

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 19 JULY 2017

Present:

Councillor N Barker – (Chair)
Councillor J Austen
Councillor G Baxter MBE
Councillor A Cooper
Councillor M Gordon
Councillor J Windle
Sarah Cottam

01/17 Appointment of Chair for the 2017/18 Municipal Year

RESOLVED – That Councillor N Barker be appointed Chair of the Member Development Working Group for the 2017/18 municipal year.

02/17 Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence had been received from Councillor D Hancock.

03/17 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting of the Member Development Working Group held on 26 April 2017 be agreed as a true and accurate record.

04/17 Update on East Midlands Councils Programme of Councillors Policy/Knowledge Briefing Sessions

The Working Group considered a report of the Acting Senior Governance Officer on the recent changes to the East Midlands Councils (EMC) Programme of Councillors Policy/Knowledge Briefing Sessions.

Over the last five years the East Midlands Councils had offered a programme of Councillor Policy/Knowledge Briefing Sessions on a subscription basis of £510 + VAT per year. The Council paid a separate subscription to be a member of the EMC.

Previously the benefits of the Council's participation in the Programme were that two Members could attend each of the six events and additional places could also be booked. Participating Members could share their knowledge with other colleagues to help inform the Council's decision making and the opportunity for Councillors from across the region to meet with colleagues and share experiences, information and ideas.

The Programme had seen in excess of 145 hours of development attended by over 970 Councillors from across 43 authorities in the East Midlands.

An email had recently been received from East Midlands Councils on 6 June 2017 advising that after reflecting on the offer that was made to the Programme it was time for a refresh of the approach. Councillor development was central to the work of the East Midlands Councils and they would continue to be a key offering to its members, but this year it had been decided that they would not be offering the Council Policy/Knowledge Briefing Sessions in the same way. In 2017/18 East Midlands Councils would continue to offer key events on policy areas or regional priorities for Councillors and senior officers, but going forward these would either be free or at a low cost.

To-date no further information had been received from East Midlands Councils, but if there were any areas Members felt would be of value for an event this would be fed back to the East Midlands Councils.

The Group raised concerns over the previous locations of the training offered by East Midlands Councils and found that this being in Melton Mowbray posed difficulties for many Members attending training.

It was proposed that a letter be put together by the Senior Governance Officer, in conjunction with the Member Development Working Group, to East Midlands Councils asking for clarification on what would be offered to Members going forward. The letter should also contain an offer of holding training in conjunction with East Midlands Councils at North East Derbyshire/Bolsover District Councils offices.

Councillor Austen raised a training event for consideration by the group.

LGIU were holding an event on 'Engaging with your Community: Working Effectively with your Council's Communications Team and using Social Media'. Prices for this ranged from £250 pp to attend the event in London, however a similar event could be held at the District Council Offices at a cost of £675 (half day) + expenses or (995 (full day) + expenses and the sessions would be facilitated by a trainer from the LGIU.

The group felt this was priced too highly and requested that the Acting Senior Governance Officer research other providers and look at other options for the training, possibly alongside other Councils.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group:-

- (1) Notes the update on the Programme of Councillors Policy/Knowledge Briefing Sessions from East Midlands Councils.
- (2) Requests that a letter be sent to East Midlands Councils seeking clarification on what training would be provided to Members going forward.
- (3) Requests the Acting Senior Governance Officer to research other providers and consider other options for a similar session on 'Working Effectively with your Council's Communications Team and using Social Media'
(Senior Governance Officer – Acting)

05/17 Member Development Strategy Action Plan Monitoring (Quarter 1)

The Working Group considered a report of the Acting Senior Governance Officer on the Member Development Strategy Action Plan Monitoring for the first quarter of 2017/18.

When the Member Development Strategy 2016-19 was agreed it included an Action Plan to implement strategy objectives. The details on the progress in relation to all the actions within the Action Plan was provided to the Group as an Appendix to the report.

The actions that had already been progressed included the Member Development Programme that had been approved by the Group at its meeting in April 2017. The new Programme was included in the Annual Report to Cabinet at its meeting in June 2017 which was approved. There had since been a few amendments to the Programme, such as alteration to the dates of training sessions and also the inclusion of new items. Two Hate Crime training sessions had been arranged for 30 August 2017 at 1.00 pm and 5.00 pm, the Planning Committee training had been scheduled to take place on 14 September 2017 at 10.00 am and discussions would be held with Scrutiny Members in due course on possible training for Scrutiny.

The Group were advised that the distribution of paper diaries for 2017/18 to all Members was now complete.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group notes the progress achieved in the first quarter for the Member Development Strategy Action Plan for 2017/18.

(Senior Governance Officer – Acting)

06/17 Member Involvement Half Day Evaluation Results – 20 June 2017

The Working Group considered the evaluation statistics and comments submitted by Members in respect of the Member Involvement Half Day held on 20 June 2017.

The session consisted of three presentations:-

- Public Health & Wellbeing in North East Derbyshire;
- A Guide to Universal Credit;
- Equalities Update – June 2017.

12 Members attended the Half Day and 12 Members completed evaluation forms at the end of the event (100%).

Overall the event was well received with all Members finding every presentation informative, relevant to them as Members and engaging. How engaging the presentations were had the least positive feedback although no negative scores were made. The Member Involvement sessions tended to use internal officers who knew a lot about their subject areas and the context of the Council, which also assisted Members in getting to know the officers in different service areas.

The first session ran over the time slot by half an hour, comments were made that Members should save questions till the end of the presentation to allow officers to complete the presentation in a timely manner. An alternative option would be to allocate more time for subject topics.

A session was made around staff being offered Hate Crime training and not Members. As a result of the feedback received training on Hate Crime Reporting had now been organised for 30 August 2017.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group notes the evaluation results of the Member Involvement Half Day on 20 June 2017.

(Senior Governance Officer – Acting)

07/17 Member Development Working Group Work Programme

The Working Group considered the Work Programme for 2017/18 municipal year which was to aid the planning of the Working Group's agendas and meetings. It was also hoped that the Work Programme would assist in the timetabling of member development support work throughout the year.

The Group were advised that the Work Programme was a live document that would inevitably be subject to change and additions.

RESOLVED – That the Working Group notes the proposed Work Programme for 2017/18 municipal year.

(Senior Governance Officer – Acting)

08/17 Any Other Business

There was no other business to be discussed at this meeting.

09/17 Date of Next Meeting

At the request of the Chair of the Member Development Working Group the next meeting on Wednesday, 13 September 2017 at 10.00 am would be cancelled.

The next meeting of the Member Development Working Group would be held on Wednesday, 15 November 2017 at 10.00 am in Chamber 1, District Council Offices, 2013 Mill Lane, Wingerworth.