



# **Councillor Development Statement 2019-23**

## **Foreword by the Chairman of the Council**

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide a foreword to this Statement. The first such Statement approved by Tendring District Council on the issue of Councillor Development.

As Chairman of the Council it is my role to both represent the Council at civic and ceremonial functions and be the custodian of the democratic process of the Council. I take these responsibilities very seriously and I know all Councillors take their individual responsibilities very seriously.

The public generally expects all Councillors to want to do the best for the people of the District. The public expects those Councillors with particular responsibilities to perform those duties well and with due regard to the likely outcomes of decisions. It is therefore right and proper that we support Councillors in all roles to deliver against the expectations.

Underpinning the democratic process of the Council is the Code of Conduct for Councillors. We all sign up to complying with the Code and that means approaching our role with the Nolan Principles in our mind at all times. This is part of the bargain we as Councillors make with each other and the people we serve.

We also make a bargain, that where development opportunities are provided we will try to participate and take on board what we are presented with. To this end, it is important that Councillors have a say about what development is to be provided and use the learning they have been given access to.

This statement provides the framework for Councillor development and how we can shape it. Making it work is then up to us as Councillors with the support of Officers.

Daniel Land  
Chairman of the Council  
2019/20

## **Introduction**

Tendring District Council is the principal Council for its District and provides a variety of services to residents, businesses and visitors. The District has a population of about 140,000 and an area of about 34,000 hectares. It has large urban centres, smaller towns, villages and rural hamlets. It has 60km of coastline and stretches inland to its boundary with Colchester. It has bustling seaside resorts attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors and a range of protected natural habitats where wildlife flourish with little interruption. It has a major international sea port and four miles off of its coast are the important wind turbines that provide much needed green energy to the UK.

With 48 Councillors elected every fourth year from 32 District Wards, the role of those Councillors in representing the District at its full is a tough call. Councillors bring with them a range of skills and experiences and this is vital to an organisation with the role Tendring District Council has and with the business it is responsible for delivering. They also have different capacities to take on specific roles and it is important to record that many Councillors have employment, business, caring and other responsibilities to fulfil alongside their role as a District Councillor.

Through this Statement, the Council is able to make a clear commitment to support Councillors undertake the range of roles they have as elected representatives. Through providing relevant development opportunities, Councillors will be better equipped to undertake those roles and to maximise the available time they have to fulfil the range of roles Councillors have. This document sets out the Council's strategy approach to Councillor development.

## **Foundations for this statement**

This Statement has at its core the aim of supporting Councillors and thereby supporting the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives, supporting good decision making and supporting community engagement by Councillors.

The Constitution states (at Article 2.03) that the key roles of all Councillors are:

- (i) Collectively be the ultimate policy-makers and carry out a number of strategic and corporate management functions;*
- (ii) Represent their communities and bring their views into the Council's decision making process, i.e. become an advocate for their communities;*
- (iii) Effectively represent the interests of their ward and of individual residents;*
- (iv) Respond to residents' enquiries and representations, fairly and impartially and assist in the resolution of concerns and grievances;*
- (v) Be involved in decision-making for the people of the District as a whole;*
- (vi) Be available to represent the Council on other bodies; and*
- (vii) Contribute to the governance and effective management of the Council's business at meetings of the Council, Cabinet and other Committees and Sub Committees, maintaining the highest standards of conduct and ethics.*

In addition there are specific additional responsibilities on, amongst others, the Chairman of the Council, Vice-Chairman of the Council, Leader and Cabinet Members, Chairmen of Vice-Chairmen of Committees.

With a business the size of Tendring District Council, it is vital that the ultimate decision makers, Councillors, are made aware of relevant development opportunities with a view to ensuring they are continually better able to fulfil the responsibilities of their roles. In return, Councillors will be expected to avail themselves of those development opportunities, actively participate in those development opportunities provided and help to shape the programme of opportunities with the stated aim to enhance their ability to fulfil their Councillor responsibilities.

An element of Councillor development must be providing a basic foundation to the role for those new to it/or returning, over-arching legislative requirements such as on declarations of pecuniary interest and the Equality Act duties and the established mandatory training requirements for particular roles (such as when determining planning and licensing applications).

## **Roles and responsibilities**

*Individual Councillors* have a personal responsibility to contribute to identifying their development needs and aspirations, to help shape the provision of Councillor development opportunities, to positively seek to access development opportunities/attend development events and sessions, to provide feedback on the development opportunities provided and to apply the learning in their role.

*Political Groups* have a collective responsibility to encourage development and to channel views and needs from the members of those Groups so that all voices are heard and all Councillors can legitimate feel they can help shape the development programme for Councillors.

*Chairman of the Council* has the responsibility as part of his role as custodian of the democratic processes to be the Champion of development for Councillors and the conduit through whom the views of Councillors are channelled to oversee the construction, delivery and views on Councillor development at the Council.

*The Head of Democratic Services and Elections* shall be responsible for providing the officer support for Councillor development, inviting Councillors to identify their development needs and aspirations, collating and determining the development programme for Councillors and keeping that programme up to date, providing the means for development opportunities to be evaluated and reporting on the evaluation outcomes and being the officer liaison point for development opportunities.

*The Chief Executive and Corporate Directors* have the responsibility to support Councillor development including the making available of staff to support that development.

*Individual Officers* have the responsibility to consider and advise their line management of issues that it would be beneficial for Councillors to receive development opportunities in. Designated Officers, such as the Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer have their statutory responsibilities to consider in respect of development requirements for Councillors.

## **Induction provision**

Even before Polling Day, the Council will contact declared candidates to alert them to key initial requirements and events immediately following the day of Poll. This is to try to equip whoever from among the candidates is to be elected by the public with information so that they can take up the role as seamlessly as possible. This information is then refreshed and repeated in correspondence issued to the successful candidate as soon as possible after the declaration of result.

The person elected to the District Council is also provided with the Council's 70 page guide for Councillors called 'Signpost'. The guide provides a broad range of information on local government structure, the role of Councillors, governance arrangements, decision making and meetings schedule as well as details of other elected representatives for the District and officers with a brief explanation of their responsibilities.

The first formal event happens within days as the elected Councillor must make their declaration of acceptance of office and at the same time they confirm their acceptance of the terms of the Code of Conduct. Time is allocated for the declaration of acceptance of office beyond the physical time this takes to make. This is the opportunity for the Councillor to talk with the Chief Executive and/or Monitoring Office and for those officers to assist Councillors to settle in to the new/returning role.

As soon as practical after the four yearly elections of all 48 District Councillors, there will be an Induction Day. The 2019 Induction day was held on 10 June and covered these subjects:

Introduction from the Chief Executive	Council/Cabinet/ Committees, Overview and Scrutiny The	The Corporate Transformation Programme
The Council's Community Leadership role and key strategies	Council's Constitution, and Decision making	Planning / Local Plan / Garden Communities
Corporate Plan and Priorities - Reviewing these	Councillors' Allowances Mileage and subsistence (including business use car insurance)	Waste collection and recycling – up-coming changes
Performance Management System	Health & safety / lone working	Tending 4 Growth
The showing of the review of the year film	The Council's Financial Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy	Jaywick Sands revitalisation strategy

In between the above sessions, a 'Marketplace' setting was provided to cover other issues or provide an opportunity for Councillors to access more information on issues raised in the above sessions. The 'Marketplace' had officers present in the gaps between the above sessions on the following subjects:

Councillor Support	Committee Administration	Electoral Registration and Elections
IT (including Information Governance)	Payroll	Transformation (including Customer Service)
Planning, Local Plan and NEGC	Waste and Recycling	Jaywick Sands and Housing
Community Safety	Tourism and Events	Cliff Stabilisation
Regeneration		

The induction programme was also delivered away from the Induction Day with face-to-face sessions on the planning process and licensing to meet the approved requirement for Councillors determining planning applications and licensing applications to have received training before they take part in meetings that make such decisions.

In addition, short 1-2-1 Chairmanship sessions were provided with an external facilitator to support those Councillors taking or being reappointed to positions where they would preside over meetings. The sessions were aimed at the Chairman of the Council, Vice-Chairman of Council and Chairmen of Committees.

A group training session was also provided on overview and scrutiny to which all Councillors were invited with the object of involving both those who would sit on Overview and Scrutiny Committees but also those who sit on the Executive and other Councillors so that they could consider how best to enhance the positive culture of the Council towards overview and scrutiny.

The Induction Programme for Councillors provided the framework in which organised visits took place to sites in the District which were or would be the subject of decisions by the Council. These visits allowed for more informal dialogue around the issues associated with the sites being visited and the options being pursued/considered.

In the event of a by-election, time will be allocated to the elected Councillor with the aim of achieving the same level of induction as was provided for in the above.

Planning for induction for the programmed elections in 2023 will also be provided for to build on the induction plan successes from 2019.

## **Personal Councillor Development Planning**

Beyond the induction training for Councillors immediately after they take up office the Council is establishing a development planning process for Councillors. The development plan will look at the skills and experience of Councillors. It also:

- Considers the needs of Councillors as part of a complex multi-service Council such as Tendring.
- Tries to address the changing landscape in which the Council will be operating in during the period up to and beyond the next programme of elections
- Seeks to help prepare Councillors for roles they may have to take on or aspire to taking on.
- Aims to set development goals and the route to deliver against those goals

Through the implementation of personal development plans, it is intended that support for Councillors to develop will be targeted where it will be most effective in terms of the plan and to provide objective data on which to construct Councillor development opportunities year upon year.

The implementation of the personal development plans will help to ensure that equality of access to relevant development opportunities is an enduring feature of the Councillor development programme to be delivered by Tendring District Council.



## **Development Opportunities and approaches**

This statement uses the term development opportunities extensively throughout. This phrase has been used as learning styles are as broad as the range of services the Council provides. As such, it is important that we seek to provide learning in a broad range of ways to achieve the best outcome. This statement commits the Council to this approach. An approach that uses the following in a blended package to achieve the development needs and aspirations it is possible to achieve:

<b>All Councillor Briefings</b>	<p>Most months of the year there is an evening face-to-face session, normally starting at 6.00pm, as an informal way of introducing current and relevant issues for Councillors. The programme of briefing dates is agreed as part of the schedule of meetings approved by Council each year.</p> <p>In addition, when the programmed dates for All Councillor Briefings do not work with an issue that would benefit from the format of such a briefing, a special briefing session will be organised (such as on the Local Plan to achieve determination of submissions in accordance with timescales we need to respond to).</p> <p>During 2020, it is our intention to video record All Councillor Briefings and make the video available to Councillors. In this way, attendees can remind themselves as to what was said at the briefing and those who could not attend are not disadvantaged by not having access to the briefing detail.</p>
<b>E-learning</b>	<p>Through the Council's membership of the Local Government Association, a dedicated e learning platform is available to all Councillors to assist them with their development. The modules have been established to help support and develop Councillors ensuring they are confident and capable; well-equipped and well-supported to make a difference, deliver and be trusted.</p> <p>A separate introduction guide to the e-learning package, setting out how to access it and the available modules is available to all Councillors.</p>
<b>Written briefings</b>	<p>Either as part of All Councillor Briefings Sessions mentioned above, some other development opportunity or otherwise as a stand-alone form of briefing the Council may provide material in written form to assist Councillors. The written briefing may be provided to the Council by an external agency.</p> <p>The written briefing will be uploaded to the Council's repository for Councillor development material and a link circulated so that Councillors can access it. Councillors are free to request the material in paper format in response to the link being circulated.</p>
<b>Subscriptions</b>	<p>The Council subscribes to the Local Government Association's</p>

	<p>First magazine. The Council then circulates those copies to each Tendring District Councillor.</p> <p>Individually, Councillors may subscribe to the online monthly e-bulletin of First Magazine using the link below:  <a href="https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKLGA/subscriber/new?topic_id=UKLGA_262">https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKLGA/subscriber/new?topic_id=UKLGA_262</a></p> <p>Where relevant information can be secured that can be obtained for Councillors through free subscription it will be offered to Councillors.</p>
<p><b>Presentations/ Evidence at meetings</b></p>	<p>Where presentations or evidence is presented to Councillors in meetings, it will be made available for all Councillors to access. As with written briefings it will be uploaded to the Council's repository for Councillor development material and a link circulated so that Councillors can access it. Paper copies will be available upon request.</p> <p>Included in this description is the response to questions raised on individual performance data being considered by Councillors in Committee.</p>
<p><b>Specific training Sessions</b></p>	<p>In addition to training for Councillors in order to allow them to participate as Members of the Planning, Licensing, Audit or Standards Committee, the use of specific training subject/topic based training exists and will be provided in addition to All Councillor briefings where appropriate.</p> <p>Such training can be to support understanding of overview and scrutiny techniques, questioning skills, work programme planning and changes to improve the culture around scrutiny.</p> <p>Where significant changes to the Constitution are brought in there will be the opportunity for training to be provided on those changes to ensure that understanding of the changes is widespread.</p> <p>During 2020, it is our intention to video record all training sessions provided by Council Officers and make the video available to Councillors. In this way, attendees can remind themselves as to what was said at the briefing and those who could not attend are not disadvantaged by not having access to the briefing detail.</p>
<p><b>1-2-1 or small group sessions</b></p>	<p>On occasion, based on the learning style of individual Councillors or on the requirements of the subject, it may be more appropriate to provide for 1-2-1 or small group sessions of Councillors. This style may be particularly suited to Councillor IT provision and Chairman-ship sessions looking at the specific</p>

	needs of the Councillor concerned. Where this style, rather than large group sessions, would be more appropriate it will be used.
<b>Site Visits/ Tours</b>	The opportunity to visit a site, building or place that is to be the subject of an impending decision can be of great value. While organised site visits are normally associated with planning applications to be determined by the Council's Planning Committee, they may be relevant in other circumstances. In the same way tours can greatly help in understanding complex or strategic issues and solutions to those issues. Councillors are, subject to normal and reasonable considerations and respect for those in the vicinity of the site, building or place able to make their own arrangements to visit the area in order to support their understanding of the issues to be debated. Where Councillors do make their own arrangements for a site visit on a matter to be determined by the Council they are asked to give prior notification during office hours to the Head of Democratic Services and Elections. An annual organised tour may be set as part of the schedule of meetings approved each year.
<b>Visits to other Councils</b>	As with Site Visits, if there is a relevant reason to take Councillors from Tendring to another Council in order to develop and support understanding and appreciation of a matter relevant to issues being faced by the Council locally, then the facility exists for Councillors to request such a visit.
<b>External Seminars, Conferences and symposiums</b>	<p>A range of organisations provide seminars, conferences and symposiums on relevant subjects. Where the event is provided within 150 miles of Tendring, is free of an admission charge and all other costs to the Council would be less than £100, the Council's Head of Democratic Services and Elections will be able to determine requests from Councillors.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council is able to authorise the representation of the Council, by Councillors, at the Annual Local Government Association Conference.</p> <p>All other conference etc attendance requests will be the subject of consultation with the Chairman of the Council.</p>

## **Feedback on development**

A crucial element of the delivery of Councillor development is the provision for Councillors to be able to feedback on the development opportunity concerned, for that feedback to be collated and for the views expressed on the development opportunity to influence future provision. A commitment to this element is provided for in the form of this statement.

Specifically, the views of Councillors will be sought on facilitator of development sessions provided in respect of their knowledge of the subject matter, their ability to explain and describe key concepts and to answer questions. Feedback is further sought on the structure of the development opportunity, its pace, its convenience and on materials provided. The appropriateness of the level of training is also sought.

Feedback can be provided on a paper sheet or, preferably, using an online evaluation form the Council has developed. A link to the online form is provided immediately following the training opportunity to those who attended. The relevant officer will confirm the detail of attendees to the Head of Democratic Services and Elections to facilitate this.

Within a week of the development opportunity, the expressed views of attendees will be collated from the paper and online forms returned. If remedial steps are needed as indicated from the feedback received, they will be put in place. The feedback will also be used to help shape future provision generally.

The feedback forms also ask Councillors for any development opportunities they would like to see provided in the coming 12 months and also if there are support issues that they wish to record. This data supplements that coming from the personal development planning process.

Adjusted feedback arrangements will be put in place for such things as e-learning packages and the provision solely of written material as part of development opportunities.

On a quarterly basis, the summary of feedback and ideas for further development opportunities will be reported to Management Team and to the Chairman of the Council for them to review and direct if additional measures are needed to meet identified needs and aspirations.

Annually, there is a report to the Standards Committee, notifying it of the mandatory training sessions which have been undertaken for the members of the various committees, the topics covered and the attendees including whether they are a member of the committee, as substitute or otherwise.

## **Shared access with Essex County Council and Unitary/District Councils in Essex**

The Council commits to providing reciprocal agreements with Essex County Council and the Unitary/District Councils in the county of Essex to providing mutual access to development opportunities being provided. As such, and under these arrangements, it is envisaged that no charge will be levied for a Councillor from one of those other Councils to attend a development opportunity provided by Tendring District Council on the basis that no charge will be levied for attendance etc on a Tendring District Councillor participating in a development opportunity provided by another Council. A mutual access agreement would envisage similar levels of Councillor development opportunities being provided by both Councils.

The value of shared access is recognised as being a good practice in the use of public funds and a way of extending learning opportunities through engaging a wider range of experiences in those opportunities.

## **Contact Points and useful links**

For further information, please contact the Head of Democratic Services and Elections using the following contact details:

In person: Room 67, Town Hall, Clacton-on-Sea CO15 1SE

Tel: (01255) 686580

Email: [ksimmons@tendringdc.gov.uk](mailto:ksimmons@tendringdc.gov.uk)

Links to information that Councillors may find useful as part of their development:

Centre for Public Scrutiny – [www.cfps.org.uk](http://www.cfps.org.uk)

Local Government Association – [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

East of England Local Government Association – [www.eelga.gov.uk](http://www.eelga.gov.uk)

Local Government Information Unit – [www.lgiu.org.uk](http://www.lgiu.org.uk)

UK Parliament Website – [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)