

Harrow Council Policy for Member Development

1.0 Introduction

This policy set out the plans and structures in place to ensure that elected members have access to ongoing professional development based on the identified needs of specialist groups (Committees) and individuals. The policy takes into account the diversity within the borough, the profile of members and the range of their development needs.

1.1 Scope

The policy covers all elected members who serve the four year term and includes all members elected through by elections during term. It covers all members across all political parties and independents. The policy also makes reference to council officers and voluntary and community sector partners who have a role in supporting member development. (hereafter referred to as the Third Sector)

1.2 Review

The policy is subject to approval and review on a four yearly basis by the Member Development Panel. Programme is subject to ongoing monitoring by the Panel and an annual review supported by the HRD team.

2.0 Aims and Objectives of Member Development at Harrow Council.

The policy aims to provide an entitlement to professional development for members and ensure they receive continuous updating on the key legislative and political skills frameworks that impinge on the day to day work of members.

Implementation of an annual Modern Councillor Member Development programme should enable members to:

- 2.1 increase the capacity of individual members in line with Harrow Council's strategy
- 2.2 gain the skills and knowledge required to increase the capacity of the council to implement the corporate improvement plan to attain and retain excellent status
- 2.3 engage with the implementation of the corporate values – CREATE (see Appendix attached)
- 2.4 review their own performance
- 2.5 improve and further develop political skills
- 2.6 participate in a development programme to meet identified needs
- 2.7 increase their understanding of the framework of local government and the impact of national government
- 2.8 develop a range of organisational and management skills to support them in their role e.g. presentation, casework, IT skills
- 2.9 recognise the changing legislative framework in which the council operates

3.0 The Key Principles and Processes to Support Member Development

3.1 Management by Members

All matters relating to member development will be managed and co-ordinated by the Member Development Panel that meets four times a year. Reports on progress shall be presented to the Standards Committee by the Chairman of the Panel.

3.2 Named Officer with Job Description

A named officer will have responsibility for Member Development and ensure that professional learning and development advice and support is provided to members in developing policy and direction; they will also co-ordinate administrative support. References to the roles of assigned officers servicing member development will be detailed in their job descriptions.

3.3 Identification of Development Needs

The council will use a range of methods for the identification of the personal and professional development needs of members. The methods include:

3.4 Annual Training Needs Analysis

A survey sent out to all members on annual basis incorporating questionnaire items on legislative training requirements, mandatory knowledge and a range of personal and professional needs aligned to the IDeA Political Skills Framework

3.5 Coaching and mentoring

Delivered by external consultants as part of a two year programme open to all members allowing 360 degree feedback and an in-depth assessment of learning needs and preferences.

3.6 Post learning event feedback questionnaires

These include an item on future training needs so that members can record their additional requirements on an ongoing basis throughout the year.

3.7 Informal Discussions with Senior Officers

As part of day to day liaison with officers, Committee Chairman and Portfolio Holders may identify emerging needs resulting from legislative changes and other developments affecting the council and the responsibilities of councillors.

3.8 Co-ordination of Training Needs

All needs identified, including those relating to committee work, will be collated by officers supporting member development (see 3.2 above) and managed in conjunction with the Member Development Panel.

4.0 Programme Planning, Delivery and Evaluation

Access to internal and external programmes is provided for all members. Attendance at external fee based events are agreed for individual members through officers in conjunction with representatives on the Member Development Panel.

4.1 Delivery methods will employ a wide range of learning strategies to ensure that the preferred learning styles of individual members are addressed as far as possible. These will include: round table discussions through quarterly briefings, action learning events, coaching and mentoring, e-learning and intranet based updates, specialist workshops, seminars and external conferences.

4.2 Evaluation of programmes will be based on the comprehensive process used for council employees. This incorporates after event feedback questionnaires and Focus group sessions. The combined learning evaluation and log is completed by members after each development session asks individuals to evaluate personal, council wide and community benefits of the training.

5.0 Equalities, Work-Life Balance and Community Engagement

5.1 Equality and Diversity

- 5.2 The council applies the Harrow equalities policy to both members and officers. One consequence is that there should not be any physical, social, religious or cultural barriers to members who wish to take up development opportunities.
- 5.3 Opportunities for members to benefit from learning and development activities will be available regardless of members' physical circumstances, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, age or religion.
- 5.4 Availability and timing of development activities will take account of members' family, caring and work responsibilities and ensure a positive approach to work-life balance is promoted. Where appropriate and necessary, development sessions will be made available to members on a one-to-one basis.

6.0 Community Leadership and Links to the Third Sector

- 6.1 Development opportunities for members shall include activities that promote community engagement and leadership, work-life balance and positive citizenship.
- 6.2.1 Member development programme will include input from representatives of the Third Sector, for example, affiliates of Harrow Association for Voluntary Services (HAVS). Where appropriate and useful, staff and HAVS volunteers from the Third Sector will be invited to participate in member development sessions.

7.0 Publicity and Engagement with Members

- 7.1 An annual Modern Councillor Professional Development Programme will be produced annually supplemented by monthly bulletins. Dates for development events run in-house will be added to the Democratic Services and Corporate Calendar.
- 7.2 The annual Modern Councillor Brochure will be also be available on the Intranet along with a regularly updated web page on Member Development, providing links to an e-learning programme and an online events calendar.

8.0 Contacts

- 8.1 Members will have access to a named officer responsible for member development and dedicated email enquiry mailbox. Contact details will be published in the Modern Councillor Brochure and in regular email and postal bulletins.

Draft tabled at the Member Development Panel 7th April 2009. See Minutes for actions agreed.

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Appendix

1. Harrow Council's Values

It is expected that all officers and council members will engage with and promote the council's Values:

CREATE

Customer First - we are focused and invested in improving the lives of our customers, going the extra mile to resolve their issues and empowering them to take responsibility for their own decisions.

Respect – so we treat each other with courtesy and regard, earning respect through working with others to engender trust.

Engaged Communication – that's why we listen *Actively* placing a premium on engaging in conversations that bring people together, allows curiosity and interest in areas other than their own.

Actively 'One Council' - we collaborate not blame, because we believe the '*sum of the parts*' is more powerful than its individual parts.

Taking responsibility – We always deliver what we say we will, empowering and challenging each other to enhance performance and behaviour.

Energise and Improve – while distinguishing ourselves by taking actions that innovate and improve.

2. Learning Evaluation Cycle

The methodology for monitoring and evaluating the member development programme is aligned to the council's corporate strategy for the evaluation of Learning and Development. See diagram attached

3. Statement of Commitment for Members, Officers and Stakeholders to Member Development

Members

It is recognized that elected members have a wide range of demands on their time in terms of other work, voluntary commitments, membership and representation on other bodies and council business.

Within this context, and recognizing other demands, It is expected that all members will make a commitment to their own personal and professional development whilst serving as a councilor and engage with the programme developed by Member Development Panel colleagues. Members are also expected to share any learning and areas of good practice with member colleagues, particularly where the council has funded attendance at external events.

Officers

All officers whose work involves liaison with members will ensure that they communicate any discussion on the training of councilors to the appropriate lead officer responsible for Member Development and/or the Chairman of the Member Development Panel. All officers will follow the council's staff code of conduct in all of dealings with members.

Contribution of Stakeholders including the Third Sector

Through regular inputs into the programme and in attending appropriate development events it is recognised that representatives from the Third Sector and other stakeholders will provide members with up to date information on activities relevant to the council.