



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

Lancaster City Council Member Development Strategy 2011/12

Introduction the Chairman

The Member Development Strategy sets out the development priorities for the coming year, to ensure relevant support and guidance is available to all members.

Over the next four years, members face a huge challenge to balance their duties as ward councillors against the need to deliver good public services in a time of great public austerity. This strategy will build on a strong history of member support at Lancaster to ensure that councillors have access to all the training and information they need.

Democratic Services runs the Council's member development programme, and this exists to support members in their role:

- i. as ward councillors;
- ii. on committees; and
- iii. when appointed by the Council onto an outside body.

Council Business Committee has the ultimate responsibility for directing member development, and its members actively promote opportunities for councillors and cascade information to their political groups.

The Council's first Member Development Strategy was adopted in 2007, and it set out various means of supporting members to improve their performance and deliver the Council's corporate priorities. The Strategy is reviewed on an annual basis in a process led by Council Business Committee, to ensure that member development remains relevant and effective.

This year's Strategy reflects the views of councillors and the Corporate Plan, in order to direct an effective programme of support throughout the year. Combining training, funding for conferences, and a focus on community leadership, the Strategy gives members a very clear overview of the support they can expect over the year.

Richard Newman-Thompson
Chairman, Council Business Committee

Our Objectives

This year's Strategy has five clear objectives which we hope to achieve over the course of the year:

- 1. To provide a community leadership programme for councillors, which will form the basis of Level 2 accreditation on the Member Development Charter;**
- 2. To complete Personal Development Plans for over 75% of councillors;**
- 3. To develop the *For Councillors* section of the intranet,**
- 4. To hold a number of high quality training sessions in partnership with neighbouring authorities;**
- 5. To run an internal programme of training events for members over the course of the year**

1. Community Leadership

The Council's long term ambition is that:

by promoting city, coast and countryside, we will secure a safe and prosperous community that is proud of its natural and cultural assets and provides lasting opportunities for all.

To pursue this, the Council recently approved four main priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- economic regeneration;
- climate change;
- partnership working and community leadership; and
- statutory responsibilities.

Whilst elected Members will contribute to all of the above, the Corporate Plan has committed the Council to:

deliver a development / training programme including training around the community leadership role of councillors

Although community leadership can mean different things to different people, a fundamental element is that members of the public identify their local councillor as somebody approachable, informed, and able to help. Our focus over the course of the year will be to provide high quality training on this aspect of a councillor's role.

Ward surgeries are perhaps the best known means of engaging with local residents and businesses, and our work over the course of the year will explore how councillors can go further to establish their role in the community.

To demonstrate our commitment to supporting members as community leaders in these challenging times, we will make this the focus of a push to achieve the prestigious Level 2 accreditation of the North West Member Development Charter.

The Council took the decision in 2002 to commit to its own internal Charter for councillor training and development. Following that, the Council signed up to the externally accredited North West Charter for Elected Member Development.

We currently hold Level 1 of the Charter, which recognises that member development in Lancaster demonstrates:

- a commitment to councillor development;
- a strategic approach; and
- that learning and development is effective in building capacity.

We will need to build on our strong tradition of member support to achieve Level 2 accreditation and, in the process, provide high quality training for members on a crucial component of what makes a successful councillor.

Objective 1: To work toward Level 2 of the North West Member Development Charter, with a community leadership programme for councillors;

2. Personal Development Plans

Personal Development Plans are an ideal way to ensure that members' personal development and support requirements are met. Through an informal one-to-one discussion, members' role on the Council can be assessed and strengths and areas for improvement highlighted.

A plan will then be put in place to ensure those areas are addressed and appropriate training sourced. Personal Development Plans are completely confidential and take less than an hour to complete.

It should be noted that members may only be eligible to attend certain conferences and seminars in instances when the subject matter has been identified as a priority in a Personal Development Plan.

As a result of Personal Development Plans, training courses have been organised, one-to-one sessions held, job shadowing arranged, and information provided electronically for members. All of these have helped individual councillors fulfil their role on the council, as well as establishing priorities for inclusion in the ongoing programme of training events.

Objective 2: To complete personal development plans for at least 75% of councillors during the 2011/12 municipal year.

3. Good Communications

All Councillors now have access to a Council laptop and other electronic resources, with individual support available to any members who may need it. Council Business Committee is now a paperless meeting.

This being the case, the 'For Councillors' section of the intranet has recently undergone substantial changes, with a wealth of information now available to councillors.

Members' internet home pages have been set at 'For Councillors' by default, which means that this will be the first webpage a councillor accesses when logging onto the internet.

All the latest training events, relevant news, and opportunities will be listed here, along with useful forms and templates which can be downloaded and filled in to claim travel expenses or apply to attend a conference.

The Latest News section will be regularly updated throughout the course of the year, and key programmes, such as Personal Development Plans, together with conferences and seminars will be advertised here.

Objective 3: To develop the Councillors section of the intranet, providing up to date information about the Council’s work, forthcoming events, reports and templates.

4. High Quality Training With Neighbouring Authorities

In July 2011, Democratic Services contracted an external speaker to give a training session on chairmanship skills. To keep costs down and provide a networking opportunity for our members, it was decided to extend an invitation for neighbouring authorities to send representatives - charged at the going rate.

Feedback from councillors, representing Lancaster and neighbouring authorities, was extremely positive. The high quality of the speaker and the ability to exchange views with councillors from different authorities led to a lively atmosphere which was reflected on the evaluation forms.

A number of members have already expressed a wish for similar events to take place in the future and, where the costs can be shared with other participating authorities, we will seek to provide more opportunities like this over the course of the year.

Objective 4: To hold a number of high quality training sessions in partnership with neighbouring authorities

5. Internal Training

Member Briefings are run on a monthly basis by Democratic Services, and provide a detailed insight for members into different aspects of the Council’s work. Hosted by senior officers and often involving site visits, we will be holding member briefings on each Service’s work over the course of the year.

Code of Conduct training is mandatory for all councillors, whilst equalities training is compulsory for newly elected members. Councillors nominated to the Committees shown below must attend mandatory training sessions as set out:

| Name of Committee | Mandatory Training |
|--|--|
| Licensing Act Committee | Licensing Act 2003 Training |
| Licensing Regulatory Committee | Equalities Training Licensing Regulatory Training |
| Personnel Committee | Equalities Training |
| Planning and Highways Regulatory Committee | Planning Training |

Appendix 1

Crucially, it will be feedback from one-to-one discussions with councillors during Personal Development Plan sessions which will determine what our internal and external training priorities will be during the course of the year and planning for next year. The training programme will be produced to meet the demand created by councillors, so please be sure to sign up for a Personal Development plan and let us know what you'd like to see.

Objective 5: To run an internal programme of high quality training events, covering a wide range of subjects, for members of the council.

Officer Support

Each member of the Council will receive support to enable them to be effective in their role as a councillor. Democratic Services offer day-to-day support, and are responsible for co-ordinating the member development work at the Council. The key officers to contact are:

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