

**MINUTES  
OF THE MEETING OF THE  
MEMBER DEVELOPMENT GROUP  
TUESDAY, 26 MARCH 2024**

Held at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena,  
Rugby Road, West Bridgford  
and live streamed on Rushcliffe Borough Council's YouTube channel

**PRESENT:**

Councillors D Soloman (Chair), M Barney, T Birch, T Combellack, M Gaunt,  
A Phillips, D Polenta and G Williams

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

C Caven-Atack	Service Manager - Corporate Services
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager

**APOLOGIES:**

Councillor R Mallender

**33 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

**34 Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 September 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 25 September 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**35 Councillors' Training Update**

The Service Manager – Corporate Services presented the Councillors' Training report, which updated the Group on the current position in regard to Councillor Learning and Development.

The Chair referred to the summary of progress detailed in Paragraphs 4.6 and 4.8 of the report and asked the Group to consider the six questions posed in Paragraph 4.14 of the report.

The Group noted that overall the uptake for e-Learning was poor, with a few Councillors completing a lot of modules and many completing very few or none at all. Some members of the Group thought that face to face training was better, and that the whole e-Learning process was off putting and did not suit everyone. Reference was made to a previous request that face to face training sessions should be recorded, as that would allow the sessions to be viewed again, which could remove the need to run face to face sessions again, and hopefully relieve pressures on officers and allow Councillors to watch it whenever they wished.

The Service Manager – Corporate Services advised that trying to record the sessions would not be straightforward and it would not be possible to record who had attended, which would be an issue, as the Council had to demonstrate that Councillors were attending mandatory training. She went on to question the quality of the training experience, and the passive nature of training if it was simply viewed from a recording.

A member of the Group referred to the difficulties in attending face to face sessions, especially parents with young children and those with busy work commitments and stated that recordings could help Councillors and the training programme should be flexible to support all Councillors.

The Chair referred to the legal requirement to complete mandatory training, including GDPR and questioned how much proof was required that such training had taken place elsewhere.

A member of the Group asked if there was any feedback available as to why Councillors had been unable to attend training sessions, as that could be a useful tool going forward. They were advised that there was not.

The Group considered the number of sessions run for each topic, the spread, timings and days of the week sessions were held on. It was noted that many Councillors were also on parish and town councils, which had evening meetings, which often clashed with training. The Service Manager – Corporate Services advised that many parish and town council meetings were held on a Monday, and therefore training sessions were not held on Mondays. A balance also had to be struck to ensure that meetings and training sessions were spread out to avoid officers and Councillors being busy on multiple nights in one week. The Service Manager – Corporate Services stated that a pilot would be undertaken and a suitable internal training session chosen. However, she reminded members of the Group that delivering online training sessions was specialised, Council officers were not trained for that, and that would affect the quality of the session.

Members of the Group stated that whilst training was important a balance had to be struck and a sense of proportion was required. Mandatory training was very important; however, the desirable training should be left to a Councillor's own judgement, as to whether they considered it to be necessary, and there should be no consequence for not undertaking this training. Some Councillors might not have attended training if they thought it related specifically to a committee that they were not members of. The Service Manager – Corporate Services referred to the Member Development Charter, part of which had involved appraisals for Councillors, and had included an individual training plan for each Councillors. That had not proved very successful and had been discontinued; however, if the Group wished, that could be reconsidered again at a future meeting.

In answer to a question regarding the completion of mandatory training and what was required to get that to 100% by specific deadlines, the Service Manager – Corporate Services stated that there were five mandatory courses, related to various committees, and no Councillors could be a member of those committees without having undertaken that training. She went onto advise that

GDPR should be completed by all Councillors. In respect of essential training, she confirmed that Councillors should also be completing that training.

Members of the Group suggested that deadlines should be given to complete courses and where applicable, Councillors should be made aware that some sessions would not be repeated. Councillors who had not undertaken mandatory training should be contacted directly when further sessions were run, for example Licensing Committee training and asked about their availability to ensure that they could attend. The Service Manager – Corporate Services referred to the Learning and Development Policy, which clearly stated that mandatory training should be completed within 12 months of a Councillor taking office; however, there were currently no sanctions in place, apart from reporting Councillors to the Standards Committee, which she advised had never happened.

In answer to a question regarding refresher training, the Service Manager – Corporate Services advised that many courses were regularly updated and refreshed, as could be seen on the training programme for next year. She went on to advise that in respect of Standards training, the basics had been covered as part of the Induction Programme; however, to sit on the Standards Committee specific training was required, and currently two members of the Committee had not undertaken that training.

A member of the Group felt that Councillors who had failed to undertake GDPR training should be advised that they could infringe regulations and that their email use could be suspended. They went on to mention that there was a difference between Councillors in their first term of office and more experienced ones, who would have previously undertaken the training for committees and they felt that some tolerance was required.

The Chair referred to the seriousness of undertaking GDPR training and asked the Group if it was happy to impose a sanction, with Councillors being given two months to do it, otherwise their email access would be removed, which would be in line with the same sanction that officers received.

A member of the Group voiced agreement that a sanction for GDPR was reasonable; however, more broadly he did not consider any further sanctions should be imposed, apart from potentially planning training and he questioned if withholding allowances was legal and advised that he would not support that. The Service Manager – Corporate Services confirmed that it was legal and other councils did take that sanction. In answer to a question about comparing Rushcliffe's training record to other councils, she advised that Rushcliffe was about average, and that some councils had better records as they paid Councillors to attend training, by keeping back part of their allowance specifically for that. Most councils had similar sanctions in terms of being unable to sit on specific committees without training, although this did not work for GDPR training.

Members of the Group stated that Councillors were very busy, receiving many emails and it was inevitable that information could be easily missed, and suggested that emails could be highlighted in colour to make things clearer. Also some of the terminology was unclear, for example the difference between

mandatory and essential training and the Group asked if the process could be simplified. The Service Manager – Corporate Services reminded the Group that following the Induction last May, each Councillor was sent a Training Expectations file that included the complete training programme for the last 12 months, including dates, times and the classification of that training, and that would be replicated for next year. In respect of terminology, she advised that it had been a previous decision of the Group to use that wording, and she would be happy to simplify it.

The Chair proposed that the classification be changed to mandatory and desirable training, with desirable being left to individuals to determine if the course was appropriate for them, whilst every effort would be made to reach 100% for mandatory training sessions, in particular for all committee members. A Councillor without that training would not be allowed to sit on the committee. The Chair asked officers to send a summary of training to each Councillor, with everything recategorised and colour coded red for mandatory and another colour for desirable, with a reminder that all mandatory training should be completed.

In answer to a question regarding holding training sessions around the Borough, to reduce travel time for Councillors, the Service Manager – Corporate Services stated that this could be looked into, although she reminded the Group that the Arena was centrally located, and Councillors were entitled to claim travel expenses to attend training sessions.

In respect of GDPR training, the Chair asked officers to contact the remaining Councillors who had still to complete this training, or provide evidence that they had done it, and remind them that this should be done within two months or they would lose access to their emails. A member of the Group suggested that rather than asking officers to contact those Councillors, Group Whips and Group Leaders should be asked instead.

The Chair asked the Group if they agreed that the point had come when a sanction was required regarding the GDPR training, in conjunction with contacting those Councillors again, and members of the Group agreed that it was a fair and proportionate response.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) a pilot be implemented on recording a face to face internal training session on YouTube for Councillors to view;
- b) the training categories be amended to mandatory and desirable; and
- c) that a sanction of losing e-mail access be imposed on any Councillor who fails to complete their GDPR training by the required deadline.

## 36 **Draft Training Programme 2024/25**

The Service Manager – Corporate Services presented the draft Training Programme for Councillors for 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix One to the report.

The Chair reiterated that people learned in different ways and questioned if any of the 16 face to face courses, listed in Appendix One were also available as an e-Learning module. On looking at the list of six mandatory e-learning courses, it was noted that two courses, Equality and Diversity and Disability and Discrimination were also covered by face to face sessions.

The Chair advised that the draft Training Programme included a repeat of the Understanding Licensing Committee training, and she hoped that all members of the Committee would be trained after this session. It was noted that there was an e-learning module for Chairing Skills, which would also be helpful. The Service Manager – Corporate Services advised that all Councillors should attend the face to face session on Updates for Planning Committee members.

A member of the Group asked if there could be some training around dyslexia, autism, hearing and sight loss and the Service Manager – Corporate Services stated that this could be looked into.

The Chair questioned if the Cyber Security session should be mandatory rather than desirable given the increasing threats associated with this. Members of the Group considered that on balance, although it was an important issue, and as there was also an e-learning module available it should remain as desirable. The Service Manager – Corporate Services confirmed that this could also be included again in future face to face GDPR sessions when they were scheduled.

The Chair hoped that for some sessions going forward, for example planning and use of the Planning Portal, there could be some live demonstrations to further enhance those sessions.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) that a session on dyslexia, autism and other sensory issues be added to the Councillors 'Training Programme for 2024/25; and
- b) that the Councillors' Training Programme 2024/25 be approved.

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm.

CHAIR