
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

**Held on Thursday, 22 November 2012 at 10.00 am in
Norfolk Room, Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr T R Carter (Chairman)	Mr T. J. Jermy
Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mr M. S. Robinson
Mr K.S. Gilbert	

Also Present

Mark Stokes	- Deputy Chief Executive
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In Attendance

Leanne Neave	- Member Trainer
Teresa Smith	- Committee Officer

Action By

42/12 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2012 were confirmed as a correct record.

43/12 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Stuart Green.

44/12 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

45/12 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations were made.

46/12 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

None.

47/12 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed Mark Stokes, Deputy Chief Executive to the meeting.

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The Chairman gave an introduction to the Local Ward Member / Officer Pledge document explaining that this had been in the pipeline for a number of years, however the Panel were now committed to making the Pledge work. It was important for Councillors to be effective so they should be informed. It was also a 2-way process for Members to inform Officers of any issues too.

Mr Bambridge asked for the word 'important' to be defined, because what would seem important to one person may not be to someone else.

Mr Robinson said that a Member should only have an overview and not be loaded with information.

Mr Bambridge said being in a village was harder to keep in touch with issues than being in a town. It was important for a Member to not only know when an officer had worked on the ward, but also to be informed of public health, environmental, licensing and planning issues too.

The Chairman asked Mr Bambridge to consider a definition to the word 'important'.

The Deputy Chief Executive presented an overview. He had previously met with the Chairman to discuss and identify key areas. He wanted to ensure that all key areas had been covered. The preferred method of communication would be via Email and the Member page, however he would welcome guidance from the Panel.

Mr Jermy thought that the Council had been much better about communication and that Asset Management was an exemplar on the way to keep Members informed.

The Deputy Chief Executive said this was a valid point and new members of staff and Officers would need to be made aware of the Pledge through training.

Mr Bambridge wanted Members to be informed of any follow-up work that had been carried out as it was hard to keep in touch with progress.

The Deputy Chief Executive said that would be an area to work on with external contractors, for example Capita.

Mr Gilbert asked if a ward was a multi-Member ward, that all Members should be informed.

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Mr Robinson said it was key that Ward Members be kept informed but it was a 2-way process and Members should also keep Officers informed.

The Deputy Chief Executive acknowledged it was part of the Officer Pledge to keep a Member informed. However if a Member was aware that a case had snowballed then this should be fed back to Officers in order to monitor the situation.

Mr Jermy gave an example where there had been an issue in his ward which another Member had been dealing with. An Officer had copied in all the ward Members into the correspondence so that when the Member was away on holiday, Mr Jermy was able to assist with the case.

Mr Gilbert suggested that the Member Website would be the best place to keep ward information but that an email to say the information was on there would be helpful.

The Chairman said that the Member website was not up to date and that information was missing which needed to be looked at urgently.

Mr Robinson replied that as a Councillor he does not always get the time to view the Members page.

Mr Bambridge said that the Member's page was very useful and he looked at it every 2-days. It was an additional source to hold material. He agreed there may be some issues out of date, and it might need someone with IT knowledge to update it, however it should stay with Member Services to maintain the page. All Members had a Council laptop therefore an email should be the prime source of communication. He did ask that if Members could receive emails on smart phones it would prove useful, however understood there were security problems with this.

Mr Robinson said the process must not be over-complicated.

The Deputy Chief Executive suggested that the Pledge be trialled via email as the preferred method of communication and receive feedback.

Mr Jermy added that he liked 'Pledge' in the title and hoped it would in-still a culture to keep the Member informed. Overall he thought the Pledge was a good idea.

AGREED that:

- (1) The Deputy Chief Executive would bring the amended document to the meeting in January 2013.

Helen
McAleer

Action By

The Chairman thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for the work already done on the Pledge.

48/12 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

48 .a Finance Report

The Member Trainer presented the Finance report to the Panel.

The Chairman said he noticed that the balance needed to last for the next 6-months and was concerned if this would be enough.

The Member Trainer had costed training programmes scheduled until April 2013 and the budget would cover this. However it could not account for additional training or conferences that Members may request to attend.

The Member Trainer had received confirmation that the Member training budget for 2013/2014 would be £17,500.

A concern was raised that training had been requested specifically for Members on time management, by Mr McGrath however only 4 Members attended the course.

Mr Bambridge said he was very grateful to those that did training in-house. However he did feel that if courses were not filled up, that places could be 'sold' to other councils.

The Member Trainer explained that only places for software training were released to Officers, but other courses were Member specific. She would check with Finance but didn't think the money from selling places would go back into the Member Training budget but it went into a central pot.

Mr Bambridge proposed that in these financial times, Breckland must seek continually to attract high quality training and training officers should seek to promote to other Councils to re-coup the costs into the training budget.

Mr Robinson said that considering the figures there was an underlying issue of communication and that Members should actively engage with training.

The Member Trainer explained that a training programme was devised from the Personal Development Plans and the Member Panel approved the courses. Just recently 12 Members had requested software training but only one Member was at the course.

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The Chairman suggested that Members should be asked what training they would like and perhaps an email could be issued.

Mr Jermy said that attending training courses was very beneficial and the more people that attended allowed for new ideas to be shared. He would like to know what percentage of Members engaged with training and if it was the same people attending. He asked if Members sent apologies for not attending, or just did not turn up.

The Member Trainer said that she usually found out on the day which left it too late to re-book the place.

Mr Jermy suggested that Members should be charged for the course if they did not attend.

Mr Bambridge asked if Members were targeted specifically for the courses available.

The Member Trainer said that she had tried to automatically send out invites but it did not work.

The Chairman requested that as there was a reduction in the budget that specialist statutory training needed to come out of another training budget.

Mr Robinson said that a leaflet was produced and given out to all Members at full Council.

The Chairman said that at another council, it was a requirement that a Member should attend 3 training sessions per year, otherwise their allowance was reduced.

48 .b Personal Development Plans

The Member Trainer reported that 42 Members had completed their Personal Development Plans. The next PDP's were due in May 2013.

48 .c Training Update

The Member Trainer reported that the bulletin for December courses had been released.

There had been a change in the Human Resources Training team whereby Richard Wills was the Breckland Services Training Manager which was based on the external training services and would be focussing on selling and delivery of these courses. Julia Perry was the Training and Development

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Manager and was the line manager for Leanne Neave who was responsible for Member Training and Karen Hitchcock for Staff Training.

The Member Trainer had reported that following the last meeting where it had been discussed and decided that the away days should be mixed, the Executive Board was concerned about the delivery and content of the 'Community Chest' away day and had asked for the one planned for December not to go ahead. She was unaware of any further detail.

The Chairman said that he felt the away day needed to be fair, right and proper and thought the issue was about the content rather than the proposal of a 'mixed' Member away day.

48 .d Feedback Report

This report would be considered at the next meeting.

49/12 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting scheduled for Thursday 31 January 2013 were noted.

The meeting closed at 11.30 am

CHAIRMAN