**COUNCILLORS’ LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROTOCOL**

**Welcome and Introduction***:*

*As elected Councillors who have varied political careers, we appreciate the demands of the role of being a Councillor. We acknowledge that over the years the role of an elected Councillor has transformed and continues to evolve with ever changing demands from those that we are elected to represent. These are in addition to the various challenges local authorities continue to experience and the decision we have to make. One way to support Councillors is by developing the Learning and Development Protocol which we as the Member Training Champions are delighted to endorse.*

*Each elected Councillor brings a variety of skills, knowledge and experience to the role. The Learning and Development Protocol details the learning provision and support that Councillors will be offered to help support them in their roles and to develop their knowledge as a result of issues such as new legislation or more local issues, whilst contributing to the delivery of the Council’s priorities, objectives and ambitions.*

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| *Councillor Judi Billing* | *Councillor Ruth Brown* | *Councillor Steve Deakin-Davies* |

**The Member Training Champions:**

Three Group Member Training Champions have been nominated and formed a cross party steering group to assist with the identification of learning and development needs, planning and delivery of activities. For 2018-2020 these are:

* Councillor Judi Billing
* Councillor Ruth Brown
* Councillor Steve Deakin-Davies

**The Councillor pledge:**

Councillors are encouraged to undertake an annual training self audit to assist in identifying their training needs and requirements.

It is important for newly elected Councillors to attend induction sessions, as these will deliver essential training and as well as provide an opportunity to discuss other training needs. The sessions will be delivered in a variety of ways, internally, by e-learning and externally if required. Training shall be logged through the Council’s GrowZone system (or equivalent replacement system). Councillors can expect training from Officers and will be encouraged to attend training and development in order to nurture the skills and knowledge of the role.

Further details on the corporate Induction can be found below.

**Compulsory training:**

As part of the NHDC Councillor’s Code of Conduct[[1]](#footnote-1), it is necessary for Councillors to attend compulsory training provided by the authority. It will be compulsory if:

* Full Council, Cabinet or a Committee decides it is, or
* Group Leaders agree that it should be compulsory with any of the Statutory Officers (Head of Paid Service; Section 151 Officer/Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer); or
* a Councillor is directed to attend training following a Councillor conduct complaint.
* If a Councillor sits on of the Planning Control or Licensing and Appeals Committee. [*NB* Councillors cannot participate in decision making at that Committee unless the compulsory training has been completed].

Examples of compulsory training include: Safeguarding, Data Protection, Anti-bribery and Councillor Code of Conduct.

It is understood that Councillors are busy and relevant officers will use their best endeavours to accommodate training flexibly. In return Councillors are encouraged to attend / and or participate in any session to meet these requirements.

**Specialised / other training:**

Outside of any compulsory training Councillors are encouraged to attend any specialised training or development events provided. These are designed to extend knowledge in matters such as planning and licensing law, regulations, procedures, Codes of Practice and the Development Plans beyond the minimum referred to in the above and therefore support Councillors to carry out their role effectively. Where Councillors are invited to annual refresher training, they should endeavour to attend.

**Equality of opportunity**

NHDC is committed to the principle of equality in the learning and development opportunities and activities for all Councillors.

It is acknowledged that Councillors have many conflicting demands on their time, so where possible development activities will be provided at different times to accommodate various needs. Additionally, everyone has different learning preferences. Therefore, the Council will aim to provide development materials in a variety of forms/ formats and make training interactive and appealing. Wherever possible internal training will be delivered by officers in partnership with relevant Councillors.

**Induction programme**

Particularly as a new Councillor there is a significant amount of information to learn. To assist, the Council will deliver a Councillors Induction Programme, which is endorsed annually by the Member Training Champions, Group Leaders, the Political Leaders Board and Senior Officers.

*Note that* the Council also runs a staff corporate induction day. This follows the recruitment of a particular number of new employees. Departments within the Council have varying degrees of involvement with Councillors, so to assist those officers in understanding a Councillors role, some Councillors will be invited to attend the staff inductions. This will also help to promote good working relationships between Councillors and Officers. The staff induction also includes a trip around the District and newly elected or re-elected District Councillors will be invited to attend the trip by Learning and Development.

**Councillor Development Programme**

A Councillor Development Programme will be formulated by the Democratic Services Manager and with the Member Training Champions and shall be overseen by the Committee, Councillor and Scrutiny Manager, Democratic Service Manager and with the assistance of the Learning and Development Team. The purpose of the Councillor Development Programme is to bring together all learning and development opportunities available to individuals, Committees and political leadership, which are considered and prioritised against specific needs and resources.

**Councillor Buddying Arrangements**

Those Councillors that have been elected for a number of years have a vast amount of knowledge and experiences which would be invaluable to less experienced Councillors. Buddying/ mentoring by an experienced Councillor is another support mechanism, particularly for new Councillors or those aspiring to different roles. Political Group Leaders are asked to support mentoring arrangements and manage these directly within the Political Groups.

**The GROW Zone**

The GROW Zone is the Council’s Learning Management System which is designed to manage an individual’s learning and development activities.

When invited to attend training, Councillors should book onto the event directly using the GROW Zone system.

The system can be used to:

* Book on to learning and development activities.
* Add a record of learning and development activities to your Learning Journal (Note: activities organised by the Learning and Development Team are automatically added).
* Access and complete e-learning, i.e. training that is done on the computer
* Democratic Services and Learning and Development can run learning reports on individual Councillors.

**Annual Report on Councillor Learning and Development**

An annual report shall be provided to the Senior Management Team/ Directors, Executive Councillors and the Political Leaders Board to provide key information on Councillor Development and use of the budget over the previous twelve month period.

**Evaluation**

Following attendance at any training event, Councillors will be requested to offer feedback. This provides an opportunity for Councillors to highlight where there are any areas of improvement as well the positive experiences, so that the learning and development programme can continue to develop. The results shall be collated and presented at the same time as the Annual Report.

**Councillor Training Budget**

Within the Budget setting process the Council allocates an amount for Councillor Development each year. The budget is currently divided between the Political Groups according to the number of Councillors per group. Councillors should contact their Party Group Leader for consent to attend an external event (who should confirm that this can be booked to the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager). Any non-Political Group Councillor will receive a pro-rata’d allowance.

However, if the Council arranges for an external trainer to provide a general Councillor Group event then this will be taken from the overall budget and the Political Group budgets or individual independent Councillor amount shall be reduced accordingly.

**New Councillor Welcome Pack**

Upon election, each Councillor is provided with a New Councillor Pack which includes the necessary forms for completion, details of senior management and their areas of responsibility, Councillor role descriptions, guidelines for using social media, reference to other essential documents i.e. the Constitution.

Councillors will be able to access the Mod.gov library facility for any updates to this pack during their term of office.

**Electronic Communication**

As of the 2019 Civic Year the Council is conducting paperless meeting. Every Councillor is provided with a tablet device which can access the intranet, Mod.Gov and email, which enables Councillors to support the reduction in use of paper and quick access to important information.

**Review:**

This Protocol shall be reviewed annually.

**Useful Contacts:**

Committee, Councillor and Scrutiny Manager: 01462 474353

Learning and Development: 01462 474619

IT helpdesk: 01462 474444

1. As per the NHDC Councillor’s Code of Conduct 3.7(e) and footnote – see Section 17 of the Constitution [↑](#footnote-ref-1)