees (licensing committee and its sub-committees). Content and method of delivery will be determined by the Chief Officer Elections and Regulatory in consultation with licensing committee chair and legal services.</p>	<p>Prescribed training this training must have been undertaken before any Member can participate in any licensing committee</p> <p>The training will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An introduction to the terms of reference of the licensing committees and an explanation of their different powers and functions; and • Key concepts and legal framework underpinning robust decision making in relation to licensing matters. <p>Update and development training this training will be offered to licensing committee members in order to enhance their knowledge in relation to important licensing issues and trends.</p> <p>Training will be offered to all licensing committee members on how to chair sub-committee meetings.</p>
<p>All Members of Scrutiny Committees – recommended for members who are new to Scrutiny but open to all who wish to refresh and enhance their knowledge. Content and method of delivery will be determined by the proper officer for Scrutiny in consultation with scrutiny board chairs.</p>	<p>A programme of training and development activities will be offered to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce new members to the role, functions and processes of scrutiny; • develop member knowledge and understanding of the role of scrutiny in Leeds City Council, the procedures that underpin the function and clarity about the boundaries of the role; and • empower members to carry out effective scrutiny by providing an opportunity to develop and/or maintain core skills and behaviours.
<p>All Members appointed to the role of Committee Chair – recommended for newly appointed chairs but open to all chairs to refresh and enhance their skills.</p>	<p>Training will be offered to equip newly appointed Members to chair meetings effectively.</p>

Monitoring, Review and Communication

Reviewing the Strategy

We will keep this strategy and the development opportunities offered under regular review. Members are encouraged to provide feedback and suggest any areas they feel should be covered.

We will monitor and review training and development accessed through this strategy to ensure that we are making best use of the resources available, and that access to the development opportunities offered is fair and consistent.

Leadership and accountability for the strategy

Member Management Committee has oversight of member development activity and will receive regular reports to provide assurance that the Member Development Strategy remains up to date and fit for purpose, and that it is being implemented effectively.

The Member Management Committee may appoint a working group to maintain oversight of the work programme to develop and deliver the Member Development Strategy and make recommendations to Member Management Committee as necessary and appropriate.

The Executive Member for Resources is the lead Member for Member Development and together with the Chair of the Member Management Committee will champion Member Development across the Council. Group whips in are responsible for taking the lead in promoting learning and development opportunities for Members in their groups and ensuring best use of identified resources.

The Head of Democratic Services is the officer with responsibility for matters relating to Member Development and will report regularly to the Member Management Committee.