
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

**Held on Wednesday, 26 September 2018 at 10.00 am in
Norfolk Room, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr I. Sherwood (Chairman) Mr M. S. Robinson
Mr P. R. W. Darby Mrs L.S. Turner
Mr T. J. Jermy

In Attendance

Leanne Neave - Democratic Services Officer
Rory Ringer - Democratic Services Manager
Karen Hitchcock - Learning and Development Partner

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14/18 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March were confirmed as an accurate record.

15/18 APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillor Hewett.

16/18 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

17/18 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None.

18/18 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

None.

19/18 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT BUDGET (STANDING ITEM)

Karen Hitchcock, Learning and Development Partner gave an update on the Member Training Budget. She informed the panel that to date £6530 had either been allocated or spent this financial year on training, leaving £3469 in the budget.

Councillor Darby queried where the fee charged to Parish Councils for their attendance at training events went.

The Learning and Development Partner advised they were charged £40 per head and currently the money was not allocated to the Member Training Budget, but could be reallocated to the training budget by the

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finance team if appropriate.

Councillor Jermy believed if the full cost of the training course was being met from the Member's Training Budget then the fee charged to external delegates should come back into the Member's Budget.

All Members were in agreement and the Learning & Development Partner was asked to speak to the Finance team to arrange this.

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20/18 MEMBER TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Learning and Development Partner advised that the 'Presentation Skills' session had been delivered and the final session of the current programme, 'Understanding and Managing Change', would be delivered on 7 November.

Councillor Turner commented that the 'Questioning Skills' training had had a profound effect on Members of OSC that had attended.

Councillor Jermy queried whether the schedule of training included details of external training. The Learning and Development Partner confirmed the training programme was primarily internal courses, but also included Licensing and Planning training which are delivered by external trainers.

The Chairman believed it was useful to see attendance at training courses and thanked the Learning & Development Partner for the information.

Councillor Turner commented that she had received feedback that dates for training were being communicated to Town and Parish Councils too close to the training taking place.

The Chairman confirmed that District Councillors were offered places on training courses first and if all seats were not filled it was then sent out to Town and Parish Clerks but agreed this could be quite close to the training date.

The Learning and Development Partner reminded Members that the Training Plan had been sent out to all members earlier in the year. It was only invitations giving details of the course and an outlook diary request that were sent out nearer to the actual date of training. She advised these could be sent altogether well in advance but was concerned Members would feel overloaded.

The Chairman asked that in the future Town and Parish Councils be notified of training courses and dates at the same time as District Members and that outlook diary request are sent well in advance.

21/18 MEMBER INDUCTION 2019

Rory Ringer, Democratic Services Manager, presented the draft programme. He advised that the programme will be given out with District Council nomination packs and would also be available at the

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prospective councillor event.

He updated members on the programme, highlighting:

- IT sessions - A number of sessions have been scheduled, to allow training to take place in small groups. It was agreed that some of the sessions should be delivered in the evening to allow members more opportunities to attend.
- E-learning had been included in the programme for the first time.
- Governance sessions were scheduled in early to address members concerns on the Code of Conduct and Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.
- The initial session on 7 May would include a meet and greet session with Senior Managers.
- Although not mentioned specifically in the Induction programme, Members Personal Development Plans would start at the end of May. Breckland Training Services had carried out the last two and it was proposed they would carry this out. The information would then shape the training programme for the next four years.
- It was suggested that current Members could be trained on the new kit prior to the election, and whilst not receiving the kit until after the election, if re-elected, it would cut down the number of Councillors requiring training post-Election. The Democratic Services Manager agreed to investigate the possibilities of this.

He subsequently asked for the Panels feedback on the following points:

- **Mentoring members – would the panel still like to do this or should officers or political parties be responsible for it?**

After a brief discussion it was agreed that offering newly elected members the opportunity to have a mentor was required and the process should be administered by the Council's officers and those members willing to act as Mentors should make themselves known to the Democratic Services team who will maintain a list.

It was also agreed that this should be available on a cross party basis.

- **Allocated seating at Council meetings – was this something the Panel wished to consider recommending?**

Councillor Turner queried if the layout of the Council Chamber could be changed so members of the public could see Councillors faces.

The Democratic Services Manager advised there was a small

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project team in place who were currently looking at options for revamping the Committee Suite. These options include new furniture and 'Smart' room capabilities.

Councillor Jermy agreed having structure was good and felt blocks of seating was a good idea. With the present arrangement Councillors could move seats meeting by meeting and he wished to sit with his fellow party colleagues, it was his opinion that blocked seating promoted democracy.

Councillor Robinson was not in favour of allocated seating and he took the opportunity with flexible seating to be able to sit and engage with Councillors on items to be discussed.

The Chairman felt the primary purpose of Council meetings was engagement, if a member of the public attended they would have little idea as to who each Councillor was or what party they represented, he felt block seating would appease that.

After discussion it was agreed that this was not something that should be proposed at this stage.

- **Shared Training Opportunities**

The Panel agreed that these should continue to be shared and other opportunities to share training with not only South Holland but other Local Authorities should be explored.

- **What information did the Panel feel new members needed to be supplied with following election.**

- It was agreed to reduce the volume of paper given to Members as part of their induction. The idea of an app on members new iPads was discussed, and in particular what information should be available for Members to tap into and look at. Suggestions included the LGA Councillors code, the induction and training programme, Ward statistics and references to Freedom of Information.

- **Question and Answer session - Did the Panel wish to hold a session fronted by experienced members on life as a councillor and if so when should it happen.**

- The Panel felt with a mentoring structure in place there was no need to hold this type of session.

Following further discussion, a number of additional suggestions were made for inclusion in the Induction process

- A 'who's who' guide to Portfolios, teams and managers should be electronically available.
- Temporary ID cards should be given out on Induction day to give Members access to the building as their official cards were not

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available until Council on 16 May.

- Newly elected members should receive a welcome e-mail highlighting the key sections of the website to enable members to undertake some initial research on Council activities, prior to the Induction day.

22/18 PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLOR EVENT

The Democratic Services Manager outlined the suggested format for the event. Following a discussion the Panel agreed that:

- The event should take place in February 2019.
- Information regarding the event should be included with the nomination packs if possible.
- Political Parties should encourage their prospective candidates to attend.
- The Panel should consist of at least one rural district or parish Councillor.
- The format should be based on smaller tables allowing attendees to move from table to table, this would encourage a more informal atmosphere, putting attendees at ease.
- Early communication to the Parish Councils was crucial to allow them to pass on the information to interested parties.

23/18 LENGTH OF SERVICE RECOGNITION

Members discussed the merits of recognising the contribution that elected members make to the district of Breckland, and considered a number of questions namely:

- Should there be some form of official recognition?
- What length of service should be recognised?
- What should be given to the recipients?
- When should the presentation happen?
- Is it for Members solely with continuous service or should non-continuous service count.

After further discussion it was agreed that Members with at least 20 years' service should be officially recognised, and that the presentation of a framed certificate and pin badge would be made at the Chairman's reception to be held at Gressenhall Museum of Working Life on 21 October. The design and layout of the Pin and certificate to be agreed with the Executive Member Governance.

24/18 NEXT MEETING

Next meeting to be confirmed.

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The meeting closed at 11.45 am

CHAIRMAN