

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

6 October 2023

Present:-

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

Apologies:-

Councillors M Hartnell, L Samuel and D Sellis

Members attending in accordance with Standing Orders 8 and 25

2 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 15th June 2023 were agreed to as a correct record of the meeting.

3 **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

4 **Governance Review - Member Development**

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services re-appraised Members of the Member Development Strategy 2021-2025 in order to collect their feedback for the Member Development stream of the Governance Review.

The Director wanted to start the discussion on Member Development and ensuring that Members have what they need to meet their training and development needs. Members are aware that the Member Development Strategy is reviewed every 4 years after the Council's quadrennial elections.

Comments and discussion areas included:

- Help and advice on dealing with challenging conversations and interacting with consistent online and on social media.
- Safeguarding training for Councillors.
- The need for general, basic and additional IT training for the systems used by the Council and the systems that Councillors need to use to be effective e.g Outlook tips and Sharepoint.

- The need to work together with other Councils in Devon to pool resources on shared areas of training e.g. Equalities. The Director highlighted the shared service for Member Development and commented that she was going to work more closely with her Monitoring Officer colleagues on shared training needs.
- Ensuring the differentiation between training and development needs are met.
- Ensuring the differentiation between training for Officers and Members, Members need different skills and sessions for the roles they do.
- Ensuring wellbeing support was available for Members.
- How we work more closely with external providers such as the LGA and South West Councils, as many of their webinars and events are fully subsidised for Councillors.

Councillors discussed wellbeing and the role of being a local Councillor, working with services and their local community including dealing with resident's complaints. Councillors raised particular issues with Highways and how improving services would reduce the casework they receive. Officers commented that a draft Member Officer Protocol had been discussed at the Governance Review Working Group and to raise any concerns they had with either the Monitoring Officer or Democratic Services Team.

Officers commented that because the 2021 Induction was delivered largely online, and although well received at the time, there was a need to go back over some of the basic elements of the training. There is need to determine what is mandatory training (e.g. safeguarding and data protection) and what are additional pieces of training for Members.

Overall, the Director reflected some of the feedback received at the meetings including:

- The need for shorter, bitesize training for some of the basics due to the large amount of information Members receive.
- That the Council should offer training in person, online, in hybrid meetings and in different locations to meet the needs of Members.

The Director thanked Members for the comments and added that she would ask Members again for their feedback at the upcoming All Member Day on 28th November. The Director agreed to come back to the next Meeting with some more information, any additions to the Strategy and how the strategy would be implemented in the future.

5

Member Learning and Development Log

The Deputy Head of Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer appraised Members of the training and development opportunities since the last meeting and the future training and development opportunities.

The report highlighted the previous masterclasses and member briefings that had taken place since the last steering group meeting and the upcoming opportunities.

Officers highlighted the Council's personal development plan (PDP) offer and the ability for Members to have an officer to discuss concerns and problems with. Areas covered as part of the sessions include digital skills and resilience. Officers highlighted that these sessions continued and welcomed Members to get into contact to set one up.

6 **Member Wellbeing Survey**

Members were asked if the Steering Group wished to run a 5th Member Wellbeing Survey and determine the questions to ask Members.

Members felt it was important to gauge the wellbeing of Members but also to ask Members for feedback on a range of issues to inform the Member Development Strategy.

Members suggested the following areas for questions:

- Knowing where to go to get answers?
- Know where to get information you need?
- Working with service areas.
- Getting issues resolved for residents.
- The organisation as a whole.

The Director offered to collect information, feedback and the views of Members at the upcoming all Member Day.

7 **Dates of Future Meetings**

Members noted the dates of future meetings, as shown in the calendar of meetings at <http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>.

The next Steering Group meeting is 7th February 2024.

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 10.31 am and finished at 11.50 am

4

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6/10/23