Member Development Strategy
2025- 2027

1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this document is to outline the Council's approach to Member development.

1.2 To ensure equal access to training and development opportunities is provided to all Members in accordance with equal opportunities legislation and Council policies.

2 Member Development Steering Group

2.1 As a key part of the strategy, the Member Development Steering Group should be reinstated.

2.2 The Steering Group will meet quarterly.

2.3 The Steering Group to be composed of one Councillor from each group and relevant officers.

2.4 The Terms of Reference of the Steering Group to be:
   a) To lead on member development activities/needs and ongoing arrangements for member development with the assistance of the Democratic Services Team;
   b) To review and monitor the Council's Member Development Strategy and make recommendations to the Standards Committee;
   c) To identify Member training needs and propose suitable training;
   d) To ensure training supports the Corporate Plan;
   e) To recommend to Council the budget provision required for members development;
   f) To champion member development at Spelthorne and encourage member engagement in training sessions;
   g) To aid in the production of a comprehensive induction programme;
   h) To aid in ensuring members complete feedback on training sessions.

3 Member Development Needs

3.1 **Induction:** all members to be provided with the necessary training to undertake their role efficiently and effectively as soon as practicable following their election. Following elections, the 2023 Member Induction Plan was put together taking on board the feedback received following the 2019 Induction. Feedback was sought on the 2023 sessions, a summary of which can be found at Appendix B.

3.2 Induction training will ensure new Members are aware of Spelthorne's required standards and internal/external workings and relationships.

3.3 Councillors elected at a by-election will be provided access to recordings of the induction sessions along with any other relevant materials. A sign-off sheet to be provided to the Councillor by which they can self-certify to say that they have watched the session. 1-to-1 sessions may be appropriate for those councillors sitting on a regulatory committee, e.g. Planning.

3.4 **Role Specific Training:** Mandatory training will be provided for councillors sitting on a regulatory committee (Licensing, Planning. Sessions on Chairing Skills will be made available to all Councillors with it being mandatory for Chairs and Vice-Chairs.

3.5 **Generic Skill Development:** Further development opportunities to be made available throughout the municipal cycle.

3.6 Sessions to focus on any changes in policy (e.g. sessions relating to changes to planning law) or following input from the Member Development Steering Group.

3.7 Specific training will be focussed on the skills identified in *'The 21st Century Councillor'* study by North West Employers and Birmingham University

3.8 Skills identified in the Study were as follows:

Foundational Skills were broken down into two broad categories:

Knowledge-based skills:
- Understanding specific policy areas
- Different roles and responsibilities of councillors
- Understanding the Corporate Plan

Practical Skills:
- Public speaking
- Chairing skills
- Social media training

Relational Skills were broken down into three sub-categories:

Connective Skills:
- Influencing
- Negotiating
- Listening

Digital Skills:
- Use of new digital technologies

Reflective Skills:
- Resilience
- Setting boundaries
- Emotional Intelligence

3.9 All training development will be consistent with the Council's Corporate Plan, strategies and policies.

4 Members ICT Training Area and Library

4.1 Recordings of the Induction Sessions, along with Presentation materials, will be available on the Members ICT Training Area.

4.2 Committee specific information, member briefings, and presentations to be made available through the Members library.

5 External Sources

5.1 Clear signposting to suitable external sources of training available to all councillors.

5.2 Links to LGA workbooks to be provided.

6 Budget

6.1 A budget for training to be allocated for each municipal cycle and held by the Democratic Services Manager.

7 Evaluation

7.1 While evaluation forms were sent out following the Induction Sessions in 2023, the response rate was very poor. New options for gathering feedback should be considered including online options.

7.2 Exit interviews / questionnaires to be issued to all councillors not standing for re-election in 2027.

8 Pre-Election information/sessions

8.1 Ahead of the Borough elections in 2027, an 'open' event will be held for prospective councillors providing information on the role of a councillor, the training provided and support available.

9 Increasing Member engagement

9.1 To improve member engagement in training sessions, further consideration should be given to alternate ways of providing training including:
- Hybrid sessions

- Offering sessions at alternate times
- Ensuring sessions are relevant

9.2 Use of experienced Councillors to deliver sessions will be considered where appropriate.

10 Review of Strategy

10.1 The Strategy will be reviewed in 2027 and refreshed for the next municipal cycle.

10.2 Democratic Services will keep a Training Record for each Councillor. The Training Record will be a public document, viewable on the Council website.

10.3 An indicative timetable of key events is included at Appendix C