



## COUNCIL

Wednesday, 22 July 2020

### **ADOPTION OF MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE FOR 2020-21**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The Shadow Member Development Steering Group (SMDSG) developed a Member Development Strategy 2019-2023 and a Member Development Programme 2019-23 which included a Training and Development Schedule for 2019-20 that would support Members through their first year in office.
2. It was intended that the Member Development Strategy (the Strategy) would be reviewed and, if necessary, updated by a new East Suffolk Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) to ensure that it was appropriate for the new Council. The Strategy has now been reviewed.
3. The MDSG also reviewed the Member Development Programme and has now created a Training and Development Schedule for 2020-21 which it hopes will continue to support Councillors in carrying out their roles and duties.
4. Full Council is now asked to adopt the revised Strategy and to note the Training and Development Schedule for 2020-21.

Is the report Open or Exempt?	Open
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards in the District
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<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Steve Gallant Leader of the Council
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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Shadow Member Development Steering Group (SMDSG) was mindful that support, training and development needed to be in place for when East Suffolk Councillors were appointed following the elections to the new Authority on 2 May 2019.
- 1.2 To that end, the SMDSG developed a Member Development Strategy 2019-23 (the Strategy) and a Member Development Programme 2019-23 with a view to both documents being reviewed by an East Suffolk Member Development Steering Group, once appointed, to ensure that they were appropriate for the new Council.
- 1.3 At its first meeting on 22 May 2019, the East Suffolk Council resolved to appoint a Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) to continue its commitment to Member Development and to provide Councillors with the support, training and development they need to carry out their roles effectively for the benefit of East Suffolk residents.
- 1.4 The MDSG comprised the Leaders of each political group of the Council, as well as several Members who had expressed an interest in Member Development, including a number of Councillors who had never been elected as District Councillors before.
- 1.5 At its first meeting in September 2019, the MDSG started to review the Strategy and the contents of the Member Development Programme.

## **2 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2019-23**

- 2.1 The SMDSG intended that the Strategy would be in place from 2019 to 2023 and cover all of the Members' development needs during that period. The Strategy has a large remit. It aims to meet the needs of newly elected Councillors, as well as experienced, returning Councillors. It also looks to support those who are Members of other authorities (twin or triple hatters), and to provide information and support for those who might be interested in standing for election, in future. In addition, the Strategy has taken account of the recommendations from the successful Charter Plus re-assessment which took place in 2017.
- 2.2 The MDSG wanted to ensure that the Strategy and its Action Plan reflected the five themes of the new Strategic Plan. Each section of the Strategy was reviewed with that in mind, and also to ensure that every element of the Strategy was practical and beneficial to Members.
- 2.3 A major part of the review focussed on newly titled "Member Development Plans". The MDSG wished to ensure that there was a real benefit to Members, in completing their Plan, and that it offered them an opportunity to identify any training and development needs which they had. These needs could then be considered when the MDSG created the annual Training and Development Schedule.
- 2.4 The Member Support Scheme was also reviewed, and it was decided to assign each newly elected Member to a particular Democratic Services Officer who could be a point of contact and ensure that Members were fully supported.
- 2.5 The MDSG also felt it was important to emphasise the ongoing commitment which the Authority had towards Member Development, including the availability of sufficient resources, both in monetary terms and Officer time.
- 2.6 Given the current, unprecedented circumstances caused by COVID-19, the MDSG felt it was vital that the Strategy included a statement about the impact of the pandemic and the steps which the Council had taken to respond to it. This included the move to remote meetings, and the training which had been provided to facilitate their introduction, and smooth running. It

also included a reference to the survey of members which has been undertaken, to enable the MDSG to understand the impact which the pandemic has had on Members personally, and on how they carry out their role and responsibilities. The MDSG will be reviewing the results of the Member Survey at a future meeting.

- 2.7 The Strategy, including the Action Plan, will be reviewed by the MDSG on an annual basis to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose and responsive to changing needs.

### **3 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2019-23 – TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE 2020/21**

- 3.1 The MDSG also reviewed the Member Development Programme with a particular emphasis on the training and development opportunities offered to Members as part of the induction process, when newly elected in 2019.

- 3.2 The MDSG was keen to ensure that the Training and Development Schedule for 2020/21 was not only responsive to the needs and priorities of the organisation but also to the requests for training and development from Members themselves. To that end, a list of possible training topics was drawn up from various sources, including the Training Feedback Forms and Member Development Plans, and developed into a Training and Development Schedule for 2020/21.

### **4 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO THE EAST SUFFOLK STRATEGIC PLAN?**

- 4.1 The Strategy acknowledges that Councillors have a key role in achieving the vision set out in the East Suffolk Strategic Plan. The Council is committed to supporting Councillor's learning and development needs, ensuring that all Members have the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to effectively carry out their community leadership roles. This commitment supports the five themes in the Strategic Plan which are Growing our Economy, Enabling our Communities, Remaining Financially Sustainable, Delivering Digital Transformation, and Caring for our Environment. Councillors play a key role in developing and delivering these Themes, for the benefit of the Council and its communities.

### **5 FINANCIAL AND GOVERNANCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The MDSG oversees a budget of £50,000, over a four-year period, for Member Development activity. In order to make the best use of funds at the appropriate times, the budget has been profiled over that four year period with greater funds available in the municipal year immediately after the District Council elections, and less funding in the years leading up to the subsequent elections.
- 5.2 There are also funds set aside within the Democratic Services budget to cover the costs of the Charter Plus Award Membership and the reassessment. There is also sufficient capacity within the Democratic Services Team to support Member Development and the MDSG.

### **6 OTHER KEY ISSUES**

- 6.1 Member Development is a key element in ensuring that Councillors are offered the necessary support and development to enable them to carry out their roles effectively, in accordance with good governance and to the benefit of the community.

6.2 This report has been prepared having taken into account the results of an Equality Impact Assessment – no negative impact on any of the characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 are identified as a result of the new Member Development Strategy or Training and Development Schedule with both aiming to be inclusive for all Members or prospective candidates.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

7.1 Consultation was undertaken with Members as part of the Member Development Plan process, to seek their views on the induction, training and other support that they wished to be made available. The training needs which were identified have been used to help develop the Training and Development Schedule for 2020/21 and the other feedback will be used to measure progress against the various aspects of the Strategy's Action Plan e.g. in reviewing the Induction process, and in developing a blended learning experience with greater emphasis on the use of technology.

## **8 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

8.1 The option not to review the Strategy and provide a new Training and Development Schedule for 2020/21 was rejected. The MDSG recognised the benefits of having a strategic approach to Member Development, in terms of providing on-going learning and development, to enhance the skills which councillors bring to their role, and to assist them with community leadership. It was felt that all of these things would be important in the early years of the new Council, when Members will be familiarising themselves with the social, economic and demographic issues of East Suffolk, and the challenges that they bring. These benefits were even more important, given the current pandemic, and the impact which it has had on Councillors personally, and on how they are able to carry out their roles and duties.

## **9 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 To ensure the continuing strategic approach and commitment to Member Development.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the East Suffolk Council

- A) adopts the refreshed Member Development Strategy for 2019-23
- B) notes the Training and Development Schedule for 2020/21.

### **APPENDICES**

<b>Appendix A</b>	Member Development Strategy 2019-23
<b>Appendix B</b>	Member Development Programme 2019-23 – Training and Development Schedule for 2020/21

**BACKGROUND PAPERS** Please note that copies of background papers have not been published on the Council's website [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk) but copies of the background papers listed below are available for public inspection free of charge by contacting the relevant Council Department.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Available From</b>
13 July 2020	Equality Impact Assessment	Democratic Services