

Committee: Audit and Standards Committee

Date: Thursday, 26
March 2026

Title: Member Development Annual Report
2025–2026

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Lead member(s): Councillors M Lemon (Chair), G Driscoll,
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Working Group

Summary

1. At the full Council meeting on 22 April 2025, members approved the Uttlesford Member Development Strategy, which included a number of ongoing commitments, including an annual review of member development.
2. This annual report has been recommended to the Audit and Standards Committee by the Member Development Working Group at its previous meeting on 18 February 2026. The report incorporates Member Development activity delivered between May 2025 and March 2026, including key themes drawn from the Member Development Working Group meetings held on 9 December 2025 and 18 February 2026. These themes include member feedback, training effectiveness, attendance challenges, preparation for Local Government Reorganisation, and requests for further training topics.

Recommendations

3. Audit and Standards Committee are recommended to:
 - i. Note the Member Development Annual Report.
 - ii. Note the provisional Member Development Schedule for 2026/27 to be shared by the end of March 2026.

Financial Implications

4. Member Development will be resourced from existing budgets.

Background Papers

5. Past meeting documentation of the Member Development Task and Finish Group which informed the establishment of this working group is available [here](#).
6. Documentation of the MDWG meetings held on 9 December 2025 and 18 February 2026 is available [here](#).
7. [Member Development Strategy](#) as agreed at Full Council on 22 April 2025.

Impact

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Communication/Consultation | Anonymous feedback forms have been made available to members after each training session. The Member Development Working Group have reviewed the Annual Member Development Report and recommended to the Audit and Standards Committee for noting. |
| Community Safety | Nil |
| Equalities | The MD Strategy reflects the Council's commitment to inclusivity and equal access. |
| Health and Safety | Nil |
| Human Rights/Legal Implications | Elements of Member training is mandated by the Constitution and/or legislation but there is no legal requirement to maintain a Member Development Strategy. |
| Sustainability | Nil |
| Ward-specific impacts | All wards |
| Workforce/Workplace | Councillor consultation regarding training needs by way of a working group is expected to improve member buy-in to development requirements. |

Situation

Summary of Member Development

9. Since May 2025, nine training sessions and five member briefings have been delivered. Two of the training sessions were facilitated as 'follow-up' sessions for members who could not attend the initial session.
10. A list of Member Development sessions has been attached as Appendix A, along with details of member attendance.

Feedback and the Member Development Strategy

11. The Member Development Strategy stipulates requirements relating to member feedback. In summary these are:

- To evaluate the implementation of the previous year's training programme.
- To assess feedback via anonymous member evaluation forms, which Members will be asked to complete after every training session.

12. Furthermore, the MDWG's Terms of Reference provide the following aims:

- i. review matters raised relating to member development for the previous year
- ii. review the Member Development Strategy to ensure its fit for purpose
- iii. to endorse the Member Development Programme for the year ahead
- iv. to make recommendations by way of an annual report to the Audit and Standards Committee

Feedback Received in 2025

13. The Member Development Strategy was approved in April 2025 and feedback forms have been made available to councillors after each training session since. Feedback forms were made available as paper copies and handed out for in-person sessions, whilst online forms were circulated following sessions held remotely. Overall, 54% of attendees at training events completed a feedback form.

14. Members can access the summary of feedback forms directly [here](#).

15. As outlined in the Strategy, the forms were completed anonymously.

16. The following headlines have been drawn from the completed feedback forms:

- The vast majority of responses to all sessions were positive, with 94% strongly agreeing or agreeing that the training held was effective and relevant to their roles.
- The same applies to the 'content was well organised and easy to follow,' with 93% strongly agreeing/agreeing that this was the case.
- The organisers/trainers also largely received positive feedback, with 97% agreeing or strongly agreeing that 'the trainer was knowledgeable, prepared and communicated effectively'.

17. The outlier in terms of feedback was the Cybersecurity training carried out in October, whereby 3 attendees 'Disagreed' that the training was effective.

18. The feedback forms also allowed members to raise comments including what could be improved and what additional topics could be included in future.
19. Of the forms received 40% did not raise areas for improvement. Of the 60% of those that did, various requests/comments were made, such as asking for practical measures to be implemented (i.e. keeping to timings, presentation, classroom rather than lecture style room setups, desk required etc). Democratic Services note this feedback and will endeavour to implement these practical requests where possible. For instance, 'classroom' style learning environments (e.g. seated at a desk), rather than lecture/theatre seating, would be implemented where feasible.
20. Furthermore, the majority of returned forms did not provide comment on topics for future training sessions. Where relevant, member feedback has been passed on to the lead officers for each respective training session with a request to incorporate into next year's training.
21. At the MDWG meeting on 9 December 2025, members reviewed the feedback and noted that while not all attendees complete forms, those with strong views tended to provide feedback. In regards to practical lessons learnt, members noted that the hybrid Licensing training was effective and reduced cost, with cameras required to remain on for monitoring attendance.
22. Attendance rates remained challenging for training, such as the all member Code of Conduct training, whereby the Council has only achieved a 50% attendance rate for 'mandatory' training related to the standards. The MDWG have requested that Group Leaders be asked to encourage attendance and they will be sent a copy of this report to inform this request.
23. Training requests for 2026/27 from members of the MDWG included tailored cyber security, site security and emergency planning, chair training, continued mandatory Planning and Licensing training, Code of Conduct refresher sessions and more interactive formats. Furthermore, work was being carried out on the Litmos training system to make the learning platform available to councillors and this would be rolled out in 2026/27.
24. The Group also expected members to be briefed as required on emerging issues, with Local Government Reorganisation matters being one particular topic that will likely require ad hoc briefing events over the forthcoming year.

Provisional Member Development Programme 2026-27

25. A provisional Member Development 2026-27 schedule has been drafted and is attached as Appendix B.
26. Mandatory training sessions as per the Strategy are defined as:
 - Code of Conduct Training – all councillors are required to complete this training.

- Code of Conduct Panel Training - for sitting members and substitutes of the Audit and Standards Committee, this training is required to sit on Standards Panels.
- Planning Committee Training – for sitting members and substitutes of the Planning Committee, this training is required to sit on Planning Committee
- Licensing and Environmental Health Panel Training - for sitting members and substitutes of the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee, this training is required to sit on Licensing Panels.

27. In addition to mandatory training, a number of other sessions/briefing events were requested:

- Audit
- Emergency Planning
- Cyber Security tailored for councillors
- Chair training

28. It should be noted that the provisional schedule is not exhaustive and the Member Development Strategy does not prevent development sessions being scheduled or changed as required. As previously mentioned, briefings on the LGR process are likely to be required ad hoc as the matter progresses through Government.

Next steps

29. Subject to comment, the provisional development schedule will be circulated to all members before the end of March 2026 in accordance with the Strategy.

30. The MDWG will be tasked to meet again towards the end of 2026 to review member development and produce a training programme for 2027/28. Furthermore, as this is the first year that the Strategy has been in operation, the MDWG will consider its overall effectiveness following the implementation of the 2026/27 programme. It should be noted that the working group’s Terms of Reference stipulate that members serve a maximum of a two-year term on MDWG. All current members of the MDWG can serve for another year but membership will be confirmed at Annual Council in May.

Risk Analysis

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| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigating actions |
|--|------------|--------|--|
| The Member Development Strategy was produced to provide structure, certainty | 2 | 2 | The Strategy itself incorporates mechanisms to |

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| and establish milestones for monitoring and reviewing the development programme, to ensure that the training offered to members evolves with the needs of the district. | | | keep member development under routine review and provide a channel for member feedback to ensure needs are understood. |
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- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.