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**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the**

**MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL**

**Held on Wednesday, 3 April 2013 at 10.00 am in  
Norfolk Room, Conference Suite, Breckland Council, Elizabeth House,  
Dereham**

**PRESENT**

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

**In Attendance**

Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer
Leanne Neave	- Member Trainer
Mark Stokes	- Deputy Chief Executive

**Action By**

**7/13 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2013 were confirmed as a correct record.

**8/13 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Jermy.

**9/13 MEMBER / OFFICER PLEDGE (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

The Deputy Chief Executive was present for this item.

He noted that the draft pledge had seen a lot of discussion and from comments made at previous meetings he suggested that under the heading 'Case Handling' the third bullet point should be removed or amended as it added no value.

With regard to the meaning of 'important' which had been the subject of much discussion at the previous meeting he drew Members' attention to the first three paragraphs of the pledge which he thought made clear what Members needed to be informed about. He suggested that the final sentence be amended to read:

*It is important that members are fully informed about **all matters on which they may be required to make decisions or which affect their wards to support them in their community leadership role.***

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Members supported that amendment and gave consideration to the removal of the bullet point. After some discussion it was agreed that it should be retained, but amended to read:

*Where a trend is occurring within a ward – eg a **number** of complaints about a specific issue*

The amended version was **AGREED**.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that Managers had already seen the Pledge. Now that the final version had been agreed the Training Team would work to ensure that all Officers were aware of it.

The Member Trainer advised that she had recently run a course on Political Awareness which had been very well received. The Pledge linked well with that training and would be included as part of the induction for new staff as well as being rolled out to all Officers.

Mr Robinson noted that it would be useful for new Members too.

**10/13 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

10 .a Finance Report

The Member Trainer asked Members to note the figures for the 2012/13 budget which showed the balance as at 21 March. There were a few items outstanding which amounted to a couple of hundred pounds, which had resulted in about £4,000 being left in the budget on 31 March 2013. The new budget for 2013/14 was £17,500.

The Chairman noted that the budget had reduced despite more having been spent on training in 2012/13. The aim was to use the Breckland Training Service more in future to try to reduce spend. He asked if the remaining budget had been carried over and was advised that it had not.

It was pointed out that three Members had attended Leadership training which was unusual.

The Chairman was aware that three people had applied for the Planning Summer School which would cost about £2,500. There had been three Planning Advisory Service events in the last eight months and they had been excellent and free, yet they had not been attended by the people that wanted to go on the paid for course. He thought that people should attend free courses when they were relevant.

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Mr Bambridge agreed entirely. He suggested that the Planning Advisory Service should be formally invited to visit the Council to give one of their free courses.

Mr Robinson suggested, and it was agreed, that a formal request should be made to the Portfolio Holder. It would provide a free day's training for Members of a public facing Committee which dealt with contentious issues.

Mr Gilbert asked if there would be a charge if Members were trained by the Breckland Training Service and it was confirmed that the training would be free.

The Member Trainer advised that the training programme would be primarily provided by herself and the Training and Development Manager, not by the Breckland Training Service.

The report was noted.

10 .b **Training Feedback**

Feedback sheets from the Social Media Training course were tabled for noting.

10 .c **Training Programme 2013**

The Member Trainer told the Panel that Self-Assessment Questionnaires had been filled out by 43 Members and five more were needed to meet the 90% target. The 10 outstanding Members had been e-mailed a reminder.

The Chairman said that he would contact the Deputy Leader and ask him to mention the matter at the next Council meeting.

From the 43 responses received a training programme had been drawn up. Options had been provided and Members were asked to choose the most suitable option. The draft programme was tabled.

Members looked at the Training Programme and agreed the following options:

**Chairing Meetings**

There was discussion on the merits of using David McGrath as a trainer. It was acknowledged that he had a great deal of experience and being an ex-Councillor had a clear understanding of matters from a Councillor's perspective, but weighed against that was the cost of his services.

It was suggested that Councillors from other authorities could be invited and charged for the training to cover the costs.

The Member Trainer pointed out that the Town & Parish Councils

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had been charged to attend training but the money had not been put back into the Member Training budget.

**Decision:** Options 1 and 3 agreed and Option 2 agreed subject to enough places being booked.

**Public Speaking**

Town and Parish Councillors should be invited to the course to recoup some of the costs. Other Local Authorities could also be invited. It was felt there was scope to review the rate charged for training depending on the subject matter.

**Decision:** Option 1 agreed.

**Communicating effectively with my ward / Dealing with complex issues / Working with Town & Parish Councils**

It was suggested that the three topics could be combined in one training session.

Mr Robinson was keen for new Councillors to be mentored to help develop their roles as community leaders. The Chairman agreed and asked for that to be put on a future agenda.

**Decision:** The three courses to be run as a combined event.

Leanne  
Neave

**Social Media**

This course had already been run at South Holland and was a hands-on experience, focussing on all areas of interest.

**Decision:** Option 1 agreed.

**Holding Ward Surgeries**

**Decision:** Agreed to hold this subject in reserve as it might be covered by the Social Media course and/or the Communicating effectively training sessions.

**E-mail**

There was not enough interest in this to run a course. However, it was suggested that some Members needed more basic ICT training and that was an area that needed to be resolved.

**Decision:** Option 1 agreed. Individual one-to-one sessions would be held.

**Computer – Word / Excel / PowerPoint**

Mr Bambridge suggested that schools would be willing to give Councillors basic training. Mr Robinson thought that Councillors should be signposted to free training opportunities.

**Decision:** Basic Word training only to be provided and would include training in the layout of letters, etc.

**Time Management**

The Chairman requested that the course should encompass Work / Life balance.

**Decision:** Option 1 agreed.

**Dealing with the media / interview skills**

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**Decision:** Option 1, 2 and 3 agreed together with additional video interview training on successful completion of all three steps.

**Officer / Member relationship**

Although only one Member had signed up for the topic it was thought that there might be others that were not confident in their relationship with officers.

**Decision:** Option 1 agreed.

**11/13 TOWN & PARISH COUNCIL FORUM (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

Members were updated on the preparations for the next Town & Parish Council Forum which would take place on Tuesday 21 May at Elizabeth House in Dereham.

Invitations had been issued to all Clerks of Town and Parish Councils and to all District Councillors. The invitations had been sent on 26 March 2013 and to date 12 Parishes and five District Councillors had responded. Reminders would be sent out on 7 May 2013.

Agenda topics so far were:

- Code of Conduct / Standards
- Local Development Plan
- Training available for Parishes

The Clerks had been asked to put forward any other topics they would be interested in, as had the Shared Management Team.

**12/13 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 9)**

The arrangements for the next meeting on 30 May 2013 were noted.

The meeting closed at 11.45 am

CHAIRMAN