

Member Development Steering Group

Wednesday, 4 March 2026

5.30 p.m. Brooks Room - Council Offices, Narborough

Membership:

Cllr. Adrian Clifford (Chairman)
Cllr. Matt Tomeo (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr. Nick Brown
Cllr. Luke Cousin
Cllr. Susan Findlay

Cllr. Ande Savage
Cllr. Dillan Shikotra
Cllr. Roger Stead

Cllr. Bob Waterton
Cllr. Jane Wolfe

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notes of Last Meeting (Pages 3 - 8)

To approve the notes of the last meeting held on 7 January 2026 (enclosed).
3. Budget Update

To update Members on the Member Training Budget – To follow.
4. Skillgate Modules

Members will receive an update at the meeting.
5. Member Development Programme (Pages 9 - 22)

For Members to consider the current Member Development Programme and provide feedback on the courses delivered and proposed future training.
6. Items for Next Agenda
7. Date of Next Meeting
 - Wednesday 3 June 2026.

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MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

Minutes of a meeting held at the Council Offices, Narborough

WEDNESDAY, 7 JANUARY 2026

Present:-

Cllr. Adrian Clifford (Chairman)

Cllr. Nick Brown
Cllr. Luke Cousin

Cllr. Ande Savage
Cllr. Bob Waterton

Cllr. Jane Wolfe

Officers present:-

Avisa Birchenough - Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer
Nicole Cramp - Democratic & Scrutiny Services Officer

Apologies:-

Cllr. Matt Tomeo, Cllr. Susan Findlay, Cllr. Dillan Shikotra and Cllr. Roger Stead

1. NOTES OF LAST MEETING

The notes of the meeting held on 23 September 2025, as circulated, were approved as a correct record.

2. **BUDGET UPDATE**

The Chairman, Cllr. Adrian Clifford welcomed Members to the meeting and invited the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer (DSSO) to provide an update.

- The cost of the upcoming Charing Skills course needs to be deducted from the training budget. The Finance Team will then provide Democratic Services (DS) with an updated report which will be brought to the next meeting.
- After the cost for the upcoming Charing Skills course has been deducted, there will remain approximately £3,000.
- The remaining budget runs until April 2026

The Chairman requested any remaining budget be rolled over into the new year. The DSSO responded that they will seek advice from the Finance Department.

3. **SKILLGATE MODULES**

The DSSO gave an update to the Steering Group on providing the reporting function on SkillGate for module completion to Group Whips. This request is not possible to fulfil, as the Group Whips would have to be listed as Managers on the SkillGate system, which in turn would impede their visibility on the system for the Senior DSSO.

It was agreed that Democratic Services will send a monthly report to Group Whips to ensure they have access to the data.

Members received an update from Cllr. Luke Cousin and Cllr. Jane Wolfe on the modules they have completed.

The overall view from both councillors was positive, noting that the 6 identified modules are relevant and should all be completed. Modules sizes allow for all to be completed in the suggested 6-month window. Completion of these modules would support Members in minimising the risk of “not being informed”, unable to serve/support residents and generally being knowledgeable about key and current topics.

The Chairman requested that SkillGate be rolled out to Members within the next 6 months and the following trialled modules be made available:

- Cyber Awareness and Staying Safe Online
- Essential Safeguarding for Children, Young People and Adults
- Fraud Awareness
- Introduction to Data Protection
- Sexual Harassment Awareness for Employees
- EDI
- An introductory email is prepared by the Chairman and SDSSO to give clear guidance on the expectations of time scales and modules to be completed by all Members.
- A concise short description of each module is provided so Members can better understand the content.

The Steering Group requested an alternative to the use of “Mandatory” in the title of the Modules. Members did not agree on a final term to be used, although the word could be dropped altogether.

The Chairman thanked the members who trialled the modules and provided feedback to the Steering Group.

4. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The DSSO gave an updated overview of Member Development Programme from the previous year and invited Members to feedback on the courses delivered and what proposed training they would like to see planned for the year ahead. Currently 3 courses have been scheduled for Members as per the Councillor Development Review:

1. Chairing Skills
2. Planning Masterclass - LCC Highways
3. Planning Masterclass – Flooding

The DSSO also gave an update on the published articles requested by Members for the weekly Newsletter. Current articles included rules of procedure, deadlines for questions and motions to Council, the role of a Monitoring Officer and the Golden Triangle: governance roles and responsibilities.

The Chairman expressed his concern on the low sign-up for Chairing Skills scheduled in March. This course was the most requested training by and for Councillors via the CDR. The Chairman asked Members to encourage their respective Groups to attend this course.

Cllr Luke Cousin requested presentation slides be shared with Members following the course.

The DSSO asked the Steering Group if they felt there were any areas/topics they would like to explore and receive more training in as we approach LGR. If a Unitary council was the way forward, did Members feel they had suitable provisions to equip them moving forward.

The Steering Group was interested to know what other authorities are doing and authorities who have already gone through the transition, what would they do differently if anything.

The Chairman asked Members to start considering what training they would like to see in the upcoming year and that this item be added to the next meeting agenda.

5. FEEDBACK FROM THE NEW MEMBER'S 6 MONTH CATCH-UP

The DSSO updated Members on the feedback received from the newest Member who joined the council following a by-election in May 2025. The feedback was positive and the Member advised they appreciated having the opportunity to give their comments and have a discussion around their experiences.

6. UPDATED MEMBER ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Member Roles & Responsibilities had been updated with the new appointments of Member Champions (Net Zero Lead and Digital Transformation). Since the publication of the agenda, there had been some slight amendments made by the Leader and the Chief Executive and updated role descriptions were circulated at the meeting.

The updated Member Roles & Responsibilities will be published on the Members SharePoint site for reference.

The DSSO informed the Steering Group that Scrutiny will be conducting a review on Members Champions on 10 March, and advised Members should they wish to sign up to contact the Democratic Services team.

7. ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

1. Councillor Development Review – Members were asked to consider training and development opportunities that may arise from the review.
2. A full budget update/breakdown will be provided at the next meeting that will give an overview of the training and briefings that have been covered in the past year.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 4 March 2026
- 3 June 2026

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 6.21 P.M.

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Member Development Programme 2025/2026

Contents	
Skillgate Online Learning Modules	Page 2
Local Government Reorganisation	Page 3
Member Development Programme	Page 4

Skillgate Online Learning Modules	
Learning Module	Completion Rate: Updated on 03/02/2026
Phase 1	
Cyber Awareness and Staying Safe Online	2
Essential Safeguarding for Children, Young People and Adults	2
Fraud Awareness	2
Introduction to Data Protection	2
Sexual Harassment Awareness for Employees	2
EDI	2
Phase 2	
Carbon Literacy and Net Zero	Expected rollout: Summer 2026
The Importance of Environmental Sustainability	Expected rollout: Summer 2026
Emergency Planning at Blaby District Council	Expected rollout: Summer 2026
Understanding Domestic Abuse	Expected rollout: Summer 2026
Prevent Duty Awareness Training	Expected rollout: Summer 2026

Local Government Reorganisation & Devolution	
Scrutiny, Briefings & Training Opportunities	
All Member Briefing	26 June 2025, 17:30-19:00
Briefing to receive the latest update on Local Government Reorganisation.	Council Chamber
LGR – Additional Scrutiny Commission Meeting	28 October 2025, 17:30-19:00
A extended invitation to all Non exec members. Members to consider the draft proposal with Scrutiny Commission Members to provide the final response for Cabinet to consider at their meeting on 20 November.	Council Chamber
LGR – Additional Scrutiny Commission Meeting	22 April 2026, 17:30-19:00
A extended invitation to all Non exec members. Members to consider the following: 1. A blueprint for implementation and an understanding as to what actions have been taken to date amongst councils to seek to share resources, work on alignment of policies and terms etc. 2. What type of learning and development is being provided for staff to ensure that they are prepared for the merger? 3. Examine the FAQ's that staff have put forward.	Council Chamber

2025				
Date and Time	Location	Mandatory, Optional or Advisory	Training Event:	Training Provider
Thursday 16 January 2025 2:30-3:40pm	Virtual Event (MS Teams)	Optional	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Personal Safety for Councillors</u></p> <p>This session will cover the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical advice and guidance • It will reference surgeries, canvassing, home visits and managing unexpected doorstep visitors 	Local Government Association
Saturday 18 January – Sunday 19 January 2025 Programme starts at 9.30 on first day and finishes at 3.00pm on second day.	Warwick Conferences, Coventry CV4 7SH	Audit & Corporate Governance Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman only.	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Audit Committee: Leadership Essentials</u></p> <p>This programme will discuss how Audit Committees can be most effective. Drawing on the insights of regulators and practitioners it will provide space for participants to reflect on the way their Committee functions and how it can gain maximum assurance that the council's governance arrangements are fit for purpose.</p>	Local Government Association
Wednesday 26 February 2025	Virtual Event (Microsoft Teams)	Optional (Advisory to Scrutiny)	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Data and managing council performance – training for councillors</u></p>	Local Government Association

5:00pm - 7:30pm		Commission and iPlan Members)	<p>The session will cover the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what is data? • common ways in which data is analysed and presented • key questions to ask of our data • performance management – measuring what matters. <p><u>Why attend?</u></p> <p>Good use of data within councils is crucial to informing decision-making and monitoring performance. This session will help you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand data • interpret performance reports • ask the right questions • use data to make informed decisions. 	
Monday 10 March 2025 5:30pm	Virtual Via MS Teams Please note: This session is	Optional	<p><u>Council Tax & Benefits Member Training</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax Support • Benefits Overview 	BDC Officers

	going to be recorded.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualifying Criteria & how to make a claim 	
<p>Wednesday 19 March 2025</p> <p>5:30pm</p>	Virtual Session (MS Teams)	Advisory	<p><u>Officer & Member Training Session</u></p> <p>Purpose of this session is to understand and explore the importance of excellent working relationships between councillors and officers in an effective local authority. The session will cover the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The central importance of the relationship between members and officers in an effective council The respective roles of members and officers What happens when this goes wrong in a council Relevant codes and protocols including local codes and member/officer protocols Areas of potential risk/friction and how to avoid/mitigate these Mini scenarios – to put it all into practice! 	BDC Officers & External
<p>Thursday 22 May 2025</p> <p>5:30pm</p>	Council Chamber	Mandatory for Planning Committee Members & Substitute Members	<p><u>Annual Planning Committee Training</u></p> <p>The session will cover the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Role of the Planning Committee The Code of Conduct Planning legislation and policy The structure of the committee day 	BDC Officers

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making a decision on a planning application 	
<p>*CANCELLED</p> <p>TO BE</p> <p>RESCHEDULED</p> <p>Thursday 19 June 2025</p> <p>5:30pm</p>	Council Chamber	Advisory for Planning Committee Members & Substitute Members	<p><u>Planning Committee Masterclass</u></p> <p>Topic TBC</p>	BDC Officers
<p>Tuesday 1 July 2025</p> <p>5:30pm</p>	Council Chamber	Advisory for Licensing & Regulatory Committee Members	<p><u>Licensing & Regulatory Member Training Session</u></p> <p><u>This session will cover:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the Team • Overview of the Licensing Department • Current Enforcement Action • Taxi Licensing 	BDC Officers

<p>Saturday, 13 September – Sunday, 14 September 2025</p>	<p>Warwick Conferences, Coventry CV4 7SH</p>	<p>Advisory for the Leader of the Council and Finance Portfolio Holder</p>	<p><u>Leadership Essentials: Finance for Leaders and Finance Portfolio Holders</u></p> <p>This two-day programme will help leaders and finance portfolio holders get to grips with the financial challenges facing their authority. Informed by experienced local government finance practitioners, we will discuss how councils can set strategies for sustainability in the medium-term, as well as balancing the budget on an annual basis. It will also consider how members can work effectively with officers to ensure that the Council is making the most of its opportunities.</p> <p>The course will explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of leaders and portfolio holders in a changing financial environment • Working with the CFO and other key officers to make sense of opportunities • Understanding the council's finances • Navigating the budget process • The financial aspects of new delivery models • Recognising a good business case for change • The latest finance challenges facing councils 	<p>LGA</p>

<p>Wednesday 24 September 2025</p> <p>1:30 – 3:00pm</p>	<p>Virtual</p>	<p>Optional</p>	<p><u>Supporting Better Mental Health: Looking after your own wellbeing as an elected member during stressful times</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some of the definitions of mental health and illness • the concept of risk and protective factors • basic psychology and tackling unhelpful thinking patterns • why the role of councillor is vulnerable to additional stress • managing social media • managing relationships with colleagues and constituents • the role of exercise, diet, and green space. 	<p>LGA</p>
<p>Tuesday 30 September 2025</p> <p>10:30-12:00pm</p>	<p>Virtual</p>	<p>Optional</p>	<p><u>Understanding the Finance and Risk Governance Divide Member Training</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert insights into where scrutiny and audit roles align and diverge • Practical strategies to reduce duplication and avoid gaps • Interactive group discussions to share what works (and what doesn't) • Reflections and actions to take back to your authority 	<p>Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CFGs)</p>

Tuesday 4 November 2025 10:00am-12:30pm	Virtual	Optional	<p><u>Data and Managing Council Performance</u></p> <p>This session offers practical insights into how data is analysed and presented, how to measure what truly matters, and how to confidently use data to monitor your council's performance. The course will include real-world local government examples, ensuring the content is directly applicable to your role.</p>	LGA
Saturday 22 – Sunday 23 November 2025	Residential	Optional for the Planning & Strategic Growth Portfolio Holder	<p><u>Local Plan - Leadership Essentials</u></p>	LGA
Monday 1 December 2025 2:00-3:30pm	Virtual	Optional	<p><u>Better Mental Health with Residents: Using council powers and influence to create mentally healthier communities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social and commercial determinants of mental health • environmental factors like housing, traffic, and pollution • addressing issues around food, alcohol, and gambling 	LGA

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> building social connections for community wellbeing 	
Requested by MDSG	Reading Materials	Optional	<u>Role & Purpose of a Monitoring Officer</u> Members have been provided with reading materials which are saved in the Learning & Development area in Members SharePoint.	BDC
2026				
Thursday 5 February 2026 5:30pm CANCELLED TO BE RESCHEDULED	Council Chamber	Advisory for Planning Committee Members & Substitute Members	<u>Planning Committee Masterclass</u> <u>Highways</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the consideration of highway safety in planning applications assessing severe impacts assessing parking standards other LCC highway considerations 	Highways Authority
Wednesday 11 February 2026 5:30pm	Brooks Room	This training is highly encouraged for members of the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee.	<u>Global Internal Audit Standards - Audit & Corporate Governance Committee Training</u> For the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee to receive an update in regards to the Global Internal Audit Standards and the requirements for Audit Committees.	External Auditor

<p>Monday 2 March 2026</p> <p>5:30pm</p>	<p>Council Chamber</p>	<p>Advisory for Chairs and Vice-Chairs</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Chairing Skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles, Rules and Reference Points • Preparation strategies • How to open meetings and navigate early standard items • Including challenging contributors, votes and outcomes • Summarising skills • Virtual Chairing hints and tips 	<p style="text-align: center;">Link Support Services (UK) Ltd</p>
<p>*DATE TBC</p>	<p>Council Chamber</p>	<p>Advisory for Planning Committee Members & Substitute Members</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Planning Committee Masterclass</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Section 106 Highways</u></p>	<p>BDC Officers</p>
<p>*DATE TBC</p>	<p>TBC</p>	<p>Advisory for Planning Committee Members &</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Planning Committee Masterclass</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Material Considerations</u></p>	<p>BDC Officers</p>

		Substitute Members		
*DATE TBC	TBC	Advisory for Planning Committee Members & Substitute Members	<u>Planning Committee Masterclass</u> <u>Developer Contributions</u>	TBC
*DATE TBC	TBC	Optional	<u>AI Training</u>	TBC

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