MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
MEMBER DEVELOPMENT GROUP
MONDAY, 28 FEBRUARY 2022

Held at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road, West Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillors R Mallender (Chairman), T Combellack, G Dickman, B Gray, D Mason, A Phillips, K Shaw and G Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

C Caven-Atack	Service Manager - Corporate Services
T Coop	Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES:
Councillors B Buschman

15   Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

16   Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 April 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2021 were approved as a true record of the meeting.

17   2022 Be a Councillor Guide

The Service Manager – Corporate Services presented a report which included the 2018 Be a Councillor Guide to assist with the development of a 2022 equivalent, which is due to be published in summer in line with the 'party' nomination processes.

The Group noted the updates and changes required to bring the 2018 Be a Councillor Guide up to date and were asked to identify any further changes they feel needed to be made. Some additional content ideas put forward by officers were provided for the Group to consider as follows:

- Section on diversity – councillors from all backgrounds and experiences are required to represent the community – possibly with some demographic information

- What I wish I'd known four years ago – section specifically focusing on the experiences of new Councillors in 2019

In addition, the Service Manager – Corporate Services highlighted further activities to support and run alongside the publication of the 2022 Be a Councillor Guide:

- Outreach events for prospective councillors (mainly at the Town and Parish level) in three or four different locations across the Borough – presentation and FAQs led by the Chief Executive.

- Social media campaign including a number of videos with councillors – preferably highlighting younger councillors, those from non-white backgrounds, and those that have achieved something tangible (and therefore engaging on video) for their community

The Group welcomed the ideas suggested by officers and felt the guide offered a good understanding of what being a Councillor entailed. The Group offered some additional ideas in respect of encouraging new Councillors.

These included:

- Inviting prospective candidates to come along to Council meetings to see what goes on and how decisions are made – This could include edited YouTube and social media reels of past meetings where noticeable decisions had been made.

- Encouraging existing Councillors to get involved – providing quotes for the 2022 Be a Councillor Guide and being on hand to provide a face to face dialogue with prospective candidates.

- Encouraging more diversity – ethnicity and disability and how the Council can adapt its ways or working to encourage new candidates – Including accessibility to Council meetings

It was RESOLVED that the Member Development Group:

a) Noted and agreed the changes contained in paragraph 4.1

b) Noted and agreed the new content contained in paragraph 4.3

c) Noted and agreed the supporting activities outlined in paragraph 4.5

d) Approved that officers could move forward with the 2022 Be a Councillor Guide and associated activities to promote the role of a Councillor in advance of the May 2023 Borough, Town and Parish elections.

18 **Councillors Training - Update**

The Service Manager – Corporate Services presented a report to update the Group on the current position in regard to Councillor Learning and Development.

The Service Manager – Corporate Services reminded the Group that the Council at its meeting in July 2021 adopted a new Councillor Learning and

Development Policy. The Policy contains a number of key learning and Development Principles including the completion of all mandatory training within 12 months of becoming a Councillor, which was extended to December 2021 due to Covid-19. A dispensation for training undertaken with other employers was also included to avoid the need for Councillors to do mandatory training such as GDPR more than once.

A table was provided that shows Councillors' progress towards completing mandatory or essential training in line with the Councillors' Learning and Development Policy. The Service Manager – Corporate Services highlighted five mandatory sessions which Councillors must undertake before serving on a specific committee: These are for Planning, Licensing, Standards, Employment Appeals and Interviewing Committees. In addition, the Group were advised of five essential face-to-face training sessions: Budget Briefing and Enforcement Briefings that all Councillors must attend and three sessions that are open to all Councillors but are only essential if certain committee positions are held, these are: scrutiny training, treasury management and risk management training.

The Service Manager – Corporate Services advised the Group that the Council's internal auditors conducted an audit on the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements. This resulted in a 'moderate rating' of assurance and concluded that there was a medium risk that Councillors had not received adequate training and development to fulfil their roles. The auditors made three recommendations as follows:

- A schedule of Member training, which prioritises Members on Regulatory Committees should be monitored by the Member Development Group, and Chairs of the respective Committees
- After a reasonable time (approx. 3 months), non-compliance with training should be reported to the Standards Committee.
- The Council should ensure that all future training for Councillors is included in the central training spreadsheet

The audit findings were reported to Governance Scrutiny Group at its meeting in November 2021. Since then the following actions have been undertaken:

- A planning training event was held on 19 January 2021 and was attended by 27 Councillors (one councillor nominated to the committee has still not received the mandatory training)
- Licensing training booked for April 2022 (unable to schedule earlier due to staffing issue)
- A skills audit for Governance Scrutiny Group members will be undertaken after Annual Council to ensure the right mix and level of skills is present within the Group (this is in line with new Treasury Management Code requirements).

Members asked specific questions in respect of Councillor engagement and commented that individuals learn in different ways. It was suggested that the word training be replaced by development or update and that a combination of face-to-face and online sessions were a good format going forward.

In respect of e-learning there was a mix of views from members, some really disliked e-learning and found the process cumbersome, advising that there were issues with multiple login stages and passwords, and some members experienced issues with completing the modules. It was suggested that Councillors be provided with a link that would direct them to the relevant e-learning, whether it be mandatory (GDPR) or essential learning. The Service Manager – Corporate Services confirmed that this was already being looked in to by ICT.

Members were asked for their view on introducing sanctions to encourage attendance at training sessions. Members expressed that Councillors did not do the work for the money and holding back their allowance due to non-attendance at training sessions would not work. It was noted that Councillor attendance at meetings was recorded and published to the Council website.

Members welcomed the Councillors individual training records and found the information within it useful. It was suggested that reminders be sent to members in respect of mandatory e-learning and perhaps a traffic light system be introduced to manage Councillors development expectations and sharing this information with Committee Group Chairs to encourage and remind members to attend any specific training sessions required to fulfil their roles.

In respect of improvements to Councillor development post 2023 induction and whether any changes to the induction programme were required, The Service Manager – Corporate Services asked for members thoughts on whether the programme could be condensed from 6 weeks to 2 days, perhaps over the weekend post-election, with follow up training over the year. Members advised that this would not suit all and did not think asking a new Councillor to attend a 2 day or weekend session immediately after a busy election was appropriate.

Members were in agreement that a planned programme was required, using a combination of intensive training initially, using good quality presenters/officers and perhaps encourage existing Councillors to share their wealth of experience either in small group sessions or as a one-to-one format, following up with further development sessions over the year. It was also suggested that new candidates be encouraged to attend Council meetings, so they have a basic understanding of what being a Councillor involves.

It was RESOLVED that the Member Development Group:

a) Noted and approved the information provided by officers in relation to Councillor Learning and Development.

b) Provided actions and ideas that addressed the concerns raised in the officers report in relation to Councillor Learning and Development.

19 **East Midlands Councillor Development Charter**

The Service Manager – Corporate Services presented a report which provided the Group with information against the Councillor Development Charter Self-Assessment Document, with the aim to provide context about the future

direction of the Member Development Group at Rushcliffe. A copy of the Self-Assessment Document was provided as an appendix to the report.

The Service Manager – Corporate Services asked members whether they had identified anything in the document that could improve the development offer by learning from other authorities or bodies such as East Midlands Councils, with the emphasis on ensuring that all Councillors are appropriately developed and supported to effectively carry out their roles.

Members agreed that it was useful to look at other authorities to identify opportunities to do things differently and improve member development outcomes. It was suggested that a 'get to know you' interview to see what knowledge and skills members could provide or a mentoring scheme for newly elected Councillors provided by existing and more experienced Councillors.

Overall, the Group felt that the Charter provided little value or benefit to Rushcliffe. The Chairman suggested adapting elements within the charter that would best fit the Council in improving its Member Development programme going forward.

It was RESOLVED that Member Development Group

a) Noted the Officer Self Assessment

b) Agreed not to pursue the Councillor Charter Status but to incorporate elements of the Charter to improve the Councils Member Development programme.

The meeting closed at 7.25 pm.

CHAIRMAN