

## THE MEMBER DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY WORKING PARTY

### MINUTES

Wednesday 15 December 2010 – 6.00 p.m.  
Council Chamber

#### Attendees

#### Councillors

R Woodward (Chairman)

**In attendance**, Councillor P Purver (Chairman of the Member Development Working Party)  
David Dalby, Head of Democratic Services, Charnwood Borough Council

#### Officers

Keith Gordon, Senior Scrutiny Officer

#### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor N Smith due to attendance at a Civic function as Chairman of Council.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

#### 3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 August 2010 were confirmed as a correct record.

#### 4. Member Development

The Senior Scrutiny Officer reported on the response to a survey of Members and read from a reply (attached as appendix 1).

Members agreed that the induction of new members should form the priority of the next year following the election. They felt that a 'buddy' system of experienced members as well as officers would be of great benefit to new members as an introduction to the way the council works.

During discussion members agreed that an identified contact officer would also help new members find their way around the council.

Members thought Personal Development Plans to be a worthwhile forward although it was felt that they had not reached their potential in the past.

Time spent in service areas had been particularly beneficial to members when newly elected as both an introduction to the staff involved and providing awareness of the full services offered by the council. This help members' confidence when dealing with constituents' enquiries and comments.

Members also felt that it was important that training was available on computer software to enable members of all levels of experience to utilise the council systems and ICT fully in their council work. This training should be available for all levels of experience and confidence.

David Dalby, Charnwood Borough Council, stressed the priority given to member development across Charnwood council. The council was committed to achieving the charter and all levels took this seriously. The Cabinet lead member chaired the council's member development committee and it included a group leader in its membership.

David had prepared 'role profiles' up to reflect the different roles of councillors across the council and these identified the knowledge and skills necessary for councillors to fulfil the respective roles. Members could identify the areas in which they would benefit from additional training. Personal Development Plans for each member were prepared following confidential conversations with the members. From these, individual training needs identified and followed up.

As the members saw the benefit of the training identified for them individually, attendance at the training sessions was high. Eighty-six sessions had resulted in an average attendance of 18. These training sessions had resulted in a total attendance of 960 since 2007.

Before the election, the council had given a 'candidate's pack' to each prospective candidate. This included reference to the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out the role of councillor with assurance that any necessary training would be available. Candidates were therefore expecting to receive training as a councillor.

At 'prospective councillor' events, experienced councillors spoke to candidates about 'being a councillor' and the wife of a councillor spoke about 'having a councillor in the family'

Before an election, David held 'exit interviews' with members who had declared that they would not be standing for re-election so that lessons could be learnt for future training provision.

The high priority given by members at Charnwood to meeting training needs impressed Members.

In response to a question, David confirmed that the member development budget at Charnwood for 2001-12 had increased to £10,000 from £8,500 to reflect the additional demand in the first year after an election. He expected the budget to revert in following years.

Members thanked David Dalby for his attendance.

## **5. Next Meeting**

Members agreed that witnesses be invited to the next meeting. The Senior Scrutiny Officer undertook to circulate possible dates to members.

The meeting closed at 7.20 p.m.

**Response to survey of all Members**

Email sent 7 August 2010

Keith,

From my experience it took at least 18 months as a "new boy" to get to grips with what was going on so if there is a "fast track" in any way then it needs to be looked at, possibly a weekend workshop in the 1st month. A lot of knowledge comes from actually doing the job and the training I have received in the whole has been very good. The speed-reading course was excellent and well recommended along the Leadership Course which was exceptional but not for everyone and big "ask" of personal time (4 x 2 day residential). It not only improved my skills within the political and council world but also gave me extra confidence and skills within my business environment.

It is difficult to provide training for such a wide base of people from different backgrounds and with different skill-sets especially as none of the elected members are direct employees of the council (so can't insist on attendance to training courses).

I would like to see elected members sharing their own skill sets with their peer group; there is a lot of knowledge amongst the members. There are several good "train the trainer" courses around, I have gained such professional skills myself and do know that other members also have these skills and ability to train others, Matthew Blain comes to mind. However this does mean further commitment for "the few" but some of the retired members may wish to take up this training which of course would be cost effective i.e. "VFM" during these difficult times.

Regards  
Graham