

Councillor and Local
Democracy
Development Strategy
2018 –23

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Contents

1. Leader's Statement
2. Executive Summary
3. Introduction
4. Policy Statement
5. Operating Context
 - Councillors
 - Democracy
 - Charter Plus
6. Resources: Budget, Income, Staff, Partners, Contracts.
7. Methods: Assessing Needs, Delivery
8. Work Areas
9. Performance

Appendices **(to follow)**

1. *Councillor Development Plan*
2. *Councillor Development Programme*
3. *Performance Measures*
4. *Councillor Role Profiles*
5. *"Charter" Requirements*

Leader's Statement (to draft)

- Transforming the Complex Organisation that is Council
- Developing Councillors to lead Organisation and represent Community
- Communicating and operating digitally
- Being the Best Councillors

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Executive Summary

Introduction

1. This Strategy is owned by the Councillor Development Steering Group on behalf of all Councillors.
2. It is an internal operational document that sets out the direction of Councillor and Democracy Development until 2023 when it will be refreshed to take into account the direction and needs of the newly elected Council. It aligns with the Corporate Plan, which is itself being refreshed in 2019.
 - The Strategy outlines the issues that the Council seeks to tackle and the resources available to do so across the Council: Councillor and Democracy Development are tasks for all of us.
 - It summarises our priorities, the methods we intend to use and our measures.
 - It shows the links to and contribution of Councillor and Democracy Development to the Council's Corporate Plan; leading the Council and representing the Community. It includes a set of measures to assess the effectiveness of the work of the team.
3. Its overall purpose is to develop skilled and knowledgeable Councillors who are capable and confident leaders and representatives of their communities.

Council Transformation

1. We have a **Moving Forward** programme focussed on Digitalisation, Aligning Public Services, Organisational Design and Commercialisation to ensure delivery of our Corporate Plan which itself has four priorities.
2. Councillor and Democracy Development are brought together in one strategy to ensure that we are better able to listen to and inform local people and that their voices are informed and confident in return.
3. Our initial focus is on Councillor Development. Better Councillors will be better decision makers as well as better listeners, able to use resources more effectively to achieve clearer goals, making successful Council Transformation more achievable.
4. We aim to rely increasingly on e-Learning and other digital packages to enable Councillors to train at a time and place that suits them.
5. We will pay closer attention to Democracy Development after the new Council is elected in 2019.

Councillor Development

1. We aim to enable Councillors to be confident that they have the skills and knowledge to be effective.

2. The Council expects that all its members will identify and address their development needs on a day to day basis and as part of the greater Development Needs Analysis.
3. This means new learning as well as maintaining existing skills and knowledge throughout their term from attending prospective councillor events through induction and during their period of office.
4. The Councillor Development Steering Group will ensure that wider organisational needs are identified. This will then be used to create a costed Development Programme that in turn will form the basis for budget setting and commissioning.

Democracy Development

1. The Strategy focusses on offering Councillors the skills development and subject knowledge needed to be advocates for their communities. We will also continue to work with local schools and ensure prospective candidates for election have access to the information they need.
2. In all areas we will utilise and develop digital methods of communication. We will work with County and Parish Councils because they are the other local democratic organisations.
3. We will be active across the district with community groups including our status as a housing stock retaining Council, to deliver under Priority 2 of the Council's Corporate Plan: *"To have pride in South Holland by supporting the district and residents to develop and thrive"*.

Operating Context

1. Our Charter accreditation has recently lapsed and we intend to use a re-application to boost our commitment to development. The Council is intent on focussing on delivering learning events that meet the needs of its members.
2. It recognises that it is halfway through the municipal cycle so capturing detailed development needs information is difficult. It will therefore offer a refreshed "core curriculum." This is based on the views of Councillor Development Steering Group, Cabinet members, Committee chairmen and individual councillors.
3. The Council recently undertook a LGA Peer Challenge. The report was considered by Council on 12 April 2017 and it informs this strategy in its emphasis on local leadership and engagement.

Performance Management

1. We have to know how well we are doing: in our use of resources, against our planned work, in improving what we do and in the eyes of local people, to ensure we contribute appropriately to meeting our Corporate Plan commitments.

2. We will look at our resources, our systems, their quality and our improvement and track that we continue to meet the accreditation requirements for Charter.

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Introduction

1. South Holland Council reaffirms its commitment to Councillor Development and will consider reapplying for Charter.
2. \The Council sees Councillor Development as a means of building capacity and resilience for its Moving Forward programme and to deliver its Corporate Plan. The Council will support its members in championing democracy in their local communities, serving the district as a whole and leading the Council. Councillors are decision makers, watchdogs, volunteers, caseworkers, sign-posters and campaigners.
3. The Council was previously Charter accredited but this lapsed in 2016. We aim to offer a robust and varied development programme that responds to individual and corporate priorities and needs. This will underpin any future Charter re-application.
4. Delivery of the Strategy is the responsibility of the Democratic Services team. Their work, which is overseen by the Councillor Development Steering Group, is captured in a Councillor Development Plan. It identifies work for the remaining Council term and the year of the new Council until December 2020.
5. The Strategy is in the context of the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-19, aligning to the election cycle and our 4 Priorities:
 - To develop safer, stronger, healthier and more independent communities while protecting the most vulnerable;
 - To have pride in South Holland by supporting the district and residents to develop and thrive;
 - To provide the right services, at the right time and in the right way;
 - To encourage the local economy to be vibrant with continued growth.
6. The 2016 Peer Challenge referenced a number of leadership and engagement issues while acknowledging the investment in elected member training and development.
7. The Councillor Development Steering Group will review the Strategy at the start of each new municipal cycle and the Development Plan each year to ensure they adapt to new issues and changes in resource. This will also ensure that both documents support our Transformation Programme of Digitalisation, Aligning Public Services, Commercialisation and Organisation Design.
8. The Strategy will continue to:
 - Encourage members of the community to stand and participate in elections;
 - Support, develop and retain Councillors;
 - Identify and address individual and organisational needs through an annual programme of training, events and campaigns;
 - Provide a range of training options to meet learning styles and lifestyle.

9. Commercialise our work where possible to generate income and improve our reputation.

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Policy Statement

1. Every councillor can access learning activities that will provide them with the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their duties effectively.
2. All individuals and communities have the right to be represented by an effective councillor and to engage in democratic processes.
3. All learning activities will be accessible across political groups and will conform to the Council's Policy and Procedures.
4. Learning activity for Councillors and Committees will be based on the Council's and the individual's needs deriving from:
 - Corporate priorities as expressed in the Council's Corporate Plan and Moving Forward Programme;
 - Legal/Constitutional requirements;
 - Recommendations from inspections and audits;
 - Needs identified through Personal Development Analysis (PDAs).
5. An induction programme will take place at the start of each electoral cycle. It will also be provided for councillors elected at by-elections.
6. The assessment and analysis of the training and development needs of individual councillors as well as the collective needs of the Council will be reviewed during their term of office.
7. A prioritised, comprehensive programme will be produced to meet those identified and prioritised needs. It will be delivered in a range of ways with an increasing emphasis on "E learning" as we strive to meet learning preferences and minimise the impact on volunteers who are often "time poor."
8. Councillors are expected to participate in development and learning assessment and activity. Without training in areas such as planning and licensing they cannot fulfil their quasi-judicial roles. A Development Agreement will be provided as part of the Induction process

Operating Context

Councillor Development

1. The Council intends to significantly improve its Councillor Development. It was awarded the Charter for Member Development in 2013. It will consider reapplying for Charter accreditation once a new robust programme is in place for the new Council in 2020..
2. Activity and resources are overseen by a Councillor Development Steering Group, made up of 7 Councillors, including the Executive Member for Governance.
3. Our purpose is to develop skilled and knowledgeable Councillors representing informed and confident people in strong independent communities. In short we want South Holland Councillors to lead the Council and steer its transformation on behalf of their communities.

The Council

1. South Holland is a District Council. It delivers and commissions a range of services including refuse collection, planning and housing landlord services. Its key relationships are with Lincolnshire County Council, other Lincolnshire districts, local Councils and its shared management partner Breckland District.
2. Support services are provided by Compass Point Business Services, a company owned and controlled by the Council and East Lindsey Council. This arrangement was reviewed in 2017 and will be the subject of a new contract from April 2018.
3. The Council as a whole is transforming, continuing its commitment to Excellence and Value for Money through its Moving Forward programme by:
 - enabling better service and access through **digitalisation**,
 - **aligning public services** to optimise the use of its assets to generate income and as better operation / contact bases. DWP will share premises from spring 2018.
 - **commercialisation**, trading as well as outsourcing with the recent focus on Public Protection a key example,
 - becoming ever more economic through better **organisational design**.
4. This means that change will be our steady state, so it is vital that we begin to take a strategic approach to Councillor Development: providing the skills and knowledge to manage risk, allocate resources and assess our effectiveness in achieving the right outcomes.
5. Digitalisation is a key development issue. It will affect the way we deliver training, how Councillors work and how we interact with communities and citizens.
6. Services in many areas, including the Management Team and Councillor Development are shared with Breckland Council. This ongoing relationship provides continuing opportunities for improving member development while retaining the political distinctiveness of each authority.

7. The Council operates a Cabinet System, with a range of Committees and Panels covering Planning, Licensing, Audit, Appeals and Overview & Scrutiny. This creates a need for leadership skills and statutory knowledge.
8. The Council recently undertook a joint LGA Peer Challenge with Breckland. The report was considered by Council in April 2017 and it informs this strategy in its emphasis on local leadership and engagement and ensuring that our Transformation work has cohesion and clarity.
9. It recognises the ambition to regain Charter and the keenness of South Holland and Breckland councillors to learn from each other, while stressing the need to learn from the experiences of Welland Homes and Compass Point, in providing political oversight and strategic direction.

Councillors

1. South Holland has 37 Councillors representing 18 wards. At the time of writing the political composition is a Conservative administration of 27 members and in opposition, 8 Independent Councillors and 1 unaligned.
2. Councillors need the skills and knowledge to steer this complex organisation and bring the contribution and concerns of their communities to the table. They also bring their individual mix of experience, skills and knowledge. Approximately 60% of our Councillors work. A few of them are also Parish Councillors or County Councillors.
3. The Council has restated its commitment to Councillor Development, carrying out an interim Development Needs Survey in 2017. It will use this alongside its understanding of organisational needs to ensure learning and development builds capacity.
4. For example, Councillors need to be ever more “digitally savvy.” If we can work with them to implement paperless agendas and communicate online, we can save money and they can make more effective use of time: becoming more available for their local communities.

Democracy

1. South Holland is a rural district, between Peterborough and Lincoln. It has a largely agricultural economy and is centred on market towns including Holbeach and Crowland with Spalding being the administrative centre.
2. Electorally, it is divided into 18 wards and is part of one parliamentary constituency.
3. There are 22 Parish Councils in South Holland. We are 1 of 6 districts within Lincolnshire, which is also served by a County Council.

Population

1. South Holland's growing population is around 90,000. There has been a medium term decline in the percentage of people under 64 with a growth in those who are 65 or older.
2. 5.9% of our population are from recent EU accession countries which is higher than both County and English figures.

Election turnout

1. People vote in South Holland. 66.1% turned out nationally in the 2015 General Election: our local figures was 64.59%
2. Our local election turnout showed a wide range from 46.89% in Spalding St Paul's to 67.94% at Moulton / Weston/ Cowbit

Participation at South Holland Council

1. People generally do not attend Council meetings unless they are directly affected (a planning, licensing or appeal decision for example.) Decisions are not "Called In" by local people.
2. Overview and Scrutiny operates proactively through Performance Monitoring and Policy Development Panels. They have sought to address organisational and locally important issues proactively such as paper and printing, empty homes and leisure facilities
3. It is vital that the Council supports its Councillors as community leaders, to ensure that comment and challenge are heard and responded to.

Charter

1. Charter is broadly [Investors in People](#) for Councillors. Charter has been a significant factor in our Councillor and Democracy Development. Its aim is to ensure that Councillors are able to shape debate whilst continuing to fulfil their role. Charter criteria were reviewed towards the end of 2016.
2. The requirements for Charter can be found at <http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/7632544/MD+Charter+and+Charter+Plus+Requirements.pdf/8f27184e-8a4d-4915-9c4a-315fd3aeb813>
3. The Council was awarded Charter status in 2013. Assessment was centred on 4 Charter Standards which have been reduced to 3.
 - **Commitment to Councillor development and support**
 - **Strategic approach to Councillor development**
 - **Learning and development is effective in building capacity**

4. These standards are clear threads in this Strategy and our Plan. Charter status is awarded for 3 years; our 2013 award expired in 2016.
5. The Council will consider reaccreditation and this will be a priority for the new Council in 2019/20 based on developing and delivering a needs based programme of effective learning activity.

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Resources

This section outlines the financial, human and asset resources available for Councillor and Democracy Development.

Financial

1. The annual budget for 2017/8 is £10,000. There is no anticipated change to the budget for the remaining period of the strategy.
2. There is limited opportunity for income generation. Where appropriate events will be offered to Parish Councils and to neighbouring / partner authorities. The current charging rate for development events is £45 per head.

Staff and Councillors

1. Councillor Development is lead by Democratic Services; however, the wider staff establishment also has a role to play. Executive and Service Managers are central to identifying and addressing the knowledge issues for their service and committees, especially where quasi-judicial functions are concerned.
2. Councillors trained as trainers / mentors will also have an important role to fill and all members are expected to support and participate in Local Democracy activities in their wards. They also have a direct role to play in identifying needs, evaluating their own learning activities and shaping our approach through the Development Panel.

Partners,

1. South Holland District Council (SHDC) shares a management team with Breckland. The two authorities provide joint training events in some areas, notably licensing but have chosen to maintain separate roles and strategies.
2. Compass Point Business Services which provides Information Technology, Human Resources, Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits and Financial Services
3. County and Parishes: we intend to develop more joint opportunities for local councils and to explore access to County training events.
4. The East of England Local Government Association: East Midlands Councils and regional Association of Democratic Services Officers.

Commissioning & Contracts

1. We will consider the most effective way to deliver needs assessment and learning activities for Councillors for the new Council in 2019.
2. Where specialist knowledge and / or “gravitas” are needed we will procure niche providers. Generic skills and knowledge can be delivered by South Holland / partner employees or sourced from more general providers as long as they understand the specific needs of councillors and local government as a sector

3. We will consider procuring a Development Needs Assessment for the new Council to ensure we have a robust and confidential process from which we can build a learning programme.
4. We will consider what are the most economic, efficient and effective ways of providing training with a shift to online / IT based delivery
5. Democracy development will be undertaken directly by Councillors and Council officers.

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Methods

Member Development

Assessing and Documenting Needs

1. Assessing development needs requires a process to understand the existing skills and knowledge and learning needs of individuals together with the needs of the organisation.
2. Any process we use or procure will reflect the [National Political Skills Framework](#). Its six core skills are:
 - Local Leadership
 - Partnership Working
 - Communication Skills
 - Political Understanding
 - Scrutiny and Challenge
 - Regulating and Monitoring
3. We need to understand the development needs of Councillors over the course of their “career” and how they relate to our Corporate Plan and Transformation Programme. This will change over time and can most easily be broken down into 4 year programmes mirroring the electoral cycle of the Council. Councillors also have a range of roles and specialisms: Leader, Executive Member, Committee Chair etc., for which there are specific learning areas.
4. As we assess training needs we aim to capture Councillors’ existing skills and knowledge. This assessment process for individual Councillors will be reported to the Councillor Development Steering Group to ensure that wider organisational needs are met.
5. The Council expects that all its members will engage with the assessment and address their development needs. In return the Council will offer a robust, convenient and confidential process that will be analysed to show common needs from which a wider programme can be constructed.

Prioritising Councillor Development

1. All Councillors are expected to take part in learning activities provided by the Council as part of its annual programme that address the needs of the Council and needs which they have identified themselves within the assessment process.
2. Some training is considered mandatory: this is the case where statutory duties need to be discharged, such as planning and licensing or where the Councillor has a leadership role (Portfolio Holder, Committee Chairman, etc.) or where there is significant risk for the Council & to protect the individual councillor, such as safeguarding vulnerable people.

3. New councillors are expected to take part in the full range of induction learning activities to ensure they understand their responsibilities and how the Council works. Activities must be geared to helping new Councillors become effective as quickly as possible.
4. Training that supports the Council's Moving Forward transformation programme will be prioritised with CDSG and Cabinet supporting participation and take up.
5. Councillors can also choose to undertake optional development if they wish to increase their skills and knowledge for particular roles or subject areas, subject to resources.

Delivery

1. The methods we use for Councillor Development and to address Local Democracy need to be varied to suit the learning preference and knowledge base of the individual, the needs of the organisation and the nature of the subject.
2. We intend to significantly increase our use of online / IT based training to enable Councillors to learn where and when it is convenient for them
3. As part of the development of a new Councillor Development programme for the 2019 intake, we will consider what the best means of delivery for both skills and knowledge training is in partnership with our providers. The options include:
 - In person
 - Full session
 - Bite size
 - Webcast
 - Video
 - Mentors
 - Briefing note
 - Workbook

Democracy Development

1. The way we work in communities needs to be appropriate to the situation. We must recognise that people who do not engage in democratic processes often have significant barriers of health, mobility, location or language.
2. We aim to improve our Local Democracy activities including events to encourage people to stand as Councillors.
3. Councillors themselves will have a central role in this: within their wards as well as working with the targeted groups.

Evaluation

1. We need to show that Councillor and Democracy Development make a real difference, so we need to set up measures. Achieving the strategic objectives in our

Corporate Plan and Transformation Programme is a headline reflection of effective councillor learning and development.

2. The role of Councillor Development Steering Group in the evaluation of learning and development solutions is critical to the continuous improvement of learning events and associated materials.
3. After learning events, it is important to consider participants experience to inform future planning and in some instances reinforce the learning that has taken place. Similar we need to reflect back on the wider programme of events: do they make sense together, are they cohesive?
4. Participants are expected to complete evaluation forms at the end of all learning events that take place in the Council. Where events for members are organised by other organisations, councillors are expected to discuss the value of the events on their return and distribute learning materials to others. Evaluation will also monitor councillor access to and take-up of training opportunities.
5. A summary of event evaluation will be submitted to Councillor Development Steering Group.

Priority Work Areas 2018-20

The work areas derive from the needs of the organisation, the needs of individual Councillors and the needs of the community. Our immediate priorities are outlined below and are covered in more detail in our Plans.

Councillors

1. Councillors need to have the skills and knowledge to lead our “Moving Forward” Transformation while being a robust conduit for their communities.
2. Councillors also have ongoing needs. We will offer an interim programme of primarily digital events to meet these needs for the rest of the municipal cycle.
3. The new Council will need an Induction programme to help the Council gel as well as to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear.
4. For the new Council we will commission a Needs Analysis so that we are able to assess individual needs and ensure our next Four Year Development Programme is current.

Democracy

1. Our work must help communities to be informed, confident and independent. Our immediate priorities are to continue our work with local schools.
2. In the medium term, this will mean targeting any groups, communities or localities that are significantly less engaged in democratic processes than the rest of South Holland.

Council

1. We will consider reapplication for Charter in 2020 as a contribution to the “Pride” and “Right Services” priorities in the Corporate Plan. Charter can provide confidence to our communities and partners that we value our political processes and the people who represent them.
2. We will develop our commissioning role which supports the commercialisation of the Council
3. We will support transformation and especially digitalisation by developing online delivery, assessment and event booking.

Performance

1. The Strategy assesses the effectiveness of Councillor and Democracy Development by the outcomes it enables for the Council.
2. The main outcome we are seeking is highly skilled and knowledgeable Councillors representing informed and confident people in strong independent communities.
3. Our key quantitative outputs are successful reapplication for Charter in 2018 and robust planning for Charter Plus application in 2019.
4. We aspire to a 10 out of 10 score from every participant at every learning and development event that we commission. If we don't score 10 we will ask why and with the provider, try to improve.
5. During the life of the Strategy, we will keep management data and introduce a range of measures to see and report how well we are doing. The measures will look at the cost and quality of what we do with a focus on seeing if we can make real changes: outcomes that affect electoral turnout or the number of people standing for election for example.
6. Our measures for 2018/19 are included in the Councillor Development Plan.