

## MINUTES

### MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

13 JUNE 2012

**Present:**

**Councillors:** Flint  
Guest  
Rance  
Taylor  
Wixted

**Officers:** Michelle Anderson Corporate Support Team Leader  
(Democracy)

The meeting began at 7.30pm

#### 1. APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIRMAN

Councillor Rance proposed and Councillor Guest seconded that Councillor Taylor be Chairman.

#### Outcome

That Councillor Taylor be Chairman of the Member Development Steering Group.

#### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Conway and Hearn.

#### 3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March were agreed by the members present.

#### 4. EVALUATION FEEDBACK

M Anderson highlighted the feedback from the recent Emergency Planning briefing, which took place prior to a Full Council meeting. It was recognised that the attendance was very good and the overall feedback was excellent. The only weakness was to slow the pace down.

Councillor Taylor said the presenter was an ambassador for this topic and it was a very successful presentation.

Councillor Rance noted that since the Hemel Hempstead disaster, it had become apparent that Councillors were unsure of their role during an emergency and the training did touch on this. She suggested that a briefing paper or flow chart be produced for councillors to show what would happen and who does what (Officers or Councillors) in the event of a disaster. This would be circulated as a Member Development handout.

Councillor Guest noted that it was difficult for those members who worked, to attend the briefings before Full Council. She suggested that presentations etc are circulated to all members after the event.

Councillor Flint added that she arranged for a 1:1 with the relevant officer when she was unable to attend the members briefing.

Councillor Taylor highlighted that if a Member has a 1:1 with an officer, Member Support should be notified in order to record it in the attendance figures.

Councillor Wixted asked if the presentations from Member Development sessions could be saved onto a shared drive, accessible to all councillors.

M Anderson explained that SharePoint would be the ideal location; however there had been problems with councillors being able to access it from home. This could be looked into further.

Councillors Taylor and Wixted suggested that an agenda type briefing paper could be produced for each development session, listing its date, time, location, aims and objectives and how the session would run.

Councillor Guest felt that this could encourage more people to attend if they could see exactly what it would involve.

### **Outcomes**

1. That a briefing paper or flow chart be produced for councillors to show what would happen and who does what (Officers or Councillors) in the event of a disaster. This would be circulated as a Member Development handout.
2. That an agenda type briefing paper could be produced for each development session, listing its date, time, location, aims and objectives and how the session would run.

## **5. QUARTERLY BUDGET UPDATE**

M Anderson explained how the budget underspend for 2011/12 had occurred. She noted that due to the reduced budget for 2012/13 it would need to be carefully monitored throughout the year.

Councillor Rance congratulated the council on the high level of income received from other council's who attended DBC courses/events.

Councillor Rance asked if the number of those attending each event could be added into the budget report, to show its value for money.

### **Outcome**

1. The number of those attending each event be added into the budget report, to show its value for money.

## **6. ANNUAL TRAINING REPORT**

M Anderson introduced the report and highlighted that it would be discussed at CMT on 26 June 2012. Following the Member Charter assessment in December 2010, direction of travel and areas for continuous improvement were highlighted, and this formed the basis of the report.

The Council would be having their midpoint assessment on 9 July 2012, and this document would be discussed.

M Anderson noted that there was a high level of participation in the PDP process, which saw 92% completed. This was a difficult process, however more councillors got involved than the last time.

Councillor Flint said that training should be ongoing and was always useful. She noted that her comments on her PDP this time were very different to the ones she made at her last interview.

Councillor Guest felt that the 360 degree feedback was good in principle; however felt that it should be offered in a slimmed down version, as it was a lengthy process.

M Anderson replied that further work could be done with Bill Haylock who takes the Cabinet members through a similar process. If this process worked then it could be an option to roll out to all councillors.

Councillor Taylor said that follow up meetings, training and reviews were needed once the 360 work had been carried out. He said that the PDP was a way for councillors to commit to a learning plan, whereas the 360 feedback could be seen more as a tick box exercise.

M Anderson summarised the feelings of the group that the PDP's should continue to be carried out; however the 360 feedback has been trialled but did not work to its full potential at Dacorum Borough Council. Therefore if this was requested in the future, different options for carrying it out would be explored.

Councillor Taylor stressed the importance of succession planning. He felt that the need for this had been heightened since the recent resignation of a Cabinet member. This had a knock on effect on many committees, which saw many members taking on new roles. A training plan needs to be in place which can be implemented immediately as and when required. Succession planning must be a high consideration for the future.

Councillor Rance said that every Cabinet member should have a deputy who could step in if needed.

The Chairman, on behalf of the MDSG will write a letter to the Leader of the Council highlighting their concerns for succession planning, which would be circulated to the group for further comments, prior to it being sent.

Councillor Flint suggested that Cabinet could begin this piece of work and it could be referred back to the MDSG to further develop the process. This could be a 1 item agenda.

It was a process which was needed for succession planning, which was non-political.

### **Outcome**

1. The Chairman, on behalf of the MDSG will write a letter to the Leader of the Council highlighting their concerns for succession planning, which would be circulated to the group for further comments, prior to it being sent.
2. The Chairman would provide his 'Quote' for the training report in time for it being presented at CMT on 26 June 2012.

## **7. PDP/360 DEGREE OUTCOME**

This had been briefly discussed as part of the previous item.

M Anderson added that the round of PDP's had proven to be very difficult this year. There seemed to be a lack of enthusiasm amongst some members, and some felt that it was a tick box exercise.

She continued to note that Members did not have a great level of knowledge of the Council's priorities, and had requested further information on them and what they meant to councillors. It was agreed that a Member briefing, similar to the staff briefings, be held whereby CMT would discuss the priorities.

Councillor Wixted said that the initial checklist for the PDP process should have clearer instructions on how to complete it.

M Anderson said that they will continue, for now, with the briefings before full council as the numbers suggested that it appealed to many members.

It was noted that the training programme for 2012/13 will be set following the requests made during the PDP process.

### **Outcome**

1. It was agreed that a Member briefing, similar to the staff briefings, be held whereby CMT would discuss the priorities.

## **8. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

M Anderson explained that due to an event for the Police & Crime Commissioners election, the Member Development session will be cancelled on 4 July 2012. The MDSG agreed this.

In addition, an extra event will be held on 27 June 2012 for a Water Gardens briefing. This will be advertised in this weeks' Members News and a flyer will be distributed. Councillor Flint & Rance would be unable to attend this event and requested a 1:1 with the relevant officer.

Councillor Taylor commented that the recent flyer for the CIL training event was excellent.

### **Outcome**

1. That a 1:1 be arranged for Councillors Flint & Rance with the relevant officer for the Water Gardens briefing, as they were unable to attend the Members event on 27 June 2012.

## **9. MEMBER CHARTER PLUS**

M Anderson highlighted recent concerns with regards to the council committing to Member Charter Plus. It concerned her that the enthusiasm and momentum for Member Development had decreased recently and the feelings being expressed were that many areas were tick box exercises.

The cost of signing up to Charter Plus was £2000 and it was felt that this money could instead be used for OSC or Localism training, which were two topics highly requested.

In addition, concern was raised with the logistics of completing the work for Charter Plus, as there were elections in November and May 2013.

M Anderson explained that the council could sign up to Charter Plus at any time in the future, but perhaps the requirements of Member Charter should be allowed to develop further before the next step was taken.

Officers were open to suggestions and if the MDSG wished to continue with Charter Plus, they would implement the action plan.

Councillor Taylor thanked M Anderson for an excellent presentation of a difficult situation.

Councillor Flint agreed that Member Development needed to be revitalised, things could be done differently and held in different locations.

Councillor Guest asked how long the process was to achieve Charter Plus.

M Anderson guessed around 18 months; however it could be delayed depending on the interaction of Councillors.

Councillor Rance felt that with efficiencies being made, in all organisations there was an added pressure on staff and with the elections taking place it would be difficult to focus on Charter Plus requirements.

Councillor Taylor felt that the council should not strive for something just to achieve another 'gold star'. He suggested waiting until after the full 3 year assessment in December 2013 and re-discuss the options for committing to Charter Plus then.

Councillor Wixted suggested that small steps and quick wins for the Charter Plus requirements are implemented as soon as practical.

Councillor Flint felt that OSC needed to be revamped, for the committee to be encouraged to be more proactive and for all members to be involved.

The group felt that the MDSG was 'Member Development at its best'.

The group felt that members should be encouraged to feel part of Member Development, to be more enjoyable for them and to help them interact with and implement Cabinet policies.

### **Outcome**

1. The MDSG agreed that the council should not commit to Member Charter Plus at this stage, but wait until after the full 3 year assessment in December 2013 and re-discuss the options for committing to Charter Plus then.

## **10. RESULTS OF LOW ATTENDANCE QUESTIONNAIRE**

M Anderson introduced the item and explained that those members who had not attended the required 5 member training sessions during 2011/12 had received the questionnaire. Only 10 of the 27 forms were returned and overall there were no

significant reasons as to why they had not attended the sessions. Some had too much work on and others chose different courses to do. Overall it seemed that the 7.30pm slot worked well and some members were interested in further developing E-Learning.

Councillor Flint suggested looking at these figures again next year to see if there were any improvements.

## **11. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

The MDSG approved the final Member Development Strategy 2012-2015. M Anderson would re-launch this strategy once the results of the Member Charter midpoint assessment were known.

## **12. MDSG WORK PROGRAMME**

### **5 September 2012**

Add 'LGA Conference Feedback' (Councillor Flint & Rance)

It was suggested that feedback is obtained from Councillor Williams for this item too.

### **4 December 2012**

Add 'Succession Planning'

## **13. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on 5 September 2012 at 7.30pm.

The meeting ended at 9.07pm