12. MEMBERS LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Rushmoor Borough Council is committed to supporting local councillors in carrying out their roles as democratically elected representatives of the community and community leaders, and recognises the need to provide appropriate training, development and learning opportunities to help councillors undertake these roles.

1. **SCOPE AND PURPOSE**

1.1 This policy applies to all elected Members and supports the principles of the South East Charter for Member Development.

1.2 The purpose of this Policy is to set out the Council's commitment to provide appropriate learning and development opportunities for all councillors, to enable them to acquire the knowledge and skills required to be effective elected members across all their roles, and to provide a structured and planned approach to training activities.

1.3 The Council recognises that continuing investment and commitment to Members' learning and development is integral to achieving the Council's strategic objectives, the delivery of high-quality services and for the effective governance of the Council.

2. **OBJECTIVES OF ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT**

2.1 The key objectives of Members' training and development are to

- ensure councillors have the skills and expertise to carry out the role of councillor in an ever-changing environment and gain satisfaction from their work;
- support councillors to be effective in the delivery of the Council's priorities;
- assist individual progression and develop capacity;
- enable councillors to carry out their roles as ward representatives and as community leaders efficiently and effectively
- enable councillors to undertake specific duties and responsibilities
- keep Members up to date on new legislation and changing policies

3. **KEY PRINCIPLES**

Equality of Access and Opportunities

3.1 The Council recognises its responsibility to offer equality of access to learning and development for all elected members. In practice this means making sure that there are no physical, social, religious or cultural barriers to Members who want to participate in development opportunities, including those with family and work responsibilities, and using a range of methods to meet learning needs. Training and development will be delivered in a range of formats to ensure flexibility around access.

3.2 All Elected Members shall have the opportunity to benefit from learning and development opportunities regardless of their physical circumstances, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, age or religion.

3.3 Information about Members' Seminars and training events shall be published well in advance, and appropriately publicised.

Member-led Approach

3.4 The Council shall implement a Member-led approach to learning and development with representatives from all political groups invited to participate in the planning, delivery and evaluation of member development activities. Members shall be encouraged to identify their own development needs and participate fully in training and development events.

Community Engagement

3.5 Member Development opportunities shall include activities that promote community engagement, work/life balance and good citizenship.

Resources

3.6 The Council shall allocate a budget for elected Member development to cover priority needs linked to corporate, role specific and individual learning and development requirements, subject to finances and resources being available. This will be reviewed annually. Joint training activities with other authorities will be used where appropriate to reduce the costs of training to the authority.

3.7 Elected Member entitlements to travel and subsistence for attendance at learning and development events is stated in the Elected Members' Scheme of Allowances.

4 **PROCESSES FOR MANAGING ELECTED MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Summary

4.1 Member development will take place within a structured process. In line with best practice, the Council shall implement a cyclical four-stage approach to managing Members' learning and development activities comprising the following:-

- Identification of needs
- Planning activities
- Delivery of activities and opportunities
- Evaluation and monitoring of investment and benefits of learning and development

Identification of Needs

4.2 The identification and delivery of learning and development needs and priorities will be carried out at a number of levels; Individual, Role specific and Corporate.

(i)   **Individual**

- At least once a term, an individual training needs analysis questionnaire will be issued to each elected member.
- Newly elected Members will have an opportunity to discuss training and development needs as part of their induction, and often this will be facilitated through the mentoring arrangement with a member of the Executive Leadership Team.
- All Members will have the opportunity to discuss their training and development needs on a one to one basis.

(ii)   **Role Specific**

- The Council shall publish and maintain up to date Members' Roles Profiles to assist in identifying potential areas of training and development needs for councillors. Members whose role changes will have their training and development needs reviewed.

- The Council shall seek to deliver a learning and development programme, which is informed by councillors' three key roles:

  o Representing the interests of the ward
  o Policy making, committee and scrutiny role
  o Community leadership role

- Identification of learning and development needs at political group level will be achieved through the feedback from the Member Training Group representatives.

(iii)   **Corporate**

- Councillor training shall be linked to corporate priorities identified via the Council Business Plan, and by members of the Corporate Management Team.

Planning Members' Learning and Development Activities

4.3   The Council shall have a rolling programme of training and development events, which shall be updated regularly and circulated to all Members.

4.4   The cross-party Member Development Group shall have responsibility for the content of the programme.

Delivery of Activities

4.5   The Council shall seek to use a wide range of methods to provide elected Members with the knowledge, capabilities, opportunities, networks and experiences they need to fulfil their role as effectively as possible.

Evaluation

4.6 In order to evaluate satisfaction and value for money, the Council shall ensure that investment in learning and development is evaluated in terms of benefits and impacts, including evaluating value for money. The Council is committed to the continuous development of elected Members and shall make adjustments and improvements to development activities. Development resources, activities and processes will be regularly monitored by Members and officers to ensure effectiveness.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 Each individual Member is responsible for undertaking core training, identifying their training requirements and sharing knowledge and skills amongst other Members. The role of Political Group Leaders is to provide support and encouragement to councillors to attend Members Seminars and to ensure their members' training needs on core competencies are met.

5.2 The role of the cross-party Member Development Group, appointed by the Cabinet, is to prepare and monitor the implementation of an action plan for achieving the Charter standard for Member Development and to examine Members' training needs, and to develop proposals for the rolling programme of learning and development events as appropriate. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Members' Learning and Development shall be invited to participate at all meetings.

5.3 The Corporate Management Team has a role to identify service specific training and development areas, and to anticipate new training needs arising from the areas identified for increased focus each year as part of the Council's annual review of its Business Plan.

5.4 The day-to-day management of appropriate Member Training and Development activities will be the responsibility of the Corporate Manager - Democracy, in consultation with the Member Development Group. A named officer shall be identified with responsibility for co-ordinating training.