
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

**Held on Thursday, 12 January 2017 at 10.00 am in
Dereham Room, Elizabeth House, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr I. Sherwood (Chairman)
Mrs E J Bishop

Mr P. R. W. Darby
Mr M J Nairn

Also Present

Mrs L.S. Turner

In Attendance

Anthony Hodson-Curran
Leanne Neave

- Councillor Development Co-ordinator
- Democratic Service Officer

Action By

1/17 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th November were agreed as a correct record with the amendment to 50/16 paragraph 3, amended to "LT advised she had attended Warwick and feedback had never been sought from delegates. She believed it was not value for money if there were no outcomes".

2/17 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Robinson.

3/17 URGENT BUSINESS

The Chairman advised Councillor Robinson had spoken to him with regard to his position on the Panel, it had been agreed that Councillor Robinson would remain a formal member of the Panel however he would not attend meetings on a regular basis.

The Chairman advised that he wished for Councillor Turner to become a formal member of the Panel. He requested the Democratic Services Officer confirm the correct process for membership changes and for the Terms of Reference to contain the process. The Chairman would like the Panel to review the membership as the Panel required representation from all opposition, Independent, UKIP and Labour. It was felt that more newly elected Members would also strengthen the Panel.

LN

Action By

4/17 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None

5/17 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

Councillor Lynda Turner.

6/17 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

The Member Development Co-ordinator opened the item for discussion. He advised it was appropriate to review the Terms of Reference following the Charter Plus Assessment.

MN Advised the Terms of Reference had been discussed when he joined the panel and believed they had been approved.

The Chairman confirmed the Terms of Reference required a review and to formally agree them.

JB commented on the line under 'Activities' regarding feedback. She queried if a form could be given immediately after a training session so on the spot feedback was obtained.

The Councillor Development Co-ordinator confirmed that Breckland Training Services (BTS) operate this method of feedback but was unable to comment on external providers.

The Chairman confirmed that the Terms of Reference could answer questions regarding the validity of the Panel, the document gave a better understanding of the Panel to the reader.

PD suggested that there was a need to promote the Council to potential Councillors.

The Chairman questioned whether it was part of the Panels role.

The Member Development Co-ordinator advised that in the restructure of Democratic Services roles had changed. The Member Development Co-ordinator role now focussed on Member Training at both Breckland Council and South Holland District council. Local Democracy events were the responsibility of the Democratic Services Officers.

The Chairman requested the Terms of Reference include a reference to "recruiting new Members".

PD requested there be a section in the Terms of Reference that refers to Local Democracy Events.

Action By

The Chairman requested the Member Development Co-ordinator take into account the comments made and bring the Terms of Reference back to a future meeting.

AHC

7/17 CHARTER PLUS REVIEW

The Chairman thanked the Panel members for their support with Charter Plus and Officers for their time and hard work. He was thrilled. He believed the Council would not do what it does without the Charter Plus status which he valued tremendously. He queried the absence of a press release.

The Democratic Services Officer advised an immediate press release had been advised against until the report had been received. EELGA advised a formal presentation would be made by them at Februarys Council meeting and it had been suggested that a press release, including photograph, was then done.

JB commented that she believed the press release needed to highlight the fact that because of MDP people in Breckland have a “better councillor”

The Chairman agreed stating the quote “Member Development makes (us) Councillors better able to serve everybody”

JB commented that there was a need for Breckland Members to appreciate the status.

PD stated that the Charter Plus Mark showed newly elected Councillors that post election they are not “just left”.

LT echoed Councillor Bishop’s comments agreeing there was a need for Breckland Members to realise how important Charter Plus was. She added that potential candidates needed to appreciate there is a responsibility for them to undertake training.

The Member Development Co-ordinator explained the “20% of Members not engaged with Member Development” mentioned in the report were members who did not complete the Self Assessment for various reasons and there was no identifiable group of Members that did not engage in learning activities.

LT queried if back benchers were interviewed in the Charter Plus Assessment day.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that the Workshop for backbenchers held at the assessment in 2013 did not form part of the recent assessment. There was an interview scheduled for opposition Members but this had been cancelled on the day due to an incident which blocked entering Elizabeth House car park.

Action By

AHC advised SEEMP would speak to Opposition members at the 18 month review.

The Chairman requested the Panel review the Member Role Profiles over the next 12 months, they will then be used in the District Election 2019. He also stated Members needed up to date information on Officer and Portfolio Holder responsibilities so the appropriate person was contacted when required.

MN commented on the first bullet point in "suggested improvement areas", he believed Councillor Bishop was an excellent Member to support this area.

The Member Development Co-ordinator confirmed he was happy with the improvement areas. Points 2,3,4 and 5 were recommendations given by Officers when interviewed The only area for improvement recognised by the assessors was Case Studies.

The Chairman highlighted the following "Breckland Council may also want to explore how the Scheme of Members Allowances could be developed to incentivise engagement in member development activities." He does not wish the Panel to look at this without discussion with the Leadership and Group. He stressed the Panel Members were not to form an opinion outside of Groups on this subject.

The Member Development Co-ordinator confirmed that South Holland Council had investigated allowance incentives but the scheme was not currently in place. The Cabinet member for Braintree Council indicated on Assessment day that Braintree had a system in place for allowance incentives linked to training.

8/17 LOCAL DEMOCRACY PROGRAMME

The Democratic Services Officer presented the programme.

The Chairman advised he would like an event for potential candidates, over 18's, somewhere in the programme.

MN queried if at Parish Councils in May there could be a presentation on the subject of "Being a Councillor".

LT commented that many Parish Councils and members of the public have little knowledge of the structure of a District Council and there was a need to advise how a Council works.

The Chairman stated he liked the programme.

Action By

LT queried if an Open evening could form part of the programme.

MN was keen for such events to be held at different locations in the district.

LT advised Dereham Town Council hold "Meet your councillor" events at Dereham Library, she believed it was a good idea to hold such events in places where people felt safe.

The Chairman agreed and stated it needed to be "local, local democracy" with issues that concerned people locally.

The Panel approved the Programme.

9/17 NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 16th March, 10am Dereham Room Elizabeth House Dereham

The meeting closed at 11.15am.

CHAIRMAN