
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

**Held on Thursday, 8 September 2016 at 10.00 am in
Dereham Room, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, NR19 1EE**

PRESENT

Mr I. Sherwood (Chairman)
Mrs E J Bishop
Mr P R W Darby

Mr M J Nairn
Mr H E J Clarke

Also Present

Mrs. L. Neave

Mrs L.S. Turner

In Attendance

Anthony Hodson-Curran
Leanne Neave

- Councillor Development Co-ordinator
- Member Trainer

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35/16 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

36/16 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Jermy and Robinson

37/16 URGENT BUSINESS

None

38/16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None

39/16 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

Councillor Lynda Turner

40/16 CHARTER PLUS RE-ACCREDITATION

The Chairman advised the panel he was a huge supporter of Charter plus and we should be proud as an organisation to hold it.

Cllr Turner advised that Cabinet Members had queried why the Council had signed up to Charter Plus and requested that a copy

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of the report be sent to Cabinet Members to answer their queries.

The Chairman requested the symbol of Charter Plus be added to the website so residents knew we held the mark.

The Member Development Co-ordinator confirmed the cost of the Charter Plus was approximately £1200 a year. The process for delivering it worked well and it was not a strain on officer time.

He went on to say that further information for the interviewees would be given nearer the time. A briefing paper for senior managers and all Members would be issued shortly, and that Members of the development panel had been requested to save the date.

41/16 FINANCE UPDATE

The Member Development Co-ordinator advised a spend of £550 since the last meeting. The budget had been committed for the remainder of the financial year with a provision being made for licensing committee training. A detailed report would be presented at the next meeting.

42/16 COUNCILLOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Member Development Co-ordinator confirmed clear direction had been given earlier in the agenda.

Cllr Nairn requested that the BTS report be shared with Cabinet Members.

The Chairman confirmed the programme be built around the results of the assessment and that the report be attached to the minutes for Councils October meeting.

The Member trainer updated members on ideas for the Local Democracy week. A number of events had been planned for week commencing 10th October. A request was made for Members to sign up for Political Speed Dating which would be held on 10th October. In addition, residents would be encouraged to attend Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny meetings held that week via social media. An open evening was planned for 12th October entitled "being a councillor". This would be a forum whereby speakers would present on life as a councillor from Parish Councillor to County Councillor. The communications team would also be interviewing Members on their role which would be added to the website.

The Panel approved the programme and the Chairman requested the meetings be streamed live on line, if no one available to

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broadcast he would attend and broadcast via periscope.

The Member Trainer advised that 17 members were due to attend the Freedom of Information briefing being held on 8 September, five of which were Town and Parish Councillors at a cost of £40 per person.

43/16 DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Chairman thanked the Director of Breckland Training Services (BTS) and the Member Development Team for achieving 80% participation. He stated the report read well and highlighted a number of issues.

The Director of BTS thanked Members for attending the interviews. The quality of which had been fantastic and Members had been honest and open. Some trends were recognised during the interviews and these were recommended to form the backbone of the training programme and induction programme moving forward. It was highlighted that issues raised on many interviews included:

- Moving training around the district and not just using Dereham as a venue
- Deliver an “Effective Ward Councillor” session
- Basic IT skills sessions should be delivered. It had been recognised during the interviews the suggested form of delivery for IT courses should be on a 1-1 basis as individuals knowledge level of IT was different.
- Social media
- Effective communication

Some additional learning areas that had been raised were on debating skills, lone working, personal resilience and code of conduct. It was noted that members requested advance notice of course dates and that the training record for members should be published on line.

One area of discussion during the interviews was a “Councillor of the future” programme. Nothing currently is available like this and it could be a great initiative.

The Director suggested different methods of delivery, short sharp sessions no more than one hour, packaging several topics into one workshop and holding briefing sessions after Council.

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A comment made by members had been noted that sessions should be delivered by professional trainers and not internal officers who were specialists in the specific topic.

The Chairman queried why it was felt that four or five delegates on a course was a failure and could see the course being cancelled when compared as a percentage against the membership five delegates was a good attendance. He asked if reasons were given in the interviews as to why members did not attend training?

The Director of BTS advised that reasons were given such as venue and timings and suggested some sessions be linked with the calendar of meetings.

The Director of BTS left the meeting.

The Chairman supported the idea of several subjects in one session but felt a two hour session was too long. It was questioned whether training in short specific sessions could be attached to meeting agendas.

Cllr Turner suggested the code of conduct briefing session be added at the end of a Council meeting to enable a captive audience.

Cllr Darby agreed that IT training should be on a 1-1 basis but other subjects required practical scenarios and role play.

Cllr Bishop commented that following her induction she received a briefing and the delivery style was unsuitable for Members. The presenter had not modified their talk or presentation and it had put several new Members off attending further training sessions.

The Chairman queried if we received feedback following courses.

The Member Development Co-ordinator confirmed that feedback was received from BTS following all their courses however it was something that would form a discussion at a future meeting.

The Chairman requested that Cllr Bishop encouraged new Members to come to training.

Cllr Nairn stated the Councillor of the future initiative was a brilliant idea and it could be moved forward with a Youth Council.

Cllr Turner advised that after initial success the Youth Council lost momentum and a decision was made to close it.

It was agreed young people had to want to be involved and

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engaged with it.

Cllr Clarke thanked the Director of BTS for his report and suggested communication with young people be linked with social media.

Cllr Bishop added that any youth panel should have an agenda that was driven by the young people.

Cllr Darby suggested another age group to look at was post university.

The Councillor Development Co-ordinator advised the panel that at the April meeting they adopted the new strategy. Within it were two plans, an action included looking at Youth Council. The current approach was to look at young children and progress through to the older ones to see if there was an interest. Norfolk County Council ran a successful Youth Council and perhaps we could learn from them.

Cllr Bishop applauded the Member Trainer for the Origins of Democracy sessions held in schools and some of the questions given by children participating had been brilliant.

The Chairman thanked the Director of BTS for the report and asked that the Member development Co-ordinator updated him on the points discussed.

Members agreed IT training should be offered on a 1-1 basis and suggested that part of the member training budget be ring fenced specifically for IT. The Panel also agreed to group subjects together to form one session, potentially grouping drier subjects with more engaging ones.

The Chairman drew Members attention to the fact that we did not train on Outside Body representation. It was unclear on how Members involvement on Outside Bodies fitted in with the larger picture.

Cllr Darby agreed there were many cross overs in Outside Bodies.

Cllr Bishop suggested that as a new councillor it would be useful to have session on how different Outside Bodies were linked to each other.

The Chairman requested that Cllr Turner looked at Outside Bodies regarding Health as Cllr Nairn felt this area was not joined up in its approach.

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The Member Development Co-ordinator saw that the absence of any surprises in the report demonstrated the strength of the relationship between the Members and the Panel. The team now had a clear and realistic picture as to the development needs for the Members and remained mindful of the audience needs and agreed specialists should give 'Breckland' knowledge but presenters present.

Next steps to be considered will cover

- Digitilisation – IT, Social media and digital passport
- Decision making – “how do we work well as a Council, in Committee and with the Community?” “How do you steer the Council and how do you monitor?”

A programme and a comprehensive budget forecast to the end of the cycle would be presented at the next meeting.

The Chairman suggested that if training was delivered at venues across the district could the report consider the possibility of inviting Kings Lynn and other neighbouring authorities

Cllr Turner requested that the annual prospective councillor event be delivered annually.

44/16 NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 10th November 2016 at 10.00 in the Dereham Room, Elizabeth House, Dereham.

The meeting closed at 11.35 am

CHAIRMAN