

# SWT Member Training and Development Policy

## Policy Statement

Somerset West and Taunton Council is committed to delivering its mission statement “Bring the urban rural renaissance to Somerset West and Taunton, by putting our customer at the heart of everything we do, building communities in which they can thrive and making our built and natural environment the best it can be financially and sustainably.”

Elected Members are integral to achieving the council’s mission, the council’s strategic objectives and the delivery of high quality services.

The Council is committed to supporting the training and development of all elected Members to enable them to perform effectively in their role and to develop to meet future challenges and is committed to ensuring that:

- All Members should have access to appropriate training and development activities to enable them to acquire the knowledge and skills required to be an effective SWT Member and Ward Councillor.
- A planned and structured approach to Member training and development will to be taken.
- Access to training and development activities to be transparent and equitable.
- Training and development, wherever possible, should be linked to the Member skills and knowledge framework.
- Elected Member training and development activities should be adequately resourced within the available Member Training budget.
- Elected Members are encouraged to identify their own development needs and participate fully in training and development activities.
- An agreed Elected Member Training and Development Plan will be produced each year. This plan will be linked to the Council's Strategic Plan, the roles and function of Councillors and the key changes affecting the Council's priorities.
- All Elected Members will have a Personal Development Plan that identifies current training and development needs and planned development.

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 It is vital that Members of the Council are supported in all their diverse roles on the Council and this policy sets out the Council's commitment to providing a consistent and structured approach towards developing and supporting members in:
- Carrying out their existing roles efficiently, including effective community leadership;
  - Preparing for future roles on an individual basis;
  - Undertaking their specific duties and responsibilities;
  - Contributing to improving the effective organisation of the Council;
  - Keeping up to date with new legislation and changing policies
- 1.2 To demonstrate its commitment in recognising the potential and value of a well trained organisation, the Council proposes to work towards achieving Member Development Charter status, which adopts nationally recognised good practice guidelines in respect of Member training and development.

## **2.0 A Councillor's Role**

- 2.1 Once elected a Member must represent the best interests of their residents, the Council and the District working in partnership. In performing their duties, Members will have the following roles:
- Representing the local interests of the community they are elected to serve (Ward Councillor)
  - Setting and developing council policies
  - Helping to shape and advise upon the policies of others (partners with whom the Council works)
  - Scrutinise and investigate the Council's work and activities and the work and activities of others (statutory partners)
  - Promoting and maintaining high standards of behaviour across the Council and its parishes
  - Consider and determine applications for planning and licensing consents and related issues
  - In addition to their roles as community representatives councillors may be appointed to:
    - The Executive
    - Scrutiny Committee
    - Planning Committee
    - Licensing Committee
    - Audit, Governance and Standards Committees
    - Outside Bodies
- 2.2 This policy is built around supporting all councillors in their particular roles, taking account of their diverse needs.

## **3.0 Aims and Objectives**

- 3.1 The aims and objectives of this Policy are:

- To establish a culture whereby continuous Member training and development is seen as a key component to the success of the organisation.
- To equip Members with the skills and knowledge necessary to deliver high quality services which are valued by their customers.
- To ensure that all Members, are trained to a level at least appropriate to their roles and responsibilities, recognising the importance of their roles within the Council, their ward area and on outside bodies.
- To ensure that support is available enabling individuals to acquire and develop a full range of skills to maximise their ability and capacity to deliver
- To encourage to take responsibility for their continuing professional development whilst reinforcing that they are key to enabling the Council to achieve its aims and objectives
- To clearly define roles and responsibilities in respect of Member training and development
- To identify adequate resources to meet the objectives of the learning and development programme

#### **4.0 How we will deliver the Aims and Objectives**

##### **4.1 We will deliver the aims and objectives by:**

- Providing a planned approach to Member Development
- Involving Members in their training and development, from planning the learning programme through to delivery and evaluation
- Maximising training and development opportunities for Members through partnership with other organisations and neighbouring authorities
- Ensuring that the contribution that Member training and development makes to meeting the Council's aims is evaluated and recognised
- Supporting individual training and development, valuing and recognising the skills and experiences that councillors bring with them
- Identifying individual training and development needs through an annual Personal Development Review session
- Adopting a Member Training and Development Programme with clear objectives and links to the aims of the Council, the roles and functions of members and the key changes affecting the Council's priorities
- Delivering training and development in innovative and creative ways to make the best use of the resources available to the Council and ensure value for money;
- Ensuring that every Member is empowered to take responsibility for their own training and development

- Being flexible about the delivery of training and development, taking into account the diverse needs of individual councillors

4.2 Specifically, the key strategic elements are:

### **Induction**

4.2.1 A comprehensive induction programme of training and development for every newly elected Member, enabling them to 'fast track', learning about the organisation and supported by the following:

- An induction day to meet key people and learn more about corporate and constitutional processes
- An induction pack setting out the entitlements, support and guidance available, together with other useful information about the Council and its processes;
- An induction booklet which Members will work their way through and complete all relevant training
- A 'buddy' from the Governance Team who will act as their point of contact for any queries
- A 1-2-1 with their Governance Team 'buddy' to discuss the support available to them and to identify any individual needs;
- A six month review (1-2-1) with their Governance Team 'buddy' to check 'satisfaction' levels and to identify any areas where more information or training is needed

### **Personal Development Reviews**

4.2.2 All Members will be offered the opportunity to have a Personal Development Review (PDR) on an annual basis to:

- Get feedback from Members as to how things are going and to find out what is working well and what isn't working quite so well
- Identify individual training and development needs
- Check how the outcomes from previous PDRs have progressed
- Find out if their role has changed – and assist with any support or development that they require

### **Annual Training & Development Programme:**

4.2.3 An annual training and development programme will be developed in consultation with the Member Training and Development Working Group based on:

- Identified needs from Personal Development Reviews (PDR's);
- Identification of 'mandatory' training that all Members should receive and balancing this with other training needs or requests
- The requirements of new legislation and emerging corporate themes;
- the Corporate Strategy and emerging corporate themes;
- ethical and governance requirements and changing standards;

- the impact of any scrutiny recommendations in terms of changing corporate practice;
- emerging themes or developments from partners

### **Training and Development Sessions**

4.2.4 A wide range of training and development sessions will be available:

- Internal training and development sessions
- Member Briefings on specific topics
- Training and development videos that Members can watch at their leisure
- Mandatory training modules
- Attendance at seminars and conferences to inform learning on specific and specialist subjects, for instance as an Executive or Scrutiny Member or serving on a particular Committee;

## **5.0 Roles and Responsibilities**

5.1 In order to ensure that Member Training and Development is embedded throughout the Council, the following groups and individuals have the following roles and responsibilities within the Council:

### **Individual Members**

5.2 Individual Members are responsible for their own training and development by:

- All Members are expected to undertake and complete an induction process, including attendance on an induction programme and the completion of an induction booklet
- Participating in training and development activities each year, designed to assist them in their role within the Council.
- Undertaking any 'mandatory' training on areas that all Members need to have an understanding and awareness of
- Undertake training before becoming a Member (or substitute) on specialist Committees including:
  - Planning Committee
  - Licensing Committee
  - Scrutiny Committee
  - Audit, Governance and Standards Committee
- Highlighting any training and development needs through the Governance Team and via the annual Personal Development Review
- Undertaking IT training, if appropriate, to assist the Member get up to speed with how the Council works
- Providing feedback on any training and development undertaken

### **Group Leaders**

5.3 Group Leaders will actively promote Member training and development within their group

## **Member Training and Development Working Group**

5.4 The Member Training and Development Working Group (MTDWG) will be a cross party Executive Working Group who will oversee Member training and development on behalf of the Council and will:

- Review the Member Training and Development Policy on an annual basis to ensure that it is still fit for purpose
- Work with Officers to develop the Member Skills and Knowledge Framework
- Act as ambassadors for training and development and positively support and encourage other Councillors to identify training needs and take advantage of development opportunities.
- Ensure that a comprehensive induction programme is made available to all newly elected Members
- Ensure that all Members are encouraged to take part in a Personal Development Review (PDR) on an annual basis
- Ensure that an annual training and development programme is drafted, meeting the identified needs through the PDR process and that delivery reflects individual learning style preferences
- Explore and identify new approaches to learning and development and to encourage a culture of lifelong learning
- Evaluate the effectiveness and value for money of all learning activity by continuously monitoring feedback from Members
- Consider reports and updates from the Governance Team on the member training budget.
- Identify the critical information needs of Members and the most effective ways of communicating that information
- Promote citizenship and local democracy in the District
- Develop and maintain an Action Plan for Member training and Development
- Ensure all seminars, briefings, advice and other formal learning opportunities are designed and delivered in relation to the Council's Corporate Priorities.
- Promote mentoring support for all new councillors and those who require mentoring when changing role.
- Ensure that pre-induction materials and briefings are made available for prospective councillors in the community and an induction programme is offered to every newly elected councillor.
- Identify opportunities for sharing learning activities with officers, partners, the voluntary sector and other Councils where appropriate – ensuring that the Council is getting value for money for training

## **Member Champion for Training and Development**

5.5 The Member Champion for Training and Development will:

- Communicate the importance of training and development to Members
- Present any reports from the MTDWG to the Executive

- Act as a sounding board and provide a critical friend challenge for matters relating to Member Training and Development

### **Executive**

5.6 The Executive will:

- Review and approve the Member Training and Development Policy and any subsequent revisions
- Ensure that the Member Training and Development programme reflects the strategic objectives for Somerset West and Taunton Council
- Ensure that a culture of lifelong learning is developed for all Members at Somerset West and Taunton Council
- Ensure there is genuine commitment across the council to support the training and development of all Members
- Monitor the effectiveness of the Member Training and Development Policy by receiving half-yearly update reports from the Member Training and Development Working Group.

### **Governance Team**

5.7 The Governance Team will support Member Training and Development by:

- Providing support to Members and the MTDWG for matters relating to Member Training and Development
- Providing officer support in relation to the preparation of agenda and minutes relating to meetings of the MTDWG
- Providing 1-2-1 support ('buddy' system) to newly elected members as part of their planned induction programme
- Devising and delivering in consultation with the MTDWG a programme of induction training for new Councillors
- Carry out the Personal Development Review with Members once a year
- Devising and delivering, in consultation with the MTDWG, a comprehensive annual training and development programme for all Members based on the needs identified through PDR's and other essential training
- Provide administrative support for all training and including communication with Members and provision of feedback to providers
- Managing the Member training budget in consultation with the MTDWG
- Keep a record of all Member Training including attendance logs
- Collate the feedback and evaluation from Members relating to any training and development they have received
- Advising and assisting the MTDWG in carrying out their role