

MINUTES

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

03 JUNE 2014

Present:

Councillors: Adshead, Douris, G Sutton
and Taylor (Chairman)

Officers: Michelle Anderson Corporate Support Team Leader
(Democracy)
Trudi Coston Member Support Officer

The meeting began at 7.34 pm

1. ELECT A CHAIRMAN

It was proposed by Councillor G Sutton, and seconded by Councillor Adshead that Councillor Taylor continued to be the Chairman of the Member Development Steering Group.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2014 were agreed by the members present and then signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Taylor asked if the Information Security/Data Protection training with John Worts had been rescheduled. T Coston confirmed it was rearranged for 24 September 2014.

4. ANNUAL TRAINING REPORT

M Anderson said the annual training report was a summary of what's happened during the past year, and was pleased to announce that they had succeeded in their overall training target. She advised there was a slight reduction in the training budget for this year as enthusiasm often dropped in the last year of a members' term. The budget will increase significantly next year due to the Borough Elections as new members will require training. The Member Development Strategy was reviewed early this year but will be revisited next year after the Borough Elections and be completely rewritten. She drew attention to paragraph 7.4 noting the '*how to become a councillor*' webpages had received 542 hits between May 2013 – April 2014 which suggested that the public are finding the information useful. She explained that after next years Borough Election, the focus would be on the induction programme and the PDP's, and we hoped to bring some information on the induction programme to the next couple of meetings.

R Taylor thanked M Anderson and her team for all their hard work during the past year.

Councillor G Sutton suggested that they could offer training to potential candidates before the next Borough Election in preparation of them becoming a Councillor as he felt it can be a very overwhelming experience.

Councillor Adshead endorsed Councillor G Sutton's comments and explained that he attended a couple of Full Council meetings before being elected and found it very useful to visit the Council Chamber and oversee the process of the meeting.

Councillor Douris suggested producing fact-sheets containing useful information to distribute to party agents. He also agreed that attending Full Council meetings would be useful for potential new members so they could discover the pace and process of the meeting.

M Anderson referred back to a meeting last year where it was decided that Jim Doyle would hold an event explaining how to become a councillor, website information, an explanation of the process and what to expect. She suggested this could be arranged for early next year.

Outcome/Action

- Following a brief discussion, the committee decided they would like M Anderson/T Coston to liaise with Jim Doyle and arrange an open event to be held in February 2015 for potential new members, and then invite them to the Full Council meetings in March and April, prior to the Election in May.

5. MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRE FEEDBACK

T Coston advised that 88% of the questionnaires were returned which was an excellent result, and the majority of the unreturned questionnaires were due to the members' intention to stand down at the 2015 Borough Elections.

In the '*not at all confident*' column, the three topics that were required the most were understanding Local Government finances, understanding the scrutiny process and preparing budgets and planning for future projects, and in the '*not very confident*' column, speaking confidently to the Press and speaking confidently in public were the two most required topics; these five topics were also requested several times in the column for suggestions for the training programme. Another popular suggestion was training for the use of basic I.T skills, which could be done as an in-house afternoon session for those that need it.

Some of the suggestions for the training programme related to information in service departments which she felt could be provided in newsletters/fact sheets if the committee felt it would suffice. She said she was surprised to find that the majority of members had no preference as to whether training was during the day or in the evening, and suggested the committee could look at doing both in the future.

The committee agreed they were happy for fact sheets to be produced to resolve the lack of knowledge within service departments.

Councillor Douris asked for a breakdown of figures for those with a preference of training during the day, in the evening or no preference at all. T Coston agreed she would email the figures to the committee the following day.

T Coston advised there had been a comment from one member that they disliked briefings before Full Council meetings, and asked the committee if that was something they wished to reconsider.

Councillor Taylor felt the briefings before Full Council were useful as members would be attending Full Council anyway.

Councillor Adshead said he found the briefings inconvenient as he works full time and often isn't finished work in time to attend.

The committee decided that they would like the 1 hour briefings to consist of a 40 minute presentation, followed by 20 minutes of questions and answers, along with a hand-out to keep members focused. M Anderson/T Coston to inform all members of these changes.

Outcome/Action

- Fact sheets to be produced to resolve the lack of knowledge within service departments.
- T Coston to email a breakdown of the daytime/evening/no preference figures for training sessions.
- M Anderson/T Coston to inform all members of these changes to the format of briefings prior to Full Council.

6. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2014/15

T Coston asked the committee if they were happy for her and M Anderson to pick the topics in highest demand and schedule them in to the training programme.

Councillor Douris felt there were many other topics relating to service changes that were also important to focus on.

M Anderson advised that they usually add extra dates for briefings on service changes or arrange one-to-one sessions.

Councillor G Sutton said he would like to see the roles of senior officers explained.

Councillor Taylor stressed that regulatory committee training was crucial.

Councillor G Sutton found sharing training courses with other authorities very useful so he could create a better understanding of how others work and felt that other individual's knowledge was invaluable.

Councillor Adshead explained he had been asked by another member to say they felt the 1 hour briefing sessions shouldn't be classed as training.

Councillor Taylor said the briefings were to ensure all members are being developed and updated on changes across the Borough.

Councillor Douris suggested they look at branding the briefing and training sessions separately to differentiate the two.

M Anderson advised that information sessions couldn't be included in the member training target. Councillor Taylor said he wanted all training sessions to be branded as member development.

Councillor Adshead asked for the full training programme to be circulated to all members.

Outcome/Action

- The full training programme to be circulated to all members

7. QUARTERLY BUDGET UPDATE

M Anderson advised that the only expenditure so far this year was the Leaders attendance at the LGA conference, but explained that some of the training sessions discussed in item 4 would require external trainers and therefore will use a significant amount of the budget. She advised that the budget would increase next year to reflect the cost of training new members.

8. MDSG WORK PROGRAMME

The committee agreed to add the 2015 induction and PDP's to the next few meetings leading up to the Elections in May.

R Taylor said he would speak to Councillor Harden to discuss DORIS and E-Learning updates at future meetings.

9. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 9 October 2014 at 7.30 pm.

M Anderson announced that she would be absent from the next few meetings as she would be on maternity leave commencing the end of September. The committee congratulated Michelle and wished her well.

The meeting finished at 9.00 pm.