

## **MINUTES**

### **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP**

**14 DECEMBER 2016**

**Present:**

**Councillors:** Banks  
Douris  
Hicks  
Howard  
Taylor (Chairman)

**Officers:** M Anderson Corporate Support Team Leader  
(Democracy)  
T Angel Member Support Officer

The meeting began at 7.34 pm

#### **53                    APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Conway and P Hearn.

The Chairman said he believed that Councillor Adshead was at The Forum induction and therefore wouldn't be attending this meeting.

#### **54                    MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2016 were agreed by the Members present and then signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman asked for an update on the action points from the previous meeting.

M Anderson referred to the Effective Member Officer Partnership training and explained she had met with the officer in HR that dealt with staff training and gave them details of this course which they have suggested putting in to the Leading in Dacorum programme. She said this was likely to be after May 2017.

The Chairman explained that he suggested having the session for officers and then a joint session with members and officers because he felt it would be helpful for everyone and the member only session was so useful.

Councillor Hicks suggested that long term officers may not benefit from an officer only session but felt that a joint session with members was a good idea.

Councillor Howard arrived at 7.38 pm.

Councillor Douris said there was a danger of having separate training sessions and he felt that by having a joint session everyone would come to the training with a blank page.

The Chairman said the decision with was HR now and out of our hands.

M Anderson advised that we would be involved in the discussions and arrangements and would therefore pass on the committees' suggestions.

Councillor Hicks said he didn't realise how different being a Borough Councillor would be to being a Town and Parish Councillor. He found the Councillor only training very useful.

## **55                      PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOLLOW-UP REPORT**

M Anderson advised that we hadn't received the report yet for the follow-up sessions so we didn't have an accurate update. She said we had booked two dates for the PDP's to be carried out but one of those dates had to be cancelled due to lack of bookings. T Angel explained that as of last week, 9 members had either had their follow-up appointment or an appointment had been arranged for a telephone call. She said the other 6 members hadn't replied to arrange an appointment.

The Chairman said he had also spoken to the provider and he was hopeful to have completed all 15 sessions by tomorrow. He said he was passionate about training and continuing to improve skills and he was very disappointed in the lack of interest.

Councillor Hicks said he worked part-time so he was able to attend most training sessions but felt that those who worked full time could really struggle to find the time. He did suggest that members could have completed a telephone interview so there wasn't really an excuse.

Councillor Douris said he found it disappointing that the PDP's hadn't been successful. He also agreed with Councillor Hicks and felt you really don't know what's involved in being a councillor until you become one.

Councillor Hicks referred to previous discussions about having refreshments at training sessions. He suggested that it could encourage members to attend if they worked full-time, were rushing around and they're probably hungry/thirsty and want to go home but if they knew they could come along to the sessions and have refreshments they may feel more tempted.

Councillor Howard said she didn't complete a follow-up appointment and felt that she didn't get much out of the PDP like she had hoped.

Councillor Douris advised that in the run up to the HCC Elections, potential candidates are invited to group meetings. He added that the PDP process at HCC had not been overly successful.

Councillor Hicks said he underestimated the amount of work involved for a councillor and didn't feel that we could prepare someone in advance for the amount of work they would be taking on.

M Anderson advised that we could consider having tea/coffee and biscuits at training sessions but it would have to come out of the member development budget. She said we used to provide refreshments years ago but the budget was taken away. She explained she would need to investigate the logistics of it due to the move to The Forum.

M Anderson explained that we tried to get members to do a report on the 'How to Become a Councillor' webpage so that they could explain in their own words exactly what was involved in being a councillor but we struggled to get volunteers.

The Chairman suggested that he and Councillor Douris could write something for the webpage. Councillor Douris agreed.

M Anderson said there were discussions prior to the 2015 Borough Election about Jim Doyle carrying out briefings for potential candidates but it was deemed inappropriate for an officer to be doing it.

The Chairman felt it was a member's duty to encourage others to become a member and shouldn't be done by an officer.

Councillor Howard said she would have found it useful to attend several meetings when she was a prospective candidate.

M Anderson suggested that existing councillors may have been put off because of the previous PDP cycle. She highlighted that we have spent approximately £4,300 on this PDP process which worked out at roughly £280 per councillor. She felt this was very expensive considering not all members had completed the whole process.

Councillor Douris suggested having a post-it wall at the post-election inductions for newly-elected members to write down what they would like to know about being a councillor. The officers felt this was a good idea that they would take forward.

Actions:

- Councillors Taylor and Douris to write reports for the 'How to Become a Councillor' webpage.
- Officers would circulate the PDP review report, once received

## **56                      QUARTERLY BUDGET UPDATE**

M Anderson introduced the budget report and welcomed any questions.

The Chairman ran through each of the payments so members were clear what courses had been paid for.

The Chairman drew attention to the 'Safe and Confident Use of Social Media' course and advised that the Standards Committee had just put together a new policy on Social Media.

Councillor Douris asked if the new policy would be adopted in time for the training on 9 February. Councillor Taylor hoped it would be but asked the officers to liaise with Mark Brookes to confirm.

M Hicks said he avoided using social media but agreed it can be useful.

M Anderson reminded members to just let her or T Angel know if there are any courses they would like to go on.

Councillor Douris asked if it was likely that we would spend the rest of the budget before the end of this financial year. M Anderson said there were a couple of courses we still needed to pay for but it was unlikely that we would spend the full amount.

Actions:

- Member Support to liaise with M Brookes about the date of adoption for the new social media policy.

**57**

**MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2016/17**

T Angel advised that the development programme was now full until April 2017 and the next session was scheduled for 19 January in The Forum. She said she would start advertising the sessions for January next week so that members had plenty of notice as she wouldn't expect them to be checking their emails every day over the Christmas period. She explained that she had a few other requests for training sessions which could be found at the end of the programme, but would need to try and find some available dates now that the programme was full. She said she was mindful that she didn't want to bombard members with too many training sessions.

Councillor Douris asked if the training to be scheduled was in priority order. T Angel advised it wasn't.

**58**

**MEMBERS TRAINING FEEDBACK**

T Angel drew attention to the two sessions that had been held in November and highlighted that the majority of feedback was positive but the number of attendees were still quite low. She noticed that a few comments on the forms were bold and advised members that it was a formatting issue. She welcomed any comments or questions from the group.

Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that the presentation slides from training sessions would only be circulated to members that either attended the session or members that specifically ask for them. Some of the group felt that it could de-incentivise members to attend the sessions if they could receive the presentation slides without attending.

Councillor Banks arrived at 8.48 pm.

The Chairman gave Councillor Banks a brief summary of what had been discussed before she arrived.

Councillor Banks felt that the PDP she had received was really good and felt she had personally gained a lot from the process.

## **59                      MDSG WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17**

M Anderson advised that she had met with HR and was reminded of the E-Learning suite for Councillors that hadn't been used for a couple of years. She said the new members probably hadn't been made aware that it was there as it had previously been unsuccessful. She had some checks she needed to do such as compatibility with iPads and updating members details, but thought it would be useful if she invited someone from HR along to the meeting in March to give members more information on E-Learning. All members agreed this would be useful.

M Anderson asked the members to let her or T Angel know of any items they would like to add to the work programme in the future.

### Action:

- Member Support to invite HR along to the meeting in March for E-Learning.

The Chairman thanked the committee for all their work and contributions throughout the year and wished them a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The Meeting ended at 9.04 pm