

## MINUTES

### MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

01 OCTOBER 2013

**Present:**

**Councillors:** Conway  
Rance  
Taylor (Chairman)

**Officers:** Michelle Anderson Corporate Support Team Leader  
(Democracy)  
Clare Thorley Member Support Officer

**Others:**

The meeting began at 7.34pm

#### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Wixted, Hearn and Flint.

#### 2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2013 were agreed by the members present and signed by the Chairman.

#### 3. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2013/2014

M Anderson began by introducing the upcoming member development programme and the upcoming development event; Public Speaking. M Anderson highlighted that this was the first of the Joint Authority training sessions and that Dacorum Borough Council would be hosting it. As a result Dacorum had received two free places on this course. The Chairman asked which Councils would be taking part in this training event and where it would be held. M Anderson replied that Hertsmere, Watford and Three Rivers would be attending and that the event would be taking place in the Bulbourne Room.

M Anderson said that she was concerned that there was a high volume of member development sessions coming up in November. M Anderson commented that the Housing Allocations was an addition that had been made due to the upcoming changes in Government policy that were due to take effect on the 7 November.

M Anderson said that in order to avoid inundating members with lots of member development session flyers she had compiled a form with all sessions on it and she would ask members to tick which courses they could attend and then return it to Member Support instead of replying individually to each session. Reminder flyers for each event would be circulated nearer the time.

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M Anderson referred to a previous request from members regarding training on the Constitution, she mentioned that the Constitution was currently undergoing alteration and that this would mean that training on the Constitution may be even more relevant and necessary.

Councillor Rance then said that she thought that some of the long serving Councillors would appreciate and benefit from a session on the Constitution. M Anderson said that currently the training target was running low and that a high volume of attendance at the November training sessions would give a needed boost to the figures.

M Anderson said that she was also having discussions with J Deane (Assistant Director, Finance & Resources) regarding the possibility of a budget briefing around in January 2014.

#### **4. EVALUATION FEEDBACK**

##### **Planning**

M Anderson commented that the Planning member development session held on the 3 July had a very good turn out. Some of the feedback suggested that it would be more advantageous to have a separate session on Planning for Parish Councillors. The Chairman agreed with this and said that he had noticed that occasionally Parish Councillors had a tendency to focus on Parish-specific problems at these sessions and that this was not the appropriate time to focus on these issues.

The Chairman acknowledged that it was important that the Town and Parish Councillors received help and support but that it may be more beneficial to run separate sessions for them. Councillor Rance commented that Parish Councillors had sessions with officers and that perhaps organising more of these with a focus on training in specific areas would be of benefit and that this issue did need further thought. M Anderson agreed that this was a potential area for improvement and recalled that when Dacorum Borough Council were applying for Member Development Charter accreditation, Member Support did find it challenging to demonstrate the provision of training for Parish Councillors.

Councillor Rance suggested that it may be worth contacting the Parish Councillors to find out what subjects they would like training on. M Anderson suggested that it may be worth engaging S Collins (Officer, Town, Parish and VCS) to help facilitate this as she had a strong network across the Town and Parish Councils and had recently joined the Democratic Services team alongside Member Support.

##### **Dacorum Anywhere**

The Chairman said that this was a useful session but that Dacorum Anywhere, whilst having obvious advantages, may potentially have some disadvantages further down the line and that it would be useful to be aware of these in order to deal with them if they were to become a larger issue. Councillor Rance stated that there were some benefits especially in regards to Planning; in that Councillors could access plans online, but that some work was still needed around ensuring this was easily practicable. Councillor Rance also pointed out that it would be worth while identifying the Councillors who struggled with IT issues and ensuring that they had appropriate support whilst rolling out the Dacorum Anywhere concept. The Chairman added that it would be worth Member Support liaising with H Price (Team Leader, Performance, Improvement and Transformation) to organise support sessions.

##### **Outcome**

Chairman:

- M Anderson would liaise with S Collins to look at development for Town/Parish Council's.
- M Anderson to liaise with H Price to discuss any training needs as part of implementing Dacorum Anywhere.

## **5. QUARTERLY BUDGET UPDATE**

M Anderson pointed out that she still had to add the LGA Conference fees to the Budget update and that the cost for this was £495 per person. The Chairman asked who went to this and M Anderson replied that two Councillors had attended.

M Anderson highlighted that there was currently £6,500 left in the £11,000 Member Development budget for 2013/2014. M Anderson pointed out however that there would be no upcoming Personal Development Plan (PDP) fees as these were to be conducted internally in 2014. In addition there would not be the additional cost of applying for the Charter Plus accreditation for Member Development. M Anderson asked, with this in mind would the MDSG consider a reduction in the budget. Councillor Rance asked the cost of the PDP's and the Charter Plus, M Anderson responded by saying that the approximate cost of the PDP's, when carried out by D Lamb, (the previous external PDP provider) last year was £4,000 and that applying for the Charter Plus cost £2,000.

The Chairman said yes to a potential reduction resulting from cutting the cost of PDP's and Charter Plus but that it may be unwise to cut a full £4,000 as there still could be potential costs associated with carrying out the PDPs internally. However the Chairman noted that he did want to show willing given the omitted cost from PDP's/ Charter Plus and he suggested a reduction from £11,000 to £8,000 or £9,000. Councillor Rance agreed that this was reasonable but pointed out that Dacorum Anywhere may result in extra training and there would be an additional cost with that.

Councillor Rance queried the value of the IDEA Course that one Councillor had attended. When she attended this course it was a 2 or 3 day residential course and this seemed better value for money in comparison to what appeared to be one day's worth of training for £150. M Anderson said she would look into this and get back to the MDSG.

M Anderson then checked that the MDSG were happy to implement a reduction of the budget to £8,000 or £9,000. The Chairman said that he was happy to go down to £9,000 with the potential for further reduction following implementation of the PDP's internally. M Anderson pointed out that after the election there would be potential for the budget to rise again to cover the costs of the induction programme.

The Chairman said that he had noticed that the Overview & Scrutiny Review 2012 conducted by an external consultant had proved to be contentious amongst his group, but that the recommendations may be of some value, when taken in relation to the value of Constitution training in order to facilitate more effective Overview & Scrutiny.

M Anderson said that she was aware that some Councillors were not happy with the Review findings and that at the OSC Chairs & Vice Chairs Group it had been pointed out that the evidence and the resulting recommendations that came out of the review were not well matched. However M Anderson pointed out that the OSC Chairs & Vice Chairs Group had agreed a plan to develop an Overview & Scrutiny 'vision' in

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order to give the Overview & Scrutiny function some focus. The Chairman pointed out that he was not sure if the MDSG had seen the Overview & Scrutiny Review report in great detail.

In addition the Chairman pointed out that it would be worth waiting for Constitution training and then Councillors could see how Overview & Scrutiny related to the Constitution. Perhaps then a more general follow up session on Overview & Scrutiny practice could be arranged. The Chairman said that following member evaluation of these sessions the MDSG could then make a reasonable conclusion as to whether or not training on Overview & Scrutiny may be of benefit.

#### Outcome

- M Anderson said she would look into the details of the recent IDEA course.
- M Anderson would confirm the recent costs for PDP's and as a result, inform the MDSG of the budget reduction for 2014/15.

### **6. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS 2014**

M Anderson said that following discussions around preferred options for PDP's the decision had now been made to do them internally and that the PDP's would be carried out by B Haylock (Team Leader, Organisational Development and Training).

M Anderson drew the attention of the MDSG to the appendices in the agenda and explained that the format of the forms drew from the principles of Charter accreditation. M Anderson asked the MDSG if they would be happy to use these checklists again for the PDP's. In addition to these checklists D Lamb had conducted interviews via the telephone with Members.

The Chairman said that he could see no issue in re-using the check lists and Councillor Rance said that as he was internal it should be possible for B Haylock to meet with Councillors face-to-face instead of conducting telephone interviews and that this might prove to be more useful. M Anderson pointed out that the principles of the Charter for Member Development had been amended and so in order to reflect this, the checklists would have to be changed slightly.

The Chairman said that some expansion of point 7 in checklist 1 (Appendix A) may be needed as it was important Councillors knew they could highlight any areas for development. Councillor Rance pointed out that Ward Councillors didn't communicate enough and so were unaware as to what was going on in other wards and the potential impact or effect this may have on their own ward. Councillor Rance said that it would be ideal to develop a system by which councillors could share information about various social issues that affected their wards so they were more informed as to what was occurring across the whole borough.

M Anderson pointed out that there used to be a system (MOSAIC) that enabled some social information to be shared. She would look into re-launching details on this. Again it may be beneficial to engage S Collins with this and in order to perhaps run open events at community centres across the borough with the purpose of informing Councillors on these issues. The Chairman also suggested involving C Lynch (Lead Officer, Active Communities) in this.

#### Outcome

- M Anderson to amend checklist 1, used for PDP's, to reflect the new principles of Charter Accreditation.
- M Anderson to look into re-launching details on MOSAIC

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## **7. MDSG WORK PROGRAMME**

Councillor Rance mentioned it would be beneficial to liaise with H Price as to how best support Councillors with the Dacorum Anywhere scheme.

Councillor Rance also requested that a link to the Constitution was emailed to all Members prior to the Constitution training session to ensure that they were all aware of it prior to coming along to the training session.

M Anderson said that Member Support would liaise with the Town and Parish Councils in regards to training.

M Anderson also highlighted the recent launch of DORIS (Dacorum Online Resource for Interactive Study) and said that this was an e-learning tool that may be appropriate for some subjects/courses for member development and that B Haylock who was behind the launch had asked if DORIS could be trialled with members.

Outcome

- M Anderson to invite B Haylock to the next MDSG meeting to discuss his plan for the forthcoming PDP's and to demonstrate DORIS.

## **8. NEXT MEETING**

Councillor Rance suggested that B Haylock attend the MDSG meeting on the 3 December to discuss the roll out of the PDP's and demonstrate DORIS.

Councillor Rance then requested that the next MDSG meeting start at 7.00pm in order to provide extra time for Bill Haylock's presentation. The group agreed this.

- The start time of the next MDSG will be moved to 7pm, in order to accommodate the DORIS demonstration.

The meeting finished at 8.45pm.

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