

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

15 OCTOBER 2020

Present:-

Councillors B Parsons (Chair), M Asvachin, J Berry, R Hosking, D Sellis and C Slade

Apologies:-

Councillors A Connett and P Twiss

Also in Attendance

33 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5th February 2020 be signed as a correct record.

34 **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

35 **Learning and Development**

Officers updated Members on the training and Member development that had taken place over the summer during the lockdown and the Covid-19 pandemic period.

There had been a reduced timetable of training and development opportunities, in part due to the pandemic situation, but also reflecting the proximity of upcoming elections which were due to take place in May 2021.

A number of Virtual Surgeries had been held to provide information and advice to Members in supporting their communities through the pandemic, covering areas such as Community Safety, Library Services, support for young people and supporting for those experiencing financial hardship as a result of the pandemic.

Following the move to online Committee meetings, Scrutiny Masterclasses were not currently being held on the day of Scrutiny Committees (as was usual practice), but some Masterclass sessions were being held to address issues on an ad-hoc basis, including a Health Scrutiny session on Covid-19, where scrutiny Members from Plymouth, Torbay and the Devon districts were also invited to attend. Future Masterclasses were planned addressing children's and adult mental health, and on CAMHS and Autism services. The Chair and Vice Chair of Health and Adult Care Scrutiny Committee were also

receiving regular briefings and updates on the pandemic situation from the Director of Public Health and the Acute Trusts.

Scrutiny Standing Overview Groups (SOG) continued to be held covering a range of topics including the Exeter Transport Plan, Food Poverty, Ofsted outcome and the Improvement Plan and Covid-19 management and response.

Members welcomed the training and briefing sessions that had been arranged over this period and commented on the usefulness of the SOG meetings to consider areas such as the Ofsted outcome. Vicky Church, Scrutiny Officer, undertook to provide Members of the group with a list of training that had taken place since the beginning of lockdown.

Members also raised issues over accessing the 'mandatory' training through the DEL online system and Marion Geare, Member Development Officer confirmed that the training was mandatory for members of staff, but optional for elected Members, noting however that many of the areas covered would be very useful for Members. The Member Development Officer undertook to feedback some of the issues Members had experienced accessing the system and that more support may be needed.

36 Black Lives Matter

Jo Hooper, Equality and Diversity Officer appraised Members of the Council's work over the summer in response to the Black Lives Matter movement including:

- The development of a pilot reverse mentoring programme where Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff would mentor senior leaders and managers, with the aim of more widely sharing the lived experience of being BAME in Devon with leaders; similar schemes in the NHS had been successful; currently 10 mentors had been recruited and a training programme was being developed alongside mentee recruitment;
- The Council's new HR Management system I-trent was being used to increase workforce data on ethnicity; once this data was better understood consideration could be given to positive action recruitment programmes which could specifically target BAME communities;
- BAME staff networks were already in place and continued to be supported;
- There had been a focus on getting staff, Members and communities engaged in relevant events and activities; this had provided a greater challenge over the summer due to the Covid-19 pandemic; the Exeter resect festival was cancelled and other events had moved online including events recognising the contribution of the Windrush generation and range of events celebrating Black History month through Zoom which focussed on black history in Devon and Exeter.

Opportunities for Member development and training on BAME issues were discussed, and while it was possible to organise formal training, Members were encouraged to take up personal development opportunities by engaging with community events, getting to know local BAME communities and building equality and diversity issues into training in other areas such as mental health.

It was also suggested that a BAME mentoring scheme for Members, joining together with other local authorities, could be a really beneficial way for Members to build skills and confidence on equality issues around race and ethnicity. The Head of Scrutiny undertook to take this suggestion forward through scrutiny networks and the Local Government Association to see what could be put in place.

37 Member Wellbeing

The Member Development Officer outlined the wellbeing support that had been put in place for Members through the pandemic period, which included the offer of one to one sessions, a reminder of the wellbeing resources available on Inside Devon and the offer of running a resilience session for Members. These messages had been reiterated to Members through a number of different channels.

The Chair greatly endorsed the support being offered to Members and encouraged all Members to be proactive in looking after their own wellbeing, and to take up the offers made by the Council.

38 Induction 2021

With elections scheduled and still expected in May 2021, the Member Development Officer outlined the usual approach to Member Induction, which included two full days of induction events held shortly after the election itself, followed by a range of training, briefings and development opportunities held over the summer and into September.

With the current pandemic situation, it was unknown as to the extent to which these events may have to take place online, but decisions around this would be taken nearer the time. Members were supportive of providing online learning as part of the overall offer.

Members were supportive of delivering induction training and development over a number of months as in previous years, noting that there may need to be additional IT/Microsoft Teams training for new Members, who may have varied IT experience. A focus on the organisational structure of the council, and how the various services interact with each other and partner organisations was considered to be a key element of training for newly elected Members.

39 Shared Service Update

The Member Development Officer advised that the majority of the shared service partners had now ceased contributing financially to the Shared Service, but it had been agreed by the Council's leadership that in the short term at least, Devon district councils would continue to be able to draw on the usual services. Local authorities from outside of the Devon County Council area would need to continue to pay for services, and as such Torbay Council was the only remaining authority continuing to contribute financially.

40 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 meeting of the Member Development Steering Group was scheduled for Thursday 4th February 2021.

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

The Meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 11.40 am