

MINUTES

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

24 MARCH 2021

Present:

Members:

Councillors: Bhinder
Douris (Chairman)
Freedman
Griffiths
Silwal

Officers: Cassy O'Neil –
Member Support
Layla Fowell –
Member Support
Marsha Kange-
Member Support

Also Attendance:

The meeting began at 6.30 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sammy Barry

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed and taken as read

3 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

It is the end of the training year and therefore there will be an end of year update given at the June meeting to close off the year

4 QUARTERLY BUDGET REPORT

The entire budget has not been spent, however the same budget will remain going forward.

Cassie O'Neil said that due to the Covid restrictions this year, we have spent less as there has not been any face to face training sessions, however Marsha and Layla will

be looking at a well-rounded and wholesome training programme going forward and looking for feedback from Councillors before we put that in place.

Cllr Freeman said he realised that remote working will be coming to an end, however he has noticed that some of the Councillors have been struggling a little bit with remote working and he considers that there are simple little things which can be done to assist them. For example he said that he uses a headset which contains a mute function button on it which could help by giving some Members a simple headset device and showing them how to use it to make things run a little smoother.

Cllr Douris said he wasn't sure that this particular request fell under the Member Development budget and therefore he would be leaving that matter for Member Support to decide.

Cllr Bhinder agreed with Cllr Freeman, he said he spoke to IT months ago and was given the option of either in-ear or headphones to trial and to use. He chose in-ear as he wanted something discreet and he thought it was fantastic as it not only had the mute function but also prevented feedback issues.

Cllr Douris said that it could be added to the list of training ideas going forward and then asked Cassie to comment.

Cassie O'Neil said that she is looking at this under allowances and ICT provision and is speaking with ICT to ask about the basic things needed. Cassie said that depending on resources, she has started looking at using MS Teams to record instructional videos to send out as little 'bite sized' training, especially as we will be looking at the use of electronic voting and therefore she will make sure that proper training is provided to everyone.

Cllr Griffiths arrived at 18:49pm, apologised for slight delay as she joined the meeting on time, however had experienced ICT issues and therefore had to reboot.

Cllr Griffiths agreed with Cllr Freeman that it would be a good idea for the additional ICT equipment however she said it should come out of the ICT budget and not the training budget. As part of the training programme she would like to see some 1-2-1 tuition given to some members from the ICT department, this would be more basic training including how to access Dennis for instance. Cllr Griffiths suggest that this would be good to start once we get back to being able to meet again.

Cassie O'Neil said that Member Support could look into providing such training as it was not technical high level ICT and therefore the ICT department do not generally provide resource for that. Setting up as 1-2-1 would be better as uptake on drop in sessions has not in the past been very great.

Action Point – Member Support Team to look into providing basic ICT for Members.

Cllr Douris said that often there is a system that you use all the time and then you will get a process that you use once a year.

Cllr Bhinder referred to things like virtual voting, we have Teams & Zoom, there have been many occasions that there has been webinars on Zoom, there are things that people don't know. He also said that he has a little device that he plugs into his laptop to be able to see information displayed clearer on the larger screens than on the little laptop/tablet.

Cllr Douris said it maybe that we could put in something in Members News about the little device and the benefits it can have and that we would need to explore whether it could be provided by ICT or need to buy from Amazon.

Action Point – Member Support to liaise with ICT to find out whether the USB device can be provided or suggestions as to where Members can purchase the device.

5 EVALUATION FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

There was only 3 returned feedback forms following the 'Questioning Skills for Scrutiny' training which is a shame as there were 15 people who attended. Cllr Douris suggested that this was a consequence of not having "live" physical sessions as there is nobody there at the end to collect the forms.

Layla Fowell apologised for not sending the feedback forms following the "Chairing" session.

Cllr Freeman said he was disappointed to hear that only 3 people had responded, given that there was discussion at length following the training.

Cllr Griffiths suggested using the poll settings on Teams for feedback on sessions immediately afterwards.

Cassie O'Neil said that yes it could be used as a Poll and she would be looking into how to create a poll which could be used for training sessions. She said that we don't currently use the voting tool function at meetings because members of the public attend the MS Teams meetings and therefore would have the option to cast a vote.

Cllr Griffiths states that feedback tool should be used at the very end of the training session reminding Members to complete the feedback there and then, rather than afterwards or coming back to it later.

6 ATTENDANCE RECORD

Cllr Douris clarified that the highlighted items were mandatory training sessions and Cassie O'Neil said yes.

Cassie O'Neil said that since the last meeting there have been two sessions;
1) - Questioning at Scrutiny which had 15 attendees and
2) – Chairing session which had 7 attendees.

Cllr Silwal asked what training needs to be undertaken to sit on DMC.

He was asked to be a substitute but didn't know if he had undertaken the relevant training for it.

Cassie O'Neil said that there is specific DMC training which must be undertaken before a Member is able to sit on DMC and that training is delivered in-house by the Planning Department.

Layla Fowell suggest that she will discuss with Planning about getting a session put together for Members

Action Point - Member Support to look at other training previously undertaken and add to attendance sheet. (DMC etc.)

Action Point – Member Support to discuss further planning training if required with Planning department.

Cllr Griffiths suggests that the list should be made accessible to everyone to be able to check what training has been undertaken. For Members to be able to look up the information themselves as to whether they have had the training to do the specific job.

Cllr Freeman suggested before we look at mandatory training, we should ensure that it is necessary to undertake it each year. For example he said that he understands Safeguarding needs to be undertaken each year, however something like Social Media training may have been undertaken in 2019 and so is it necessary to do again in 2020?

He suggests that the list/spreadsheet is made clear as to the mandatory training taken in what specific years.

Action Point – Layla Fowell to send Mandatory spreadsheet to the committee showing who has undertaken mandatory training and who hasn't and in what year(s).

Cassie O'Neil suggests that Member Support provide an "end of year round up of training" for Members so that they can see what training they have undertaken that year and also to give a reminder of mandatory training which may be expiring and needs refresher.

Cllr Douris said there is a need to alert Group Leaders of those Members who have not completed their mandatory training.

Cassie O'Neil said we prepare a quarterly report to be given to Group Leaders via the Chief Executive which displays that information and allows Group Leaders to discuss with their Party Members. She will check if this is continuing and if not, will seek to get it re-instated.

Cllr Douris asks can the information be uploaded to DORIS.

Cllr Griffiths wants clarification that the information uploaded would only be visible to the individual Members and would only display their own information.

Cassie O'Neil said that yes she would look into the DORIS module and yes it would only be displayed on your own personal account so other could not see.

Layla Fowell said that she believed that any training undertaken pre-DENNIS could not be uploaded retrospectively as the system would not allow.

Action Point – Member Support to look into the possibility of utilising the DORIS/DENNIS Member module on the intranet to include essential training information for Members.

7 MDSG WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr Douris suggested that they ask officers from various departments, to highlight particular training sessions which they feel would be helpful to Members. Following on from that list, you could ask Members to vote on what sessions they would like to attend and choose the most popular.

At the bottom of the voting sheet there could be a box for Members to include what sessions they personally would like to be trained on (up to max of 3 sessions) and then the most requested training sessions could be taken for delivery.

Action Point – Member Support to discuss with Officers regarding specific training for Members.

Cllr Griffiths agreed that would be a good idea.

Cllr Bhinder said he had wanted to explore the idea of Members being trained on more awareness of the Environment and particularly issues covered under the ‘Clean Neighbourhood and Environmental Act 2003’. This looks at issues of untaxed vehicles, clean neighbourhoods and section 215’s. He said it would be a good idea for Members and have awareness of what Dacorum Borough Council and the community can do to keep the environment clean.

Cllr Freedman said his idea would be that there is an event for new Councillors who join to meet up in person and to speak with Group Leaders and Officers as a “moral building” event.

Cllr Griffiths said she liked that idea, especially with 2 new members joining after 6th May.

She also stated that it was important that Member Services are involved in the training suggestions for Councillors.

Cassie O’Neil said that they could possibly tie this in with the town & parish council marketplace idea when social distancing permits. It would be beneficial for Members to have a chat with Officers and see them in person.

Action Point – Member Support Team to look into hosting a marketplace event once social distancing measures permit.

The Meeting ended at 7.12 pm