
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

**Held on Thursday, 12 July 2012 at 10.00 am in
Dereham Room, Conference Suite, Breckland Council, Elizabeth House,
Dereham, Norfolk NR19 1EE**

PRESENT

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

In Attendance

Terry Huggins	- Chief Executive
Leanne Neave	- HR Advisor/Member Development Trainer
Richard Wills	- Training & Development Manager
Helen McAleer	- Senior Committee Officer

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23/12 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24/12 MATTERS ARISING

The following matters were raised from items in the Minutes:

- Only three Members had booked appointments with David McGrath
- Only 16 PDP interviews had been completed

The issue of how to get Members to attend training sessions was discussed. With elections pending there was an opportunity to set up a structure and long-term strategy.

Sanctions for non-attendance could not be introduced. Currently only Planning and Licensing training were compulsory for Members of those Committees.

The Panel was proud of the Council's Charter Plus status and to maintain that status, 90% of Members had to participate in training. All three Group Leaders and the Exec Members should be encouraged to use their influence to get Members to attend training.

It was agreed that work needed to be undertaken to find out why

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some Members did not attend training. If the reasons could be understood it might be possible to address the issues.

The Member Development Trainer was asked to provide a list of people who had not booked their PDP interviews. Panel Members would then encourage those they knew to book an appointment. They would also question other Members about their views on training and bring back their findings to the October meeting.

**Leanne
Neave**

25/12 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr S Green.

26/12 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

None.

27/12 DECLARATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

No declarations were made.

28/12 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING (AGENDA ITEM 6)

28 .a Finance Report

The Member Development Trainer presented the report for Members to note expenditure. The £300 discrepancy was being checked and would be clarified at the next meeting.

Mr Gilbert asked if the one-to-one surgeries at £425 each were value for money and Mr Bambridge, who was one of the participants, thought that they were. He thought that David McGrath was probably the best trainer the Council had ever had. He pointed out that if more Members had booked sessions the price per head would have been lower.

With regard to the amount for the Leader of the Council to attend the LGA conference it was noted that there had been a separate budget for conferences in previous years but that had now been amalgamated with the training budget.

28 .b Moving Training Forward

The Chairman introduced this item.

He referred to the list of responses from the Panel members to various questions asked about training issues and facilities for Members. This list would be a standing item on the agenda and each issue would be addressed in due course.

For the current meeting he suggested that they should

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concentrate on the Members' Room. From the responses received and discussions with other Councillors it was clear that many did not consider that using the Members Room was a pleasant experience. The following points were noted:

- the St George's Room was often used for meetings and Members were not comfortable with interrupting those to access the Leaders Room (which they had been advised they could use when meetings were taking place)
- the layout was not good. It needed to be more welcoming with small comfortable chairs and tables scattered round
- the room should include facilities such as a telephone, wi-fi and possibly television (to watch things like Prime Minister's Questions, etc)
- it should feel more informal and include a library and display material
- it should be closer to the Committee Suite for easy access.

After discussion Members agreed that the new meeting room next to the Contact Centre (Room 35) would be a suitable alternative. It could be equipped at minimal cost from existing furniture, etc and should be for Members' use only – not for meetings. The St George's Room could then become a formal meeting room for use by all.

RESOLVED to RECOMMEND TO CABINET that:

- (1) Room 35 should become the new Members' Room;
- (2) It should be equipped at minimal cost with existing furniture in a relaxed and informal style;
- (3) Wi-fi and telephone facilities should be available in the room
- (4) A drinks machine or facilities to make drinks should be available in the room;
- (5) A library, display boards and information on training and constitutional matters should be available in the room;
- (6) No meetings should take place in the room;
- (7) The St George's Room should become a formal meeting room.

28 .c Training Programme 2012-2013

The Member Development Trainer presented the item which concentrated on a programme of training, rather than individual training.

She had been tasked with putting the training into programmes and these had been broken down into three categories: Leadership, Software and Communication. If a Member attended

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all the course modules in a programme they would receive a final certificate.

She drew attention to items with LGA against her name. She would facilitate those sessions but using materials provided by the LGA, which reduced costs.

When the training programme had been approved a flyer would be produced which would be handed out at the next full Council meeting. It would be eye-catching and tri-fold to reflect the three categories of courses.

A table of stand-alone training, not connected to the programmes, would also be available. No dates had been fixed for those, but that information would be e-mailed to all Members.

Members discussed the possibility of using experienced Officers to deliver training or assist external trainers. However, it was noted that being good at your job did not necessarily mean that you would be a good trainer.

Discussion followed about the timing of training events, with some Members favouring evenings and others preferring mornings. It was clear that there needed to be a choice of timings if more Members were to be encouraged to attend training although it was also acknowledged that not all preferences could be accommodated.

The Member Development Trainer was asked to e-mail all Members asking for their preferred times and days and then arrange the training to satisfy the majority.

**Leanne
Neave**

The Chief Executive noted that there was a lack of finance training for Members. He thought that a session on Local Government Finance would be helpful for Members before the next round of budget setting. There were also changes to Council Tax allowances coming soon which affected Parishes and Members might welcome advice on that.

These matters would be covered by Finance training on the 'stand-alone' programme.

AGREED to endorse the Training Programme for 2012/13.

28 .d Learning Library

The Member Development Trainer advised that the HR department had set up a Learning Library for the use of Members and staff. They had books on a variety of subjects which could be borrowed as required.

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She would also start work on building up a library for the Members' Room.

29/12 TOWN & PARISH COUNCIL FORUMS - JUNE 2012 (AGENDA ITEM 7)

Mr Gilbert thought that the forums would have been a good opportunity to give advice on Localism.

The Chairman noted that it had been decided to pull that item from the forum agenda as information would be provided at a later date.

Mr Bambridge was concerned that Members should not be left behind as they should be getting involved with helping the Parishes. He asked for a lead to be given to the Panel by the Executive before the next meeting in October.

Members noted that only three teams had provided stalls at Dereham and that there had been none at the Thetford forum. Mr Jermy remarked on the difference that had made to Thetford. It had been very different from the previous year when there had been an opportunity to mingle with Parish Councillors and talk to them and to Officers.

The Chairman suggested that the format needed to be changed, but he questioned the cost.

Mr Bambridge accepted that more money had been spent previously but felt that the Council needed to engage with Parish Councils. He proposed that they should return to the old format and have exhibitions to reflect all the departments of the Council. He thought it had been a good idea to hold the forum in the summer as the lighter evenings encouraged attendance. .

AGREED to **RECOMMEND TO CABINET** that Town & Parish Forums should continue to be held around the District and should include exhibitions by Council departments.

30/12 DISCUSSION

With three by-elections pending Members discussed the induction arrangements for new Councillors. Mentoring would be arranged by Groups as required but that was not felt to be enough.

The Member Development Trainer advised that she would interview each new Member under the PDP process and they would be given an Information Pack, but they would not receive the same level of induction given at the time of the full elections.

The Training & Development Manager advised that his secondment was coming to an end as Julia Thaxton would be returning from

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maternity leave shortly. She would re-assume her position as the Training and Development Manager.

Mr Bambridge thanked the Training & Development Manager for all his help and support.

31/12 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 8)

The arrangements for the next meeting on 4 October 2012 at 10.00am were noted.

The meeting closed at 11.32 am

CHAIRMAN