

Thanet District Council

Member Training Strategy

Some time in mid 2017



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Introduction

Thanet District Council (TDC) believes that at the centre of any authority dedicated to meeting the needs of its community will be elected members and the Council understands its key role in supporting and assisting those members so that they may successfully undertake the vital role they have in serving their communities and modernising local government.

Local Government is a constantly changing environment and all Councillors whether they are newly elected or those of more experience require training to ensure they are as prepared and equipped as possible to meet both their own and their constituents' needs.

Members will be encouraged to take responsibility for their own training and development needs by identifying areas in which they require further assistance, via a Training Needs Analysis. The aim is to ensure that every Member has the opportunity to acquire the skills required to perform their duties to the best of their abilities.

Aims of the strategy

The aim of this member training strategy is to set out a clear pathway to achieving the following three goals:

- Members are equipped with the right skills to help them serve their community to the best of their ability identified through a comprehensive self-assessment of their individual needs.
- Members equipped to help the Council achieve its corporate priorities
- A culture where Member development is seen as a key component in the success of the Organisation.

Objectives

The following five objectives will ensure that TDC will meet the aims of the strategy.

- Produce a yearly Member Training Programme populated both by Members and where relevant by officers and designed to meet the needs of members.
- Introduce a training needs analysis allowing Members to identify their own strengths and weaknesses and where they need to improve their skills.
- Create a Member learning and development plan to ensure these objectives are met in a timely manner.
- Create a Leadership development plan for both Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet focusing on leadership themes that will develop the capabilities of those members to ensure that the Council can respond successfully to changing legal, policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes.

- Create an appropriate, timely and effective Members Induction Programme both for Councillors elected at Full Council elections and those elected via by-elections.

Member training group

Member development is most successfully implemented when members own the process and it is Member led. In order to help with ensuring that the Council has a member led approach to member development it has created the Member Training Group.

The Member Training Group has played a key role in the creation of this strategy and in future will play a vital role in implementing its aims and assisting in meeting the objectives. The Group consists of representatives from all the Council's political groups and in addition as part of its membership it also has the Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance, in whose portfolio member training falls. The group is administered by Democratic Services and can also call on the support of the Director of Corporate Governance – who is also a member of the Council's Corporate Management Team.

The terms of reference of the group are:

1. To act as a sounding board on member training issues.
2. To assist Democratic Services in creating a Member Training Strategy
3. To help promote attendance at Member training in each Members political group.
4. To view the results of member training surveys and assists Democratic Services in creating the annual Member training survey.
5. To assist Democratic Services in ensuring Member role descriptions are appropriate and up to date.
6. To assist Democratic Services in creating the Annual Members training programme and the New Members Induction Programme.
7. To assist the Council in achieving charter for elected member development status.
8. To assist with the introduction of new ways of personalising training for members.
9. Assisting Democratic services in ensuring members have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

Identifying member development needs

All Councillors will be offered the opportunity to complete a training needs analysis questionnaire each year and the Council expects that all its members will engage with the process. This will allow Councillors the opportunity to reflect on the skills and expertise that they already have and identify gaps in their knowledge. These responses will then be collated by Democratic Services who will

then use them, amongst other sources to create a yearly member training programme. This programme will then be able to be utilised by members as a source to be able to fill in the gaps they have in their knowledge, as identified within their own personal training needs analysis document.

Democratic Services will also conduct a member training survey each year, whilst mainly looking at practical issues surrounding the training provided; it also allows Councillors to suggest topics for future training sessions. These responses will then be collated by Democratic Services who will then use them in the creation of the member training programme.

If Councillors wish to sit on certain committees such as planning or licensing, they must have undertaken the relevant training beforehand to ensure they are compliant with the legislation. This will be undertaken as either 1-2-1 training or part of a group and so could feature within a member training programme.

The Corporate Management Team and specific service areas should also identify potential needs for example; new legislation or corporate governance issues that affect all Members and then provide appropriate and timely training on those issues.

How will the Council meet Member's needs?-

1) Annual member training programme

The Member Training Group will agree an annual member training programme that runs from April to April. The programme will contain development activities that have been identified through the activities mentioned previously namely:

- Development activities that assist Councillors achieving their training needs identified through the training needs analysis process.
- Development activities suggested through the annual member training survey
- Role specific training, albeit that is open to all members
- Corporate Governance training issues.

The programme will also contain a variety of different training activities, which will be explained later in this strategy, namely:

- Courses run by TDC officers
- Formal courses run by external trainers
- Members briefings

- Coffee evenings

Each activity contained within the member training programme will state which of the corporate priorities or corporate values that particular activity relates to. This helps to enable members to identify those courses that relate to areas that they have identified as in need of addressing as part of their training needs analysis.

Administrative support for the member training programme will be provided by Democratic Services. This encompasses sending all members a copy of the programme, individual electronic appointments for each specific session, populating the calendar of meetings and a telephone reminder at least a week in advance of the session. Democratic Services will also ensure that sufficient pre-course information is provided to Councillors to help them decide on whether to attend courses and to help them prepare questions.

The current member training programme is attached at Appendix 1.

2) Members Induction

A comprehensive induction programme is essential to newly elected members so that they may, at the earliest opportunity maximise the skills and knowledge needed to become effective community leaders.

The induction programme will be agreed by the member training group in January of the district council election year, in sufficient time in order to be included with paperwork circulated to potential candidates.

The induction programme will contain a variety of different training activities, covering the Council's priorities and values, governance and behaviour training and specific committee training together with soft skills such as chairing and public speaking training. In addition there would also be more practical sessions surrounding ICT, tours of the offices and democratic housekeeping issues.

All members will also receive an induction folder containing a copy of the programme, calendar of meetings and forms covering payroll, register of interests and car parking. In addition all members will receive a tablet device through which they will access all of the Council's committee papers and an electronic copy of the Council's constitution.

Members who are elected at by-elections will also receive an induction folder as described above and will receive an abridged version of the wider induction programme, adapted to be delivered on a mainly 1-2-1 basis.

3) Leadership Development

Developing both the current Member Leadership team and future potential leaders is an important and often neglected part of an overall strategy. Democratic Services will undertake a number of activities to help support the development of both the current Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet. These activities link the strategy with principle E of the CIPFA “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework” ensuring that the Council follows best practice. TDC will:

- Create a specific development plan in partnership with both the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet focusing on leadership themes that will develop the capabilities of those members to ensure that the Council can respond successfully to changing legal, policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes. This would be done via a variety of learning methods including trainer-led sessions, distant learning and E-learning, provided by both internal and external training providers. This plan would be shared with both at least two months in advance the next Full Council elections. This plan would then be implemented from the day after those elections.
- Provide specific training for Cabinet members and shadow cabinet members building on the leadership themes mentioned above outside of the election period.
- Hold a joint CMT/Cabinet away day and a joint CMT/Shadow Cabinet away day at least yearly including one specifically between the January and April of each Council election year to discuss significant issues, key themes and priorities for a new administration and the support they could receive.

4) Other Support offered

The members’ room has been recently refurbished and has a networked PC, meeting facilities for councillors, Ipad charging points and a coffee machine. In addition the room has WiFi access as has the whole of the Council offices.

The Council also has a Member newsletter that is published electronically every week called “In the loop”. Democratic Services regularly use this newsletter to remind Councillors of upcoming member training sessions and other training opportunities.

Learning Styles offered by Thanet District Council

The Council utilises a variety of training styles in both the annual member training programme and the member induction programme. These include:

- **Courses run by external trainers** These are traditional classroom style training sessions led by an external trainer, who possesses skills and/or knowledge that internal officers do not have, or the Council does not feel is appropriate for officers to give.
- **Courses run by officers** These are traditional classroom style training sessions led by an officer of the Council. The Council has many experienced officers with a great deal of skills and knowledge particularly how that knowledge relates to specific Thanet issues. Therefore the Council will always try to maximise where possible the opportunities for officers to provide member training. In addition to being able to provide real-life, locally known examples within their learning, it is also a fantastic development opportunity for officers.
- **Members briefings** These are briefings in a seminar style and are held on a bi-monthly basis. They cover items of importance that relate to the Council's corporate values and priorities. The vast majority are given by officers of the Council, although occasionally there are external presenters if it is felt warranted.
- **One to one training** This type of training involves personal training on a one to one basis and is often most used for ICT training. Whilst effective, it is time consuming and its use would be judged on a case by case basis.
- **Coffee evenings** These are informal networking sessions between Members and Officers. They are an opportunity for Members to pose questions to Officers about service issues and for officers to raise service specific issues with members. They are held on a bi-monthly basis and each session focused on a specific service area.
- **E-learning** Each Member can access a suite of E-learning courses through their Council Ipad. These E-learning courses focus on wider but still important skills and knowledge such as safeguarding and health and safety.

Budget for Member Learning and Development

The budget for member training is ring-fenced within the wider Council training budget. This budget covers the cost of the yearly member training programme and the costs associated with the south east employers' charter for elected member development. This budget is managed on a day to day basis by the Committee Services Manager and reviewed by the Member Training Group at each of its meetings.

In addition there is also the possibility of members attending seminars and/or additional external courses which would be paid for from the conference fees budget. This would be on a case by case basis and subject to the usual budgetary approval and group leader sign off.

Evaluating Members Learning and Development

Democratic Services provide a feedback form to all Councillors attending a training session and strongly encourage that they are completed and returned to Democratic Services. These forms are then collated and the results analysed to see where future improvements to training can be made.

In addition to the feedback gained directly after each training session, Democratic Services will also contact all those Councillors that attended a session six weeks after the date of the training to document how that training session has improved (or not) that Councillors way of working. Democratic Services will either increase or decrease this six week timescale if needed, dependent upon the training provided, in order to most appropriately assess its impact.

Both the feedback from each member training session and the feedback received from the review at six weeks will be considered by the Member Training Group in a timely manner in order for the group to make any recommendations regarding any issues that may have emerged from that training session.

Democratic Services also keep a record of all the learning and development courses and briefings attended by each Member and this record will then be published on each Councillors TDC webpage. The responsibility for maintaining this record lies with the Committee Services Manager, based upon the signed attendance sheets used at each meeting.

Reviewing the Strategy

How will we know when we have achieved the aims of the strategy?

The aims being:

- Members are equipped with the right skills to help them serve their community to the best of their ability identified through a comprehensive self-assessment of their individual needs.
- Members equipped to help the Council achieve its corporate priorities
- A culture where Member development is seen as a key component in the success of the Organisation.

The Council is applying for the South East Employers Charter for Elected Member Development, in order to achieve charter status, the Council must pass a comprehensive assessment of the Member training provided by Thanet District Council. This assessment will look at a wide variety of topics including many that are coterminous with the aims and objective outlined within this strategy. Therefore if the Council achieves Charter status it will have only done so by meeting the aims and objectives of this strategy.

The Member Training Strategy will be reviewed by the Member Training Group on a yearly basis, to ensure the work being undertaken by Democratic Services will meet the aims outlined within the strategy and the that strategy remains up to date and relevant. The Member Training Group will also monitor the objectives outlined within the strategy at each of its meetings.

Contact details

If you have any queries regarding this strategy document please contact:

Democratic Services
Thanet District Council
Margate
Kent
CT9 1XZ

Tel: 01843 577459
Email: committee@thanet.gov.uk

Document History

Version	Date	Agreed by	Minute ref
1	XXXXXXXXXX	Council	

Appendix 1: 2017/18 Member Training Programme

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Course</u>	<u>Trainer/Facilitator</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Link to Corporate Plan/Values</u>
11 Apr 2017	6.15pm	Members Briefing	Various	Council Chamber	Priority 2
25 May 2017	7.00pm	Coffee Evening	Waste and Recycling	Manston Road Depot	Priority 1
30 May	1.00pm	Training Session – Member/Officer relations	Tim Howes	Council Chamber	Value 2
30 May	7.00pm	Training Session – Member/Officer relations	Tim Howes	Council Chamber	Value 2
20 June 2017	6.15pm	Members Briefing	Various	Council Chamber	TBC
4 July 2017	2.00pm	Training course – Chairing Skills	Elaine Bolton, Beckwith Consulting	Council Chamber	Value 2
4 July 2017	7.00pm	Training course – Chairing Skills	Elaine Bolton, Beckwith Consulting	Council Chamber	Value 2
11 July 2017	7.00pm	Coffee Evening	Parking and Enforcement	Austen Room	Priority 1
5 Sept 2017	6.15pm	Members Briefing	Various	Council Chamber	TBC
26 Sept 2017	7.00pm	Coffee Evening	Parks & open spaces/foreshores/ Crematorium & Cemeteries	Austen Room	Priority 1
26 Oct 2017	2.00pm	Training Session – Planning Training	Iain Livingstone	Council Chamber	Priority 3/Value 2
26 Oct 2017	7.00pm	Training Session – Planning Training	Iain Livingstone	Council Chamber	Priority 3/Value 2
23 Nov 2017	7.00pm	Coffee Evening	Housing	Austen Room	Priority 2
30 Nov 2017	2.00pm	Training session – Scrutiny training	Centre For Public Scrutiny - TBC	Council Chamber	Priority 2/Value 2
30 Nov 2017	7.00pm	Training session – Scrutiny training	Centre For Public Scrutiny - TBC	Council Chamber	Priority 2/Value 2
9 Jan 2018	6.15pm	Members Briefing	Various	Council Chamber	TBC
23 Jan 2018	7.00pm	Coffee Evening	Maritime and technical services	Austen Room	Priority 3
6 Feb 2018	6.15pm	Members Briefing	Various	Council Chamber	TBC
27 Feb 2018	10.30am	Training session – Personal safety	Stewart Bundy	Council Chamber	Value 2
27 Feb 2018	7.00pm	Training session – Personal safety	Stewart Bundy	Council Chamber	Value 2
20 Mar 2018	7.00pm	Coffee Evening	Communications	Austen Room	Value 3
3 Apr 2018	6.15pm	Members Briefing	Various	Council Chamber	TBC
5 Apr 2018	10.30am	Training Session – Licensing Training	Phil Bensted	Council Chamber	Priority 1/2/3
5 Apr 2018	7.00pm	Training Session – Licensing Training	Phil Bensted	Council Chamber	Priority 1/2/3

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01843 577165