

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 7 JANUARY 2016

Present:

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

Also Present:

Donna Cairns – Senior Governance Officer

37/15 Apology for Absence

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor G Baxter MBE.

38/15 Minutes of Last Meeting

The Working Group considered the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 November 2015. In relation to Minute 30/15, the Senior Governance Officer advised the Group that she had attended the East Midlands Councils – Councillor Development Network meeting on 1 December 2015. The meeting had been useful to share ideas and best practice and the Senior Governance Officer would try to attend future meetings when possible due to their time and location.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Member Development Working Group held on 19 November 2015 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

39/15 Member Involvement Half Day – 17 November 2015 – Evaluation Results

The Working Group considered the evaluation statistics and comments submitted by Members in respect of the Member Involvement Half Day held on 17 November 2015.

It was noted that all Members who attended and provided feedback either agreed or strongly agreed that the presentations were helpful and increased their knowledge and understanding of their role of Members and officers work.

It was commented in the feedback that although questions were requested to be held until the end, during this session questions had been taken during the presentation and it was felt that this added to them.

The Working Group discussed that the nature of the questions being asked would determine whether it was suitable to be answered at that time or to be held until the end. It would be up to the Chair of the meeting or the person giving the presentation to determine this.

It was agreed that the arrangements to request questions be taken at the end of each presentation should continue.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group notes the evaluation results in respect of the Member Involvement Half Day held on 17 November 2015.

40/15 Evaluation Results

(a) Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults – 9 November 2015

The Working Group considered the evaluation statistics and comments submitted by Members in respect of the Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Briefing Session on 9 November 2015.

Overall the feedback had been very positive, however, the Working Group discussed that the session could have been clearer on the information for Members specifically in their personal capacities rather than the role of staff. The Senior Governance Officer advised that she would pass this feedback on to the course provider.

The slides from the presentation at the briefing had not been circulated to all Members as they had not been received from the course provider. The Senior Governance Officer would circulate these as soon as they were available.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group notes the evaluation report on Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Briefing held on 9 November 2015.

(b) Planning Advisory Service – Defensible Decisions – 12 October 2015

The Working Group considered the evaluation statistics and comments submitted by Members in respect of the Planning Advisory Briefing Session on Defensible Decisions held on 12 October 2015.

The briefing session had been open to all Members from North East Derbyshire District Council and Bolsover District Council. A total of 20 Members had attended the event, 17 from North East Derbyshire District Council and 3 from Bolsover District Council.

The feedback had been very positive with all Members rating the session as either good or excellent. All of the participants answered that they felt more confident in their ability to make robust planning decisions.

It was noted that planning remained a high priority for learning and development for Members and further sessions would be organised during the year.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group notes the evaluation report on Planning Advisory Service – Defensible Decisions – held on 12 October 2015.

41/15 Review of the Member Development Strategy

The Working Group considered the report of the Senior Governance Officer on the draft Member Development Strategy for 2016-2019.

The Working Group had agreed in November 2015 that the existing document, including the Member Development Strategy, Member Development Evaluation Strategy and Member Training and Development Policy, be consolidated into a single Member Development Strategy and Action Plan.

The draft Strategy set out the aims and objectives for member development within the Council and how it linked to the Corporate Plan. The roles of elected Members were also outlined to ensure that member development addresses the various aspects of the work of Members.

The Strategy would establish a framework for how Councillors' learning and development needs would be identified and how a programme would be designed to meet these needs. It also provides a consistent approach to evaluation to ensure member development activities are effective in building capacity.

Attached to the Strategy was an Action Plan that set out actions for implementing the Strategy's objectives. The Action Plan included some matters raised recently by the Working Group such as reviewing the evaluation forms and the accessibility of information on the Member Development section of the Members Portal.

The Action Plan also included a review of the timing of Member Development sessions and a review of the Calendar of Meetings. The Working Group commented that the make-up of the Council now included a greater proportion of Members who work either full or part-time during the day. At present all Member Development sessions are held during the day which makes it difficult for working Members to attend. It was discussed that Members had been asked on occasions specifically for their preference on the time of day for a training or briefing session, such as the Licensing Committee Briefing coming up in January, and no preference had been stated for an evening session. It was commented that Members on a Committee that meets during the day did not necessarily represent the preferences for Members overall on the Council. It was agreed that the timing of Member Development events and the timing of meetings in the Calendar of Meetings be kept under review, as outlined in the Strategy.

The Working Group discussed how Members requests for external training courses should be dealt with. It was proposed in the draft Strategy that the decision for most training requests should lie with the Assistant Director – Governance and Monitoring Officer as she holds the delegated powers for determining operational matters and she would consult the Cabinet Portfolio Holder. Requests for external training with more significant policy or financial implications would be raised through the Member Development Working Group and be taken to Cabinet if necessary.

The Working Group discussed that some guidance or criteria should be developed to assist in determining these requests so that a clear and consistent approach would be followed. It was agreed that reference to developing this criteria be added to the Strategy and the Action Plan.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group support the draft Member Development Strategy, subject to the incorporation of their comments as set out above and agrees that the document be circulated for consultation with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees, the Political Group Leaders and SAMT.

42/15 Review of Member Role Profiles

The Working Group considered the report of the Senior Governance Officer on the review of the Member Role Profiles.

The existing Role Profiles were adopted by Cabinet in June 2013 for the period 2013/2016. The following Role Profiles were currently in place:-

- Member of the Council
- Chair and Vice Chair of the Council
- Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council
- Leader of the Majority Opposition Group
- Leader of the Minority Opposition Group
- Cabinet Member
- Chair and Vice Chair of a Scrutiny Committee
- Scrutiny Committee Member
- Chair and Vice Chair of a Regulatory Committee
- Member of a Regulatory Committee
- Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee
- Member on Standards Committee Member
- Member on Member Development Working Group Member
- Member of the Strategic Alliance Joint Committee

Minor amendments to the Role Profiles had been proposed to improve the wording of the responsibilities under each profile.

The Working Group discussed whether all of the existing Role Profiles were necessary to have in place as the Member Development Working Group Role Profile was the only Working Group that was included on the list. It was suggested that Role Profiles should only exist for the basic level as a member of the Council and for those roles that received a special responsibility allowance. It was therefore proposed that the Role Profiles be slimmed down to only include:-

- Member of the Council
- Chair and Vice Chair of the Council
- Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council
- Leader of the Largest Opposition Group
- Cabinet Member
- Chair and Vice Chair of a Scrutiny Committee
- Chair and Vice Chair of a Regulatory Committee
- Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee

It was suggested that Members could refer to the terms of reference for each Committee or Working Group for information on their role as a Member of that Committee or Working Group.

The Role Profiles would be circulated to the Members holding the positions currently for their comment before being brought back to the next meeting of the Member Development Working Group and on to Cabinet for approval.

RESOLVED –

(1) That the Working Group recommends that the Member Role Profiles be limited to:-

- Member of the Council
- Chair and Vice Chair of the Council
- Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council
- Leader of the Largest Opposition Group
- Cabinet Member
- Chair and Vice Chair of a Scrutiny Committee
- Chair and Vice Chair of a Regulatory Committee
- Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee

(2) That the role profiles be circulated for consultation with the Members who currently hold these positions.

43/15 Draft Programme for Member Involvement Half Day Sessions 2015-2019

The Working Group considered a report of the Senior Governance Officer on the draft two year Programme for Member Involvement Half Day sessions.

The results of the Training Needs Survey, together with topics suggested by the Governance Team and SAMT, had been used to prepare the draft Programme. The draft programme was in early stage of development and the proposed sessions depended upon officer availability and the availability of external providers where necessary. Further consultation with SAMT would take place to develop the Programme.

Each Member Involvement Half Day Session was allocated up to three topics, with many of the sessions having only two out of the three topics filled in. This was to allow spaces in the Programme for topics on emerging issues to be added and for Members to raise topics they wished to be covered. The Programme was to be a living document and would be subject to change.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group supports the draft two year Programme for Member Involvement Half Day Sessions.

44/15 Member Development Budget 2015/16

The Working Group considered a report on the current level of expenditure on the Member Development Budget 2015/16. The budget for 2015/16 was set at £4,000 and to-date the total expenditure had been £2,640.

The Group were advised that the invoice for the Safeguarding Briefing remained to be paid and there were a few more external training or briefing opportunities which may need to be paid for.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group notes the report.

45/15 Upcoming Learning and Development Sessions

The Working Group considered a report of the Senior Governance Officer on proposed upcoming learning and development sessions for Members.

The following development activities/briefing events were proposed over the next few months:-

Workshop to Raise Awareness about PREVENT (Counter Terrorism)

This session would be delivered by Safer Derbyshire to raise awareness of the PREVENT Strategy which was about supporting and protecting people who might be susceptible to radicalisation and ensuring that individuals and communities have the resilience to resist violent extremism. The session would be held on 1 February 2016 and invitations would be sent out following this meeting.

Briefing on Electoral Review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

It was proposed that the Chief Executive and the Elections Manager deliver a briefing for Members on this review following the conclusion of the Council meeting on 15 February 2016. It was anticipated that this may be quite a long meeting therefore it was suggested that the timing of this briefing be changed to the March Council meeting.

Media Training

It was proposed that a session on media training involving preparing for media interviews, identifying key messages and practical interviewing skills live to camera be provided for Cabinet Members and Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Council's Committees. It was proposed that this training be procured jointly with Bolsover District Council.

The Working Group discussed that there had been very limited experience in being requested to undertake television or radio interviews and as such it was questioned whether this training was necessary. The Working Group were advised that this training would be beneficial for general communication and presentational skills and that there was always a possibility for events to take place within the District in relation to which Members of the Council may be expected to respond. In such a situation there may be limited time for Members to be trained or briefed in advance so having an opportunity for Cabinet Members, Chairs and Vice Chairs to practice and develop these skills would be beneficial.

As the cost of delivering this training may exceed the remaining Member Development budget for this year, approval for additional funding would be required if the training were to be delivered this year.

Child Sexual Exploitation Conference

The Working Group were advised of a conference that would be taking place in March 2016 on Child Sexual Exploitation. This conference was organised by the same provider that delivered the Safeguarding Briefing for Members in November 2015.

The Working Group discussed that the conference invitation could be offered to Cabinet Members and to Members of the Communities Scrutiny Committee as it related to their

current Safeguarding review, limiting the number of places to one Cabinet Member and one Scrutiny Member.

The details of the conference were still awaited and would be circulated once they had been received.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group notes the report on upcoming learning and development sessions.

46/15 Any Other Business

The Working Group were advised of a request from a Member for a copy of Knowles on Local Authority Meetings: a Manual of Law and Practice to be made available to Members either on hard copy or electronically. This book had been referred to by the Governance Manager in the Council meeting on 4 January 2016. The Working Group were advised that the book is a technical manual aimed for democratic services staff and cost £110 per copy.

The Working Group discussed that it would not be value for money for an additional copy to be obtained for access solely by Members and that any Member wishing to refer to the book could obtain a copy from the Governance Office and refer to it only on site.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group agrees not to purchase a copy of Knowles on Local Authority Meetings and that Members can request access to a copy in the Governance Officer if necessary.

47/15 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Member Development Working Group would be held on Thursday, 25 February 2016 at 10.00 am.
