



**MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT
POLICY
2017/18**

1. Introduction

Every Member of Mid Devon District Council strives to serve the communities they represent and the District as a whole to the best of his/her ability.

The Council's vision and commitments are set out in the Corporate Plan 2016 to 2020 available via <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/206666/corporate-plan-2016-2020.pdf>

The main priorities for the Council are Economy, Homes, Community and Environment, these priorities pick up the themes of the Policy Development Groups, with the overarching priorities being efficiencies, value for money, digital transformation and staff and member development.

In line with corporate policies and the long term vision for Mid Devon this Policy will help to develop Members so that they will have the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes to significantly improve the Council's decision making, the quality of its services and life in the District.

This Policy recognises the need for different forms of development, both in content and method of delivery. It addresses developmental needs in skills and knowledge, having regard to the context of local government in a rapidly changing society.

2. Key Principles

- Development will be available to all Members irrespective of political allegiance
- To ensure a consistency of approach to Member development
- Creation of a learning culture at Mid Devon District Council that regards continuous Member development as vital to its success
- Development will have regard to the Corporate Plan
- Members to have ownership of the development programme via the Member Development Group
- Consistency with Equal Opportunity policies

3. Implementation

This strategy will be implemented:

- By the Member Development Group with support from the Member Services team
- With the assistance of Group Leaders who will actively encourage their Members to participate in development activities and give feedback on courses attended
- By monitoring on a regular basis to ensure the take up and effectiveness of development activity

4. Identification of Member Development Needs

Member development needs will be identified by

(a) One to One Meetings

Structured one to one meetings will be available to all Members on an annual basis. The training needs gathered from this process will inform the Member Development Programme for the following year.

(b) Induction for New Members

A comprehensive programme for newly elected Members is delivered following the District Council elections and individually after by-elections. This is accompanied by an induction pack and includes a number of informative briefing sessions:

- Welcome and tour of the Council
- Understanding how the Council works
- The role of the Ward Member
- The role of the Committee Member
- ICT support
- The buddying system
- Planning, Licensing, Audit and Standards training
- The work of the Policy Development Groups
- Corporate Governance and ethical standards
- Overview and Scrutiny
- Council finance, the budget cycle and performance and risk
- Housing, Estates, Council Tax, Economic and Community Development, Environmental Health and waste
- Media Training
- Essential Skills (provided by SW Councils)

Training for members of the Planning Committee is a priority because only those members who have received training in planning matters will be allowed to sit as members or as substitutes for members on the Committee. Training is also a requirement for the Audit, Licensing and Regulatory Committees and the Standards Committee as members on those Committees need to be suitably trained before they can sit thereon.

(c) Partnership Working

The Member Services Team attends meetings of the Regional Member Services Officers Network. That group, amongst other issues, discusses the ongoing provision of Member Development.

We welcome Members from other Local Authorities to share some of our general training sessions, this has proved very successful and as we move forward with regard to devolution, partnership working will continue to evolve.

Resources and events made available by South West Councils are pursued and accessed as required.

5. Methods of Delivery

These will include:

- Internal development and training courses
- Informal in-house briefings and workshops
- Shared learning and development with other authorities
- External events promoted by South West Councils and other local government organisations
- Written learning materials
- E-learning packages
- Useful web links

6. Links to the Corporate Plan

At the one to one interviews Members are reminded of the links between member development and the Corporate Plan. Reference is made to the fact that the Council will be in a better position to achieve its priorities by developing the skills and potential of its Members. We also feel we are in a unique position in that all 4 of the Policy Development Groups link directly to this strategic document.

7. Member Development Group – Terms of Reference

The Member Development Group is made up of representatives from the main political groups. Its terms of reference are:

- To ensure that Members have sufficient and appropriate development to enable them to perform effectively in their role;
- To ensure that Members are consulted about their development needs at individual, group and Council level;
- To ensure that Member development is adequately resourced both in terms of budget and personnel;
- To ensure that learning is disseminated amongst Members;
- To ensure that there is equality of access to development;
- To ensure that development opportunities are diverse to meet different learning styles of members;
- To ensure that Member development is evaluated to:
 - Identify its effectiveness
 - inform future development plans
 - identify value for money

8. Communications

Successful communication is an important element of member development. The Members Weekly Information Sheet is used to highlight and remind Members about forthcoming learning and development events. Prior to each briefing a paragraph is included in the Information Sheet giving Members an idea of the issues to be covered. Members are also sent calendar appointments about future events and reminders.

Additionally, group leaders are asked on a regular basis to encourage their members to attend particular events.

There is a designated page on the Council's website containing information about member development.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

A variety of different evaluation methods are used to measure the effectiveness of the Member Development Programme:

- Annual one to one meetings are offered to all Members and previous meetings are reviewed;
- Each development event or briefing is evaluated by contacting Members by email after an event. A summary is subsequently produced.
- The Scrutiny Committee receives six monthly reports on attendance by Members at learning and development events and the feedback received;
- The Member Development Group is a forum for discussion, planning and evaluation. Feedback from events is reported to each meeting of the Group;
- Individual Members are contacted to obtain feedback where necessary when they attend events put on by other organisations.

10. Resources and Support

This policy will be delivered by the Member Services Team with the input of professional officers where appropriate. A dedicated budget is available for Member training and development; this covers all external training events, materials and conferences.