

Minutes

Member Development Steering Group

30th November 2022

ATTENDEES: Terry Douris - Chair (Cllr)
Margaret Griffiths (Cllr)
Sammy Barry-Mears (Cllr)
Rick Freedman (Cllr)
Goverdan Silwal (Cllr)
Alex Bhinder (Cllr)
Layla Fowell (Corporate Support)

1. Apologies

There were no apologies

2. Minutes

The Chair confirmed that the £5,082 has been removed from the accounts as it should not have been coded to the MDSG. The process for applying for money other than direct training now needs to be vetted.

Cllr Freedman confirmed that he was missing as an attendee in the previous minutes.

3. Action Points from Previous Meeting

On DORIS, the Chair noted that he had spoken to the DBC officer and advised that he has been shown a quick way to get into DORIS and the training session, though if you want to apply to be part of a training session you are unable to get in as this requires authorisation. LFowell confirmed that she has now been set up as a team leader for all councillors and if any courses are requested then she will be notified and be able to approve.

The Chair commented that a number of courses are in-house courses provided by officers who don't use the DORIS system at present. The Chair stated that this is an additional pressure on LFowell and Member Services as training sessions need to be put on DORIS and you can't register late, though this is now being rectified. The Chair provided an overview of the booking process.

LFowell confirmed that she has discussed the process with HR, and whilst backdating courses is a lot of work, they are looking to see if this can be shared across the two teams. LFowell stated that they are going to trial adding a member briefing to DORIS so members can book for it, and a Teams link will also be provided so that members can attend without going through DORIS. LFowell asked if members of the MDSG could book through the DORIS system to help them better understand how the process works and that they can then have a set process when new members come in 2023.

Cllr Freedman commented on the work to backdate training, noting that as they are coming up to a new intake, if people have not attended all mandatory courses, this is not necessary unless they are returning councillors.

Cllr Freedman suggested that the focus for DORIS should be providing training to staff and officers, and whilst it is positive for members to have access, they should be looking to direct members to in-person training. Cllr Freedman agreed that this could be changed as the DORIS system develops, adding that with the changeover of staff for officers and for members who are unable to go in during working hours, training courses act as a positive relationship-building tool between members and officers and they should therefore avoid DORIS becoming the main delivery tool for members.

The Chair commented on mandatory courses, noting that after the election all members will have to complete mandatory courses in the first year whether they are returning members or not.

Cllr Griffiths noted that not completing mandatory training could go to the Standards Committee and that members can potentially be barred from standing again. Cllr Griffiths agreed with Cllr Freedman that they should avoid creating additional work for staff, especially if no action is taken.

On virtual learning, Cllr Griffiths noted her favour of completing these in-person though the business model does not require staff to be in full-time and that their working hours should also be considered. Cllr Griffiths added that having a hybrid offer can also help open up the membership to other residents, such as those who have caring responsibilities.

The Chair acknowledged the importance of having a hybrid offer.

Cllr Bhinder agreed with Cllr Freedman, noting that in-person training is a good opportunity to meet up with officers.

Cllr Bhinder asked that Cllr Douris be noted as the Chair in the attendee list of the previous minutes.

LFowell noted that DORIS would allow members to book courses run by officers, whether virtual, in-person or hybrid. LFowell confirmed that hybrid is the best option as this allows everyone to attend. On catching up with training, LFowell advised that they are working with IT on a possible Teams channel for members to allow access to meeting and training recordings and files. Cllr Bhinder asked if they could look to use YouTube. LFowell confirmed that they would not use YouTube for training, though it is being used to stream full council meetings and will be widely used by committees as they go forward. Cllr Silwal noted how helpful it would be to access meetings and trainings on Teams again.

The Chair advised that there are training packages mainly aimed at members of staff that are available to members of staff, and that members can use DORIS as a recording facility to record the training sessions they have been to, the majority of which are provided by in-house colleagues, so there is a record of attendance. The Chair stated that they should maintain their own internal training sessions given that they also help with relationship building between staff and members.

The Chair asked that a Teams channel work from implementation. LFowell agreed, adding that they work well and will ensure that everyone has access to files in one space, and if they proceed with this then they will ensure it's set up to be ready for new members. Cllr Griffiths suggested that the channel first be tested by the MDSG before it is released to all members. LFowell confirmed that MDSG members will also be used to test the DORIS booking system.

ACTION: Cllr Douris to be listed as Chair in previous minutes.

4. Budget

The Chair noted that the £5,082 has now been removed, as referred to under item 1.

LFowell presented the budget, noting that it remains unchanged since the last meeting.

The Chair asked if a notional value could be given to training courses that staff have provided. LFowell confirmed that some of this is covered in terms of the member induction programme and agreed to pick this up further with Cassie.

Cllr Griffiths asked if accruals are included in the budget, noting that she is going on a course with the LGA in January that costs, and whilst this has been approved, accruals should be included. LFowell confirmed that they know of these internally though they don't show on budgets until the invoice has come in. Cllr Griffiths asked if the MDSG could see this. LFowell confirmed that she would ask Cassie to see if this can be provided. The Chair stated that they need a spreadsheet including the budget, expenditure and accruals, adding that members do need to be aware of accruals.

Cllr Bhinder agreed that they should quantify officer time, noting that this could also help with comparing outsourcing training.

Cllr Freedman stated to find committed spending, they need to find if the purchase order placed on the external provider is split for each attendee or is global. If split, this information should be easy to get hold of, otherwise they will need to get this information manually.

ACTION: LFowell to ask Cassie to give a value to officer briefings.

ACTION: LFowell to ask Cassie if accruals can be presented.

5. Member Development Programme

LFowell provided the update, noting that there was little change. LFowell confirmed that the health and safety training briefing will take place tomorrow evening, there will be a session on 19th January that they will trial through DORIS, and then February has been kept clear as previously discussed.

It was confirmed that Russell Ham would be providing the health and safety training.

The Chair commented on the evaluation forms. LFowell noted that a lot of briefing feedback forms have not gone out and confirmed she will be looking at the process in more detail. LFowell stated that they need to ensure the form covers what they want to ask and if they use it on Forms. LFowell suggested that the questions included on the evaluation form be put on the agenda for the next MDSG meeting. Cllr Griffiths asked if the feedback form can be linked to the training session on DORIS. LFowell confirmed that she would look into this.

The Chair noted the amount of work that LFowell was having to cover and confirmed that he would support this being covered by HR. LFowell confirmed that she was happy to work with the MDSG on this.

The Chair asked if they should pursue the evaluation forms for the remaining training courses given that they are close to the end of their terms. It was agreed that this should be deferred to the new term.

Cllr Freedman noted that a lot of feedback is regarding the presentation of the course, though the main focus should be on the content of the course. LFowell agreed that they need to tailor the feedback forms, noting that more feedback would be required on external training courses.

ACTION: LFowell to look if feedback forms can be linked into DORIS.

ACTION: Item on evaluation questions to be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

6. Member Risk Assessment

LFowell noted the risk assessment and confirmed that any feedback would be provided to Cassie. LFowell advised that feedback could also be provided post-meeting.

Cllr Griffiths commented that she was unsure if you could mandate people to attend personal safety training. Cllr Barry-Mears advised that this comes under safeguarding. Cllr Griffiths asked what would happen if a member didn't attend training, noting that other items such as GDPR are a legal obligation. LFowell confirmed that she would pass the feedback onto Cassie that whilst the course is a good idea, it shouldn't be mandatory.

Cllr Bhinder noted that members need to be contactable and approachable and that this also needs to be considered as part of the risk assessment. Cllr Griffiths confirmed that she has removed her personal address, though they can still contact her through the council to then meet in a mutually agreed place.

The Chair stated that he has put his personal address on the website as he felt he should be available to people and that if one member is using the Forum address then they all should to ensure a level of equality.

Cllr Freedman suggested that they could not make either approach mandatory and it would be for each political group to discuss. Cllr Griffiths added that the decision is personal choice and that they also have to consider their family's safety. Cllr Griffiths also noted that councillors are stating on their out of office response that they are on holiday whilst their address is widely available. The Chair suggested that this be considered further.

LFowell noted that a risk assessment has to be in place and that the focus is on what is considered to be safe rather than mandating members to carry out these actions. LFowell asked that members also consider any items that may be missing from the assessment.

The Chair noted that the page number overwrites part of the table.

7. New Member Induction Programme

LFowell noted the first draft of the induction programme and asked members for any feedback.

LFowell advised that, with new members coming, she has been looking at the induction programme with Cassie on what new members may require at the beginning of their term.

LFowell presented the overview of the proposed new member induction as (1) an introduction to SLT, (2) code of conduct training, (3) lunch and service marketplace, (d) coach tour, particularly CCTV and Cupid Green, and (5) ICT equipment and ID badge issue. LFowell then noted the courses for consideration, with priority given on licensing specific to those licensing committees and DMC specific to DMC members, and then mandatory courses that should be completed in the first year.

On the coach tour, Cllr Griffiths stated that this needs to be wider than Hemel Hempstead.

Cllr Griffiths noted that Covid was a factor in members not completing mandatory training and that the importance of courses should be completed at the first meeting.

Cllr Freedman agreed with the items already listed for the new member induction and recommended that they also include meeting the Member Support team and information on council communication with guidance on how emails are sent out and which addresses to send items back to. Cllr Freedman stated that there should also be training regarding call-ins.

LFowell next looked at the service briefing sessions, noting the guidance on ICT, meetings and how to use ModernGov, microphones and electronic voting with meeting Member Support up the list.

Cllr Bhinder noted that Licensing and DMC courses should all be held in-person.

Cllr Bhinder commented on the briefing on ICT and meetings, noting that this should be a priority. Cllr Bhinder stated that how the council functions and the hierarchy in place would also be important to cover.

The Chair referred back to Cllr Freedman's comments on call-ins, noting the mandatory course on the constitution and suggested that this be expanded to constitution and process as this would relate to call-ins and how long you can speak at meetings.

Cllr Bhinder asked if the protocols could be bullet-pointed with easy access to members. The Chair advised that protocols regarding development and management meetings is already set out, though information could also be included in the mandatory constitution. The Chair commented that they could introduce an FAQ for members, though the information is already available.

The Chair noted the proposed dates of Friday 12th and Monday 15th May for new member inductions and suggested that a number of members may work on these days. The Chair suggested that they hold one day over the weekend. LFowell confirmed that Cassie is looking at sending information to candidates on what may happen if they are elected and that this will include the proposed dates.

LFowell next looked at the non-mandatory courses and advised that courses can be added as the MDSG feels necessary.

LFowell noted that Cassie will be taking the programme to Claire next week and asked members to consider what items were beneficial to them when they started.

Cllr Griffiths commented that it would be helpful for councillors to get to know each other. LFowell agreed that they could facilitate a place where conversations can happen. The Chair recommended a welcome event and it was agreed that this could be included as part of the service marketplace.

The Chair recommended a course on disaster management. Cllr Griffiths noted that this was already included under emergency planning.

8. AOB

Cllr Freedman noted that the MDSG works well in facilitating good communication between councillors and recommended that it be used as a good example for building it up.

Cllr Barry-Mears noted the hard work of LFowell and Cassie.

There being no further business, the Chair formally closed the meeting.