
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

**Held on Thursday, 26 November 2015 at 10.00 am in
Dereham Room, Conference Suite, Breckland Council, Elizabeth House, Walpole
Loke, Dereham, NR19 1EE**

PRESENT

Mrs L.S. Turner (Chairman)	Mr M. S. Robinson
Mr P R W Darby	Mr I. Sherwood
Mr M J Nairn	Mr H E J Clarke

Also Present

Mr P S Wilkinson

In Attendance

Anthony Hodson-Curran	- Councillor Development Co-ordinator
Leanne Neave	- Member Trainer
Rory Ringer	- Democratic Services Manager
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Officer

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18/15 MINUTES

The Democratic Services Manager informed Members that he had looked into the possibility of an incentive for training to be added to the Basic Allowance, but there was no provision for this within the legislation.

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2015 were confirmed as a correct record.

19/15 APOLOGIES

An apology had been received from Councillor Jermy. Councillor Harry Clarke was present as a substitute.

20/15 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

21/15 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

22/15 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Clarke to the meeting.

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23/15 ALTERNATIVE LEARNING METHODS

The Chairman reminded Members this had been discussed at the previous meeting, as it had been difficult to attract Members to training sessions and Officers were asked to look at alternative learning methods.

The Democratic Services Manager outlined the four alternative learning methods and the Councillor Development Co-ordinator also provided further background.

European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL)

Whilst this was a valuable course, it was very expensive. It was geared to a specific skill set and driven by office software.

Planning Advisory Service

This was a specific planning based training which could be bespoke for the local authority. It was a free service, but further research would be required as to how it would work alongside the Capita Contract.

Modern Councillor

Members could sign up to a 7-day free trial. The cost was £1000 for up to 100 elected Members. This was a solid product; however more information was needed on how training of the Members could be tracked.

Learning Nexis

This product was provided by the Local Government Association which was free and provided online. The content was geared towards a new Councillor and dealing with caseload.

Councillor Clarke commented that learning should link with the individual's skills set.

The Chairman said a skills audit had been trialled between Members of the Member Development Panel. Training could not be mandatory, but she wanted to see Member training re-invigorated.

Councillor Nairn said he was familiar with ECDL and it was a vocational tool for those that required basic training on spreadsheets or typing a letter. He would also like to see the Adult Education courses explored.

The Chairman agreed and said a database would be built showing different training methods available for Members. She added that where training was specialised there had been no issues with Members attending.

Councillor Sherwood said that as a Councillor he was inundated with emails and suggested that a quick Survey Monkey should be sent to Members asking basic questions so that Officers could see why Members had not been attending training. He also added that it should be anonymous which might encourage a better response.

The Democratic Services Manager said the skills audit had looked at

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learning styles of Members and would help to understand the training Members required.

Councillor Sherwood asked if it was a form. The Chairman confirmed that it was a form and it had been trialled and comments fed back to the Councillor Development Co-ordinator.

Councillor Sherwood suggested the skills audit should be added to the Survey Monkey as it would be quick and easy for Members. He also suggested that whilst the ECDL was specific, he had trained himself on computers and therefore some Members could appreciate training on computers.

The Democratic Services Manager advised Members that basic training courses in Word and Excel were offered, however both had to be cancelled due to lack of delegates.

Councillor Sherwood said the training that had been offered immediately after the Elections, was not a good time for new Members. He suggested that after 6-months most Members were aware of the training they needed.

Councillor Sherwood thought that the courses should be advertised to encourage Members attendances. For example if a course was entitled 'how to make life easier as a councillor' then he would come, rather than if it was entitled 'Microsoft Word'. He also added that if courses were scheduled over a lunchtime period, offering a small lunch then this would encourage more members to attend.

Councillor Sherwood mentioned that training should be aimed at where Members were at. He was a social media fan, and suggested that training courses could be advertised using Twitter, or Facebook.

The Chairman agreed, but was concerned that so few people followed the Breckland accounts on Twitter and Facebook.

Councillor Darby said that after the Election in May, he had entered the dates of training into his diary, but they were cancelled very often at the last minute.

Councillor Wilkinson said that training needed to be bought together and a skills audit needed to be done.

The Democratic Services Manager said he liked the idea of using Social Media and suggested a training library should be held. The Anglia Room now had the facility to record meetings, and training sessions could be recorded and available for Members to download when it was convenient to them.

Councillor Sherwood said he had recently used Google-Hangout which was a facility for a live online training session but in the comfort of his office. It was easy to use, and no cost to set-up. This was also recorded and placed into a library for access at a later date.

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The Chairman added that this fitted into the digitalisation workstream of the transformation project and Members had now been provided with the kit to use this type of facility.

Officers would explore the different options suggested and work on a Survey Monkey questionnaire to include the skills audit.

24/15 UPDATE ON LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK

The Democratic Services Manager thanked all Members and Officers involved in Local Democracy Week, and welcomed any ideas for next year.

Councillor Sherwood said he was a huge fan of Local Democracy Week, and would like to see a focussed and long term plan for next year. He suggested contact should be made to schools now and to focus on three schools.

Councillor Robinson said that as a Governor for a local school he met every three months as part of a cluster group. He would suggest it at the December meeting which would be cascaded to other local schools within the cluster.

The Member Development Officer added that different activities could be used, as High School's were more involved in Politics, whereas Primary Schools used the democracy process within their School council.

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25/15 UPDATE ON CHARTER PLUS ASSESSMENT

The Democratic Services Manager thanked Amanda Taylor, Democratic Services Officer, South Holland, for the work put into the Charter Plus assessment.

Breckland Council had passed the recent assessment, and would retain accreditation until November 2016 when the full re-accreditation would be required.

Councillor Sherwood said that in order to achieve the full Charter Plus work should commence now.

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The Chairman also passed on her thanks to Amanda.

26/15 UPDATE ON SKILLS AUDIT

The Democratic Services Manager said this would be followed up with a survey monkey to all Members.

Councillor Sherwood said it was important to inform Members of the length of time it would take to complete the survey and he suggested that it was kept short.

The Councillor Development Co-ordinator added that he would compile a work programme which would form a basis for the forth coming

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meetings and provide an update for Members.

27/15 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting scheduled for Thursday 14 January 2016 at 10:00am in the Dereham Room were noted.

The meeting closed at 11.00 am

CHAIRMAN