

## MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

15 July 2024

Present:-

Councillors M Asvachin, J Berry, A Connett, L Hellyer and A Saywell (Chair)

Apologies:-

Councillors J Bailey, C Leaver, L Samuel, D Sellis and C Slade

Members attending in accordance with Standing Orders 8 and 25

### 2 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024 were agreed to as a correct record of the meeting.

### 3 **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

### 4 **Member Learning and Development Log**

The 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 all Member briefings that had taken place since the last Steering Group meeting and the upcoming opportunities.

Members comments and discussions relating to the Report included:

- Attendance for particular sessions was high, such as the Devolution Deal all Member Session and the Future Delivery of the Highways Model masterclass.
- Attendance for the Scrutiny Work Programme masterclasses were disappointing, but it was recognised that the General Election had been called at that time and it was limited to just Committee members who were invited.
- In addition, further analysis showed there was a small difference between the average attendance of Members first elected in 2021

(32%) compared to those who were returning Members (37%). This was the average attendance from 9 training and development sessions from April 2023 onwards.

Action: Officers to send the further analysis and commentary of the attendance figures to Members of the Steering Group

## **5 Member Development Strategy update**

The Head of Scrutiny provided a verbal update on the draft Member Development Strategy which Members had received at their meeting in February 2024. The Head of Scrutiny had attended a meeting of the Senior Leadership Team in May 2024 to consider their feedback.

The draft strategy aligns to the Council's People First Strategy to develop and support Elected Members, recognising their role is different to that of an Officer and reflects the differing development needs. The strategy includes different strands of training including essential training, committee specific training and other types of training and development opportunities.

Discussion amongst Members included:

- Ensuring that Member development was Member focused on what they need to know to carry out their role effectively.
- Ensuring that sessions are repeated or recorded to encourage attendance for all Members.
- Suggestions to include 'Keeping Safe' training and having an Officer buddy system as part of the Induction Programme.
- What is already in place to keep Members safe, if there were concerns around safety.
- Ensuring Director attendance at key sessions to allow them to build relationships with Members.
- Ensuring directories and who's who guides are kept up to date, and Officers ensuring out of office messages are used, especially if they leave the Council to direct queries to someone else.

Officers were due to meet with the Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team again to continue to gather feedback and inform the 2025 Induction Programme. The Governance Working Group has also been invited to consider the Strategy.

Action: Officers to re-circulate the draft Member Development Strategy to continue to ask for Member's feedback as a result of the discussion.

## **6 Member Engagement Strategy update**

The Head of Scrutiny gave a verbal update on a Member Engagement Strategy, although reported that this is more conceptual at this stage. Members were invited in early 2023 to feedback their thoughts on engagement with the Council, responses and timeliness to queries and the quality of responses. The Head of Scrutiny also confirmed that she had met with a number of other local authorities to share learning and best practice.

The Head of Scrutiny highlighted the trailing of a single point of contact aiming to centralise member enquiries and improve the quality and timeliness of responses.

Members discussed the development of a Member portal, an IT-based system designed to manage member casework and enquiries and provide quick access to relevant information. Members highlighted their expectations of ensuring replies are dealt with by appropriate officers in good time and that urgent items can be raised to be responded to quickly.

## **7 Members Sharepoint Division Pages**

Following from the Member Day in June there was an action for Members to have a Division Page on the Sharepoint site for Members, aiming to provide members with easy access to division-related information.

The Head of Scrutiny ran through a proposal of the pages and what it would look like and the types of information that could be available to Members e.g. the Joint Needs Assessment, Highways, Schools and DCC Assets.

Members requested the additions of Libraries and Community Buildings and made reference to Family Hubs.

Members discussion included access to the information, information sharing across Divisions, and being able to access general information about other Divisions but ensuring that sensitive information was not available to other Members.

Action: Head of Scrutiny to enquire about automatic load of divisional data based on Member's login and username

## **8 2025 County Council Elections**

The Deputy Head of Democratic Services sought feedback on promoting the upcoming County Council elections in May 2025 and attracting candidates. This included a Councillor recruitment campaign and promoting the elections generally.

Members discussed the need to attract potential candidates by providing clear and accessible information about the election process and the role of a councillor, aiming to encourage participation and informed decision-making.

Officers clarified that potential candidates who wanted to stand for a political party would be referred to the relevant Group Leader.

## 9 **2025 Induction Programme**

A large part of the Induction programme had been covered as part of the earlier items.

The Deputy Head of Democratic Services repeated the ask for any feedback on the Induction programme and future training needs of Members.

Members discussed the reception held on the Count Day at County Hall where newly elected Members were invited to attend and sign their declaration of office. The importance of this, meeting new members and key officers was recognised. The Director of Legal and Democratic Services agreed to ensure that the Senior Leadership Team would be present at this event.

## 10 **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>

Members noted that the next meeting of the Steering Group is Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024 at 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 12.02 pm and finished at 1.30 pm