

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

16 September 2021

Present:-

Councillors M Asvachin, J Bailey, J Berry, M Hartnell, L Hellyer, A Saywell (Chair), D Sellis and C Slade

Apologies:-

Councillors A Connett and P Henderson

Members attending in accordance with Standing Orders 8 and 25

2 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 4th February 2021 be signed as a correct record.

Councillor Andrew Saywell, the Chair of the Member Development Steering Group passed on his thanks to Barry Parsons, the Steering Group's previous chair.

3 **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

4 **Introduction to Member Development**

The Member Development Steering Group received an overview from the HR Strategy and Performance Manager, Marion Geare, of the Member Development offer at Devon County Council and the role and purpose of the Member Development Steering Group

Devon County Council takes a structured approach to identifying and meeting the learning and development needs of Members and supporting the organisation to achieve its goals. Member Development has been a focus for around 13 years and a Member Development Steering Group was set up to support Members in informed and effective decision making. The Council is aligned to the SW Charter for Member Development and we have held that accreditation for around 12 years.

The role of the Steering Group is to set the strategic direction for Member Development. The Steering Group is Member led and can be used to identify

gaps in learning and agree on how we deliver learning. In addition, the Steering Group can help ensure we meet learning and development needs for Members and evaluate success of previous activity. Members are asked to promote the work of the steering group to their colleagues and feedback any comments to the group.

Councillors commented on the importance of talking to colleagues on Member Development to feedback knowledge.

5 Member Development Strategy 2021-2025

The Member Development Steering Group considered the Member Development Strategy 2021-2025. The strategy underpins the Member Development work at Devon County Council. There has been a strategy in place since 2007 and it is reviewed every 4 years at the start of Council terms to reflect any changes and the overall offer to Members. Following consultation with the Member Development Steering Group, group leaders approve the strategy at the Procedures Committee before Full Council formally approves the strategy.

The HR Strategy and Performance Manager commented that the Member Development Offer takes into account all Members, and throughout the entire cycle of being a Member from the Induction to supporting Leadership roles to Exit Interviews when retiring.

Councillors urged all Members, but particularly new Members to take up the Member Development offer.

RESOLVED that the Member Development Steering Group approve the Member Development Strategy 2021-2025.

6 Induction 2021 Review

Karen Strahan, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager, gave an overview of the planning and delivery of the Induction programme for Members since the 2021 Local Elections.

The Council delivered its Induction Programme for Members virtually and used a graduated approach to ensure new Members were not overwhelmed after being elected. The Induction started with the Welcome to Devon Seminar which gave a strategic overview of the Council, followed by Chief Officer Panel Sessions. Other sessions included Standards and Meetings Procedures, Scrutiny Induction and Committee specific training.

The overall attendance of sessions was high, and this was attributed to the sessions being online. The 'Sharepoint' website for Members meant sessions are able to be recorded to look at again.

The Council undertook a survey of Members to ask for feedback on the Induction Programme. Overall, Members found the induction helpful and informative in introducing them to the Council and praised the rollout of IT equipment. In the future, Members responded that remote training and a graduated induction over the first year should continue as well as the interactive elements such as 'Sharepoint' and breakout rooms but consider more breaks, more time in breakout rooms and ensuring the times of sessions met the needs of all Members.

Upcoming sessions continue to be Committee specific but also include Finance and budget setting, Risk and Audit and a range of Communities training.

Councillors thanked the Democratic Services and Scrutiny Secretariat for their work on planning and delivering the Induction programme despite the challenges of remote working. Councillors commented that the Induction was more accessible and meant there was limited travelling to County Hall but wanted to ensure that there were future in person visits to the Customer Services Centre and Highways Control Centre to look at these services in action.

In addition, Councillors commented on ensuring presentations given to them were accessible for all Members.

Action: Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager to liaise with Communications team on guidance to Officers on making presentations accessible.

7 Member Engagement with Children's Ofsted

Members discussed with Officers how they can all be engaged with the Children's Services Improvement Journey. This resulted from the Ofsted Focused Visit Letter which commented that the "quality and effectiveness of scrutiny and critical challenge provided by elected members and the corporate centre are not yet fully developed".

Councillors discussed the need for there to be wider engagement of the service with all Members, with all Members having an understanding and overview of the service, not just Children's Scrutiny monitoring progress. As Corporate Parents, Members need to be aware of issues.

Debbie Raymond, Improvement Director, and Victoria Bendle, Senior Policy and Executive Support Officer, gave an overview of the current position of the Improvement Journey and their current and future work streams. Children's Services want to improve communication with Members to ensure they are all engaged with the Improvement journey.

Charlie Fisher, Scrutiny Officer, gave an overview of the Children's Scrutiny Action Plan that has been developed in response to Ofsted's letter.

Councillors discussed the best way of engaging all Members through the Corporate Parenting Forum as the most natural forum to keep Members up to date. There was some concern about the proposed number of meetings being now twice a year and a need to ensure Members attend those meetings.

Action: Officers to review the Corporate Parenting Forum with the Corporate Parenting Manager to discuss frequency and engagement with Members.

8 Personal Development Interviews

David Minchinton, Senior HR Strategy and Performance Advisor, gave an overview of Personal Development Interviews offered to Members. Personal Development Interviews are 1-2-1 interviews where Members have an annual meeting to talk confidentially about their development. Personal Development Interviews lead to tailor made personal development plans for Members.

The interviews allow Members to evaluate themselves, their career and their aspirations. The interviews are based around the leadership skills framework and measure what Members may need in extra support. Metrics of measurements include engagement in meetings, understanding finance and the strategic direction of the Council.

Officers will invite all Members to a Personal Development Interview in the coming day.

The Chair encouraged all Members, particularly new members, to take up the offer.

9 Member Wellbeing Survey

Members received an update on the results of the second Member Wellbeing Survey, undertaken in April 2021.

The highlights of the results of the survey were:

- The majority of respondents continue to feel positive and are currently feeling 'ok' or 'good'.
- All respondents were doing something to support their health and wellbeing with exercise and keeping in contact with family and friends being the most popular options.
- Respondents were doing more to support their health and wellbeing compared to the previous survey.
- A large majority of respondents do feel 'Extremely' or 'Somewhat' well supported by DCC, with no respondents feeling not well supported.
- The majority of respondents did not suggest something the council could do to support them better at the time of taking the survey.

- Some individual responses did show some extra support could be given and targeted to individual need.

Officers drew attention to the suggestions from Members about what to include in the Induction Programme and how those suggestions were built into the Programme.

Councillors were encouraged by what the results were and encouraged those who need extra support to take part in a Personal Development Interview to identify any additional needs.

Councillors suggested repeating the survey to take into account newly elected Members.

Action: Repeat the Member Wellbeing Survey later in the year to collect the views of the new Members who were elected in May 2021.

10 Shared Member Development Network

Councillors received information on the Shared Member Development Network. This is a network with all Devon local authorities, Somerset County Council, Plymouth City Council, Torbay Council and Cornwall Council. It meets 4 times a year and is used by Councils to collaborate with each other on generic learning and development items. Through the Personal Development Interviews, Officers will collate and identify any skills gaps which can then be delivered through the service.

11 Working in a Political Environment

Councillors were given an overview of the training given to Officers in order to work effectively with Members. The purpose of this training is to explore the political side of the organisation and the decision-making structures with Officers and advise how to connect with Members.

12 Dates of Future Meetings

As shown in the calendar of meetings, the next meeting is Tuesday 15th February 2022 at 10.30am.

The Meeting started at 10.30am and finished at 12.10pm.

NOTES:

1. Minutes should always be read in association with any Reports for a complete record.
2. If the meeting has been webcast, it will be available to view on the [webcasting site](#) for up to 12 months from the date of the meeting

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MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

16/09/21

* **DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 12.10 pm