

Summary Sheet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 8 November 2017

Report Title

Member Development Strategy

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Shokat Lal, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

All

Summary

The Member Development Panel has worked with councillors, officers and the Local Government Association to prepare a strategy to direct the Council's approach to learning and development for Members. This strategy has been prepared to reflect the ambitions in the Council Plan and enhance the skills, knowledge and behaviours of Members. This report seeks formal approval of the strategy by the Cabinet.

Recommendations

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is invited to scrutinise the report and proposal and make recommendations to Cabinet:

1. That the Member Development Strategy be approved.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – Draft Member Development Strategy

Background Papers

Minutes of Member Seminar – 13 June 2017

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Member Development Panel – 18 August 2017

Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision Making Meeting – 13 November 2017

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Member Development Strategy

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Member Development Strategy be approved.

2. Background

- 2.1 At the beginning of 2017, the Member Development Panel reviewed the overall position in respect of learning and development activities for councillors. It recognised that much of the work in this area since the Government intervention commenced had been driven and delivered by the Local Government Association (LGA). With the continued return of decision making powers to local democratic control, the Panel felt it was necessary for the Council to take ownership of the direction of member development activity for the remainder of the current term of the Council until May 2020.
- 2.2 The Panel reviewed examples of strategies for member development from a number of other local authorities and provided direction in respect of the 'look and feel' that would best reflect Rotherham's current position and continued improvement journey.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 The Council Plan identifies the need to embed a culture within the Council which seeks to improve the services that it delivers, by providing strong community leadership, being well governed, accountable, open and transparent. Members of the Council have a key role in ensuring that this is achieved. It is the underlying premise of the strategy that member development will lead and support the Council in achieving its objectives by enabling Members to increase and realise their potential as decision-makers, community representatives and community leaders.
- 3.2 This report sets out the Council's aims in relation to member development and how these aims will be realised. In particular it sets out how the learning and development needs of councillors will be identified, how these identified needs will be incorporated into a balanced and accessible programme of member development events and other activities and how the success of these activities will be reviewed.
- 3.3 Whilst the LGA have reviewed and supported the development of the strategy, the longer term aspiration is for the Council to seek external accreditation for member development activity. The adoption of the strategy is the first milestone towards seeking accreditation.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 It is recommended that the strategy be approved to ensure that there is support for all Members to enable them to acquire sufficient knowledge and a full range of skills to maximise their ability and capacity.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 A Member Seminar was held on 13 June 2017, which was chaired by the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working and Cultural Services, where all councillors were invited to express their views on the proposed content of the strategy. Amongst the feedback received was the need for the strategy to better reflect the ambition and aspirations of the Council and Members and to strike a more confident tone about how development activity would be delivered.
- 5.2 The Local Government Association have also reviewed the draft strategy and provided comments that have informed its final content. The general thrust of the feedback from the LGA was that the strategy was sufficiently robust in identifying the methods to be used to enable continued learning and development. The LGA are keen to explore with the Council how more innovative approaches to delivering learning and development can be provided. For example, discussions are continuing in respect of the use of podcasts for Members who cannot attend Member Seminars or other development events.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 Formal approval of the strategy is an executive function and is subject to Cabinet's agreement to the recommendation in this report. However, the approach to learning and development set out in the strategy is already being implemented and work continues to develop a plan of activity which reflects the objectives of the strategy and the overriding themes which have emerged from personal development plan interviews with Members.
- 6.2 The Member Development Panel will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the strategy and the delivery of the programme of learning and development. An annual Member Development report will be submitted to Council so that all councillors can reflect on the activities and progress made.
- 6.3 The Assistant Chief Executive and the Democratic Services Manager are the accountable officers for the delivery of the strategy and Member Development activity overall.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 There is a budget for learning and development activity, including attendance at conferences and seminars, within the Democratic Services budget. The 2017/18 budget for Member Development is £18,910. There are no new financial or procurement implications arising from the adoption of the Member Development Strategy.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no legal or statutory implications in respect of the approval of the Member Development Strategy.

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 There are no new human resources implications arising from the approval of the Member Development Strategy. Officers within Democratic Services are responsible for the co-ordination of the programme of learning and development for councillors. The aspirations of the strategy and the emerging Member Development Programme can be delivered within the existing staffing arrangement.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 There are no direct implications for children and young people or vulnerable adults. The adoption of the strategy and activities for learning and development will contribute to enhancing Members' understanding of safeguarding issues for children and young people and vulnerable adults.

11 Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 The strategy reiterates that the Council is committed to the principle of equality in their learning and development programmes for all Members – irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital status or working pattern.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 There are no new implications for partners or for other services across the Council. Member Development is not a new concept; learning and development for councillors has taken place for many years in a variety of ways, but most frequently through the provision of information by officers at Member Seminars or other bespoke events responding to changes in law, policy or service delivery. The new strategy seeks to build upon those foundations and directorates across the Council will continue to contribute to Members' learning and development.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The adoption of the strategy and activities arising from it will mitigate the risk of Members not having the relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours to undertake the role of councillor.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Shokat Lal, Assistant Chief Executive
James McLaughlin, Democratic Services Manager

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

| | Named Officer | Date |
|---|----------------------|-------------|
| Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services | Judith Badger | 26/10/2017 |
| Assistant Director of Legal Services | Stuart Fletcher | 26/10/2017 |
| Head of Procurement (if appropriate) | N/A | |
| Head of Human Resources (if appropriate) | John Crutchley | 25/10/2017 |

Report Author: James McLaughlin, Democratic Services Manager

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