MINUTES

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

7 JANUARY 2020

Present:

Councillors: Bhinder
                     Douris (Chairman)
                     Freedman
                     Griffiths
                     Silwal

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

The meeting began at 6.39 pm

1   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barry.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Freedman.

2   MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October were confirmed by the Members present and were then signed by the Chairman.

3   QUARTERLY BUDGET UPDATE

Councillor Griffiths asked about adding the notional allowance of officer time to the Quarterly Budget Update.

KM said that it was difficult to add this to the Budget Update as the spreadsheet was lifted directly from the Budget itself.

Councillor Griffiths suggested adding the training title under the detail column but then putting the amount as costing nothing: £0.00.

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

KM said that she would talk to Finance. She added that the Community Leadership Training was delivered by the LGA at no cost. She said that the Chair Training and Overview and Scrutiny Training delivered by Frontline Consulting had now been paid for as well as the Social Media training from Link Support Services.

<u>Action:</u> KM said that they would be asking other Local Authorities about the training that they provide to their Members.

4   <u>MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME</u>

Councillor Douris noted that the room used for Social Media Training was too small for the number of attendees.

Councillor Freedman said that this may have been because several attendees were from Town and Parish Councils.

CW said that the room was booked according to the number of Councillors that had signed up for the session and that several Councillors turn up to sessions without signing up for them first. She said this was fine but that it was difficult to cater for.

Councillor Douris said that they had used Link Support Services for the past 4 or 5 years.

Councillor Bhinder said that it was important to provide regular training for those areas where legislation was constantly changing.

Councillor Freedman suggested two different Social Media sessions being offered. He said that one session could be mandatory, covering the legalities surrounding Social Media.

Councillor Bhinder said that it would be useful for this session to include raising awareness of abuse and bullying online.

Councillor Freedman suggested that the second Social Media session could cover public awareness and engagement including information on using the best tools to communicate with residents.

Councillor Griffiths suggested that this session could also provide horizon scanning to update Members on what was becoming popular.

Councillor Bhinder said that offering two sessions was a good idea as some training like the Licensing training provided a heavy amount of information in a short space of time. He suggested that Social Media training could give the Councillors' perspective as well as the perspective of residents using Social Media.

Councillor Freedman said that using Facebook was currently the most useful platform for communicating with as many people as possible. He said that some people would be using new platforms but that his priority was to reach as many people as possible.

Councillor Bhinder said that it was important to consider the resources of managing this.

Councillor Freedman said that this year Facebook would remain at the fore.

Councillor Douris asked when the tipping point would be when Facebook was no longer at the fore. He suggested that a Social Media session on legalities could be delivered next year and then a session on future Social Media platforms could be delivered the following year or the year after.

Councillor Griffiths said that she believed legalities had already been covered but that it would be useful for refreshers to be provided. She added that horizon scanning could be filtered into this. She commented that many people found using Facebook stressful and were moving away from the platform.

Councillor Bhinder said that demographics needed to be looked at carefully.

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

Councillor Douris suggested providing a Social Media session early on with a title such as 'Social Media: how to stay out of jail' and making sure it was clear to Members that this was a new course with a new topic.

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

Councillor Douris suggested asking Mark Brookes about a provider with a legal background. He said that a horizon scanning Social Media session could be delivered at the end of the year.

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.

Councillor Griffiths said that it would be useful to have training for Councillors on how to use ModernGov in general.

Councillor Freedman commented that it would be important to talk to Mark Brookes about the blogs due to the risk of implicating the Council.

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.

Councillor Silwal said that it would be useful if there was separate training on this.

KM confirmed that there would be.

Councillor Bhinder asked about comments on the blogs.

KM said that comments would be turned off.

Councillor Freedman said that comments could be turned off but could be received as messages on some platforms. He added that whoever was responsible for

approving the blogs would need to know what they were doing from a legal standpoint.

Councillor Bhinder said that he runs grovehill.co.uk and that he had switched off comments.

Councillor Douris commented that there was lots that was unknown concerning ModernGov and other Council IT functions.

Councillor Griffiths agreed that there were many aspects concerning IT that Councillors did not know about.

Councillor Bhinder said that many Councillors had issues with their devices at meetings that he attended, particularly with ModernGov and emails.

Action: KM said that they would be arranging sessions for Members.

Councillor Griffiths said that it would be useful to have a session that highlighted everything that could be done on the system and to then see which Councillors were interested in using which functions. She said that sessions could then be given over the 4 year term.

Councillor Freedman noted that this training should not be mandatory.

Councillor Douris commented that many Councillors would not know how to use and find these additional functions.

KM said that she could speak to the performance team. She suggested having training sessions before Council.

Councillor Douris said that he was not keen on this and that monthly, almost 'drop-in', training might be better.

Councillor Griffiths noted that when she was sent emails to her Dacorum email address, links to webpages would not work due to the firewall and that it would say that there was a server error.

Action: KM said that they would speak to IT about this.

Councillor Freedman said that it sounded like an IT issue.

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.

Councillor Douris asked for ideas for training.

Councillor Freedman suggested a Mayor's training session regarding etiquette in Full Council meetings. He gave the example of addressing Councillors.

Councillor Griffiths said that Councillors are generally asked how they want to be addressed. She said that it would be useful to have a practical training session on rules as well as a session on custom and practice.

Councillor Freedman said that it was about etiquette and gave the example of wearing a tie.

Councillor Douris, speaking as the Mayor, gave examples of people getting up at the end of the meeting and Members asking a number of questions and his own practice in running the meeting. He said that the legal rules took priority over customs and practice.

Councillor Griffiths said that the dress code was down to the Groups.

Councillor Freedman said that he was keen to follow etiquette and not cause friction.

Councillor Douris commented that Town and Parish Council meetings tended to be quite formal.

Councillor Griffiths said that there should be the option to ask someone informally about custom and practice.

Councillor Douris addressed the rules and Constitution for Full Council and said that there was actually no limit to the number of questions that could be asked.

Councillor Griffiths suggested a training session to go through the Constitution which could be Council meeting specific, for example, covering Points of Order and the Move to Vote.

Action: KM said that she would speak to Mark Brookes and Farida Hussain about this.

Councillor Griffiths agreed that going out to Members again was a good idea and that service-specific training sessions could be offered. She suggested each department listing what services they provide.

Councillor Freedman said that he would find another marketplace useful like at the Member Induction but if it could last longer. He added that it may also be worth asking officers for ideas for training sessions for Councillors and gave the example of common questions that officers may get asked.

Councillor Douris said that the way in which the sessions are advertised could be better to catch Members' attention.

5   EVALUATION FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS

Councillor Griffiths asked whether the team went back to Councillors who gave low scores in their feedback of Member Development sessions.

KM said that the evaluation feedback forms were anonymous.

Councillor Freedman added that people might not be as honest in feedback if they knew that they could be identified.

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

Councillor Freedman said that he looked for something that he could immediately take away from courses to implement.

Councillor Douris suggested rewording a question or including an additional question to cover this and whether this question should be scored from 1-10 or whether it should allow Councillors to provide a comment. He also suggested adding a comment section to ask Councillors whether anything was missing from training sessions.

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

6   ATTENDANCE RECORD

KM highlighted that not all Councillors had attended the mandatory training sessions and that names would be passed on to the Group Leaders.

CW said that Sara Whelan was in the process of arranging a further Planning training session.

Councillor Freedman suggested that Members were encouraged to pre-submit questions ahead of the Planning training to make most effective use of the time.

Councillor Douris noted that using a local situation to highlight a wider issue was useful in sessions but that focusing solely on that local situation may not necessarily be helpful.

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

Councillor Griffiths asked when the online system would be going live.

Action: KM said that she would chase this and also look at how training would be provided.

Councillor Douris asked whether IT could provide drop-in sessions.

KM said that they had been offered before so that this should be possible.

Councillor Griffiths said that it would be worth letting Members know what could be done on the system first and then providing training based on what Members wished to use.

Councillor Douris said that it would be good for Members to be kept up to date with new systems that were being used as well.

KM said that updates were provided on the Information Station.

Councillor Douris suggested asking Councillors in Members News when the last time they used the intranet was.

KM said that this may be difficult but suggested Communications adding in Members News about the Information Station.

Councillor Freedman asked whether it would be possible for an organisation chart to be provided on the intranet that went down to a lower level than Group Managers.

Councillor Griffiths said that senior staff would want to know about issues in their service and they would then delegate as appropriate.

KM said that it could be highlighted in training sessions about how to search for individuals.

7   WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 18th March.

The Meeting ended at 8.17 pm