

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

MINUTES

5 FEBRUARY 2013

Chairman: * Councillor Mrs Rekha Shah

Councillors: * Ann Gate * Varsha Parmar
* Stephen Greek (2) * Yogesh Teli

* Denotes Member present
(2) Denotes category of Reserve Member

62. Attendance by Reserve Members

RESOLVED: To note the attendance at this meeting of the following duly appointed Reserve Member:-

Ordinary Member

Councillor Jean Lammiman

Reserve Member

Councillor Stephen Greek

63. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED: To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members.

64. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2012 be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

65. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED: To note that no public questions were put, or petitions, or deputations received.

RESOLVED ITEMS

66. INFORMATION REPORT: Member Development Programme Update

The Panel received a report of the Divisional Director Human Resources and Development and Shared Services, which provided an update on the Member Development Programme of events that had taken place since the last meeting of the Panel. The report also sought Members' views on the recommendations contained within the Assessors Report relating to the Assessment for the Member Development Charter.

Officers made the following comments:

- attendance at some Member Development events was low and no Members had attended the recent Equalities and Diversity training session;
- the Members Quarterly Briefing scheduled for 28 February had been postponed because a Council meeting to consider the Council Tax had been rearranged for this date;
- identifying available dates in the Council's calendar to hold development events was challenging due to the number of meetings and religious holidays in the upcoming months;
- two training sessions on Council Tax support had been arranged for 19 February 2013 and 27 February 2013. Information on these sessions would be circulated to Members shortly. The session on 27 February 2013 was a repeat of the session on 19 February 2013;
- it was suggested that the emphasis of the training on 18 March which was being facilitated by the Office for Public Management (OPM) should be re-focused so that it provided Members and senior officers with the opportunity to consider key strategic issues;
- the OPM event on 18 March would consider items such as the wider impact of continuing austerity and what this means for Harrow; the impact of localism, welfare reform, community based leadership community budgets and the role of the ward councillors. It was anticipated that the session would last up to two and a half hours. The event would help to develop the future programme of Member Development and therefore it was important that attendance by Members was high; ;

Members made the following request that the postponed February Quarterly briefing be held at 7.00 pm on 2 May 2013.

A Member stated that consideration should be given to changing the start time of Member Development events as 7.00 pm was too early and was not always convenient for Members who worked. The majority of Committee meetings commenced at 7.30 pm. In response, an officer advised that previously

development events had started at 7.30 pm but this had been brought forward to 7.00 pm due to the length of the sessions and to assist external trainers who would need to travel home.

A Member suggested that a trial could be held with a session starting at 7.30 pm. However, other Members felt that this could create confusion and that generally 7.00 pm was an appropriate time to commence development events.

The Panel Members supported a question on preferred times and days for training events being included in the proposed Training Needs Analysis (TNA). A database would then be developed to help identify the most suitable days and times to hold training sessions.

An officer made the following comments when updating Members about training requests which had been received and were being considered for inclusion in the future development programme:

- liaison was taking place with Cabinet Members to organise a date for the EqIA refresher training;
- the officer responsible for the Local Information System demonstration would be contacted to ascertain whether this event could be included as part of the Quarterly Briefing on 2 May 2013.

An officer introduced the Assessors Report and commented that some of the feedback had been positive but that some areas for improvement had been identified.

The Panel Members considered each of the following recommendations included in the Assessors Report following the Assessment for the Member Development Charter in November 2012.

- a) The minutes of the Member Development Panel should be more detailed to reflect Members' input.

An officer advised that this recommendation would be implemented.

- b) The Cabinet Member with the brief for member development be part of the Member Development Panel.

An officer stated that the Cabinet Member responsible for Member Development was the Leader and advised that the aim of the recommendation was to ensure high level political support for member development.

A Member commented that she had raised this with a Member of the Cabinet and that further discussions were required. It was suggested that the Divisional Director Human Resources, Development and Shared Services and the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager could meet with the Leader in the future to discuss Member Development.

- c) That for consistency and ownership there should be one set of Councillors on the Member Development Panel.

Members made the following comments:

- there may be issues with the quorum if reserve Members were not appointed to the Panel;
- there were benefits in having Reserve Members present and if any were present then the ordinary Members of the Panel provided continuity and consistency.

Officers raised the following points in response:

- the assessor's comment related to some Members of the Panel being unclear on their role. It would therefore be helpful to clarify this for Reserve Members;
- the Role of a reserve Member was recognised in the Constitution;
- a role description of a Reserve Member would be drafted and could then be used as a part of the evidence for the Charter.

- d) That the TNA continues at this stage as a paper exercise and Councillors on the Member Development Panel each identify a group of Councillors to support in completing their TNA forms.

Members asked a number of questions to which officers responded as follows:

- the most recent survey, for which there was an 18% response rate, had been a web based survey including both open ended questions and specific statements;
- the new TNA would include more closed questions and the survey would be pre-populated with information to make each TNA personal to each Member.

Members made the following comments;

- there had been issues accessing the survey site remotely;
- the TNA survey should be relatively short.

The Members requested that an officer attend a forthcoming Labour and Conservative Group meeting to distribute paper copies of the survey and to explain to Members how to complete the TNA.

- e) The Member Development Panel should adopt new terms of reference and re-launch.

A Member stated that the new terms of reference should be considered at a future Council meeting as this would help to promote Member Development. An officer responded that the new terms of reference would be drafted to reflect the new strategic focus for development and would be prepared before the 18 March OPM training event.

The Members supported the Panel's terms of reference being redrafted.

- f) The Member Development Panel should take a role in evaluating the impact of Member Development and its effectiveness for the Council, Councillors and the Community. The value that the council is deriving from the member development budget should be identified.

An officer commented that development events should be evaluated on a cost per delegate basis as this would help to show the value for money of sessions. A follow up questionnaire would be sent to Members after a set time period following development events to help identify performance improvements. This new information would be included in future Member Development Programme Update reports to the Panel.

The Panel supported the new style of reporting on the member development programme.

- g) Produce a four year development programme from May 2014 following an assessment of need. A further TNA should be undertaken six months after the election to reflect the development needs of the newly elected Members.

The Panel supported the development of a four year programme and a further TNA for newly elected Members six months after the election.

- h) The Member Development Policy should be reviewed and updated and this should be led by the Member Development Panel. Group Leaders should be encouraged to provide a Forward to the revised policy to demonstrate top political leadership commitment to member development.

An officer suggested that the Member Development Policy could be reviewed alongside the drafting of the new terms of reference for the Panel. The analysis of the TNA would have been completed by May 2013 and the results of these would be used to shape the revised policy.

The Panel supported the review of the Member Development Policy.

- i) Role profiles should be sent to the political parties and associations to be used for candidate selection. This should ensure that all candidates are aware of the role of an elected Member and the skills and competencies required for the role.

Members made comments including the following:

- would the political parties use the role profiles;
- the role profiles should be sent to the political parties and it was then a matter of whether the parties wished to use them;
- the role profiles might not be used to select candidates but would help to inform candidates about the role of a councillor.

An officer stated that the role profiles would include information regarding what was required of a Councillor and would be included in the handbook Guide to Becoming a Councillor.

- j) Councillor Role Descriptions should be included on the Council's intranet and be included as part of the website based Guide to Becoming a Councillor

An officer commented that the guide and the information it contained helped to support independent candidates who were not members of a political party. As the guides were available on the website there would be minimal printing costs.

The Panel supported this recommendation.

- k) Member development programmes should be clearly linked to appropriate corporate priorities and members should be informed of the priority that the development is supporting in advance of the session.

An officer advised that this would be informed by the development event on 18 March and information on corporate plan priorities would be included in the information sent out to Members to promote development events.

- l) The Member Development Panel should initiate a skills audit of all Members to build up a data source of expertise and interest. This should be repeated after the May 2014 elections.

The Panel supported a skills audit for all Members following the 2014 election.

- m) Member development to be a regular agenda item at Group meetings.

The Panel supported this recommendation.

- n) The Council should liaise with other Councils across West London and look at opportunities for more effective collaboration in respect of member development and begin to work towards a joint Member Development group

Members made comments including the following:

- some areas were more suitable for joint training than others and there would need to be local training sessions on local issues;
- a meeting with the Chair of the Member Development Group at Brent was being arranged;
- it was possible that there could be scheduling issues for joint sessions.

An officer advised that any joint training would be on generic items, such as Charing Skills. A meeting had been held in the past with Brent regarding some joint Member Development sessions and programmes had been exchanged.

- o) Pre-candidate briefings should be scheduled well before the 2014 elections.

An officer advised that this would be linked with the recommendations on role profiles and the Councillor guide.

The Panel considered whether there should be a requirement of a minimum number of confirmed attendees for a training event to be held. Members asked a number of questions about how this would operate in practice to which the officers responded as follows:

- for training events delivered by external facilitators, a cancellation fee would not normally apply provided the session was cancelled two weeks before the date of the training;
- an email advising Members that the session may have to be cancelled if the minimum number of attendees was not met would be sent before the cancellation point;
- there were cost per delegate implications of Members not attending training sessions when they had previously advised that they would;
- the minimum number of attendees was usually 50% of the total number of places or expected attendees.

The Panel supported the introduction of a minimum number of confirmed attendees for a session to be run and requested that individual statistics for each Members attendance at Member Development events was sent to the Whips each month.

A Member asked if there had been any progress regarding the introduction of Personal Development Plans (PDPs). An officer advised that these were a requirement of Charter Plus and were still being considered. PDPs would be useful in encouraging Members to attend statutory training.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

67. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 10 April 2013 at 7.30 pm.

(Note: The meeting, having commenced at 7.30 pm, closed at 8.45 pm).

(Signed) COUNCILLOR MRS REKHA SHAH
Chairman