**South Lakeland District Council**

**Member Support Strategy 2021-2026**

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**1.0      Introduction**

The South Lakeland District Council Plan sets out how we aim to achieve our vision of "working together to make South Lakeland the best place to live, work and explore".  Our Members are central in making this vision a reality.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out how we will support Members by ensuring they have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles in the fast paced world of the 21$^{st}$ Century as effectively as possible.

This strategy has been produced in partnership with the Member Support Steering Group.

**2.0      Commitment To Learning and Development**

Learning and development is essential in helping Members to deliver the vision and priorities set out in the Council Plan, and any interventions need to be focussed, delivered to a high standard, and should use resources effectively to achieve the greatest outcomes.

We commit to ensuring that learning and development is available to all Members, both new and long standing, to meet Members' responsibilities to their communities.

**3.0      Objectives**

Our key objectives are to:

- Equip our Members with the skills, knowledge and behaviours to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively and to the best of their ability;
- Ensure equal access to learning and development opportunities;
- Provide a supportive induction for new Members;

- Encourage a supportive environment where Members share knowledge with each other;
- Encourage a learning culture, where it is recognised that continuous development is critical to the success of the Council;
- Ensure training needs and the training plan are kept under review;
- Develop and deliver an effective training plan;
- Ensure that any learning interventions are evaluated to assess effectiveness;
- Ensure the Member Support Steering Group act as champions of learning and development for Members;
- Raise awareness amongst Members of their own responsibilities for their personal development;
- Recognise best practice in other organisations and look to encourage such approaches across SLDC Members.

## 4.0 Key Responsibilities

### 4.1 Human Resources Lead Specialist

Overall responsibility for Member development is held by the Human Resources Lead Specialist.

### 4.2 Standards Committee

Members agree to follow a Code of Conduct, set out in the Council Constitution, to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties. The Standards Committee ensures that appropriate training is available and provides advice on the Code of Conduct.

### 4.3 Member Support Steering Group

The Member Support Steering Group is made up of Members from across the political spectrum and Officers with its primary aim being to provide advice to the Customer and Commercial Services and People Portfolio Holder on matters pertaining to Member Support (including Member Development).

The group is supported by members of the Human Resources, Case Management Team, IT, Strategy and Legal, Governance and Democracy Teams; and meets four times per year.

The terms of reference are:

- To make recommendations to the Customer and Commercial Services and People Portfolio Holder on issues pertaining to the support and development of elected Members in carrying out their various roles as a Councillor.
- To ensure that development and support offered is in accordance with, and meets the aspirations of, the Council Plan.
- To ensure that all Councillors have equal access to training and development opportunities tailored to their individual needs and learning styles.
- To ensure that all Councillors have the necessary resources to support and allow them to perform their roles effectively, both in person and virtually.
- To monitor the roll-out of the Member Development Programme and Budget.
- To ensure that Member Development initiatives are evaluated and reviewed so that value for money is assured.

### 4.4 Organisation Development Specialist and Case Management Officer

Member development is supported by the Organisation Development Specialist and a Case Management Officer.  Responsibilities include:

- Operating the Personal Development Plan process to assess training needs;
- Producing the training plan;
- Facilitating buddying and mentoring arrangements, particularly for new Members, where possible;
- Encouraging attendance at learning events;
- Understanding the reasons for non-attendance at learning events;
- Continuous improvement in learning and development for Members.

## 4.5	Members

Members are elected by the public to represent them both inside the Council and outside the Council in the community. They are accountable to their communities and their communities should be able to judge their performance.   Member Role Profiles are detailed in Appendix A.

It is essential that all Members have the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil these roles. All Members are responsible for, and have direct input into, their own development. This can be achieved by highlighting their development needs, including participating in the Personal Development Plan process.

Members are also responsible for attending any mandatory training, participating in learning and development opportunities and providing meaningful feedback following a learning intervention.

## 5.0	Learning and Development Programme

## 5.1	Identification and Prioritisation of Development Needs

The rationale for deciding what development and/or support is to be provided is based on information gathered from a number of different sources. These include –

- Members themselves (through their PDPs, see below);
- Corporate needs (from the Council Plan and key projects such as Customer Connect);
- Development needs as a result of changes in legislation or policy;
- Benchmarking information from other authorities; and
- Information provided by the North West Employers and the Local Government Association

## 5.2	Personal Development Plans

The purpose of Personal Development Plans (PDPs) is to support Members to undertake their duties effectively as representatives of their communities.  They are offered to all Members and participation is strongly encouraged.

As part of the PDP process, each Member can select up to three priority development areas which they feel they would like to see addressed in the next 12 months and clearly identify how this development will impact on their ability to undertake duties as a Councillor. They can also consider how and when these needs can best be met.

All Members are encouraged to participate in the PDP process, which involves the completion of an online form and the option to request a face to face meeting with their party Leader or Deputy Leader.

The information gathered from the PDP process will be used to develop the annual training plan for the year.

**5.3      Induction**

All new Members will be required to attend an induction programme.  Any development needs identified at this stage can be highlighted to the Organisational Development Specialist and Case Management Officer.

Legal and constitutional matters will be focussed on, including the Code of Conduct, Governance and Decision Making, Data Protection, Member/Officer Protocol and others.

Tools and information required to undertake the role will be made available via Sharepoint and a Case Management Officer.

**5.4      Ongoing Programme Of Events**

There are a variety of ways in which Members can learn and develop, including:

- Face to face training and briefing sessions (either virtual or in person);
- E-learning and on-line opportunities;
- Members are also able to tap into various resources available on the North West Employers' website and from the Local Government Association;
- Written materials such as bulletins and newsletters.

A training programme is run on an annual cycle.  It is planned using the information provided during the Personal Development Plan process and through recommendations from the MSSG.  All Members are encouraged to participate.  Every endeavour will be made to ensure events are held at times that are convenient to Members, such as before a Committee meeting, but this will not always be possible.  E-learning and virtual events will continue to be encouraged.

A 'Sharing Ideas' page for shared learning and development and other information is available on the Member Support pages.

**5.5      Skills Development**

The Council is committed to providing opportunities for all Members to develop appropriate levels of skills, knowledge and expertise to enable them to fulfil their community leadership roles.  These skills include:

- engaging with communities;
- promoting the duty of local authorities to involve the public;
- being aware of and considering budgetary issues and statutory duties of the Council;
- undertaking service reviews and ways of working under Customer Connect;
- promoting and participating in partnership working; and
- engaging in strategic leadership.

**5.6      Annual Member Development Programme**

The Member Development Programme is drawn up from identified training needs and priorities for training, which fall into the following categories–

**5.6.1     Mandatory training**

This training is considered essential for Members because it is either role-specific (i.e. training for members of committees when/ if dealing with quasi-judicial issues), relates to the Council's statutory duties for which it must be able to demonstrate due diligence (such as Data Protection training) or provides key information that is essential for a Member to be effective in their general role (such as Code of Conduct training).

- Code of Conduct
- Constitution
- Planning Committee
- Licensing Committee
- Chairing Skills
- Standards Committee
- Audit Committee
- Human Resources Committee
- Induction
- Overview and Scrutiny
- Data Protection
- Prevent
- Safeguarding
- Equality and Diversity
- Introduction to Public Sector Finance

**5.6.2     Optional Training** (such as topic specific issues and issues identified by individual Members)

- Community Leadership/ engagement
- Boundary changes– impact on ways of working and use of technology
- Information Technology upskilling / effective use of equipment and software (Modgov; Microsoft Teams, etc.)
- Leadership development for Cabinet members or potential members for the future
- Media skills
- Risk Management
- Conferences (as and when and dependent on budget and link to supporting PDP)

A training matrix, showing the programme in more detail, is shown at Appendix B.

**5.7     Other Learning and Development**

Although training is largely delivered in accordance with the agreed Member Development Programme, there are occasions when training opportunities come to light which Members feel would enhance their knowledge and understanding. As the Development Programme expends the full budget available during the course of the year, there is no leeway available to add training identified throughout the year.

However, the value of such training is recognised by the Steering Group and it has agreed that such training requests will be considered against the learning and development needs

contained within a Member's PDP and should demonstrate an element of "added value" to the Council.

Requests for other learning and development are made via the Member Support pages and will be reviewed against the current budget, taking into account the individual training needs of the Member making the request. The final decision is made by the Human Resources Lead Specialist.

## 6.0 Feedback and Evaluation

All Members who attend learning and development opportunities will be asked to complete an evaluation form or provide more detailed feedback as appropriate. This information will be collated and reviewed by the MSSG to ensure that training attended is relevant, provides value for money and to gauge its usefulness for others.

Attendance will be monitored and reviewed in order to focus on issues around non-attendance. To maximise attendance, the MSSG will ensure that training opportunities are well advertised and highlight the specific benefits to Members in relation their role. Training records will be maintained recording expressions of interest, numbers enrolled and actual attendance.

Members are encouraged to attend training that they have booked. Where Members have not been able to attend they will be asked to provide reasons, which are then recorded and reported to Group Leaders. Trend reports are also provided to MSSG on a quarterly basis. Where mandatory training for specific Committees is not attended, it will not be possible for those Members to participate as a Committee Member.

## 7.0 Resources

## 7.1 Budget

A small budget is available for Member training and development; this covers training events and conferences, including travel and accommodation costs.

## 7.2 Customer Services

Members can request or report issues using the online forms available on the Council's public website, by using My Account or by calling a Customer Service Advisor. Contact information can be found on the website.

## 7.3 Digital technology

IT equipment is provided to all Members to ensure that they can work securely using the SLDC network. Ongoing training and support is provided.

## 8.0 Review of this Strategy

This Strategy is subject to annual review following discussions at Member Support Steering Group to ensure relevance and alignment to Council Plan priorities.