

Councillor Development Strategy

2024



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Introduction

Life as a Councillor is very different to the outside world. Whilst experience and knowledge gained in other fields can prove useful, the skills required to be an effective Councillor can be very different.

That's why the opportunity to benefit from specialist training is so valuable and I would encourage all Councillors to think about how they could enhance their knowledge and abilities and commit to this.

Councillor Virginia Moran

Chairman of the Councillor Development Working Group



Councillors carry out critical roles on behalf of the communities they represent across South Kesteven, whether that be in their capacity as community leaders, scrutineers and decision-makers or in undertaking a range of other strategic and regulatory functions. It is therefore essential that they are provided with the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills to continue fulfilling their duties to the highest possible level.

This Councillor Development Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to delivering continuous development and training which is accessible to all 56 elected members and is focused around their needs, whether that be in relation to their current role or future aspirations on the Council. As Chief Executive, I believe that investment in the training and development of Councillors will greatly contribute towards the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities and their wider community leadership role.

Karen Bradford

Chief Executive



Aims and Purpose of the Councillor Development Strategy

South Kesteven District Council held its all-out elections on 4 May 2023 whereby all 56 seats on the Council were up for election. Of those 56 seats, 22 new Councillors were elected, resulting in a change in administration on the Council. A new Leader of the Council has been elected, resulting in a new Cabinet for the authority consisting of representatives from several political groups.

A comprehensive induction programme for newly elected and re-elected Councillors was delivered from May until September 2023, providing the necessary information, guidance and support to ensure that all Councillors were able to act in their capacity as elected Members.

The Councillor Development Strategy sets out South Kesteven District Council's continued commitment to supporting its elected Members in the roles they undertake, ensuring that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to fulfil their respective duties and responsibilities.

A key component of the Strategy is identifying how the development and training needs of Councillors are identified, the options available to Councillors for undertaking and engaging in continuous learning and development, how this is monitored and evaluated and, importantly, how this is fed back into the wider Council.

To ensure that the Strategy supports the effective delivery of the Council's corporate objectives, all training and development activities for Elected Members will be themed in order that they can demonstrate a contribution to the following priorities as outlined in the Council's Corporate Plan:

Connecting Communities – to enhance the strength, wellbeing, security and capacity of all our communities for a thriving and cohesive society that all our residents are proud to belong to.

Sustainable South Kesteven – to meet the challenge of climate change and ensure a clean, green and healthy natural and built environment for present and future generations.

Enabling Economic Opportunity – To enable and support a dynamic, resilient and growing local economy, which benefits all our communities.

Housing – To ensure that all residents can access housing which is safe, good quality, sustainable and suitable for their needs and future generations.

Effective Council – To deliver trusted, high quality and value-for-money services that fulfil the needs and expectations of all our residents.

A specific ambition of the Corporate Plan under the Effective Council priority is to achieve accredited Councillor Development Charter Status, which will be a key focus of the Strategy.

The Strategy will also reflect and promote the #TeamSK Values of the Council which are: Trust, Empowerment, Accountability. Making a difference, Supportive to all, Kindness

The Strategy will underpin the integral role Councillors play in supporting the Council deliver these aspirations.

Commitment to development and training

The Strategy recognises the importance of Councillor development and the continual improvement of the Council's Elected Members. This is demonstrated by a commitment to ensure appropriate training is in place to support Councillors in their various roles, which includes:

The following mandatory training for all Councillors:

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- PREVENT
- Safeguarding
- Mandatory training for those Members of the Governance and Audit Committee, Licensing Committee, Planning Committee and Standards Committee
- The provision of corporate and procedural development and training opportunities for all Councillors to assist in their ability to undertake their day-to-day functions as a Councillor, as well as effectively participate in the Council's decision-making processes

- The provision of training to support other 'special responsibilities' held by individual Councillors, such as the Leader of the Council, Chairman of the Council, Chairmen of Committees and Cabinet Members, for example
- The provision of briefings and workshops on specific topics pertinent to upcoming decisions or matters of local, regional or national interest potentially impacting the Council

In order to support this further, development and training sessions are offered in a variety of forms, including in-person, remotely, hybrid and through e-learning, as well as at differing times of the day and evening to cater for those with other external commitments.

The Strategy embraces opportunities for networking locally, regionally and nationally, which can facilitate the sharing of good practice, identifying challenges for the sector and anticipating future needs, risks and priorities.



"I believe that it is particularly important, not to say critical, that SKDC actively develops the programme of continuous development for Members so that the Administration, Cabinet and Members undertaking their various duties are all fresh in their roles. This is particularly important when you consider the significant number of Councillors who were newly elected in the May 2023 local elections"

Councillor Philip Knowles - Cabinet Member for Governance and Licensing

Mechanisms to drive, review and deliver the development of Councillors

A cross-party Councillor Development Group has been established to co-ordinate and oversee the authority's Councillor Development Strategy, Councillor Development Programme and associated budget and performance. The terms of reference of this Group are attached at Appendix A.

Members of the Councillor Development Group are as follows:

Councillor Ashley Baxter – Leader of the Council

Councillor Philip Knowles – Cabinet Member responsible for Member Development and Training

Councillor Graham Jeal – Leader of the Opposition

Councillor Richard Cleaver – Deputy Leader of the Democratic Independent Group

Councillor Tim Harrison – Leader of the Grantham Independents

Councillor Vanessa Smith – Leader of the Green Party Group

Councillor Virginia Moran – Leader of the Independent Group

Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing – Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Councillor Lee Steptoe – Leader of the Labour and Co-operative Group

Councillor Virginia Moran has been appointed as Chairman of the Councillor Development Group.

In addition, the following Officers have been designated as key in supporting the successful delivery of the Councillor Development Strategy:

Karen Bradford, Chief Executive
Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Samantha Selby, Member Support Officer

The Councillor Development Group has a key role in shaping and approving the Member Development Programme of the Council.

A comprehensive induction programme is provided to all newly elected or re-elected Councillors following all-out District Council elections or any by-elections held through a municipal year.

Training and development needs are identified in a number of ways, as follows:

- Requests by specific bodies or committees
- Requests by Political Group Leaders
- Requests by individual Councillors
- Councillor Personal Development Plans
- Suggestions or recommendations by the Councillor Development Group
- Suggestions or recommendations by Officers
- Suggestions or recommendations by professional associations
- Legislation, Regulation or guidance

Requests for training and development are considered, evaluated and prioritised by Officers in conjunction with the Councillor Development Group, based upon the following criteria:

- Impact on deliverability of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities
- Timeliness
- Proportionality and relevance to role
- Budgetary implications and value for money

Personal Development Plans for Councillors are an essential way of

offering individuals the opportunity to reflect on where there may be gaps in their knowledge or skills pertinent to their role, as well as identify what development may be required to achieve a more senior role on the Council. They represent a structured process for reviewing their individual needs, conducted by Political Group Leaders with the support of Officers, if necessary. A copy of the Council's Personal Development Plan template for Councillors is attached at Appendix B.

The Council is committed to inclusivity and acknowledges the commitments its Elected Members have outside of their roles as Councillors. Development and training sessions, where possible, are offered in person, remotely or as a hybrid at different times of the day or evening to ensure that everyone has the ability and opportunity to engage and participate. Development and training sessions can also take the following forms:

- Internally or externally facilitated formal training (in-person, remotely or hybrid)
- Internally or externally facilitated briefings on emerging topics (in-person, remotely or hybrid)
- E-learning courses
- Case studies and examples of best practice

- Attendance at conferences, seminars or workshops
- Personal development planning discussions
- Peer to peer learning, both internally and externally with key stakeholders
- Mentoring

All development and training sessions will include a scope to identify clear objectives, how they relate to delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and their relevance to those Councillors who have been invited to attend.

The Councillor Development Programme, incorporating the above styles of facilitation, can accommodate changing needs in the event of unprecedented circumstances, challenging times or disruption to 'business as usual'.

All Councillor development sessions will be followed up with an evaluation form which all participants will be asked to complete and return to the Member Support Officer. These will be collated, evaluated and reviewed by the Councillor Development Group on a regular basis to ensure that all feedback is considered and shared to inform how future sessions are delivered. This will include sharing feedback with external facilitators and other key stakeholders.



"I have found the Members' training and development sessions that have been run by SKDC incredibly informative and this has enabled me to better fulfil my role as an effective councillor. Aside from the general duties of this elected position, training has allowed me to take on more specific roles. For example, without the education provided I would not have had sufficient understanding to have been a member of the Planning Committee. Ongoing training helps Members stay up to date on topics essential to the role of District Councillor."

Councillor Vanessa Smith - Leader of the Green Party Group

MEMBERS' LOUNGE

Councillor Development offer

The Councillor Development Strategy provides all elected Members of South Kesteven District Council with the opportunity to develop in their current roles or support them in their aspiration to hold other roles on the authority.

Role descriptions, attached at Appendix C, have been developed which assist in identifying the experience, knowledge and skills that may be required for key positions on the Council:

- Leader of the Council
- Cabinet Member
- Chairman of the Council
- Chairman of a Committee
- Ward Councillor

Support for Councillors is available at every stage of their term of office and the Personal Development Plan process is an effective way to reflect upon what development opportunities could be undertaken to support them in their current role or prepare them for any position they may seek to take up in the future.



"Training is an important part of being a local elected representative – staying on top of changing policies, procedures and legislation. It is important that this is delivered in a manner that doesn't pose too much of a burden on already overworked staff and in a manner that builds upon the skills and experiences of members to allow them to do their jobs to the best of their abilities."

Councillor Graham Jeal - Leader of the Opposition

Appendix A

Councillor Development Group

Terms of Reference

Purpose

South Kesteven District Council has established a cross-party Councillor Development Group to:

- Co-ordinate, develop and oversee implementation of the authority's Councillor Development Strategy
- Co-ordinate, develop and oversee implementation of the authority's annual Councillor Development Programme
- Review budget and performance associated with Councillor development activity

Membership

The membership of the Councillor Development Group is as follows:

- Leader of the Council
- Cabinet Member responsible for Member Development and Training
- Leader of the Opposition
- Leader or Deputy Leader of each of the Council's political groups

Political Group Leaders are entitled to nominate a permanent replacement to sit on the Councillor Development Group as their representative.

The Councillor Development Group will be supported by the following officers:

- Chief Executive
- Assistant Director (Governance and Public Protection) and Monitoring Officer

- Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
- Member Support Officer

Chairman/Vice-Chairman

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Councillor Development Group will be elected at its first meeting and at the commencement of each municipal year thereafter.

Substitutions

There will be no right of substitutions on the Councillor Development Working Group.

Attendance

All Members of the Council will be entitled to attend meetings of the Councillor Development Working Group and may contribute at the discretion of the person presiding the meeting.

Quorum

The quorum for the meeting will be three Councillors, including the Chairman or Vice-Chairman.

Frequency of meetings

The Working Group will meet at least quarterly but may meet more regularly as and when deemed necessary.

Appendix B

Councillor Personal Development Plan

Councillor Name	
Date first elected onto the Council	
Positions held on the Council	
Date of Assessment	

Future Ambitions as a District Councillor

What do you hope to achieve over the next year in your role as a Councillor?

Record of training and development undertaken in the last twelve months:

Title of training and development session	Key learning points

Title of training and development session	Key learning points

Assessment of Knowledge and Skills:

Taking into account the Councillor role descriptions included within the Councillor Development Strategy, this exercise helps you assess the skills and behaviours which may be necessary to help you be more effective in the roles. This may also identify areas where further development may be needed and assist in the development of an action plan if necessary. Please tick those boxes which apply:

Knowledge and skills	Fully competent	Further training is desirable my current or future role	Further training is essential for my current or future role	Not applicable
The Council's Services The services the Council provides, key officers or points of contact				
Strategic Leadership Your strategic role as a District Councillor in respect of developing, shaping and taking decisions on key policies and strategies of the Council				

Knowledge and skills	Fully competent	Further training is desirable my current or future role	Further training is essential for my current or future role	Not applicable
Community Leadership Your role in your local wards as community leaders				
Governance The Council's committee structure, decision-making processes and rules of procedure				
Partnership Working Your approach to and involvement in partnership or team working				
Analytical and Questioning Your ability to solve problems and utilise your analytical and questioning skills effectively				
Adaptability and Flexibility Your ability to demonstrate flexibility and adapt to circumstances beyond your control, as well as being open-minded to others' views				
Prioritisation and Time Management Your approach to being organised, having good time management and your ability to prioritise your time and workload				
Political Understanding Your understanding of the political environment within which you operate				
Use of Technology Your ability to use your laptop or tablet effectively, including access to emails and electronic agendas and reports via the Modern Gov App				
Chairmanship Your ability to effectively chair the Council's public meetings				
Leadership Your ability to demonstrate strong leadership skills amongst your peer group and on behalf of the Council				
Coaching and mentoring Your ability to coach, mentor and support fellow Councillors				

Appendix C

Councillor role descriptions

South Kesteven District Council's elected members have a number of key roles and duties.

Ward Councillor

All Councillors represent a ward in the district of South Kesteven and act as community leaders for the residents they serve. They are a point of contact for residents and conduit between communities and the Council, as well as contributing at formal meetings to represent the interests of their constituents.

In accordance with Article 2 of the Council's Constitution, all Councillors will:

- Collectively be the ultimate policy makers for the Council and carry out a number of strategic and corporate management functions
- Contribute to the good governance of the area and actively encourage community participation and public involvement in decision-making
- Effectively represent the interests of their ward and of individual residents
- Balance different interests identified within their ward and represent the ward as a whole
- Be involved in decision-making
- Be available to represent the Council on other bodies
- Maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics

In addition to their community-based role, ward Councillors (or back-bench Councillors) therefore also contribute to the work of the Council and may be involved in:

- The development of service-specific strategies or policies
- Overview and scrutiny of the Council's

- decision-makers and service delivery
- Regulatory matters such as the determination of licensing or planning applications
- Decision making generally, such as determining the Council's budget at the Annual Meeting of Full Council

The Local Government Association recognises the following useful skills which help Councillors carry out their role:

- Acting as a leader in their communities
- Demonstrating good communication skills
- Effective partnership and team working
- Being able to solve problems and demonstrate questioning and analytical skills
- Being flexible, adaptable and open-minded
- Being organised and having good time management
- Having political understanding
- South Kesteven District Council's elected members have a number of key roles and duties.

Leader of the Council

The Leader is appointed by Full Council, normally for a four-year term of office, as the principal political spokesperson for the authority.

Main responsibilities for the Leader of the Council will include:

- Overall responsibility for representing the Council's views to the public, media and other key stakeholders
- To represent the Council on matters of corporate and strategic policy to the Government, other authorities, agencies and organisations relevant to the Council's business
- Overall responsibility for the

development, implementation, monitoring and review of the corporate objectives, priorities and vision of the Council

- Overall political responsibility for effective corporate governance of the Council
- To provide strong community leadership
- Appoint and manage the Council's Cabinet, consisting of Cabinet Members responsible for portfolios relating to the Council's service areas, and agree the Cabinet scheme of delegation
- To preside over meetings of Cabinet
- To manage the Cabinet Forward Plan of decisions required to be taken throughout the year
- To represent Cabinet as appropriate at meetings of the Council
- To take decisions in accordance with the Council's scheme of delegation in the capacity of Leader of the Council
- To act in the absence of any Cabinet Member
- To act as a final arbiter between Cabinet portfolios
- Regular liaison and consultation with the Chief Executive, Corporate Management Team and senior officers
- Regular liaison with other political group leaders and Councillors in other key roles, such as Chairmen of committees
- Monitoring and managing the performance of individual Cabinet Members and Councillors in other key roles
- Attendance at external events representing the Council

The Leader of the Council may also be responsible for a portfolio of services as a Cabinet Member in addition to their role as Leader.

The following knowledge or skills would assist a Councillor acting in their capacity as Leader of the Council:

- Acting as a leader in their communities
- Demonstrating strong communication skills

- Effective partnership and team working
- Being able to solve problems and demonstrate questioning and analytical skills
- Being flexible, adaptable and open-minded
- Being organised and having good time management
- Having strong political understanding and acumen
- Demonstrating an understanding of local government strategy and policy and the relationship between national and local politics
- Having sound awareness and understanding of issues facing the Council
- Demonstrating an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Executive, Corporate Management Team and Senior Leadership Team
- Recognising skills amongst fellow Councillors in order to effectively appoint them or recommend their appointment to key roles
- Having strong negotiation skills
- Being able to effectively coach and mentor
- Effective presiding of meetings and setting of clear agendas and work programmes
- Being able to effectively prioritise
- Demonstrating knowledge of the Constitution, including rules of procedure and codes of practice

Cabinet Member

Each Cabinet Member will normally have special responsibility for the exercise of a portfolio of Cabinet functions, linked with service areas of the Council. The Leader of the Council appoints Cabinet Members and will determine which Cabinet Member is to be responsible for each portfolio. They are members of the Council's Cabinet and will therefore have a vote at meetings of Cabinet when it meets, which is usually once per month.

Main responsibilities for Cabinet Members will include:

- Overall responsibility for the services

- Taking decisions in accordance with the Council's scheme of delegation in relation to their portfolio
- Speaking or issuing statements relating to the services under their responsibility as part of their portfolio
- Contributing to the development, implementation, monitoring and review of the corporate objectives, priorities and vision of the Council
- Contributing to the effective corporate governance of the Council
- To provide strong community leadership
- To contribute to the development of the Cabinet Forward Plan of decisions required to be taken throughout the year
- To represent Cabinet as appropriate at meetings of the Council
- Regular liaison and consultation with senior officers for the services under their responsibility as part of their Portfolio
- Regular liaison with the Leader of the Council and other Cabinet Members
- Attendance at meetings of Cabinet
- Attendance at external events pertinent to the responsibilities of their portfolio
- Regular liaison with other Councillors in key roles, such as relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen

The following knowledge or skills would assist a Councillor acting in their capacity as a Cabinet Member:

- Acting as a leader in their communities
- Demonstrating strong communication skills
- Effective partnership and team working
- Being able to solve problems and demonstrate questioning and analytical skills
- Being flexible, adaptable and open-minded
- Being organised and having good time management
- Having strong political understanding and acumen
- Demonstrating an understanding of local government strategy and policy and the relationship between national and local politics

- Having sound awareness and understanding of issues facing the services under their responsibility
- Having strong negotiation skills
- Being able to effectively prioritise

Committee Chairman

The Council has a number of Committees in its structure with different functions and areas of responsibility as set out in Part 2 (Articles) or Part 4 (Rules of Procedure) of the Council's Constitution. These range from Overview and Scrutiny Committees, such as the Finance and Economic Overview and Scrutiny Committee, or Regulatory Committees such as the Planning Committee.

The Council appoints Chairmen of all Committees as part of its Annual Meeting. The main responsibilities of Chairmen of Committees are:

- Presiding meetings of the Committee and managing its business effectively
- Leading the development and implementation of the Committee's work programme
- Providing leadership and direction for the Committee
- Promoting the role of the Committee and encourage participation both internally and externally
- Speaking or issuing statements relating to the remit of the Committee, or business transacted by the Committee
- Representing the Committee at other bodies, such as presentation of decisions or recommendations agreed
- Representing the Council at external events pertinent to the remit of the Committee
- Regular liaison and consultation with senior officers in relation to matters under the remit of the Committee
- Regular liaison with the Leader of the Council and other Cabinet Members regarding the remit of the Committee
- Attendance at external events pertinent to the responsibilities of their portfolio

Effective chairing of meetings can:

- Provide for clear leadership and direction
- Ensure that debates are focused and balanced
- Enable decisions to be reached

The following knowledge or skills would assist a Councillor acting in their capacity as a Committee Chairman:

- Demonstrating strong communication skills
- Demonstrating strong listening skills and an ability to sum up other people's views
- Effective partnership and team working
- Being able to solve problems and demonstrate questioning and analytical skills
- Being flexible, adaptable and open-minded
- Being organised and having good time management
- Having strong political understanding and acumen
- Having strong negotiation skills
- Being able to effectively prioritise
- Demonstrating knowledge of the Constitution, including rules of procedure and codes of practice pertinent to the Committee
- Acting impartially

Chairman of the Council

The Chairman of the Council is elected by Full Council for a one-year term of office at its Annual Meeting.

The Chairman of the Council has two distinct roles, one being ceremonial and a symbol of the authority's open society and an expression of social cohesion, with the other being the formal presiding over meetings of Full Council.

Ceremonial duties can include attendance at royal visits, religious or cultural services, Remembrance Day, reviews of troops, civic banquets and functions, visits of

other civic heads, civic funerals, visits of consular officers or those of a similar nature, civic visits abroad and any other official engagements that may take place throughout the municipal year.

In terms of presiding over meetings of Full Council, the Chairman of the Council is required to:

- Uphold and promote the purposes of the Constitution and to interpret the Constitution when necessary
- Preside over meetings of Full Council so that its business can be carried out efficiently and with regard to the rights of Councillors and the interests of the community
- Ensure that the Full Council meeting is a forum for the debate of matters or concern to the local community in accordance with Council Procedure Rules
- Promote public involvement in the Council's activities
- Be the conscience of the Council

The following knowledge or skills would assist a Councillor acting in their capacity as Chairman of the Council:

- Demonstrating strong communication skills
- Demonstrating strong listening skills and an ability to sum up other people's views
- Effective partnership and team working
- Being able to solve problems and demonstrate questioning and analytical skills
- Being flexible, adaptable and open-minded
- Being organised and having good time management
- Having strong political understanding and acumen
- Having strong negotiation skills
- Being able to effectively prioritise
- Demonstrating knowledge of the Constitution and strong knowledge of Council Procedure Rules
- Acting impartially

Contact details

For further details relating to the Councillor Development Strategy or Councillor Development Programme, please email the Council's Member Services Officer at **Memberservices@southkesteven.gov.uk** or telephone (01476) 406430

**Alternative formats are available on request:
audio, large print and Braille**

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