

MINUTES

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

18 JUNE 2020

Present:

Councillors: Barry
Bhinder
Douris (Chairman)
Freedman
Griffiths
Silwal

Officers: Katie Mogan Corporate and Democratic Support Lead Officer
Charlie Webber Corporate and Democratic Support Officer
(Minutes)

The meeting began at 6.30 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2 ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- **Action:** Councillor Douris asked KM is she could talk to Finance about adding officer time to the Quarterly Budget Update.

Outcome: It is not possible to add officer time to the Quarterly Budget Update.

- **Action:** KM said that they would be asking other Local Authorities about the training that they provide to their Members.

Outcome: Completed – See page 16 of Agenda.

- **Action:** Councillor Freedman suggested speaking to the Communications team about Social Media platforms and whether they could provide internal training on this.

Action: KM said that they could look for a broader provider to deliver this type of training.

Outcomes: We are looking to find another course/provider to provide this type of training.

- **Action:** KM said that there was a function in ModernGov which could enable Councillors to have their own blogs and that these would appear on their Councillor page on the website. She said that they could look into this and provide training for Councillors on how to use it.

Action: KM said that the blogs had to be approved by Member Support first. She said that they would work on implementing it and would produce a guide including guidelines on what was appropriate to include. She added that it could be beneficial for residents to read Councillors' blogs without them having to use Facebook.

Outcomes: The blog function is outdated and is no longer supported and updated by ModernGov.

- **Action:** KM said that they would be arranging ICT Training sessions for Members.

Outcome: 8th April session cancelled due to Covid-19 and needs to be rescheduled.

The possibility of holding this session virtually was discussed.

Councillors Bhinder and Freedman agreed that it would be best to deliver this training face-to-face.

Councillor Freedman suggested holding an optional virtual training session on virtual meetings.

Councillor Bhinder said that he received a request for Microsoft Teams training.

KM said that 1:1 sessions had been offered to Members.

Councillor Douris suggested a general training session as well.

Councillor Griffiths suggested offering to distribute Microsoft Teams instructions to Members if they requested it.

- **Action:** KM said that they would speak to IT about the firewall issues Councillor Griffiths was having.

Outcome: We have spoken to IT about this issue.

Councillor Griffiths confirmed that the issue had been resolved.

- **Action:** KM asked about what other training courses Councillors would like. She suggested emailing all Councillors about more training that they would

like and then bringing the responses back to the Member Development Steering Group meeting in March.

Outcome: Completed – See page 16 of Agenda.

- **Action:** KM said that she would speak to Mark Brookes and Farida Hussain about Constitution Training with a specific focus on Full Council meetings.

Outcome: Training session scheduled to take place on Thursday 17th September.

- **Action:** Councillor Douris suggested providing a line on training evaluation forms where Councillors could add their name to the feedback form if they wished to discuss the session further.

Outcome: Completed.

- **Action:** KM said that they could make the comments section more focused.

Outcome: Looking at the best way in which we can do this.

- **Action:** Councillor Bhinder asked that alternate rows were shaded on the Attendance Totals spreadsheet so that it was easier to read.

Outcome: Completed.

- **Action:** KM said that she would get an update on the progress of the introduction of the online training booking system for Councillors.

Outcome: We have been meeting with HR to move this forward.

KM demonstrated the system and explained the traffic light system for mandatory training. She showed how to book onto training and said that a confirmation email was sent out after booking onto a course which also often included an outline of the course contents. KM said that they were working with HR and the software developers on the mapping of this and that when it goes live instructions and training will be provided.

Councillor Griffiths asked if the training available was Councillor-specific or whether Councillors could book onto training that was also available to officers.

KM said that the training available would be Councillor-specific to begin with but that they would ask HR whether training could be made available to everyone.

Councillor Griffiths asked if there was a date on this yet.

KM said that they were hoping for it to go live in the next few months.

3 **MINUTES**

Councillor Freedman asked for a slight amendment to the minutes from the meeting held on 7 January.

CW said that she would make this amendment.

With the amendment, Members present confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 7 January. Hard-copy minutes to be signed when restrictions are lifted.

4 **ANNUAL TRAINING REPORT 2019/20**

KM went through the Annual Training Report.

5 **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2020/21**

Councillor Douris said that the Planning Training (17th June) was excellent.

Councillor Griffiths asked whether the attendance was better due to it being a virtual session.

KM said that they had not yet received the attendance list from Sara Whelan.

Councillor Douris said that there was a significant number of Town and Parish Councillors in attendance.

Councillor Douris noted that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training was taking place the following week (25th June).

CW said that she was working with IT to get Zoom installed on Councillors' devices.

Councillor Bhinder suggested training for Members on how to book Microsoft Teams meetings.

Action: KM said that some instructions had been created on how to book Microsoft Teams meetings and that she could send these out to him.

Members were contacted to find out what training they would like to see on the Member Development Programme for the next year and their responses published in the Agenda.

Councillor Douris asked if there were any popular responses from Members.

CW said that requests for IT Training were popular.

Councillor Freedman said that there had been significant changes made to rules and regulations due to Covid-19 and gave the example of Licensing. He suggested training on these changes.

KM said that regular papers were going to Cabinet. She added that they could speak to relevant officers of any changes if necessary and then provide either briefing papers or training sessions as appropriate.

Councillor Freedman said that it was important for Members to keep up-to-date so that they could inform residents.

Councillor Douris added that changes were happening at pace and that there were constant updates.

Councillor Griffiths said that in terms of decision-making, Members should be trained concerning legal ramifications, that they have to be re-trained for changes in law and that these should be covered in legal protocols. She added that she completely understood the importance of Members keeping informed in order to inform residents but said that officers were currently very busy. Councillor Griffiths gave the example of the Housing Teams and said that they were very busy with matters such as social distancing and shielding. She said that it was important to strike a balance.

Councillor Freedman added that changes could be difficult to predict.

Councillor Douris noted that Hertfordshire County Council were distilling each day's information to County Councillors and suggested using this to disseminate to Members in Dacorum.

KM said that a link to LGA guidance was included weekly in Members News and that this guidance was updated regularly.

Councillor Bhinder added that there was the potential of being overwhelmed with information.

Councillor Douris asked how officers received their updates.

KM said that Corporate & Democratic Support received briefing notes, for example, on how to hold virtual meetings. She said that other teams, such as Licensing, might receive similar briefing notes related to their service.

Councillor Douris suggested directing Councillors to the link to the LGA guidance in Members News. He added that anything specific, for example re-training, could be picked up.

Councillor Freedman agreed and commented that there was no easy option.

6 **QUARTERLY BUDGET UPDATE**

Councillor Douris asked whether this year's LGA conference had been cancelled.

KM said that they did not book this and it went through the Chief Executive's office instead but that she assumed it had been cancelled.

KM reminded Members that there was budget available for individual Councillors to go on training courses if they so wished.

Councillor Douris asked whether approval was required from the relevant Group Leader.

KM confirmed that approval would be required if the course was of significant cost.

Councillor Griffiths added that if a Member was consistently attending these types of courses then approval would also be required from the relevant Group Leader.

The Budget was noted and approved.

7 **EVALUATION FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS**

KM said that an evaluation form would be available through the online system and that they would be speaking to HR about adapting it.

8 **ATTENDANCE RECORD**

It was noted that attendance was looking better.

KM said that a third, and final, session would be delivered for each mandatory course.

Action: Councillor Douris asked if a tint of colour could be added to the whole column for mandatory training on the spreadsheet.

KM said that there would need to be more Budget Setting Process Training soon.

KM asked if virtual meetings going forward was preferable.

Councillor Griffiths commented that the attendance had been high at the previous night's virtual Planning Training session.

Councillor Douris agreed that virtual meetings worked as long as the training was suitable for this.

Councillor Griffiths said that those with caring responsibilities might find it easier to attend virtual training sessions.

Councillor Bhinder added that some sessions required more interactivity.

Councillor Douris commented that there was a place for both kinds of training – face-to-face and virtual.

Councillor Bhinder said that providing virtual training could be a challenge.

KM added that it may be useful to deliver briefings virtually.

Councillor Griffiths said that it was positive that there had been better attendance at virtual sessions.

Councillor Douris agreed that virtual sessions did have their benefits.

9 **MDSG WORK PROGRAMME**

KM said that they would add Action Points to the Work Programme.

10 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Councillor Silwal asked for the details of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Training.

CW said that it was taking place on Zoom at 7pm on Thursday 25th June.

Councillor Bhinder said that he had acquired a headset from Gary Osler in IT.

KM asked for details of IT equipment requests to also be sent through to Member Support.

The Meeting ended at 7.43 pm