

Blaby District Council

Member Development Strategy

May 2019 – April 2023

Reviewed MDS Sub Group
16 December 2019



Foreword

All councillors, whether newly elected, or with many years of experience have a duty to their communities, the Council and themselves to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to carry out their wide ranging and fast changing roles as effectively as possible.

We will share our learning & development opportunities with third parties, in addition, where appropriate, we will extend opportunities to local councillors who are Members of the town and parish councils in the District.

Our commitment to equipping Members with the skills to contribute to the development of our District is directly reflected in both the Council's Corporate Priorities and the Council's Corporate Values.

Following an intake of 10 new Members to the Council in May 2019 we are focused on ensuring all of our Members have the knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles as Members of Blaby District Council and provide effective community leadership for our communities.

Councillor Terry Richardson

Leader of the Council

Councillor David Findlay

Chairman – Member Development
Steering Group

Contents

- Statement of Principles
 - Equality of Opportunity
 - Access to Learning and Development

- Introduction
 - Priorities
 - Objectives
 - The Member Development Steering Group
 - Member Development Charter
 - Members' own responsibilities and commitment

- The Learning & Development Programme
 - Four year cycle
 - Personal Development Appraisals
 - Key themes
 - Delivering the programme
 - Promotion of Learning & Development Opportunities
 - ICT
 - Support for new Members
 - Enhanced programme for senior Members

- Evaluation, Review and Resources
 - Evaluation and review
 - Resources

- Appendices
 1. Pre and post training evaluation forms
 2. Value for Money
 3. Example of a PDA form

Statement of Principles

Equality of Opportunity

Blaby District Council is committed to the principle of equality in their learning and development programmes for all Members – irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital status or working pattern.

Access to Learning and Development

All Members will be given access to development opportunities that enhance the skills and knowledge that they need both now and in the future. They will be offered support to facilitate their continual personal development, to enable them to contribute effectively to the achievement of the Council's priorities and respond to the changing needs of the District's diverse communities.

Care will be taken to identify and remove disadvantages or barriers that Members feel prevent them from taking advantage of these opportunities. In practice this means making sure that there are no physical, social, religious or cultural barriers. Where possible the Council will support Members to develop skills and knowledge that will be useful to them in preparation for enhanced roles.

Enabling Members to attend events and undertake learning and development activities is a key priority. In order to facilitate this:

- Formal sessions will be programmed in advance to try to ensure that they do not clash with the committee cycle and other major events.
- Activities will be programmed at different times of the day to accommodate individual commitments where possible
- Electronic learning materials and other new technology will be used where appropriate
- Council has made provision for a Dependants Carers' Allowance within its Members' Allowances Scheme to provide assistance for those Members with caring responsibilities to attend learning events.
- Appropriate consideration and access to learning will be given to Members with different needs and disabilities

The Member Development Steering Group will regularly review the dates, times and location of all events and make recommendations for change if required.

Introduction

Priorities

Blaby District Council's vision is that Blaby District is made up of thriving and vibrant communities where people are happy to live, work and visit.

We have set three ambitious priorities that will help focus our activities:

- A Place to Live
- A Place to Work
- A Place to Visit

Elected Members have a critical role in delivering these priorities by demonstrating their understanding of the complex challenges faced by modern local government and supporting their communities. We will endeavour to ensure that our learning and development programmes are linked to these Corporate Priorities.

Objectives

Access to strong and effective Member development is therefore essential to help Members fulfil their role and will strengthen the process for good decision making. The objectives of the Strategy are to help Members develop and strengthen their awareness, knowledge and understanding of:

- Local and national challenges and opportunities for the District
- Complex issues facing local government with changes to legislation; changing governance structures in associated bodies and a different funding environment
- The skills and competencies needed by elected Members in the modern world, including effective communications, community leadership and digital competencies.

To deliver these objectives Blaby District Council will demonstrate its commitment to Member Development by:

- Fostering and supporting a Member led approach
- Taking a planned and strategic approach to Member Development and Members' digital experience
- Developing and delivering (with Member involvement) an effective Learning & Development Programme.
- Assisting Members to develop their capacity to fulfil their role by providing role profiles

- Supporting all Members in their development and with any exceptions that may arise
- Providing additional officer support for Portfolio Holders and Chairs of Committees.
- Facilitating regular assessment of training needs and working with Members to evaluate the learning to continually improve the development programme
- Evaluation and reporting of the effectiveness of Members in their roles in relation to the Council's values and Performance Framework
- Providing a budget and facilities for training and development
- Establishing an effective Member Development Steering Group

The Member Development Steering Group

Blaby District Council's Member Development Steering Group ('the Steering Group' or 'the Group') is a cross party working group that meets regularly throughout the year, with further meetings for specific sub groups. The Terms of Reference for the Steering Group are contained within Part 3, Section 6, of the Constitution.

Members have considered and guided the development of this Strategy, provided guidance and feedback on Member communications. They have provided valuable insight into the development of the Personal Development Appraisal (PDA) process and the formation of the Personal Development Plan (PDP) that will provide the foundation for Member training over the course of this Council.

Members of the Steering Group for 2019- 2020:

- Councillor David Findlay (Chairman)
- Councillor Chris Frost (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor Nick Chapman
- Councillor Adrian Clifford
- Councillor Phil Moitt
- Councillor Mat Mortel
- Councillor Bev Welsh
- Councillor Jane Wolfe

Membership is reviewed annually and appointed by Council.

Member Development Charter

Blaby District Council was the first local authority in Leicestershire to be awarded Charter status for its Member Development work, there is a requirement for an authority to seek reaccreditation every three years. Blaby District Council retained its accredited status in November 2013 and then again in 2016.

Going forward an important role for the Steering Group is to ensure that Blaby maintains the standards required for Chartered status and to consider reaccreditation as part of its work programme in 2019.

Members' responsibilities and commitments

All elected Members need to recognise the requirements to develop and maintain their skills and competencies and will be expected to meet their responsibilities of the Council's priorities in the following ways:

- Newly elected Members and returning members will participate in the full induction programme
- All Members will attend training or briefings on a range of relevant local and national issues
- All Members will participate in training on the Council's Code of Conduct
- As required Members will participate in specific training and development sessions related to their Cabinet and committee roles – including Licensing and Planning, where compliance is a Constitutional or legal requirement before Members can serve on these committees
- Supporting each other through mentoring and advice
- Sharing learning (through the Members e:bulletin, cascading information through training sessions and as part of the regular Member Development updates to council)
- Completing pre and post training evaluation of courses and where useful providing feedback on briefings.
- Create a diverse sharing and learning environment irrespective of the Political Parties

The Learning & Development Programme

Four Year Cycle

The Learning & Development Programme is based on a four year cycle that is in line with Blaby's election cycle. This approach also has the flexibility to meet the needs of new Members joining the Council (through by-elections) and the considerable experience of Members with long service. The Programme will be monitored and evaluated throughout the cycle to ensure it keeps pace with new priorities and initiatives.

Personal Development Appraisals (PDA)

The foundation of the Learning & Development Programme is a robust evaluation of training needs which are matched to council priorities and are clearly based on role profiles for elected Members.

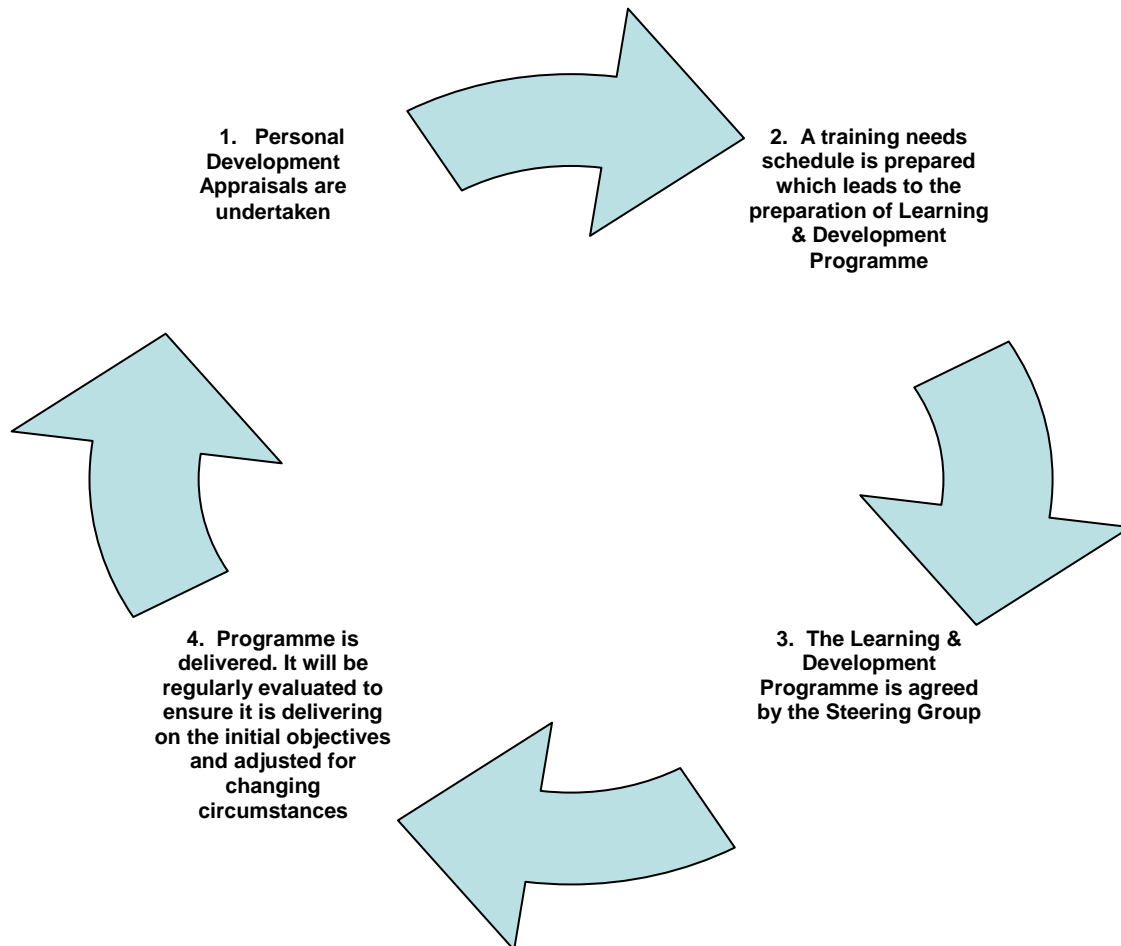
Every 12 to 18 months Members are invited to attend a Personal Development Appraisal - PDA - with their group whip and where requested a support officer from Democratic Services. Where there is a Member who is a single representative they will have the opportunity to discuss development needs with a officer from Democratic Services. These sessions provide the opportunity for an open dialogue to identify training and development needs and a discussion on Members' interests and ambitions relative to their Council roles. These sessions also provide an opportunity to match Members for peer to peer mentoring and enable group whips to consider succession planning using the Personal Development Plans (PDP) A copy of the latest PDA and PDP form is attached as Appendix 3.

Timings

- An election year is considered to be year one in the cycle and PDAs will normally be completed between 12 and 18 months following the election. This enables the completion of the Induction Programme and is timely to plan for the Programme of Learning for years 2 and 3.
- A second PDA will follow during year 3, again between November and February. This will involve a review of the learning undertaken to date as well as an opportunity to identify further training needs and assistance to Group Leaders for identification of successors to key roles.
- The completed Training Needs Assessment Summary will be shared with the Member Development Steering Group, who will guide the development of a Learning & Development Programme
- This programme will be agreed with the Steering Group

The Plan will then be delivered and regularly evaluated by the Steering Group

The continuous cycle of appraisal, establishing training needs, development, delivery and evaluation is illustrated below:



Key Themes

The majority of learning and development themes are relevant to all Members, for example:

- New or changing legislation
- Core skills such as community leadership
- Major policy or service delivery changes by the Council.

Other opportunities will be relevant to specific roles (for example Cabinet Members, Committee Chair or Scrutiny). Members will also have their own individual learning needs.

The Programme will be delivered through three key themes (Core knowledge and skills, Service Specific opportunities and Council & Committee issues). Each 'theme' is reflected to varying degrees in the four year approach:

- Year one (2019/20) is focused on induction to provide Members with the skills and knowledge needed to understand and fulfil their role.
- Year two - three (2020 – 22) will focus on enhancing Members' competencies and knowledge.
- Year four (2022/23) Identifying skills and development needs for succession planning and preparation for induction and mentoring of new Members.

Core knowledge and skills

This includes:

- Democracy and governance i.e. how Council decision-making works and organisational awareness
- The legal/constitutional framework
- Diversity and equality
- IT skills, media and communications
- Managing case work/ward work
- Code of conduct and probity
- Safeguarding
- Dealing with complaints
- Local government finance and financial responsibilities
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Freedom of Information
- Risk and resilience planning
- Partnership working and structures
- Corporate plans (e.g. Community Plan, Local Plan, Economic Development Strategy)
- Safety awareness

Service specific opportunities

This includes:

- Masterclasses/Briefings on the work of individual departments and emerging issues that affect specific service delivery. Examples of this include changes to Welfare Reform, Planning, Local Plan etc.

Council and Committee issues

There will be a number of issues relevant to Councillors as members of specific committees. These include:

- Planning matters
- Licensing matters
- Audit & Standards responsibilities
- Scrutiny skills
- Sitting on appeals panels
- Recruitment and interviewing skills
- Evaluating reports and framing questions
- Specific training for the Council's Executive (Portfolio holders) and chairs of committees

Learning Priorities for 2020 – 1

- Induction Programme
- Financial Training
- Digital skills
- Future of Scrutiny
- Emergency Planning
- Safeguarding
- Equality and Diversity
- How to be an effective ward Councillor (includes dealing with difficult situations)
- Committee training
 - Planning
 - Licensing & Regulatory

Delivering the Programme

The Group recognises that learning and development must be delivered in ways that encourage Member involvement and generate strong Member participation. Opportunities will, where possible, be tailored to reflect different personal and domestic circumstances and preferred learning styles, for example:

- Briefing notes and learning guides
- E-learning packages
- External conferences, seminars and network meetings

- In house masterclasses/briefings presented by senior managers and specialist officers
- Peer coaching and mentoring
- Visits to other authorities
- Joint Member and officer sessions
- Training with r voluntary sector, partner organisations and neighbouring authorities

Promotion of Learning and Development Opportunities

Opportunities for learning & development will be included in the Members monthly e:bulletin and shared with the group whips for group meetings.

Members will also be encouraged to feedback on each learning opportunity undertaken and an update on courses undertaken and forthcoming opportunities will be given on a quarterly basis to full council to provide a formal opportunity to share learning.

In promoting courses, officers will ensure that the benefits of attending each session are clearly highlighted to Members as it is important that the link between a session and Members' own interests are identified.

Digital

The Council is committed to the development of e-democracy and is working to increase the range of information which is available to Councillors electronically and to enable Councillors to conduct more of their business digitally.

A number of options are now available to Members to assist with the use of digital access for online papers used during meetings. Training on digital aspects will focus on ensuring Members have the skills to:

- Use email to communicate with constituents, officers, and other bodies
- Use the latest relevant technology
- Access and use online documents
- Conduct electronic research
- Understand the impact of social media

Support for new Members

In addition to the formal induction events and core skills sessions, new Members where possible will be assigned a group buddy. In all instances an officer buddy will act as their mentor to provide signposting and guidance. Democratic Services will also take a proactive role in ensuring general issues on logistics, such as Council Chamber layout, expenses etc are covered and that new Members feel 'connected'.

By-elections

When Members join the Council as a result of a by-election, Democratic Services will arrange tailored induction courses that introduce the varied elements of the year 1 programme and ensure adequate mentoring support is available to ensure new Members do not feel 'adrift'. Opportunities to observe committees and other operations will form part of this induction.

Enhanced programme for Members of the Council's Cabinet Executive, Opposition leaders and Committee Chairs

It is essential that targeted development opportunities are provided for senior Members who may be currently part of the Council's Cabinet Executive, or have the potential and ambition to join the Cabinet. This small team of Members provide the direction and leadership of the Council and their skills needs to be enhanced and refreshed to ensure they can deliver and embrace the challenges faced by local government.

Succession planning is essential to the smooth running of the council and to facilitate part of this, Portfolio Holders, Opposition Members and Chairs of other key committees will be involved in learning opportunities for Members who wish to develop their role at Blaby.

Enhanced programmes will include

- Community leadership
- Community engagement
- The impact of new legislation
- Vision – local and national
- Political understanding
- People strategy

As part of this work, senior Members will be encouraged to contribute to the learning experiences for newer Members and where appropriate share their skills and experience at a regional and national level. Suitable opportunities will be sought through the Local Government Association's Leadership Academy and courses by local universities and East Midlands Councils.

Evaluation of Learning

Effective evaluation needs to be an integral part of any learning and development programme. The objective for member development is to ensure that we support members, and give them the tools to ensure they are:

- **Informed** and able to contribute to the delivery of the council's priorities:
 - A Place to Live
 - A Place to Work
 - A Place to Visit

- **Skilled** to effectively fulfil any of their committee or leadership roles:
 - Using the role profiles and specific requirements for individual committees or work on outside bodies

- **Confident** and able to fulfil their role as a ward member and community champion
 - Using the role profiles as the basis for this work.

Training will be systematically evaluated and the Steering Group will be directly involved in encouraging feedback and considering evaluation from training opportunities. Their views will shape and determine the content of the Learning & Development Programme.

- Pre and post training questionnaires – by completing these, Members inform future learning and any actions required.

- Member's survey - will include a section on training – seeking views on courses delivered in the year and quality of content and delivery.

- Statistics on Member participation in training will form part of the six monthly Member Development report to Council.

- In addition the overall strategy will be reviewed as part of the Corporate Priorities and the Performance Framework

Resources

The Council provides both financial and officer resources to support Member learning and development. The budget covers four elements:

- Funding for training;
- Allowances for travel and subsistence

- Member Support
- Carers allowances to enable Members with caring responsibilities to attend sessions.

The budget is discussed at each meeting of the Steering Group and when preparing the budget, advice will be sought from the Group on funding needs.

The Group whips and single party members will be advised of all training opportunities. Authorisation to attend any learning or development opportunities (which incur a cost) will need to be granted in advance by a senior officer in Democratic Services. Subject to budget availability, authorisation will be granted if the opportunity is included within the approved programme, or is directly related to any an individual Member's identified training needs. Should a Member wish to undertake training outside of these parameters, then approval from the group whip and Director will be needed.

Value for Money

Member development must also provide value for money (VfM). The matrix used to determine if value for money has been achieved is shown in appendix 2.

The Member Development Steering Group reports to Council twice a year, future reports will include assessments of VfM.

The support of the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG), Group Leaders and Whips is essential to secure members buy-in and therefore their active participation in evaluation.

Evaluation of Learning and Development

Stage 1:

Evaluation of a member's learning needs in respect of their council and ward roles.

This will form part of the members' Personal Development Appraisals (PDA). Following an informal catch up with new members a full appraisal will be undertaken, with the group whip and an officer from Democratic Services, within the first year of becoming a member usually completed between January and March. Once a PDA is completed, a Personal Development Plan (PDP) will be produced and members asked to sign up to this. A PDP is likely to cover actions required up to a three year period, building on member's experience and development. *For example a PDP might include 'an introduction to scrutiny' in year 1 and for some members in years 2 or 3 – there would be advanced training for example on 'leading and scoping scrutiny reviews'.*

Stage 2:

Preparation of a learning & development programme to meet Council priorities and incorporate the individual learning needs (PDPs) of members. This programme will also pick up any requirements identified for ward work and individual committee roles.

Stage 3:

Before any course or learning opportunity members will be asked to complete a simple and short pre-evaluation form

Pre evaluation forms are not required for briefings, which will generally be related to council priorities, policies or changes in legislation.

Stage 4:

Within two weeks of each briefing, course or learning opportunity we will ask members to complete a 'satisfaction evaluation' form that seeks information on their views of content and trainer

Stage 5:

Four months after each course or learning opportunity we will ask members to complete a post training evaluation form that will focus on how they have been able to put the learning into practice. Where possible we will use examples that might be shared across the Council and put into case histories.

Stage 6:

The Member Development Steering Group will consider the evaluation forms every quarter and make recommendations from this on future learning opportunities and specific trainers etc. This will inform the annual programme of learning & development opportunities.



Member Development Pre-session Comments

You have been asked to attend the session below – before you attend could we please ask you to provide some basic information that will help us continue to provide useful sessions for members. Please complete this form and return it to committees@blaby.gov.uk

Your name	
Title of the training session	
Date of the session	

1. What do you hope to get out of the session?

Learn new skills?	Yes / No
Develop your ability to make robust decisions?	Yes / No
A refresher of your existing knowledge of this subject?	Yes / NO

Is there anything else you would like to add?

2. Is the time and venue convenient for you?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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3. If you answered no, what time and venue would be more convenient for you and we will consider this for future sessions?

4. Would you like to try the Council's e:learning platform to learn at home at your own pace?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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5. Have you looked at the LGA's learning and development work books in the Members Lounge?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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6. If you answered 'no' – would you like a member of the Democratic Services team to show you what is available?

Member Development Initial Evaluation Feedback

Please complete this form and return it to committees@blaby.gov.uk. The information you provide will be used as part of our commitment to provide learning & development sessions that help members make effective and informed decisions.

Your name	
Title of the training session	
Date of the session	

1. Overall what did you think of this session?

Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
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2. As a result of this session do you have more confidence in your ability to make decisions or understand processes and reports on this subject?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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3. If you answered no, could you please tell us why not?

4. How would you rank the session presenter(s):

Poor <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
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If there was more than one presenter, did any stand out for you (and why)?

5. Did you find the pace and content of the session helpful?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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If you answered 'no' ... what could have made it more useful for you?

6. What was the best bit of the session for you (and why)?

7. And what bits were not quite so good (and why)?

8. What could have been improved to make the session more helpful for you?

9. Would you recommend that this session should be included in future induction programmes?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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10. Would you be willing to write a short review on the session to go in the members' e:bulletin.

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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Member Development Implementation Feedback

Your name	
Title of the training session	
Date of the session	

1. On (date) you attended a training session on (course title) at the time you told us in your initial feedback that the course was

(summarised list of feedback)

- a. Insert
- b. Insert
- c. Insert
- d. Insert
- e. Insert

2. As it is now three months since you attended the session have you been able to implement the learning from the session in your work?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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If you answered yes – can you please give an example below?

If you answered no – can you please tell us why this is the case?

3. Do you think a follow up session would be helpful?

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
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4. Is there anything more you would like to add about the implementation of your learning from this session?

Value for Money

The factors that we will use to determine Value for Money

Factor	Measure	Score
Cost - absolute cost of the training session, divided by the number of members who attend	<£50 per head	5
	<£75 per head	4
	<£100 per head	3
	<£150 per head	2
	>£151 per head	1
Relevance Obtained from the Blaby Plan, PDP's and role descriptions	Training or briefings are directly related to delivery of the council's priorities and/or values	1
	Training is identified within a members' PDP	1
	Essential Learning for specific role	1
Quality Obtained from course feedback forms	>75% good or v good	3
	>50% good or v good	2
	>25% good or v good	1
	<25% good or v good	0
Applying the Learning Obtained from course feedback forms	>75% "more knowledge/confidence in the subject"	3
	>50% "more knowledge/confidence in the subject"	2
	>25% "more knowledge/confidence in the subject"	1
	<25% "more knowledge/confidence in the subject"	0
Impact Post evaluation forms 3 – 6 months so we can test the impact	Over 50% of attendees are able to provide an example of how they put the training into practice	3
	Would the attendee "recommend a friend or colleague"	3
Maximum score		20

VfM is achieved if an event scores 12 or above.

Personal Development Appraisals (PDA) for Elected Members

Name :	Date of PDA :	Whip :
Ward :	List roles at Blaby DC	Date elected :

Preparation for your PDA

In order to effectively fulfil your roles and responsibilities as an elected Member you need to develop your core competencies in the key areas of Community Leadership, Knowledge, Communications and Scrutiny.

Ahead of your PDA with your group whip, it would be very helpful if you read through the ‘competencies’ outlined overleaf and consider these in the context of your own skills/expertise and give some thought to the areas in which you think training and development will help you.

If you already have – or have ambitions to hold – enhanced responsibilities then you should also consider the additional skills required for enhanced competencies. This process also provides the ideal opportunity for you to articulate your interests as the whips will be able to refer back to this document when preparing their nominations for committees ahead of annual council.

Your own areas of interest and where you would like to have more responsibility in the future

Your areas of interest	Steps to help you develop

Enhanced competencies for roles with additional responsibility	Shared assessment of your current strengths and areas for development	Identification of training needs – including mentoring and observation

An example of the Member Development Plan (PDP)– individual members will be asked to sign up to this later in the year when the training programme is established,

Key areas for development in next 18 months ... and why this is important	Action to put this in place	Pre and Post event evaluation completed

Name

Signature

Date

Review Date