

MINUTES

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

5 SEPTEMBER 2012

Present:

Councillors: Conway
Hearn
Taylor
Wixted

Also present: Councillor Williams

Officers: Michelle Anderson Corporate Support Team Leader
(Democracy)
Lucy Stone Member Support Officer

The meeting began at 7.30pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Flint.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June were agreed by the members present.

3. LGA CONFERENCE FEEDBACK

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Williams to the meeting and invited him to talk about the LGA conference.

Councillor Williams said that he thought the LGA conference offered excellent value for money. It was the biggest annual conference and therefore attracted a lot of significant national figures. There was always a Secretary of State in attendance and sometimes the Prime Minister and Leader of Opposition. This provided high level input and excellent debates.

The conference, held in Birmingham, also included various different rooms, where up to 12 different sessions were held at one time. These were on a whole range of subjects and included experts in those fields. Councillor Williams said that he, the Leaders of the opposition and the Chief Executive tried to attend different sessions.

Councillor Williams said that the conference also provided an excellent networking opportunity. Other Councils would be seeing the same issues and it was a way of sharing best practice and ideas. The programme included a political party meeting for all the parties.

The Chairman commented that it seemed like money well spent. Councillor Williams agreed and said it would be possible to go to lots of different conferences on different subjects. The cost of this would add up, whereas the LGA annual conference dealt with all the issues in one go.

L Stone asked if Councillor Williams shared his learning from the conference with other Councillors. Councillor Williams said that he spoke in Group meetings about prominent issues and often invited a Director to speak on an issue to the Group.

L Stone suggested that if any general development issues arose from the conference, these could feed into the Member Development programme. Councillor Williams and the MDSG agreed.

The Chairman said that at a recent Finance and Resources OSC meeting, there had been an hour's presentation on the options for the Customer Service Unit. He said that it would be useful for all Councillors to be given chance to comment on it, not just the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Williams said that he thought there was less value in running an internal session where just a handful of Members attend.

Councillor Hearn said that if the Chairman thought there was value for all Councillors, something should be done. The Chairman suggested sending a condensed version of the presentation to all Councillors asking them to send their comments to D Gill.

Outcome

L Stone and M Anderson to contact D Gill and organise a condensed version of the Customer Services Unit presentation to be sent to all Councillors for comment.

If any general development issues arose from the conference, the Group Leaders should contact M Anderson & L Stone so they could feed into the Member Development programme.

4. EVALUATION FEEDBACK

M Anderson said there had been one session since the last meeting. She said there had been some confusion about whether the evaluation form was needed. They had not been handed out at the meeting, so they were sent out afterwards. As a result, only five of 17 had been returned.

M Anderson and the Members said that this highlighted how successful the usual Evaluation process was which should be followed.

5. QUARTERLY BUDGET UPDATE

M Anderson went through the quarterly budget update and said there was just over £7,500 left. Localism training was scheduled in, which would be around £1,500 and the remaining budget would also be used for a scrutiny review and development sessions.

M Anderson highlighted the need for Councillors to let officers know if they were attending a course. This was especially important for courses run by external trainers where places were limited.

6. E-LEARNING

L Stone said that an E-Learning package available to staff was launched to Members through Members' News a few months ago. Only one Member had registered on the

facility but had not completed any courses. L Stone suggested that a drop in session be held before a Full Council meeting to encourage its use. It was also suggested that a Member champion be identified for the facility. L Stone added that this facility was available at no cost to the Member Development budget.

Councillors felt that it would be a good idea to choose a Member champion at the drop-in session. Councillor Williams said he would attend the drop-in session.

Outcome

An E-learning drop-in session to be held before a Full Council meeting where a Member champion would be chosen.

7. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

L Stone went through the Member Development programme and this was agreed.

8. BECOMING A COUNCILLOR WEBPAGE

M Anderson presented the revised Becoming a Councillor webpage. She explained that it would be live on the website following the meeting but could be changed at any time.

Councillor Wixted suggested adding a sentence on the different types of people who become Councillors, for example, those in full time employment and working mums.

Councillor Hearn expressed concern that suggesting that all Councillors could need to handle press enquiries would make people nervous. She suggested adding 'with assistance' to the bullet point.

M Anderson said that this would be advertised in Members' News. If any Councillor was approached about how to become a Councillor, they would be able to suggest they look at the webpage. M Anderson said that it would be signposted from the home page before the next Borough election and asked when the best time for that would be. The group suggested January or February 2015.

Outcome

The changes outlined above to be made and the site to be promoted before the next Borough election.

9. MDSG WORK PROGRAMME

The group discussed how the topic of succession planning could be approached as it was on the work programme for the December meeting.

The Chairman asked Councillor Williams about succession planning and the impact of losing a Portfolio Holder. Councillor Hearn mentioned that Councillors could shadow existing Portfolio Holders.

Councillor Williams said that this was difficult in how much the Council could get involved in a political process. He said that deputy Portfolio Holders were not necessary for the current workload. Councillor Williams added that a lot of Councillors who would be capable of being a Portfolio Holder worked and therefore

could not commit to the role. He said that if a lot of the Portfolio Holders lost their seats it was likely to be due to a large political swing.

Councillor Taylor said it would be helpful to have job descriptions for Members. M Anderson said that these were included in the constitution.

Councillor Wixted said it would not be possible to have a manual for being a Portfolio Holder. Councillor Williams added that the main skill of being a Portfolio Holder was not about the subject, but about the relationships built up with senior management. He said he would speak to Cabinet about offering a day's shadowing experience to all Councillors.

Outcome

Councillor Williams to speak to Cabinet and potentially offer Councillors to shadow a Portfolio Holders for a day.

10. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 4 December 2012 at 7.30pm.

The meeting ended at 9.02pm