



LEARNING

TO BUILD

EXCELLENCE

IN WYRE

2019 TO 2023

Councillor Development Strategy 2019/23

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Councillor Development Strategy 2019/23



Council values

1. The purpose: why we have a Strategy

The Strategy sets out our objectives for councillor learning and development and how we intend to achieve those objectives. This updated Strategy refreshes and reiterates our commitment. The council first adopted a strategy in 2003 at the same time that we signed up to the principles of the North West Charter for Elected Member Development. The Charter laid the foundation on which we have been building ever since to support and develop our councillors.

Wyre achieved and has maintained the requirements of the Charter and has gone on to be awarded Charter Level 2 - the Exemplar standard for Elected Member Development - an accolade that has been given to only a handful of councils.

We have continued to update the Strategy to ensure that the council continues to maintain the exceptionally high standard of councillor development opportunities consistent with Level 2 of the Charter. This latest 2019 update of the Strategy shows that our commitment to learning to build excellence remains undiminished.

The adoption of a newly refreshed Strategy in 2019 founded upon **Learning to Build Excellence in Wyre** will continue to build upon the foundation of Wyre's previous mission statement of **Learning to Develop Excellence in our Councillors**.

2. Our vision and aims: “learning to build excellence” for all

Equality of opportunity and access to learning and development opportunities for all our councillors is central to our philosophy. This means that appropriate opportunities will be made available to all councillors irrespective of their political allegiance or independence, age, gender, sexuality, marital status, disability, race, nationality, religious belief, ethnic background, etc.

Our goal is to build excellence for all and ensure that all councillors can improve themselves and perform to the highest possible standard.

As well as opportunities for elected councillors, we may sometimes provide training sessions and briefings for candidates in the run up to a local election. When this happens, all candidates will be informed of the event to ensure that independent candidates have the opportunity to attend the sessions in the same way as the candidates of all political parties.

Councillors will have differing needs and the identification of those needs will continue to take place in an atmosphere of confidentiality. All councillors are thus able to freely inform us of any areas in which they would like to improve their skills and knowledge.

The Strategy aims to provide a framework for a training and development programme that continues to be innovative and for identifying and appropriating best practice. This is to make certain that we are aware of the finest examples of training and development for councillors in other councils nationally and internationally. This will ensure that we have:

- skilled councillors who are highly motivated in their roles
- an undeviating ambition towards excellence in councillor development
- opportunities that will build excellence in all our elected members
- councillors who are confident and well-equipped to carry out their roles effectively.

3. Our objectives

Councillor learning and development events will be provided on an ongoing basis as part of the Councillor Development Programme, which reflects the values and principles set out in the Council's Business Plan and will equip members with the skills and knowledge necessary to deliver high quality and best value services to residents.

The council encourages a corporate culture in which continuous councillor development is recognised as vital to the council's success and has appointed a Councillor Development Officer (CDO) to coordinate councillor development. Full Council has established a cross party Councillor Development Group (CDG) to maintain a member forum that ensures that the ongoing development programme remains councillor-led with professional advice provided by the councillor development officer.

The CDG, in conjunction with the CDO will ensure that the following objectives are met:

- The Wyre Councillor Skills Framework setting out the roles and responsibilities of specific councillor positions will be maintained and updated and remain relevant.
- All councillors' skills and knowledge will be developed to a level that is fully appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.
- Councillors will be given all the development support that they need to fulfil their executive, scrutiny, regulatory and other committee roles and their roles as community representatives and Cabinet support as appropriate.
- All councillors irrespective of seniority, number of years' service as a councillor or political affiliation will be encouraged to take advantage of learning and development opportunities.
- Councillors will take personal responsibility to ensure their continuous professional personal development and to develop their knowledge and skills as a councillor.
- A range of development activities will be delivered.
- Continuous improvements will be made to the new councillors' induction process.
- Political groups will ensure that mentoring from experienced councillors is available to newer councillors within their groups.
- External mentoring opportunities will be sought as appropriate.
- Regular in-house training events will be provided as will opportunities to attend external events where appropriate and affordable.
- The learning and development programme will contain sufficient flexibility to ensure that it covers current requirements and can respond to new issues as they arise.

4. Our priorities

Wyre Council recognises that councillors have a crucial role in improving services and identifying and delivering better value for money. To achieve this, elected members must have the necessary skills and knowledge to take crucial decisions that affect the lives and well-being of the residents of Wyre, the private and other employers who are based in Wyre and the visitors to Wyre.

Newly elected councillors will continue to be provided with a full programme of induction training, including a mandatory briefing on the council's Code of Conduct.

Members of the regulatory bodies of the council whether new to the committees or experience, will be required to attend appropriate training sessions or otherwise demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge in order to participate in hearings, inquiries or decisions that will affect the rights of any individual.

A thorough review of development needs will be undertaken in the months following the May 2019 election to assess the training and development requirements of the new intake of councillors and those re-elected.

The CDO will identify councillors' individual development requirements through completion of a Strengths and Development Record 2019 questionnaire which will be reviewed regularly.

Overall training and development priorities for members will be identified following the completion of the Strengths and Development Record 2019 process.

Learning and development opportunities will be provided in line with the priorities identified during the process and within the resources available.

All elected members will be expected to review their individual Strengths and Development Record regularly to promote a lifelong learning culture throughout the council.

Regular advice and information about learning opportunities will continue to be available to councillors from the CDO, the CDG, the weekly email Bulletin Board, mail outs, posters and email.

Councillors will be provided with support in the use of IT systems will ensure that councillors have access to all necessary information, are able to participate in paperless meetings and can communicate effectively using electronic media in line with developing technology.

5. Implementing the Strategy

Individual Councillors

Attendance at the majority of learning and development events will be entirely voluntary with the exception of Code of Conduct training or other training that may become necessary and that provided for Regulatory bodies of the council. Each individual councillor will be expected to take personal responsibility for his or her own learning and self-development.

Compulsory training for Councillors on Regulatory Committees

As decisions could be subject to a legal challenge on the grounds that adequate training has not been provided or received, it is essential that Councillors are fully briefed and have

received any necessary training before conducting hearings and inquiries and/or making decisions of a regulatory or quasi-judicial nature.

Members appointed to any of the regulatory bodies listed below must be able to either demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge and/or attend the appropriate briefing and learning sessions provided before they may participate in any hearing, inquiry or decision that will affect the rights of an individual.

In that respect, the regulatory bodies of the council are the **Standards Committee, Planning Committee, Licensing Committee** and any **Appeals Panel** arranged to hear an appeal from an employee of the council under Stage 3 of the Grievance Procedure. It is no longer a requirement that membership of an Appeals Panel is confined to members of the Employment and Appeals Committee.

Councillor Development Group (CDG)

The CDG will represent the views of members in all aspects of development for councillors and will contribute to the preparation of councillor development strategies and programmes.

The CDG will support and encourage councillors in the identification of development needs and the take up of learning opportunities. Whenever conflicting demands arise involving the prioritisation and allocation of the training budget, the CDG or, if no meeting can be held within any necessary timescales, the Chairman of the CDG, will be consulted.

The CDG will meet quarterly or more often if required to monitor and evaluate the quality, implementation and take-up of councillor development activities.

Democratic Services Team

The CDO along with other members of the Democratic Services team will support councillor learning and development by:

- co-ordinating development opportunities for councillors
- ensuring that all councillors are made aware of learning and development opportunities
- devising and delivering in consultation with the CDG, a programme of induction training for new councillors
- identifying and assessing needs through Strengths and Development Records,
- devising a comprehensive learning and development programme for councillors, based on needs identified in Strengths and Development Records and other essential requirements

Mentors

The council encourages experienced councillors to share their expertise with new members or those taking up new roles and responsibilities whatever their political affiliation and encourages councillors to take advantage of any mentoring arrangements offered by others both inside and outside the council (for example an experienced chairman in another authority may be willing to mentor a new chairman in Wyre). Where possible, mentoring will be provided to individual councillors within political groups by their peers.

6. Council values

Working Collaboratively

Wherever possible, the CDO will work in partnership with neighbouring and other local authorities and other relevant organisations to share best practice and share the cost of councillor development.

The CDO will regularly attend meetings of the North West Councillor Development Network which are held every 3-4 months. Interested councillors are also welcome to attend these meetings and should contact the CDO for advice on meeting dates and to arrange travel to the meetings, which are hosted by different authorities each time.

One Team... One Council...

Wyre Council aims to ensure that all our councillors are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to fulfil their important and often complex role in representing the wider community, influencing council policy and working together with council officers to achieve shared goals.

The Councillor Development Programme is integral to and supports the Strategy and ensures that all councillors have the opportunities they need to develop the skills to fulfil their roles. We are committed to continuous improvement, innovation and best value and want to encourage councillors and council employees to develop themselves to their full potential.

Although no formal qualifications are required to become a councillor, the employees of Wyre council are ultimately employed by those councillors. Councillors have responsibility for decisions on how the council budgets will be spent. Those decisions have major impacts on many thousands of residents, companies based in the borough and visitors to the area.

The council recognises that our elected members must be given every opportunity to acquire the necessary skills to help them provide the best possible services for the people of Wyre. It is essential that we continue to support and develop our councillors and, where possible, retain those councillors who have taken advantage of the development opportunities offered.

Technology and legislation continues to change at a rapid pace and continuous development is vital and we must do everything in our power to ensure that councillors and officers update their knowledge and learn the new skills that they will need to enable them to play an effective role in local government in the 21st century.

Work Smart

An ongoing annual budget of £6,000 has been allocated for councillor development for 2019/23. The CDO will manage the allocation of funds in consultation with the CDG if necessary. It is envisaged that wherever possible the majority of training sessions will be provided in house.

Wyre Council recognises the need for a value for money approach to councillor development and will endeavour to use the most suitable and best value facilitators for learning sessions. Facilitators will be chosen from a variety of sources. Wherever possible we will use any officers who can provide in-house expertise and cost-sharing with neighbouring authorities.

Some sessions will require outside providers to share their expertise and the best possible providers will be procured within the budget available.

The council recognises that individuals learn in very different ways and that some councillors' development needs may be better served through open learning methods such as books, DVDs, the Internet and e-Learning. Attendance at briefings and courses will not suit everyone.

Where appropriate the CDO may also offer places on in-house courses to councillors from other authorities on a reciprocal basis.

The CDO will maintain a database of suitable training providers and, where possible, procure any appropriate literature required for the members' library.

7. Delivery: measuring success and monitoring progress



It is clear that maintaining a skilled and well-informed body of elected members will continue to benefit Wyre for years to come. To achieve this, the assessment of needs and the meeting of the development needs that are identified, will be implemented through a supportive, flexible and multi-option approach.

Short term measures of success will include

- high levels of councillor attendance at learning events,
- councillor feedback that the available resources are suitable,
- councillor feedback that individual events are a useful and rewarding experience.

In the medium term, where needs have been identified, improvements in councillors' skills and knowledge should be evident whenever annual reviews of Strengths and Development Records take place.

The long term intent of this Strategy is to continue to bring improvements in services and value for money for the residents of Wyre. We are confident that such improvements will have been achieved with the help of increased knowledge and skills of our councillors.

The CDG has been consulted in developing and delivering this Strategy and will be involved in reviewing the Councillor Development Strategy and Programme and determining priorities for future years.