

Report of:	Meeting	Date
Councillor Michael Vincent, Leader of the Council, and Clare James, Corporate Director Resources	Council	20 April 2023

Councillor Development Strategy 2023/27 and Councillor Development Programme 2023/27

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek approval of the proposed Councillor Development Strategy for 2023/27 at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 To seek approval of the proposed Councillor Development Programme for 2023/27 at Appendix 2.

2. Outcomes

- 2.1 Councillors who are equipped with the competencies they need to carry out their various roles as an elected member effectively and confidently.
- 2.2 The council's positive and proactive approach to councillor development will be maintained.
- 2.3 A continuing process to identify on a regular basis the individual and collective development requirements of councillors.
- 2.4 A flexible system which ensures that opportunities for development are made available to fully support and satisfy the needs identified and to provide timely briefings in the event of any changes in legislation or processes.
- 2.5 The council will undergo reassessment of its North West Employers Member Development Charter status, in order to continue to meet and exceed the requirements of the Charter Level 1 and 2.
- 2.6 Training and development opportunities will be available for all councillors irrespective of age, gender, sexuality, marital status, disability, race,

religion, ethnic background or political affiliation. Should any adjustments need to be made following the elections in May 2023, these will be made on a case by case basis.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1** That the proposed Strategy for 2023/27 be approved and the relevant Director continue to make appropriate arrangements for the provision of development opportunities for all councillors within the agreed budget.
- 3.2** That the proposed Programme for 2023/27 be approved and that the four stages of development as set out within the Programme be endorsed as credible expected “career pattern”.
- 3.3** That the leaders of each political group continue to allocate a suitable number of senior councillors of their group to act as mentors to newly elected councillors as described on pages 11-12 of the Programme.
- 3.4** That the Strengths and Development Record (SDR) questionnaire (pages 35-40 of the Programme) be approved.
- 3.5** That, to ensure that development opportunities are relevant and available to all councillors, the political group leaders actively encourage all elected members within their group to participate fully in completion of the Strengths and Development Record questionnaires as outlined on pages (35-40) of the Programme and review their SDR annually. They are also asked to allocate a sufficient number of senior councillors from their group to act as mentors to newly elected councillors.
- 3.6** That responsibility for making appropriate arrangements for ongoing training and development opportunities for councillors using the collated development needs identified through completion of the SDRs remain with the relevant Director and that Democratic Services make appropriate arrangements for the provision of development opportunities for all councillors within the agreed budget.
- 3.7** That the “four stages of development”, originally set out in the 2019/23 Programme (see Pages 6 and 15-27) and the updated Wyre Councillor Skills Framework included as Appendix to the Programme be noted and endorsed.
- 3.8** That the updated criteria agreed by the Councillor Development Group (CDG) for attendance at external training and other events on page 8 of the Programme be approved.
- 3.9** That the new requirement under the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy’s (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code (Revised December 2021) to maintain a Knowledge and Skills record for elected Members in relation to this subject is undertaken by Democratic Services in consultation with the Corporate Director of Resources.

4. Background

4.1 Adoption of the North West Charter for Elected Member Development

4.1.1 In recognition that training and development was essential to enable councillors to contribute effectively, the council signed up to the principles of the North West Charter for Elected Member Development back in 2000 and we have continued to follow these principles to date. In 2008, the council achieved the necessary standards for the award of the Charter and in 2010, it received Charter Level 2 (Exemplar) Status.

4.1.2 Following updates to the process of assessment for the North West Charter for Elected Member Development Level 1 and 2, the council has put itself forward for reassessment.

4.2 Wyre's vision

4.2.1 Wyre has appointed one of the Democratic Services Officers as the responsible officer for Councillor Development. In consultation with the cross-party Councillor Development Group, they have developed and kept refreshed a Programme specifically tailored to Wyre, the latest version of which was agreed at their meeting on 12 December 2022. The Programme includes:

- **Strengths and Development Records** – these questionnaires are used to assess individual and collective training needs and help determine suitable development events for councillors.
- **Equality of Opportunity** with information about which courses councillors may attend and where restrictions may apply.
- **“Four stages of development”** - the crucial stages of a councillor's “career path” following their initial election:
 1. basics – for the newly elected councillor
 2. competence – councillors who have the essential knowledge and skills
 3. accomplishment – the experienced councillor
 4. grandmaster – the very advanced councillor
- **Mentoring**, in which the political group leaders allocate a suitable number of senior councillors from their group to act as mentors to newly elected councillors.
- **Wyre Councillor Skills Framework**, setting out the numerous skills that councillors need to carry out all the different roles within the council, including community leadership, scrutiny,

communication skills, etc.

- **Materials, Resources and Contacts** including the Councillor Portal, Members' Library and e-learning, virtual and distance learning opportunities for councillors.

4.3 Councillor Portal

- 4.3.1** In early 2022, the Democratic Services team launched the Councillor Portal for a 12 month pilot. The Portal is hosted on Microsoft SharePoint and mirrors the Wyre Staff version called the Wyre Hub. The Councillor Portal can be accessed by councillors through the SharePoint app on their councillor devices.
- 4.3.2** The Councillor Portal is a central hub site which can be viewed by all Wyre Councillors. It contains all the information for councillors to fulfil their roles. This information includes useful documents such as the calendar of meetings, civic centre floor plan and ICT help. It also includes notification of latest news and meetings, links to the council directory, a member training page with PowerPoints and recordings of past training sessions.
- 4.3.3** The Democratic Services team in October 2022 held a training session for all members which included an updated tutorial of how to access the portal, how to find useful items and how to use the Council Directory. Throughout the 12 month pilot Democratic Services collected feedback from members about the Portal and have continued to improve the service. For example, there are now a variety of forms that councillors need to have access to and may need to submit to Democratic Services that have been created as electronic forms which are accessible on the Councillor Portal. These include travel claim forms, register of interest forms and gifts and hospitality forms.
- 4.3.4** Following the successful pilot, it is intended that the Councillor Portal play a key part in the induction of the new councillor intake for 2023 to 2027.

4.4 Members' Library

- 4.4.1** There are a number of books and open learning materials available in the Members' Library.
- 4.4.2** Any councillor is welcome to borrow items from the Library providing that they inform a member of the Democratic Services team when they do so.

4.5 Other e-learning and distance learning materials

- 4.5.1** Any councillor e-learning and distance learning opportunities will be kept under review by the Democratic Services Officer and any new options

that become available will be brought to the attention of councillors and the Councillor Development Group.

- 4.5.2 The Local Government Association (LGA) has produced a series of distance learning materials covering a number of topics, in the form of workbooks and e-learning modules and these are available free of charge. Both resources are aimed at all councillors and will be particularly useful to new councillors.
- 4.5.3 The LGA now has a dedicated e-learning platform to assist councillors with their development. To receive access to the site for the first time, councillors can simply email elarning@local.gov.uk to receive a user name and password and will then be able to access the site.
- 4.5.4 The council is also a member of the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU). To receive information briefings and/or the Daily News, local government news email, councillors simply need to register on the LGIU website <https://lgiu.org/sign-up/> and set their preferences.

5. Key issues and proposals

- 5.1 The Democratic Services Officer responsible for councillor development, in consultation with other council officers, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for councillor development and the cross-party Councillor Development Group will continue to monitor the provision of development opportunities to councillors.
- 5.2 The Democratic Services Officer will continue to research and identify best practice and implement any innovations and improvements as appropriate. They will be involved in the ongoing prioritisation of training and development activities and sessions and will agree any changes that might be necessary to the Strategy and Programme for subsequent years in the period covered by the Strategy and Programme.
- 5.3 Any councillor development requirements identified in respect of the issues listed under risks/implications below will continue to be met as appropriate.
- 5.4 The proposals in this report comply with the principles advocated in the Charter for Elected Member Development and will ensure that the council will be able to achieve the standards commensurate with the Charter.

Financial and legal implications	
Finance	An annual councillor development budget of £7,530 has been allocated. Training and development facilitators will be chosen from a variety of sources as appropriate. This will include in-house training and briefing sessions, cost-sharing with neighbouring authorities as well as external

	<p>providers. It is intended that all costs will be met from the overall training budget and it is not envisaged that costs will exceed the budget provided. Should essential training be required that incur any costs over and above the budget allocated, these will have to be met from savings to be identified elsewhere.</p> <p>Any such issues will be fed into the process for the formulation of future budgets.</p>
Legal	The provision of effective training will minimise the risk of illegal or ill-considered decision making. In particular, the Code of Conduct training provided to all councillors is mandatory.

Other risks/implications: checklist

If there are significant implications arising from this report on any issues marked with a ✓ below, the report author will have consulted with the appropriate specialist officers on those implications and addressed them in the body of the report. There are no significant implications arising directly from this report, for those issues marked with a x.

risks/implications	✓ / x	risks/implications	✓ / x
community safety	x	asset management	x
equality and diversity	✓	climate change	x
sustainability	x	ICT	✓
health and safety	x	data protection	x

Processing Personal Data

In addition to considering data protection along with the other risks/ implications, the report author will need to decide if a 'privacy impact assessment (PIA)' is also required. If the decision(s) recommended in this report will result in the collection and processing of personal data for the first time (i.e. purchase of a new system, a new working arrangement with a third party) a PIA will need to have been completed and signed off by Data Protection Officer before the decision is taken in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

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List of background papers:

name of document	date	where available for inspection
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None		
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List of appendices

Appendix 1 – Councillor Development Strategy 2023/27
Appendix 2 – Councillor Development Programme 2023/27

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