

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

3 FEBRUARY 2009

Chairman: * Councillor Jean Lammiman

Councillors: * B E Gate * Paul Osborn
* Phillip O'Dell

* Denotes Member present

PART I - RECOMMENDATIONS - NIL**PART II - MINUTES**86. **Attendance by Reserve Members:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no Reserve Members in attendance at this meeting.

87. **Declarations of Interest:**

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.

88. **Minutes:**

RESOLVED: That the record of the informal discussion that took place at the inquorate Member Development meeting on 6 November 2008 be noted.

89. **Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations:**

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rules 19, 16 and 17 respectively.

90. **IDeA Member Development Charter:**

The Chairman welcomed Kris Hibbert of London Councils who had been invited to give a presentation on the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) Member Development Charter. The Chairman informed the Panel that the Council was aiming to achieve charter recognition during 2009 and that it was hoped that the presentation would give Members a better understanding of what was required in order to ensure a successful assessment.

Ms Hibbert explained that the purpose of the Member Development Charter was to build elected member development capacity by ensuring that local authorities complied with a number of good practice guidelines that had been developed by the IDeA. The central emphasis of the Charter was to put elected Members in control of their own development whilst promoting learning opportunities in line with the Council's wider corporate objectives. In order to achieve charter recognition, Councils were expected to undertake an onsite assessment during which they were required to demonstrate adherence to the following key guidelines:

- being fully committed to developing elected Members in order to achieve the Council's aims and objectives;
- adopting a Member-led strategic approach to elected member development;
- having a Member learning and development plan in place that clearly identified the difference development activities would make;
- seeing that learning and development was effective in building capacity;
- addressing wider development matters to promote work-life balance and citizenship.

Ms Hibbert commented that the Council was already fulfilling most of the Charter's requirements and identified the following existing schemes and initiatives as some of the positive steps Harrow had taken towards Charter recognition:

- the production of a Member Development Programme Brochure which formalised existing development initiatives and provided Members with a comprehensive overview of available training;

- the use of an ongoing development of a high quality induction pack for new Councillors;
- the availability of a dedicated Member Development budget;
- inviting Councillors from other boroughs and members of the voluntary sector to attend internally organised training sessions;
- the relaunch of the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) scheme and the use of Roffey Park's 360 degree feedback system to identify development needs amongst Councillors;
- the use of a core group of officers to oversee and handle Member Development issues;
- the use of 'leadership meetings' between Members and Corporate Directors to ensure both sides remained aware of important issues. The meetings also helped new Councillors develop their knowledge of the internal workings of Local Government.

During the presentation, Members discussed a number of areas where additional work was needed in order to meet the requirements of the Charter. The key areas were as follows:

- better dissemination of learning was required and, to ensure value for money, Members needed to be encouraged to share what they had learnt with others. Officers suggested that the existing learning log evaluation form could be used or, failing that, a modified version produced. Such a form would allow Members to provide key details of the training which could then be shared with others;
- the roles of individual Members needed to be better outlined to ensure members of the public knew who to contact for assistance. It was considered that, whilst information regarding committee membership and special responsibilities was available on the Council's website, it was not well organised. Officers stated that they would contact Democratic Services to see whether the situation could be improved;
- it was considered that the feedback system currently in place to gauge the benefits of training sessions needed to be further developed;
- the e-learning software that had been made available to Members had not proved popular. It was noted that many Councillors had started using the software but few had continued to use it on a regular basis. A Member suggested that sending e-mail reminders to Councillors, informing them of updates and new modules, could encourage individuals to utilise the system more often. The possibility of utilising social networking systems such as Facebook, Myspace and Twitter to assist learning was also considered;
- the way in which public feedback was logged required improvement. The Tenants' and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum was suggested as a good forum in which to trial a new external feedback system whereby members of the public could be encouraged to provide feedback. An officer agreed to discuss the proposals with Democratic Services and the Chairman of the Tenants and Leaseholders' Consultative Forum. The Chairman confirmed that the Roffey Park 360 feedback process allowed for feedback from community members.

Summing up, Ms Hibbert stated that the Council had already independently developed a robust and comprehensive Member Development programme. She stated that, aside from developing a few key areas further, the Council needed to primarily focus on documenting and collating the evidence required for its application. It was explained that in order to proceed with the application, Members of the Council would need to sign a commitment form that would then be submitted to London Councils. Once received, London Councils would consider the application and jointly agree a date for the onsite assessment. Ms Hibbert informed the Panel that it was important that the Council submitted its portfolio of evidence to London Councils three to four weeks before the assessment date and that, on the day, the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive be available.

Following a discussion, it was agreed that the Council should aim to be assessed for the Charter in late June 2009.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

91. **INFORMATION REPORT - Member Development Programme Update:**

The Panel received a report of the Divisional Director of Human Resources and Development, which reviewed the progress of the 2008/09 programme and outlined the forthcoming events for elected Members, in line with the Council Improvement Programme.

Coaching

An officer informed the Panel that the Member Development team was awaiting nine nominations for the Roffey Park Coaching Programme. It was noted that the Christmas holiday period could have resulted in the delays and officers stated that they would contact individual Members shortly.

Review of Member Development Activities since 6 November 2008

The officer detailed the mandatory Gambling Act Refresher and Code of Conduct training that had taken place in November and January respectively. The Panel was informed that a third Code of Conduct session was being organised for 3 March 2009, with the possibility that it would be held during the day to encourage more Members to attend. A Member of the Panel stated that whilst daytime sessions were more convenient for some Councillors, there were concerns surrounding non-attendance at mandatory training sessions. He informed the Panel that he intended to work with officers on this issue. The Chairman recommended that the Member Development team consider and review how it handled and followed up Member attendance concerns.

In addition to the mandatory training sessions, the officer outlined the non-compulsory sessions that had been run and informed the Panel that feedback had been positive. Officers were continuing to utilise a revised evaluation form to gather feedback and develop future training accordingly. Members commented that though the quality of the sessions had been high, there had been some clashes with Council meetings and that it was important that such instances were prevented in the future.

Update on the Programme for 2009

An officer notified the Panel of an upcoming Action Learning Event concerning Customer Service and Satisfaction, due to be held on 11 February. The event would aim to challenge Members on how the Council could improve customer service, customer satisfaction ratings and the public's perception of its work. The Panel was informed that the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive would open the event, followed by a presentation by a director of MORI. After a Question and Answer session, Members would work in groups in order to undertake a range of workshop activities designed to promote discussion.

A Member stated that it was important that the Action Learning Events were properly facilitated to ensure that political debate did not undermine the educational purpose of the session. Another Member suggested that politics had no place in a discussion concerning customer satisfaction as Councillors had a responsibility to represent the local electorate, regardless of their political alignment.

The officer requested that Members of the Panel encourage other Councillors to attend the session as a low turnout would reflect negatively on the Council and a group of at least 20 to 30 individuals was needed to ensure a good debate. The Chairman stated that she would send out reminders and it was agreed that the event would be publicised at the party Group meetings on 9 February.

Members Quarterly Briefing

An officer informed the Panel that a suggestion had been made by the Divisional Director of Audit and Risk that a session entitled "The Role of Councillors in a Major Incident" be held at a future quarterly briefing. Members of the Panel requested that the session be incorporated within the Members' briefing taking place on 5 March 2009.

92. **Any Other Urgent Business:**

The Chairman informed the Panel of the following urgent issues:

Safeguarding Children

The Panel was informed that the Corporate Director of Children's Services had requested that a Safeguarding Children training session be run for elected Members. An officer requested that the Panel decide whether the session should provide a general overview of safeguarding legislation or focus primarily on the issues surrounding the Baby P incident at Haringey Council.

A Member of the Panel stated that it was important that the Council did not neglect its obligation towards vulnerable adults and requested that the focus of the session be widened to include such issues. An officer assured the Panel that the general session would cover a range of issues. Following a discussion, Members of the Panel unanimously agreed that a general session would be more beneficial and requested that officers to proceed on this basis. It was recommended that a session regarding the Baby P incident be held at the upcoming Members' briefing.

Corporate Parenting

The Chairman informed the Panel that she had received a letter from the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel requesting that a Member Development session be arranged entitled "On being a Corporate Parent". The Panel agreed that a session on Councillors' Corporate Parenting Responsibilities was important but that the Safeguarding Children session needed to take priority. The Chairman requested that officers incorporate a Corporate Parenting training session into the next quarterly briefing and, if well received, a dedicated session be scheduled. Officers agreed to draft a response to the Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel informing her of the decision.

Induction

The Panel was advised that preparation for the Councillor Induction process in 2010 had commenced and Democratic Services would be contacted in order to commence the necessary arrangements. Members of the Panel suggested that a representative from Democratic Services attend future Member Development Panel meetings in order to provide regular updates. The Chairman requested that officers prepare a report for the next meeting in order to provide Members with an overview of the required work.

Members' Library

An officer informed the Panel that the Leader of the Labour Group had requested that it consider the development of the Members' Library. Panel Members were informed that in the near future the Library would hopefully stock journals, relevant magazines, agendas and minutes and, in addition, become a central learning resource for Councillors. The officer stated that funding would most likely have to be sought from the existing Member Development budget and, as such, he was seeking the views of the Panel.

Following a discussion, the Panel agreed that the development of the library was important but that it should undergo a trial period to ensure there would be sufficient usage to justify initial expenditure. Officers were asked to look at the possibility of installing a key card access point at the Library's entrance in order to monitor how often it was used. The Chairman stated that the Library use should be piloted until summer and reviewed at the Member Development Panel meeting due to be held in September.

Professional Development

An officer stated that by making the Members' Library a central learning hub, it was hoped Councillors would make better use of e-learning resources. He stated that the Member Development team was looking at utilising a new learning management system that would provide Members with a record of their learning and therefore support their Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Following a discussion, Members debated whether it was possible to introduce a certification system whereby Councillors would receive a formal certificate recording the training they had completed. The officer stated that the use of certificates was an option, but that formal accreditation would require external monitoring. It was agreed that the officer look into the possibility of offering Members formal qualifications and report back at the next meeting.

(Note: The meeting having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 10.00 pm)

(Signed) COUNCILLOR JEAN LAMMIMAN
Chairman