



South West Charter for Elected Member Development

Name of Council:	Devon County Council
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Description

- A Member Development Strategy was approved by group leaders and adopted by all Members at Full Council.
- The declaration of commitment to achieving the SW Charter for Member Development was signed by the Chief Executive and all group leaders in February 2008.
- A cross party Member Development Steering Group was set up with representatives nominated from each of the County Committees and chaired by the Executive Member with responsibility for Member Development.
- The Devon Members' Skills framework was developed and adopted by the Member Development Steering group to form part of the personal development discussions.
- One to one personal development interviews were carried out with Members in March 2008, with a 90% take up. A personal development plan was produced for each Member and this information was used to produce the Member Learning and Development Plan.
- Learning and development activities were delivered and evaluated in line with the plan. Learning and development needs continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis through a number of forums.
- Charter accreditation gained in December 2008.
- A full induction programme was planned, delivered and evaluated to support new and returning Members following the elections in June 2009. The programme addressed needs at corporate, committee and individual levels. One to one interviews were again offered to all Members as part of this process and a particular emphasis was placed on new Members and those returning to new roles.
- To embed learning in day to day business, consideration of requirements for additional skills and knowledge has become a standing item on the agendas for all overview and scrutiny meetings.
- Attendance at training sessions has been improved by developing a better system of communication and a booking system based around the outlook calendar.

Benefits

For the Council

- A structured approach has ensured that all Councillors are equipped with the skills they need to meet the requirements of their role and help to deliver the Council's Strategic Plan.
- As an organisation we are able to respond proactively to the constantly changing environment in which we operate. By providing Councillors with relevant skills and knowledge in a timely manner we are ensuring that we are well positioned to move forward.
- Delivery of learning has been carried out in a structured and cost effective way, supporting the organisation in achieving its goals.
- The skills framework has ensured that there is a common understanding of the role that Councillors play and the skills and knowledge which they require to perform this role. This has ensured that learning and development activities are focused and suitable.
- By building the process and engaging Members all the way through we have ensured that Member development plays a key role in all that we do, is embedded and part of the way we do business.

For the Councillors

- Individual Councillors feel valued and supported in performing their role. As a result of this individual approach, learning solutions are tailored to the needs of the individual and requirements are met in a way that best suits the learner.
- The Member led approach has ensured that all Members feel part of the process and it is very much designed to meet the needs and requirements of the user.
- By regularly reviewing learning needs both individually and through the committee structure we are able to offer learning opportunities to Members which are current and timely.

For the Local Community

- Members are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to effectively meet the needs of the community through their roles as community leaders. By reviewing the learning needs of Councillors within the committee process this assists in better, more informed decision making and improved delivery of services to the public.
- Direct links are made between the delivery of learning and the corporate aims. Through the evaluation process we are able to assess how effective learning is in supporting the meeting of this vision.
- By adopting a more structured approach, the learning needs of Members are met from the day they are elected to the end of their term in a cost effective way ensuring that we use our resources to gain maximum impact.

Photos and Quotes

Heather Barnes – Deputy Chief Executive

As a result of the initiatives we have put in place, Devon County Council is able to provide all Councillors with support and training tailored to their needs. This has ensured that they are better equipped to meet their community leadership role for the people of Devon. The SW Charter has given us a helpful framework to ensure a co-ordinated approach and to mirror the learning culture which exists across the organisation in the political arena.



Councillor Andrew Leadbetter – Chair Member Development Steering Group

I am very proud of what we have achieved so far, but this is only the first step on a journey of learning. This has provided Councillors with an excellent opportunity to gain more skills to serve their electorate and contribute to the work of the Council.



The role of a Councillor demands of them that they make significant decisions on behalf of the community and it is important that they are provided with the skills and knowledge to meet this challenge. We will continue to work to build capacity and ensure that Members are provided with the learning opportunities they need to excel in their roles as community leaders.

Councillor Des Hannon – Liberal Democrat representative on Member Development Steering Group

Working towards Charter status has helped members get into the driving seat, setting the direction which our learning and development takes. Through the feedback we get we're able to build on the good practice we've put in place and create a really robust and embedded Member Development programme.



Councillor Richard Westlake – Labour representative on Member Development Steering Group

Through the work of the Member Development Steering group we are able to ensure that Members are provided with the key skills and knowledge they require from the moment they decide to stand for election to the end of their term in office. This Member led process has allowed consideration to be given to the ever changing learning needs of Members.



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