
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

**Held on Thursday, 2 June 2011 at 10.00 am in
Dereham Room, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, Norfolk**

PRESENT

Mr I. Sherwood (Chairman)	Mr S R Green
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mr W R J Richmond
Mr R.F. Goreham	

Also Present

Mrs D.K.R. Irving	Mrs P.A. Spencer
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In Attendance

Natalie King	- HR Manager
Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer
Leanne Neave	- HR Advisor/Member Development Trainer
Teresa Smith	- Committee Officer (Scrutiny & Projects)
Richard Wills	- Training & Development Manager

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Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. He was pleased to have been re-appointed as Chairman and encouraged the new Members to take a full part in meetings. He was also pleased to see other non-Members in the room and said that all non-Members were encouraged to attend.

35/11 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

NB: At Minute No 27/11 it stated that the Panel's Minutes would be included on the Cabinet Agenda in future. As meetings of the Panel were not open to the public the Minutes would instead be forwarded to Formal Executive Board meetings.

36/11 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr K Gilbert.

37/11 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

None.

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38/11 DECLARATION OF INTEREST (AGENDA ITEM 4)

No declarations were made.

39/11 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 5)

Mrs D Irving and Mrs P Spencer were in attendance.

40/11 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING (AGENDA ITEM 6)

40 .a Member Induction

The HR Advisor/Member Development Trainer informed the Panel that the Induction for new Members had received very positive feedback. The day had been well structured and logical and new Members would continue to receive support in the following weeks.

The new Personal Development Plans (PDPs) had also been well received and feedback indicated that Members found them more efficient and time saving. The new process also gave the training officers a greater understanding of each Member's interests and development needs.

45 PDP interviews had already been booked or completed and e-mail reminders would be sent to the nine Members who had not yet arranged their appointment.

The Chairman noted that previously it had been difficult to get Members to complete their PDPs. The new system was a great improvement. He asked for feedback from new Members on both the induction and PDP processes.

Mr Goreham advised that the three new Labour Councillors had enjoyed the induction but said that there had been a lot to take in.

Mr Richmond (a new Member) agreed that it had been good but he would have liked more time to meet the officers. He suggested that in future the timetable could be switched to put Code of Conduct training and the briefing on PDPs after the Council meeting leaving the afternoon free to meet officers.

Mr Green (also a new Member) agreed that the induction had been well structured but more time was needed to meet officers.

Mrs Irving said that officers had also found the opportunity to meet new Members very beneficial. This was confirmed by the new Training & Development Manager who said that it had been very helpful in identifying new Members.

At this point it was noted that some Panel Members did not know the officers in the room, so introductions were made.

After further discussion the following points were noted:

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- Personal interviews for PDPs was the right way forward
- During their PDP interviews it had been suggested that Members should visit departments within the Council, this opportunity was welcomed
- One-to-one interviews with lead officers, on matters of interest (or where development need had been identified during PDPs), would be organised.

Mr Bambridge, e-Champion for ICT, then updated the Panel on the provision of new laptops for all Members. There had been a problem with the equipment which had recently been fixed by an officer. There had also been problems with the provision of Broadband by BT over which the Council had no control, but the rollout would begin that afternoon. All new Members should have received the new equipment within the next two weeks. All returning Members should have their new kit by the end of July.

Members discussed training and noted that it would not be sufficient to have a quick handover by the technician that delivered the laptop. Although they would be advised of set-up and use at that time and given a copy of the IT Protocol, in-depth training would need to be provided separately.

The issue of support was raised by Mrs Spencer. She asked who should be contacted about problems with either new or existing equipment.

Mr Bambridge advised that there was no longer a dedicated support officer for Members. In his place there was a helpdesk which operated from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 12 noon on Saturdays. Members could use e-mail or telephone to report any problems 24 hours a day. Officers had a target of two hours (within the helpdesk timings) to respond to such calls. Once the new equipment was installed it was expected that most problems would be fixed by remote access. For problems that could not be fixed in that way, Members would be required to bring their laptop to Elizabeth House. The new system would be monitored and revisited by the Joint Audit and Scrutiny Panel in late September/early October 2011.

Members requested that when the new equipment was delivered it should have a label with the helpdesk number affixed to it.

Kevin Rump

Mr Goreham was concerned that the service provided by BT was not good enough. He suggested that they should be held to account and Mr Bambridge confirmed that officers were in discussions with BT and its various off-shoot companies about the delays.

Mr Bambridge advised that training sessions would be arranged for Members, ranging from the use of software applications to video conferencing. It was intended that the sessions would follow on after meetings of full Council and other Committees. However, the Chairman pointed out that when Members had been surveyed they had said they did not want follow-on sessions after meetings. He said that training should be available at times to suit individual Members.

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Mr Bambridge acknowledged this. Actual training requirements were not yet known. That information was being collected as part of the PDP process. A training schedule would be prepared when all Members' requirements had been collated.

The Human Resources Manager re-assured the Panel that training would be available to every Member. At the time the new laptops and printers were delivered, a small scale assessment of how IT literate each Member was would be carried out and that information would be fed back, to inform training needs. She was currently working with Executive Members looking at WebEx, video conferencing and other practical ways to help Members to work more efficiently. A schedule for training would be arranged before the next meeting.

She also advised that the number and time of support calls by Members had been investigated before the Helpdesk hours had been agreed. There had been issues with the previous system concerning the Council's duty of care to its officers. The new system overcame those issues and should provide an efficient service.

Mrs Irving asked the following questions:

- Would returning Members be given the IT Protocol?
Yes, all Members would be required to sign the Protocol
- Would the new laptops work faster than the existing equipment?
Yes, existing PCs had .5GB of memory - new laptops had 4GBs and were faster.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bambridge and the HR Advisor/Member Development Trainer for their updates.

40 .b Member Training Budget

The HR Advisor/Member Development Trainer presented the brief report which covered the period April to May 2011. Training had been reduced due to the elections.

Appendix 1 gave details of the training that had been delivered. Both courses had achieved 100% attendance.

In response to a question from the Chairman she confirmed that reminder e-mails were being sent to attendees before each course.

Mr Goreham asked if there was sufficient money in the budget to meet all the training requirements.

The Chairman explained that the whole budget had not been used in the last two years although he acknowledged that there might be more expense due to new Members in the coming year.

Mr Bambridge added that there might be the need for additional training to address changes to Planning and the Localism Bill. The Chairman had already flagged that as an issue and asked the Training & Development Manager to arrange a training programme.

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Mr Goreham reiterated that the basic principles of Member Training were to ensure that the decision makers were well informed. He did not think that £20,000 was a lot to spend to achieve that end.

The Chairman explained that that equated to £370 per head – which would provide a lot of training.

The Human Resources Manager agreed that compared to other Councils the budget was not large, but despite that Breckland managed to provide more training and a bigger variation of training than other Councils. The budget was set using historical data but if an increase was needed, and could be justified, it could be changed.

Mr Bambridge suggested that there should be consultation with neighbouring authorities to share training and costs. He also said that some courses should be offered to Town and Parish Councils, for a fee.

Mrs Irving asked if possible shared training with South Holland had been discussed and the Human Resources Manager advised that as she now had shared responsibility across both authorities it was something that she was looking into.

The Chairman raised the question of training for Members appointed to Outside Bodies. Some of those appointments were to highly specialised organisations. To enable Members to be effective they needed training. He asked the Member Training department to liaise with the Outside Bodies to see if any training was available.

The report was noted.

41/11 IMPROVING ACCESS TO LOCAL DEMOCRACY

41 .a Town & Parish Council Forum - 14 March 2011

The Committee Officer (Scrutiny & Projects) updated the Panel on the Town and Parish Council Forum held on 14 March 2011.

Reminder e-mails had been sent and the agenda issued in advance of the event. Turnout had been good with 41 attendees out of an expected 51. Evaluation forms had been distributed and the feedback received had been noted on the agenda.

The Chairman was pleased to see that the number of attendees had improved and said that the Forums were valuable and worked well.

Mr Bambridge agreed and thought they should continue.

42/11 NEXT MEETING

A request had been received to change the date of the next meeting as it was on the same day as the Overview & Scrutiny Commission meeting. A change was agreed and a new date would be confirmed as soon as possible.

**Richard
Wills**

**Helen
McAleer**

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Closing Remarks

The Chairman wished the HR Advisor/Member Development Trainer all the best as she was about to start maternity leave.

He went on to note that the Panel had received a lot of help and support from Mr Stephen McGrath, former Member Services Manager, who had now left the Authority. Mr McGrath had taken Member Training forward in many good ways. He asked that a letter of thanks be sent to Mr McGrath, from the Panel.

**Helen
McAleer**

The meeting closed at 11.10 am

CHAIRMAN