Making a Difference

Torbay Member Development Policy
Draft V3 – 2 April 2012

1.   Introduction and context

1.1   Elected members undertake a variety of complex roles such as community leaders, scrutineers, elected mayors and portfolio holders. These roles are continually changing with increasing national and local demands. Therefore, the Council is fully committed to ensuring that all members are equipped with essential skills and knowledge in order to be effective in leading the Council to meet future challenges.

1.2   This policy outlines the Council's structured approach towards developing its members to ensure that all members, including co-opted members, are supported in their role. The policy also supports the Council in achieving its corporate objectives.

1.3   Members take a lead role in their development and the approach they adopt. They have been fundamental in the preparation of this policy and oversee its implementation.

2.   Purpose and key principles

2.1   The aim of this policy is to provide a clear structure and purpose to identify and meet learning and development opportunities for members which, in turn, supports the Council to achieve its corporate objectives.

2.2   Key principles include:

- a structured approach for attracting candidates;

- ensuring members are well equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their roles, which in turn builds the capacity of the Council to deliver its objectives defined in the Corporate Plan;

- providing an integrated approach for identifying learning and development needs for members based on individual needs and the needs of the Council as a whole;

- a member led approach to ensure members feel supported and confident in their role;

- ensuring a consistent approach and equality of opportunity to learning and development; and

- evaluating learning and development effectively and celebrating our successes.

3. Commitment and responsibility

3.1 The Council's commitment to members' development has been reaffirmed by the achievement of the South West Charter for Member Development in 2008 and the Charter Plus in September 2010. The Council is committed to ensuring that all members have the opportunity and are encouraged to develop in their roles for the benefit of the Council and our customers.

3.2 The Members' Development Group includes top political and cross-party membership (the Mayor, leaders and deputy leaders of political groups and the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator) to take the lead on members' development. A specific budget for members' development is also allocated each year.

3.3 The Mayor designates specific responsibility to an Executive Lead to take the lead role for member development and work closely with relevant officers to implement this policy.

3.4 Group Leaders support their members with their learning and development by providing regular feedback and encouragement. They also ensure members participate in relevant training and development opportunities.

3.5 To ensure members' development has a full impact, members too must demonstrate a commitment towards their learning and development. The Council expects each individual member to take personal responsibility for their development to enable them to play a full part in supporting the Council to achieve its objectives and to share their knowledge and skills with others. To support this, the Code of Conduct for Members includes the following provision, which all members sign-up to when undertaking their declaration of acceptance of office:

> '16. You will comply with the core requirements of the Council's annual Members' Development Programme. Core sessions will be held twice (or more where appropriate), and members who are not able to attend either session will be required to make alternative arrangements with the relevant officer(s) within one month of the last session being held. Failure to complete core training will be reported to the Group Leader and you will not be entitled to serve on any relevant Council meetings and bodies until such time as you have satisfactorily completed the core session.
>
> Members will also use reasonable endeavours to undertake additional voluntary training in line with that approved programme. Newly elected members will undertake induction training as specified in the Member Development Programme.'

4. Contribution towards meeting corporate priorities

4.1 Members' development plays a significant part in the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities and objectives. The linkages are made as follows:

- a high level discussion by the senior leadership (member and officer) on the key priorities for the Council over the coming year and to identify how the various member roles will be able to contribute in the achievement of these and the Council's objectives;

- each year the Strategic Leadership Team assist the Members' Development Group with identifying organisational and corporate development priorities for inclusion in members' development programmes;

- each course contained in the members' development programmes makes clear linkages to the Council's corporate priorities;

- members' personal development plans include linkages to the delivery of the Corporate Plan; and

- evaluation covers how learning and development has impacted on meeting the Council's corporate objectives.

5. Member Development Framework – how it works in practice

5.1 A diagram illustrating the cycle for member development is attached. The member development framework is provided through:

5.2 **Attracting candidates**

In the run up to local elections, a variety of methods are to be used to communicate the positive aspects of being a councillor/elected mayor to the community and prospective candidates, including:

- appropriate timing to coincide with the elections process and providing information to the main political associations in the area;

- providing realistic information about the commitments required of members so that individuals are aware before making the decision to stand for election;

- providing reassurance by demonstrating learning and development opportunities and the support available; and

- encouraging a wide range of people to become members.

5.3 **Induction**

Induction sessions are offered to all members. New members receive a good grounding on the requirements of being an elected member and help to develop/harness existing skills to undertake the various roles. Induction also provides a valuable refresh for returning members. Preparations for induction start in good time prior to the election to enable existing members to contribute towards the format and content of the induction.

5.4 **Identifying councillors' role in achieving corporate objectives and development feedback from Group Leaders**

A high level discussion by senior leaders (member and officer) establishes a clear understanding as to how the various member roles (including opposition members holding the Council to account) can contribute towards meeting the Council's priorities and objectives. Following this, Group Leaders meet with members of their group to discuss how individuals can contribute in their respective roles e.g. committee, community leadership and any specific areas of special responsibility. This will ensure that each member is aware of what they need to do to meet the needs of the community, regardless of whether they are in a majority or minority group on the Council or if they are an independent member. (Independent members may choose who they wish to meet for this discussion i.e. Chief Executive or Group Leader.)

5.5 **Identifying development needs**

Members' individual development needs are identified by:

- using the Members' Skills framework as a basis for measuring skills and abilities;

- the production of personal development plans; and

- identifying personal goals and targets.

This is undertaken annually with a six month review also being offered. A confidentiality protocol has been developed to reassure members of the confidentiality of this process.

The Strategic Leadership Team also supports the Members' Development Group each year in identifying organisational/corporate priority development needs.

5.6 **Learning and development programmes**

The Members' Development Group produce a members' learning and development programme each municipal year. In the year of a local election the programme includes a wide-ranging induction programme.

The programme addresses:

- developing skills and roles as identified through the personal development planning process;

- organisational development incorporating corporate objectives; and

- keeping up to date with national issues.

A variety of delivery methods are utilised e.g. training courses (local, national, in-house and joint member/officer sessions), reading materials, on-line learning, observing, mentoring and coaching from other members/officers and briefings.

5.7 **Core training**

The Code of Conduct for Members requires all members to receive core (or mandatory) training (see paragraph 3.5 above). The areas to be covered by core training are identified by the Members' Development Group each year. Core training is selected to enable members to better carry out their duties and safeguard the Council in respect of legislative requirements. The Members' Development Group will determine when an assessment of members' understanding is required to ensure they have reached the required standard to fulfil their responsibilities.

5.8 **Continuous professional development**

After the initial personal development plans have been prepared, members are expected to review/update these and are given the opportunity to develop personal targets and goals. This is undertaken with support from Group Leaders and/or a senior officer from the Governance Support Team. This also assists with succession planning for members to develop for new roles.

Members' training records are maintained and available on their webpages on the Council's internet site. This can be used as their personal record of achievement and used as transferable evidence throughout their career.

5.9 **Sharing learning**

Members are encouraged to share their learning with their colleagues including across the political groups. Members and officers have a wide variety of skills and knowledge and these are utilised to support others where possible e.g. through members and officers delivering training, mentoring, coaching and observing. Relevant Executive Leads and/or Chairman and the Governance Support Team are involved in supporting officers in preparing and delivering training.

The Council is active in working with its neighbouring authorities throughout Devon to ensure there are opportunities for members to share learning with their peers. This is facilitated via the Devon Member Development Shared Service of which the Council is a member. The Council is also part of a mentoring partnership of authorities within Devon and Wiltshire Council providing external mentoring opportunities for members.

Brixham Town Council is invited to attend relevant training events run by the Council and joins the Council on its work on attracting candidates and preparing for induction.

5.10 **Support and resources**

Members will be at different stages in their political career and require varying levels of support. All members are supported with their learning and development and are assisted by:

● an annual members' development budget, supported by the Mayor and Political Groups protocol for its allocation;

- equality of opportunity, supported by the Mayor and Political Groups Protocol;

- dedicated officer support from the Governance Support Team and from officers across the Council;

- support in identifying development needs and personal development planning by Group Leaders and the Governance Support Team;

- ensuring success of development actions are evaluated;

- the supply of a personal members' development pack; and

- administration of development opportunities including communication of events and promotion, booking courses and maintaining electronic records of attendance/achievement.

5.11 **Evaluation**

Evaluation is undertaken to ensure learning and development activities are successful for individuals and the Council as a whole.

As part of the personal development planning process, members identify their own success criteria for identified activities. Evaluation is also undertaken at different levels including skills and knowledge gained at course (including facilitators' feedback), review by members of learning and development received and high level evaluation on the impact member development has had on meeting corporate objectives.

An annual evaluation report covering all the levels of evaluation is presented to the Members' Development Group to enable the Group to identify future improvements.

In addition, evaluation is also undertaken on specific projects (e.g. induction) and reports on 'lessons learnt' presented to the Members' Development Group.

5.12 **Celebrating success**

To celebrate success and in recognition of our achievements, the Council will continue to maintain its Charter status and share best practice with our neighbours (via the Devon Member Development Shared Service). Individual member's success in completion of training courses is published on members' webpages on the Council's internet site.

6. Monitoring and review of this policy

6.1 The monitoring and review of this policy is undertaken by the Members' Development Group.

For recommendation for adoption by the Mayor of Torbay at the Adjourned Annual Council Meeting, 16 May 2012

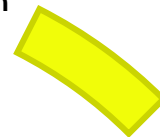# Torbay Member Development Annual Cycle

Attract Candidates (4 yearly)
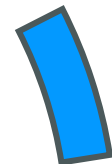
Induction (4 yearly)
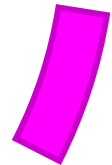
Corporate Plan agreed

Councillor role in achieving Corporate aims – Chief Executive/Group Leaders discussion
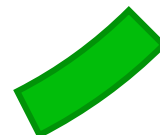
Councillor discussion with Group Leader

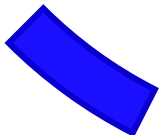Councillor 1:1 personal development planning with officer

Learning needs analysis

Debrief/feedback by Group Leaders to Chief Executive if required

Additional Corporate needs identified

Annual Members' Development Programme reviewed/implemented

6 month review of personal development plans if required

Evaluation of member development