MDWG Survey Results
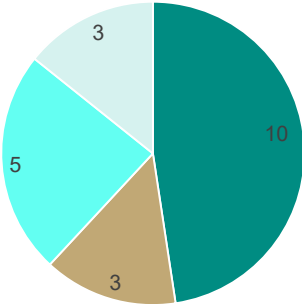
The results from the recent Member Development Working Group Survey

1

Responses

▶ Total Responses:21
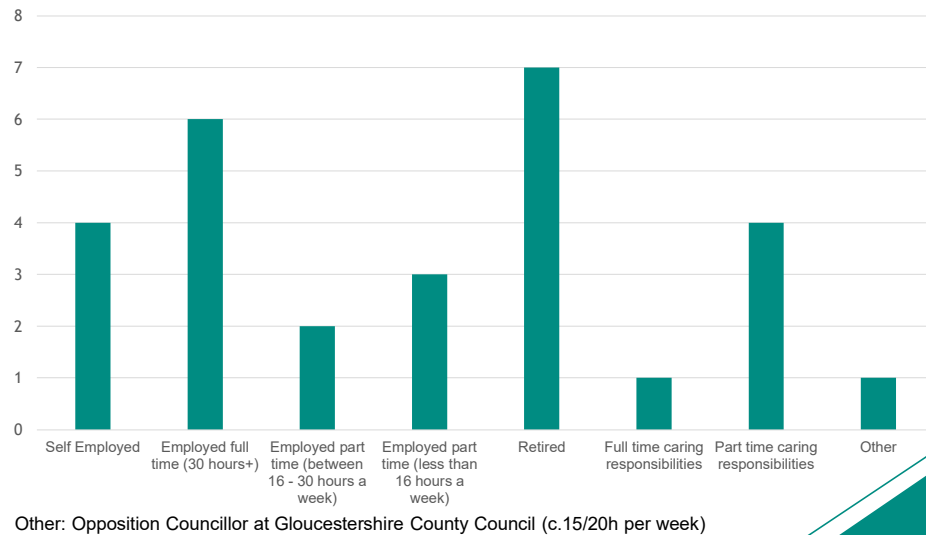
Q2 - Length of service as an elected Member

■ 0 - 2 years   ■ 2 - 7 years   ■ 7 - 11 years   ■ 11 years +

2

Q3 - Which of the following best describes your current circumstances, excluding your work as a District Councillor? (please select all that apply)

Other: Opposition Councillor at Gloucestershire County Council (c.15/20h per week)

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Q3 - Please give us much detail regarding your daily schedule e.g. working from 9am – 5pm / Available during the day in term time

Work 9 - 5 weekdays. However I work from home about 50% of the time and have a fairly flexible employer , so can cover some council related tasks during the working day. I prefer not to have to do council things during the day, and for any evening meetings/events to start at 7 pm.

Work 8am to 5:30pm Mon-Thurs ; 8 to 3pm Friday

Work 8.30- 5.30pm & Work voluntarily 2-4 hours a month.

Relatively flexible 7 days a week depending on unpredictable childcare, meetings, volunteer commitments etc

Work 08:40 - 16:30 Monday to Friday

I am available in the daytime but for District Council activity believe this is better kept to the evening when possible. I also like on-line training that can be taken in our own time. I think when we ask Councillors to attend in person we need to make sure it is useful, well organised and concise.

Between the two councils, I work 9-3:45, 5-7 and most evenings. My availability is flexible given notice, other than committee meetings at both councils and the various other bodies I represent SDC on.

I am able to fulfil my Ward Commitments and many aspects of my Role but struggle at times to make face to face commitments.

Working 16 hours per week, flexibly over 5 days, to fit around councillor work.

It varies every day. Given notice I can usually find a free slot. I collect my neighbours' newspapers on Wednesday and Saturday. On Tuesdays I collect an elderly neighbour's shopping.

As a County, District and Town Council most of my days and evenings are taken up with council work , meetings or doing emails

Employed 3 days a week, work self employed 2 days a week, have 3 children to get to and from school as well as caring for parents doing shopping and chores for them and running my own home. Self employed days I can be flexible but only within school hours.

Available most times to suit.

Different every day. Work Mon, Tues, Wed afternoons, and Friday mornings.

Work 9-5 Monday to Wednesday

Flexible working hours from home daytime, evenings, some weekends.

At present come out of retirement temporary Working all day

Available in the day as I am retired.

Busy between 8:20 - 9am and 14:50 - 15:30pm during term time. Work Mon – Thu 8:20 - 6pm. Fridays for Council business which I try to conduct from the Members Lounge at Ebley Mill. I often take time out for in-day meetings linked to my council work (eg. Outside bodies and Working Group meetings). I often end up catching up on council work at weekends. I routinely have Outlook open to remind me of any upcoming meetings and check my council emails regularly during the day. I serve on Parish Council, meetings are usually on Monday evenings from 6.30 - 8.30pm.
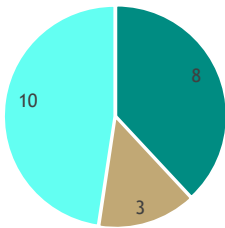
Available all day in termtime

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Q4 - Do you have fixed or flexible working hours?
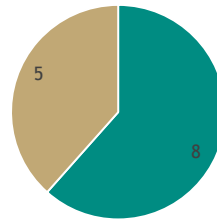
- Flexible Working Hours
- Fixed Working Hours

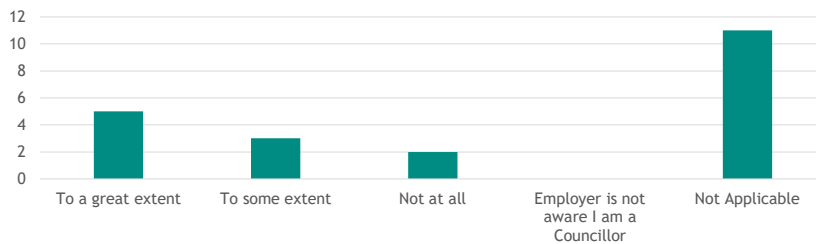## Q5 - Are you also a (please select all that apply), if so how long have you been in that role?

- Parish/Town Councillor
- County Councillor
- None

Parish and Town Councillor	County Councillor
5 years (x2)	6 years (x2)
6 years	
14 years	
Since August 2020	
2 years	
10 Years	

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Q6 - To what extent does your employer support your work as a Councillor?

And Do you utilise the 'time off work for public duties' which is available for District Councillors?

My employer is flexible however I would rather make use of that flexibility through mutual agreement and fair give and take rather than demanding special time off on the basis of the 'time off work for public duties' directive. The flexibility my employer grants is essential in childcare arrangements, so I will not risk that for council work.

Rarely only for occasional day time meetings
No / Not Really
I understand that as my role is excluded from time off allowance under the directive
Occasionally to attend a councillor event. Generally I try to flex my working hours around councillor commitments.
I used to, before retiring. In the past one employer freed me for 4 days in five.
N/A (x2)
Yes
not needed as my work is flexible enough to accommodate
No, I just try to make up lost work time after hours or very early in the morning (4—5am)

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Q7 - Are there any particular aspects of your District Council work that you have a keen interest in and would like to develop a deeper understanding? Please list:

- Equal opportunities.
- Environmental health.
- Housing
- Planning Strategy
- Finance
- Air quality
- Community Development
- SDC support for VCS
- Community hubs
- Acronyms
- Advocacy for residents
- Housing Finance
- Biodiversity (x2)

- Land use, Flood plain and the Geography of the District
- Council's role in the climate and nature emergency
- Development Control (Planning) x4
- Strategic Planning
- Active Travel
- Professional development of officers in community orgs
- local doughnut economics
- sustainable development
- Tenant Welfare and Participation and how to improve
- Overview of the process (from establishing work plan to budget setting)
- Public Speaking
- Debating

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Q8 - Can you tell us about your personal priorities as a Councillor for the next 18 months and what skills and knowledge would help you to achieve these aims:

Personal Priorities		Skills and Knowledge to support
• Assist/Support the residents of the ward I represent (x2) • protecting assets of community value • sustainability and resilience • hubs in my ward. • More open collaborative working between Officers & Cllrs. • An effective Local Plan, rapid quality planning decisions and enforcement. • Climate Change and how we can realistically make a difference particularly in our Housing Stock • Achieving the Council Plan objectives • Healthy mould free homes! • Role as Migrant Member Champion • Casework for my ward • Support for the council plan • instil circular economy principles within and beyond waste collection • Social Housing help for residents cost of living crisis • Tenant service improvement • Contribute positively to the canal strategy	• Development & piloting of new models for affordable social housing ie community land trusts • More extensive contractor management to ensure outsourced work & services are delivering value. • protecting and developing new models for integrated low cost low carbon transport and community inclusion • Support local community efforts to preserve & improve rural services, spaces and facilities. • Developing and refining the District strategy towards management companies on new developments to protect the rights of residents and parishes to step in over the long term. • Deliver on the Leisure Contract and to see the opening of the Canal and plans for the Stonehouse Bristol Road station to progress to inclusion in the New station strategy. • Deliver the council plan, Health and wellbeing, zero plastics & Carbon neutral 2030	• Planning knowledge • Licensing knowledge • specific attention to the cllr role in supporting residents in their casework & how to navigate council protocol to achieve better outcomes. • I need support from officers on how I can pursue this procedurally at the council. • Environment Committee service lines and associated legislation/regulations • Working knowledge of the BNG legislation • The new obligations around the Local Nature Recovery Strategy • Ability to deal with press in particular radio/TV • Learn how to use my SDC laptop • Support for local case work. • understanding on how the housing services are run • Having short briefing notes on key workstream areas and their current status • Having a set of official council talking points that outline the council's collective position would be really useful.

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Q9 - How confident do you feel in these key areas? Do you think there is an opportunity for you to develop your skills further? Please use the rating scale below to assist you.
LOW: level of confidence MODERATE: level of confidence –. HIGH: level of confidence

	The geography and topography of Stroud District	Making effective contributions to meetings	Developing confidence in public speaking, writing speeches, delivering presentations	Working with the Press and Social Media	Chairing meetings, facilitating discussions and group activities	Questioning and scrutiny	Preparing and delivering motions to Council	Making the best use of Council tools, eg. Modern Gov app, Outlook, Teams.	Time and Task management
Low	2	1	2	5	4	4	5	9	5
Medium	12	9	8	8	10	10	8	7	7
High	7	11	11	8	7	7	7	4	9

	Casework management	Understanding the organisation and how it works, the Constitution and protocols of Stroud District Council	Ethics and standards (Code of Conduct)	Equity/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Speed reading / effective reading / note taking	Active listening, holding inclusive meetings	Freedom of Information / Data Protection	Local Government Finance	Adult & Child Safeguarding	Mental health and neurodiversity awareness
Low	3	4	1	2	8	1	1	5	3	5
Medium	11	10	8	5	3	9	9	10	9	6
High	6	6	10	13	9	10	10	5	9	9

Q10 - Are there any skills not listed above that you would find useful in your day-to-day work as a councillor?

Dealing with conflict, difficult conversations, supporting community cohesion and A better understanding of the way officers specifically senior officers and the legal team frame economics, economic development, the relationship with the community sector and sustainability.

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Q11 - Would you benefit from any additional assistance with the use of the following IT systems?

	Teams	Zoom	Outlook	Modern Gov App	Members Hub
Yes	5	2	7	10	10

Q12 - What training do you feel should be made mandatory for all Councillors?

Training	Yes – Mandatory	No – Not Mandatory
Safeguarding	13	6
GDPR and Data Protection	16	2
EDI	17	3
Information and Cyber Security	13	4
Code of Conduct	19	1
Training for DCC Members	16	4
Licensing Training	13	4

Other: Basic awareness is necessary but not detailed knowledge
If cllrs have provide evidence they completed training as part of their employment, should not be mandatory.
Smaller refresher training for the following years more useful.
Planning for all members and a session on what the tiers of the councils do and who/how to contact for what.
Managing and dealing with casework Member-officer relations and understanding strategic/operational.
One Council, the council's strategic vision.

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Q13 - If you have suggested any mandatory training, at what frequency should this be completed?

Annually (x3)
Per term, unless specific training for joining a new committee mid term. (x2)
Every Election Cycle
One-off, practically focussed session
At start of new Civic Term for all members staggered over the first 9months and then bi annual "top ups (x2)
In line with good practice.
Every 2 years or when moving to a new committee (x2)
When elected or moved on to relevant committees
At start of elected term and a refresher at mid-point
Once a year - a refresher of the strategy, a vision for the year ahead outlining key milestones in the council calendar and a review of achievements so far. Members can end up being quite silod in their committees and may not have full sight of what's being done where.
within 5 months of start , refresher at 2.5 years?

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Q14 - Do you have any suggestions for increasing Members attendance at training?

- Perhaps issue an information sheet and then have a Q&A with a council officer at Ebley Mill before a council meeting.
- Credits system whereby councillors have to get certain number each year (like CPD for professions).
- Ask with 'Other' comments
- A variety of times & styles to suit the subject matter, fit in with other responsibilities. Online, in person and hybrid. Interactive with skilled trainer where the outcomes are behaviour change. Engaging and clearly visible benefits rather than tick box.
- This is a question of accessibility, rights and responsibilities. Training should be face-to-face where possible, but with hybrid or online-only options. There should be alternative opportunities as well, maybe a daytime option and an evening option.
- What are the impacts or penalties on the Cllr that does not attend training? There must be a balance here. Perhaps introduce a "Councillor Accreditation" status that is publicly available, perhaps on the Cllr page on the website. Limit participation of the councillor until essential training has been completed.
- Make it short and relevant.
- Keep the focus on what the practical application is for members.
- More workshops rather than Tool box talks. better use of case studies and working examples relevant to SDC Members
- Temporarily ceasing monthly allowances!
- Give plenty of notice, short notice is not helpful to people who are active in the community or that have family commitments.
- Looking at the results of this survey & Revise opportunities to support members.
- Maybe deliver training in different wards on rotation or in wards that are not so close to Ebley Mill. This could also be a way for members to see other wards in the district and get an understanding of the different communities we are representing.
- Possibly change the language used around training so that it is more inviting.
- canvas from members the best time for them to be available and organise some away days that fit these times in an attractive setting
- eg museum in the park with refreshments!
- Don't make the training sessions to long
- Make them less pedagogic and more interesting. Split them across technical briefings, short video examples to illustrate key points, practical commentary from Members who have an understanding of the topic. Inject storytelling, humour, practical exercises and inclusive discussions. Transform the council chamber space to distinguish training sessions from formal meetings, invite the councillors to mix up their seating, so they aren't sitting in political groups.

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Q15 - Are there any development sessions that you feel you would have the skills to deliver to other members? For example, this could be something tied to your expertise or previous roles you have held. Please specify.

Risk
Midlife confidence/competence crisis holding me back for now. Happy to provide my career history, skills & interests for others to get in touch for support or mentoring if that is of use to anyone, I've been v lucky to find most of that from other cllrs or subject experts within my party so far, with smaller more independent groups this may not apply to everyone
I have limited time available with my current roles and responsibilities.
Most topics.
Chairing meetings , time management, Ward work, Communication skills, effective team building .
Maybe IT.
chairing meetings; writing speeches; press
Employees rights
Using and interacting with social media and the press

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Q16 - Evidence tells us that there are many different forms of learning and people find some better suited to them than others. eg. reading, e-learning, online briefings, virtual meetings, hands-on / workshop sessions.How would you describe your learning style? Tick all that apply

Visual learner – You learn by reading or seeing pictures e.g videos, charts, diagrams etc.	Auditory Learner – You learn by hearing and listening e.g. verbal presentation, music etc.	Reading / Writing – You learn by writing, reading, and taking notes.	Kinaesthetic Learner – You learn best through physical activity and practical examples.
16	10	15	11

Q17 - Are you aware of the online training page on the Members hub to catch up on missed training?

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■ Yes ■ No

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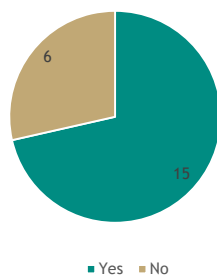
<u>Q18 - What do you use most on the Members Hub, please rank in order. (1 being most used)</u>

<u>Voted most used:</u>

News Items (Weekly Update)
Events Section
Staff Directory
Catch up on training recordings/presentations
Planning application search/referring an item to DCC
Links to SDC website (e.g. committee pages, planning applications)
Organisational structure charts
Document Library

<u>Voted least used:</u>

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<u>Q19 - Is there anything you would like to be added to the Members Hub? (Please specify)</u>

The above list isn't very accurate as I haven't used it for quite a few of those things so not sure how useful it might be. Mostly because I don't know how to search for things effectively and things aren't always logically grouped where I would expect to find something (am now actively trying to use it more & making suggestions as I find them/ try and fail to do something) Still not sussed how to make it a single click jump from outlook page (that has to be my home page to deal with incoming urgents or I'll get distracted!)

The Risk Register
The org chart is still unworkable for me.
Information about mental health support available to councillors. Basic guidance on triaging casework and reaching the correct officer.

<u>Q20 - Is there anything you would like to be removed from the Members Hub? (Please specify)</u>

No, it's looking much better than it did
No. But a clearer layout would help.
No
Not sure, will suggest as I go. Be good if it could fill more of the screen, half is the heading, hoping MS/365 training will help me better organise my online workspace :)
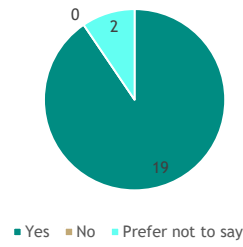The Staff directory isn't very useful. It would be better if it could be replaced with something that is easier to navigate and search

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Q21 - Do you intend to stand for re-election at the end of your term?
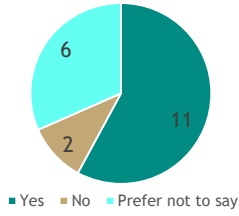
Q22 - Would you recommend becoming a Councillor if you were asked?

Q23 - Are you aware that you can access any of the e-learning modules available on me-learning not just the ones allocated to you?

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