

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 18 FEBRUARY 2015****Present:**

Councillor N Barker – (Chair)
Councillor J Austen
Councillor M Gordon
Councillor J Windle

Also Present:

Mr A Bashir – Improvement Officer
Mr M Kane – Governance Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Mr F Powell – Senior Governance Officer

01/15 Apology for Absence

An apology for absence from the meeting was received from Councillor G Baxter MBE.

02/15 Councillor T J Moon

The Working Group expressed its sadness at the news of the recent death of Councillor T J Moon. Members requested that their gratitude be recorded for the contribution and support given by the late Councillor Moon to the Council's work on Member Development.

03/15 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Member Development Working Group held on 27 October 2014 be approved as a correct record.

04/15 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Member Development Working Group held on 27 October 2014

There were no matters arising from the Minutes of the Member Development Working Groups from its meeting held on 27 October 2014.

05/15 Change of Order of Agenda

The Chair, with the consent of the Working Group, agreed to bring forward consideration of Agenda Item No 5 – Members Data Reporting System.

RESOLVED – That the Members Data Report System be considered as the next item on the Agenda.

06/15 Members Data Reporting System

The Working Group considered the report of the Assistant Director – Customer Service and Improvement. The purpose of the report was to advise the Working Group of the implementation of the Members Data Reporting System.

The Members Data Reporting system was a resource to assist Councillors in providing strategic analytical data at a ward and District level. Each ward would have a page highlighting key strategic statistics, including crime, unemployment rates, health and service data requests. The system would enable Members to monitor trends and benchmark performance.

The Improvement Officer confirmed that the system would be available for use by Members at the end of February/mid March 2015.

The Working Group was reminded that the use of the Data Reporting System had been discussed at the Member Involvement Half Day on 3 June 2014 and had been discussed at the Member Development Working Group meetings on 30 July 2014, 27 October 2014 and been the subject of a presentation at Council on 5 January 2015.

The Working Group indicated its support for the use of the System as it appreciated the benefits of the information provided and asked that Rykneld Homes Limited be requested to provide regular updates on the progress of Council House Voids so that it could be included on the system.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the content of the report on the Members Data Reporting System be noted.
- (2) That Rykneld Homes Limited be requested to provide regular updates on the progress of Council House Voids so that this information could be included on the Members Data Reporting System.

(Improvement Officer/
Senior Governance Officer/
Rykneld Homes Limited)

07/15 Being a Councillor in North East Derbyshire: A Guide for Prospective Candidates

The Working Group considered the draft copy of the Being A Councillor In North East Derbyshire: A Guide for Prospective Candidates. The Working Group indicated its support for the document and requested that it be published as soon as possible.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group supports the publication of the Being a Councillor in North East Derbyshire: A Guide for Prospective Candidates document and that it be made available on the Council's website and be in hard copy form as soon as possible.

(Governance Team)

08/15 **Member E-Learning Modules**

The Working Group considered the report on the Local Government Associations (LGA) provision of its leadership offer regarding e-learning modules for Members.

The LGA was now offering an e-learning module for Members. The provision was based on the existing Councillor workbook system, the modules provided an additional flexible method of learning for Members which could be accessed through the LGA website. To-date there were two modules available:-

- Effective Ward Councillor
- Facilitation and Conflict Resolution

It was intended that the following modules would be available by e-learning in the future:-

- Business planning
- Councillors guide to the Health System
- Chairing skills
- Climate change
- Community leadership
- Community Safety
- Creating a 'fit for the future organisation' – the political dimension
- Effective Member/Officer relations
- Engaging young people
- Facilitation and conflict resolution
- Handling casework
- Health and safety in the Council
- Influencing skills
- Introduction to Planning – Councillors Guide
- Joining the chain gang – preparing for the role of Civic Mayor
- Media and communications
- Neighbourhood and Community Engagement
- Neighbourhood Planning – Ward Councillors Guide
- Performance management
- Scrutiny of finance
- Stress management and personal resilience
- Supporting constituents with complex issues
- The effective Ward Councillor
- Working with Town and Parish Councillors

The provision of the e-learning modules was free as the District Council was a member of the Local Government Association.

The LGA had advised that were considering providing the e-learning modules directly to Councils so they could be uploaded onto their system and be accessed directly by Members. The LGA had requested that the Council indicate whether it would be interested in using this format.

The Working Group indicated its support for the use of e-learning modules and that if possible they be available directly at the District Council so amendments to the system could be made more easily.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the content of the report on e-learning modules be noted.
- (2) That the Working Group supports the introduction of the Local Government Association e-learning modules for Members and that they be made available via the Council's IT system, if possible, so that they can be accessed more readily.

(Senior Governance Officer/
IT & Training Officer)

09/15 Planning Advisory Service – “Defensible Decisions” Evaluation Report

The Working Group considered the evaluation report received from the Planning Advisory Service on the Member Training event held on 2 October 2014.

Planning Committee in July 2014 approved arrangements for the Planning Advisory Service to give an interactive presentation on Making Defensible Planning Decisions. The event was held on Thursday, 2 October 2014, 18 Members attended, including five from Bolsover District Council. A copy of the evaluation report was submitted to Planning Committee on 18 November 2014. A copy of the evaluation report prepared by Mr David Elworthy, who led the event on behalf of the Planning Advisory Service, is attached as **Appendix A** to these Minutes.

A copy of the training material is available on the Members Portal in the Member Development section and can be accessed as follows:- <https://nedxnet.nedbyshire.gov.uk/mxnet/index.php/members-extranet/folders/fid/302>

Councillor J Austen advised that at the Planning Committee on Tuesday, 23 February 2015 she requested that consideration be given to requesting an officer from Derbyshire County Council's Highways Division to attend a future meeting so that they could outline the reasons for the highway advice in respect of particular planning applications.

The Working Group requested that a report on this matter be included on the agenda for its next meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the content of the evaluation report from the Planning Advisory Service in respect of Making Defensible Planning Decisions Event held on 2 October 2014 be noted.
- (2) That the Governance Team prepare a report for consideration at the next meeting of the Member Development Working Group on the possibility of inviting a Highways Officer from Derbyshire County Council to a future

meeting to provide information on the reasons for the highway advice in respect of planning applications.

(Governance Team)

10/15 East Midlands Councils Event: “The Future of Local Government and Public Services in the next Parliament”

The Working Group was reminded that East Midlands Councils had organised an event “The Future of Local Government and Public Services in the next Parliament”, which was held on 21 November 2014, Councillors J Austen, N Barker and M Gordon attended.

A similar event would be held following the General Election and provision would be made for Members to attend the session at East Midlands Councils in June 2015.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the information in respect of the East Midlands Councils Event “The Future of Local Government and Public Services in the next Parliament” attended by three Members on 21 November 2014 be noted.
- (2) That a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Member Development Working Group in respect of the possibility of Members attending a further course in June 2015 in respect of “The Future of Local Government in the next Parliament”.

(Governance Team)

11/15 Member Involvement Half Day – 2 December 2014 – Evaluation Results

The Working Group considered the evaluation statistics and comments submitted by Members in respect of the Member Involvement Half Day held on 2 December 2014. A copy of the evaluation results and comments submitted by Members is attached as **Appendix B** to these Minutes.

During the Working Group’s consideration of the evaluation results there was a general discussion on various opportunities for Members to develop and gain relevant information to their role. The Working Group was advised that it was proposed that a series of Personal Development Plan interviews be held with Members to inform future training provision which would be considered by this Working Group and any recommendations submitted to Cabinet.

The Working Group requested that a report on the Personal Development Plan interviews be submitted to its first meeting in the new municipal year 2015/16.

RESOLVED –

That the Working Group:-

- (1) Notes the statistical information/comments provided by Members in respect of the Member Involvement Half Day held on 2 December 2014 as detailed in **Appendix B** to these Minutes.

- (2) Requests that a report be submitted on the Personal Development Plan interviews and Member learning opportunities to the first meeting of this Working Group in the new municipal year 2015/16.

(Governance Team)

12/15 Member Development Budget 2014/2015

The Working Group considered the report on the current level of expenditure on the Member Development budget 2014/2015.

The Member Development budget for 2014/15 was £4,000. This had been reduced to £2,000 as part of the Council's expenditure reductions. The main areas of expenditure to-date were:-

- Subscription to East Midlands Councils Regional Programme of Briefing Events for Councillors 2014/2015 - £500.
- Provision of refreshments for Members visit to the New Build Developments at Eckington and Killamarsh on Tuesday, 8 April 2014.
- Provision of refreshments for the Planning Committee Training Event held on 10 June 2014 and the Housing and Economic Development Housing Update Event on 9 December 2014.
- The purchase of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) booklet – Audit Committees: Practical Guide for Local Authorities and Police – to be used as part of Member Training/Development.

The Working Group was requested to note that as at 31 December 2014 expenditure from the revised budget of £2,000 was £1,006.

The Member Development budget for 2015/16 was likely to increase again to £4,000 given that this would be the year of both District/Parish/Town Council elections and that there may be additional call on Member Development resources.

RESOLVED – That the content of the report on the spend from the Member Development budget 2014/15 be noted.

(Governance Team)

13/15 The Provision and Monitoring of Training and ICT Support for North East Derbyshire and Bolsover District Councils

The Working Group considered the report of the Assistant Director Governance and Monitoring Officer. The purpose of the report was to advise Members of the process proposed in respect of training and ICT support provided to Members.

Member attendance at the recent I-pad training course had been low. Members ability to utilise the various applications on the I-pad was improving so that the majority no longer required classroom based training.

Members were now opting for one-to-one sessions with the Members ICT and Training Officer as and when required. It was proposed that to ensure that information was evaluated, that a Members Training Attendance Spreadsheet be prepared to use to log all training undertaken by each Member. As the spreadsheet developed, officers would advise the Working Group of the training provided. It was confirmed that classroom based training would be provided to Members whenever it was requested.

The Working Group indicated that it did not consider that ICT support and fixes should be classed as Member Development/Learning.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group supports the proposals regarding the use of a Members Training Attendance Spreadsheet as a mechanism for providing evaluation information on Members IT training.

(Members ICT Training Officer/
Governance Team)

14/15 East Midlands Councils: Regional Policy Briefing Events for Councillors 2015-2016 Programme

The Working Group considered a report on proposals for a series of six separate briefing events to be held by East Midlands Councils designed to specifically support local authorities.

East Midlands Councils had confirmed they would be holding a series of six professional development events for Members. These followed on from the courses held in 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15.

The benefits of the Council's participation in the programme were:-

- Two Members can attend each of the six events (the Working Group can determine which Members can attend).
- Participating Members can share their knowledge with other colleagues to help inform the Council's decision making.
- The opportunity for Councillors from across the region to meet with colleagues and share experiences, information and ideas.
- The events will provide an opportunity to hear directly from policy experts on areas of Welfare Reform, Housing Policy and Planning.

The cost of the Council's participation in the Programme was £500 + VAT (the same as for the 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 Programmes). This equated to a cost of £42 per Councillor per session. If the Working Group supported participation in the Programme the cost would be funded from the Member Development budget 2014/2015.

A copy of the Programme prepared by East Midlands Councils is attached as **Appendix C** to these Minutes. The dates and topics proposed for the Programme 2015/16 were as follows:-

- Wednesday, 24 June 2015
What the outcomes of the General Election mean for Local Government and Public Services
- Wednesday, 23 September 2015
Key Policy Issues for Local Government
- Friday, 6 November 2015
Delivering Public Services in the new parliament
- Wednesday, 2 December 2015
Topic to be confirmed
- Thursday, 28 January 2016
Topic to be confirmed
- Wednesday, 9 March 2016
Topic to be confirmed

RESOLVED – That the Working Group supports the Council’s participation in the East Midlands Councils: Regional Policy Briefing Events for Councillors 2015/2016 Programme and authorises expenditure of £500 + VAT in respect of the Council’s participation in the Programme.

(Governance Team)

15/15 Member Involvement Half Day: Tuesday, 7 April 2015

The Working Group was advised that the next Member Involvement Half Day was timetabled for Tuesday, 7 April 2015 at 2.00 pm in the Council Chamber at the District Council Offices, Saltergate.

The Working Group requested that it receive a presentation on Neighbourhood Planning to the next Member Involvement Half Day on 7 April 2015.

16/15 Any Other Business

There was no other business to be considered at this meeting of the Member Development Working Group.

17/15 Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group noted that the date of the next meeting would be discussed and agreed with the Chair and that Members would be advised accordingly.

(Senior Governance Officer)

Planning Advisory Service

"Defensible decisions" training for NE Derbyshire DC

Introduction

The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) commissioned POS Enterprises to provide support to North East Derbyshire District Council on training planning committee members. The work was undertaken on 2 October 2014 at the Chesterfield offices. 18 members attended the whole training including 5 from their strategic partner authority - Bolsover District Council.

After a very helpful update from the North East Derbyshire officers on the current position and issues, the PAS PowerPoint presentation was slightly modified to reflect their particular situation. A case study was chosen to reflect the issues and related to a housing site outside the defined settlement boundary that Planning Committee refused contrary to officers' recommendation. The subsequent appeal was allowed and a full costs application was made.

A number of key issues emerged during the training, which included:

- The importance of an up to date Local Plan and 5 year land supply
- Involvement of members in pre application discussions
- Communication between officers and members
- Obtaining and challenging evidence
- Clear and evidential decision making

Comments on the support

The training format enabled the discussion to address decision making in an informed way. In particular the relationship between the NPPF and the Local Plan was explored. Understanding the pre-eminence of the NPPF in the absence of an adopted Local Plan and a 5 year housing supply was a key learning point.

The necessity to provide convincing evidence during committee decision making was examined in some depth. The relationship between the approved development plan and material considerations was also examined and an exercise on material considerations was undertaken as part of the training to reinforce the learning outcomes.

As a result of the training the members are fully aware of the level of evidence that is required for decision making.

The training also explored practical steps that would help to support members in making difficult decisions. These included the involvement of members in pre applications discussions and acting as community leaders in applicant consultation exercises. Gaining the initiative and leading consultation exercises was seen as a positive way forward.

Improved communication between officers and members was also seen as a positive way forward to test the strength of evidence in advance of a committee decision.

General Comments

The experience at North East Derbyshire was positive and members appeared to respond positively to the training. However the authority is going to face a number of difficult decisions in the absence of an adopted Local Plan and a 5 year housing supply.

The presentation model worked well and allowed engagement on the issues. The presentation ran to time.

David Elworthy

POS Enterprises

MDWG MINS (0218) 2015/Appendix A/AJD

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP – 18 FEBRUARY 2015

MEMBERS INVOLVEMENT HALF DAY – TUESDAY, 2 DECEMBER 2014

RESULTS ANALYSIS

Members Attended: 15 (13 Members elected prior to May 2011, 2 elected in May 2011)

Total Number of Forms Completed: 13

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Did not answer
The information included in the Programme was helpful in setting out the main elements of the event	6 (46%)	5 (38%)				2 (16%)
I found the presentations helpful and increased my knowledge and understanding of the following areas:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Protection – A Practical Guide for Members 	7 (54%)	5 (38%)				1 (8%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where Are We Now – What do the changes in Welfare Reform, Housing and Planning mean for Local Government 	2 (16%)	10 (77%)				1 (8%)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Did not answer
• Emergency Planning	7 (54%)	6 (46%)				
• Employment and Skills	8 (62%)	5 (38%)				

In what ways do you think events such as this could be improved?

The following comments were made:

- More time given to each presentation;
- Very informative and interesting;
- Smaller would give officers more time to go through their slides and Members to ask more questions

Do you have any further comments to make about the event?

The following comments were made:

- Too many presentations squeezed into a half day. Suggest maximum of three presentations each half day. Ideal two to allow for questions and discussions;
- Further training for relevant information for Councillors;
- Well done to all presenters;
- Interesting topics, would have liked opportunity for us (elected Members) to have had more time for discussions.

Regional Policy Briefing Events for Councillors 2015 – 2016 Programme

Local Government and public services have undergone substantial changes over the last 4 years, the outcome of the General Election in 2015 will further shape its future and direction.

The 2015-16 Regional Programme of Briefing events for Councillors will be designed specifically to support local authorities in the post General Election period. The programme will provide tailored policy information and update sessions across a range of areas such as Planning policy, Welfare Reform policy and Health.

The first event in the programme will be held in June 2015 and will provide initial analysis of what the outcomes of the General Election will mean for policy affecting local government and the public sector.

The second event in the programme will focus on supporting new Councillors, through a policy overview event that will provide new Councillors with an opportunity to hear directly from policy experts on the areas of Welfare Reform, Housing policy and Planning.

The programme again will be made up of 6 separate briefing events, individually designed to be informative and topical for Councillors in the East Midlands.

2015/16 programme content and dates

24 June 2015 – What the outcomes of the General Election mean for Local Government and Public Services

The first event in the programme will provide initial analysis of what the outcomes of the General Election will mean for policy affecting local government and the public sector

23 September 2015 – Key Policy Issues for Local Government

This event specifically for new Councillors will provide an overview of key policy issues for local government and will provide an opportunity to hear directly from policy experts on areas of Welfare Reform, Housing policy and Planning.

6 November 2015 – Delivering Public Services in the new parliament

Understanding what the changes in Government mean for delivering public services in the new Parliament.

The content of the second half of the programme has yet to be determined, but dates have been set for;

- 2 December 2015
- 28 January 2016
- 9 March 2016

Cost of the 2015/16 programme

The cost of the programme will remain the same as the 2014/15 programme, £500 for a local authority member of East Midlands Councils, which gives each local authority two places on each of the six events. Further places can be purchased at a discounted price of £40.

Value for Money

The Regional Programme of Briefing events provides local authorities with access to continuing professional development for Councillors at an incredibly low cost.

For subscribing members of the programme the cost for each place works out at just less than £42. This represents a saving of £2,500 on similar development opportunities.

Information on the programme and individual events can be found at www.emcouncils.gov.uk/Councillor-Briefing-sessions



Who should attend the briefing sessions?

All councillors who wish to access a variety of experts and speakers to gain information, knowledge and practical advice on a range of emerging topics. Participants will be able to keep up to date and translate their learning back into their authority to help inform decision-making.

What is the Regional Programme?

The Regional Programme of Briefing events, is a series of 6 low cost knowledge based events for councillors in the region.

What are the Benefits of the programme?

Subscribing members of the programme, will have benefitted from;

- at least 12 members attending the 6 events
- at least 80 hours of development
- a cost saving of over £2,500

Membership of the programme

21 Local authorities subscribed to the 2014/15 programme.

Next steps

If you would like to subscribe to the 2015/16 programme please complete the accompanying proforma and return to Kirsty.lowe@emcouncils.gov.uk

Feedback from delegates from the 2014-15 programme

- *Very useful and very good*
- *“Excellent presentations”*
- *“Good to know how businesses have coped with flooding – useful information”*
- *“Very useful and informative”*
- *“Great event – thank you”*

East Midlands Councils wants to ensure that the programme remains topical and responsive. If you would like to suggest a future topic for the programme please contact Kirsty Lowe.

For further information - If you would like more information about the programme or details about the individual sessions, please contact Kirsty Lowe on Kirsty.Lowe@emcouncils.gov.uk or call 01664 502 637.