

## MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

15 February 2022

Present:-

Councillors M Asvachin, J Bailey, L Hellyer, C Leaver, A Saywell (Chair) and C Slade

Apologies:-

Councillors J Berry, A Connett, M Hartnell and D Sellis

Members attending in accordance with Standing Orders 8 and 25

**13**     **Minutes**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 be signed as a correct record.

**14**     **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

**15**     **Member engagement strategy on how we work in the future**

The Steering Group received an overview of the Member Engagement Strategy to support new ways of working from the Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support, Matthew Jones and HR Strategy and Performance Manager, Marion Geare.

Officers discussed how to support Members to work differently and to develop a Member led support offer based on their needs. Members discussed the importance for the of change for organisation and the drivers for change. Members received an overview of the 'Action Plan' with details on what the planned programme is.

In summary, the purpose of this piece of work was to look to the future on what work will look like, recognising how Members and officers have been working differently due to the pandemic. The Council wants to capitalise on what has been good about this period and what has been missed. The report highlighted that Members are a key part of this and wanted to ensure that Members are also part of the journey.

The Action Plan details the opportunities for Members including: working with a Member Advocate for new ways of working to ensure it is Member driven; Quarterly essential briefings/networking events; continuing Member Wellbeing Surveys and Personal Development Interviews and continuing to re-iterate support already available via ICT and Members Services Officers.

Member discussion points:

- Ensuring that the Council makes best use of technology for virtual meetings where possible but recognising that there has been less opportunities for networking and building relationships between Members and Members and Officers.
- Members shared some of their concerns about their own practical IT skills. In particular, those who also sit on other councils and having multiple email addresses and calendars to keep up to date means there are potential meetings or emails missed. In addition, Members feeling detached from the Council and wanting to hear more good news to share. Members shared solutions with each other regarding calendars and diaries and making use of the Council's news centre. Officers reiterated the support available via SCOMIS, Members Services Officers and Member Development Personal Development Interviews or PDIs.
- The current staffing arrangements of the Members Services Officers after some long-standing officers retired around the time of the 2021 Local Elections.
- Councillor Saywell indicated his preference to take on the Member Advocate role as part of his wider Cabinet responsibilities and remit.

Actions:

- Officers to circulate more information accessing IT support and SharePoint
- Head of Scrutiny to remind Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officers to try to limit generic e-mails

## **16 Engagement and Participation**

Officers updated the Steering Group on the range of training, induction sessions, masterclasses and member development opportunities that had taken place since the 2021 Local Elections.

As highlighted in the report, about thirty training and development sessions have been organised for Members. This includes 13 Induction Sessions and 18 Scrutiny Masterclasses. However, this figure does omit some of the very early introductory induction sessions. In terms of attendance, the average plotlines demonstrate a general decrease of attendance since June 2021. The mean average is 15 Members across all sessions, with 7 Members having attended over 50% of all sessions.

In addition, Members were asked for their feedback on the budget scrutiny process, starting from training in the Autumn to the Scrutiny meetings in January.

Member discussion points:

- The numbers of Members attending virtual sessions and masterclasses is significantly higher than the in-person events held pre-pandemic.
- Members commented on the benefits of online masterclasses and not holding them in person before Committee meetings. The benefits were that it shortens the day and improves the concentration and performance of Councillors when Committee is on, and Members can attend without travelling to County Hall. In addition, Members who miss sessions can watch the recording to catch up at a later date, or refresh their understanding if they wish to later.
- In terms of the Budget Scrutiny process, Members gave positive feedback on the Scrutiny process, stating that it was easy to follow, thorough and supported active Scrutiny. The Chair welcomed Scrutiny's input into the budget at those meetings.

## **17 Member Wellbeing Survey III**

The Steering Group received the results of the third Member Wellbeing Survey, which ran from 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021 to 21<sup>st</sup> January 2022. This survey was the first since the 2021 Local Elections, and as such, it was first Members Wellbeing Survey that received responses from the newly elected Members.

The Council continues to be a leading authority in asking Members about their wellbeing and allowing Members to provide feedback in this way to Officers.

This survey asked the some of the same questions as the original surveys, albeit in a different order and asked for feedback about the induction process and Member's use of SharePoint.

Just under two thirds of Members responded to this survey (39 out of 60), which is a welcome increase compared to the first and second surveys.

The highlights of the results were:

- Overall, the majority of respondents continue to feel positive, choosing between the two 'positive' responses. However, there is a smaller increase in respondents choosing the 'less positive' responses.
- The majority of respondents are carrying out a range of activities or ways to support their wellbeing, with maintaining a routine as the most frequent answer. There has been a notable decrease in respondents choosing to stay connected with others at DCC.
- More needs to be done to ensure more Members are confident in using SharePoint and councillors are utilising the resources and recordings

- Overall, Members seem happy with the Induction sessions, but the common concern is work/life balance and the amount of information they are expected to consume.
- The majority of Members responding to the survey continue to feel “well” supported by the Council.

Member discussion points:

- Members praised the Council for continuing to run a wellbeing survey for Members to gather feedback.
- Members asked about any analysis or breakdown of results between the newly elected and returning Members. Officers stated that this report does not show the breakdown but agreed to do an additional piece of analysis looking separately at the responses between newly elected and returning Members.
- Members discussed the preferred timing to run a fourth survey and felt 9-12 months time would be sufficient to allow for newer Members to feel more confident about the Council.

Actions:

- Officers to look at additional analysis for the survey results comparing the responses between newly elected and returning Members.
- Officers to repeat the Member Wellbeing Survey in November 2022 to report the findings to the Steering Group at the first meeting in 2023.

## 18 Dates of Future Meetings

Members noted the dates of future meetings:

12 May 2022 @ 10.30am  
29 September 2022 @ 10.30am  
1 March 2023 @ 10.30am

**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*

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

The Meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 11.58 am