

## MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

4 FEBRUARY 2021

### Present:-

Councillors B Parsons (Chair), M Asvachin, K Ball, J Berry, L Hellyer, R Hosking, D Sellis, C Slade and P Twiss

### Apologies:-

Councillors A Connett, A Eastman and M Shaw

## 41 **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020 be signed as a correct record.

## 42 **Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

There were no items requiring urgent attention.

Councillor Parsons passed on his thanks to officers for their work over the term.

## 43 **Induction 2021**

Camilla de Bernhardt Lane, Head of Scrutiny, updated Members on preparations for the induction of Members after the 2021 County Council Elections.

Officers are working on the basis the elections will happen in May 2021 but awaiting confirmation from the Government.

The Council has always prided itself on delivering quality induction programmes, and ongoing training, for both new and returning members. In line with the Council's commitment to training and development a programme is being developed based on previous experiences of induction and best practice. This included:

- the need for the programme to be spread out over a longer period of time to allow Members to take stock;
- during the first month, the main strategic sessions should be covered;

- through the second month, members should obtain a greater insight into the working of the Council and the Service Streams and commence any committee specific training.

This year we will need to be reflective and adaptive to accommodate the necessities of on-line learning options as well as any face-to-face meetings that may be possible.

The objectives for the programme will be;

- to welcome new and existing Members to the Council following the election, and to make and maintain connections, particularly if still working remotely.
- to provide a strategic overview of what the Council does in broad terms, and develop the functional awareness to carry out duties in line with committee appointments.
- Skills development (chairing skills, questioning skills etc).

Officers will incorporate the new virtual/remote way of working into the induction programme to ensure it is engaging, interactive and using the functionality of MS Teams. Material will be recorded so new members can watch it in their own time if they are unable to attend specific sessions.

Members discussed the need to build relationships with new colleagues, ensuring the new Cabinet and Senior Officers are visible to members and ensuring recorded material stays up-to-date and relevant.

#### **44 Member Wellbeing Survey**

The Head of Scrutiny updated members on the results of the recent Member Wellbeing Survey to discuss further actions.

The survey looked at five questions and ran over the Christmas period. Around 1/3 of members responded to the survey (17 out of 60).

Highlights included:

- The majority of respondents are currently feeling 'ok' or 'good'.
- All respondents are doing something to support their health and wellbeing with exercise and keeping in contact with family and friends being the most popular options.
- The majority of respondents to feel 'Extremely' or 'Somewhat' well supported by Devon County Council.
- The majority of respondents did not suggest something the council could do to support them better at the time of responding.

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

Members discussed and had the opportunity to share their opinions, talk openly and honestly about their personal circumstances, feelings, struggles and how they have found this time. Many highlighted the pressures facing them as councillors during this time and the increased workload they have faced. Members discussed the increased expectations of them and demand for their assistance as community leaders and concern about some of the tone of some of the correspondence received by constituents.

Members appreciated the new remote/virtual way of working as a way to increase productivity and reducing travel time to meetings but did acknowledge the importance of meeting colleagues in person at County Hall to build relationships.

Members and officers discussed ways Members could connect with each other and support each other's wellbeing in the coming months.

*Action: Repeat a Member Wellbeing Survey before the end of the term to ensure the results can benefit members elected in the new term.*

*Action: To consider how best to share Member's experiences and successful techniques for managing their wellbeing.*

## **45 Learning and Development**

The Head of Scrutiny shared with Members the learning and development activity that has taken place over the past year, despite restrictions around the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The activities included Standing Overview Groups, Masterclasses, Conferences, Briefings and Communities Virtual Surgeries.

Member reflected on the significant opportunities members have still had for positive learning and development and active scrutiny and policy development role. Members highlighted how the work of the council and its committees did not stop and seamlessly transitioned to remote working when many other local authorities struggled to maintain active councillor involvement and cancelled meetings and development opportunities.

*Action: Learning and development activity to be shared with members along with links to any recorded sessions.*

Members noted the upcoming Local Government Association Event, The Role of Data in Local Government on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Members acknowledged the resolution from the Children's Scrutiny Committee meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021 which referred to Active Bystander Training for all members.

**46**      **Dates of Future Meetings**

Members noted the dates of future meetings.

The next meeting is scheduled for 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 at 10.30am.

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

The Meeting started at 10.30 am and finished at 11.55 am