MEETING OF ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of Monday, 21st November, 2016

Members present: Councillor Graham (Chairperson);
Aldermen Convery and Rodgers.

Also attended: Councillor Jones.

In attendance: Ms. J. Minne, Director of Organisational Development;
Mr. J. Walsh, Town Solicitor;
Ms. S. Williams; Programme Manager;
Ms. C. Christy, Human Resources Manager;
Ms. L. Rogan, Principal Human Resources / Organisational Development Advisor; and
Miss. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 20th June were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Election of Chairperson

The Working Group was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 24th June, had agreed that a policy should be introduced whereby each Council Working Group would be required to consider the appointment of a Chairperson on an annual basis. That item of business would be placed on the agenda for the first meeting of each Working Group following the Annual meeting of the Council each year.

Accordingly, nominations were sought for the position of Chairperson of the Elected Member Development Working Group.

The Working Group agreed that Councillor Graham be re-elected to serve as Chairperson for the period to end on the date of the Annual meeting of the Council in 2017.

Meeting of Elected Member Development Working Group
Monday, 21st November, 2016

Members' Portal – Update

The Town Solicitor provided the Members with an update regarding the development of the Members' Portal, which included the key issues, proposed content of the portal, and impending actions of the project.

He reminded the Working Group that a facilitated Workshop had taken place in June to explore how technology could be used to improve communication between Members and the wider Council organisation and that the following three issues had been prioritised:

- They were unable to easily find relevant information (key contacts and documents) both inside and outside the council;
- They felt swamped with council-related information (size of committee report packs, emails, phone calls, voice mails); and
- They wished to be able to resolve issues raised by constituents more easily.

He advised that an update report setting out the proposed content had been brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 18th November, however, a more detailed report with an accompanying Action Plan was set out in Appendix 1, regarding the suggestions which had been made by Members during the workshop, together with the options considered and the recommended approach.

He outlined the proposed initial content of the Portal:
- A directory of key internal and external contacts – internal contacts could have photos and any relevant description tags (e.g. bonfires, dogs, derelict buildings;
- An alert function for significant issues, briefings for Members, training reminders, Council policies, and recent awards won by the Council;
- The existing "Members' Meeting Calendar" (e.g. training events, and non-committee meetings);
- A new calendar showing the event and RSVP details for Council-organised events to which all Members had been invited;
- Open consultations: council's own; NI Executive; and others which the council had been consulted;
- Member training material;
- A list of key council policies;
- Area Working Group area profiles; and
- Frequent Member queries.

He advised that up-to-date information about Council grants would also be developed for the Portal in the future.

He explained that additional communication actions to be taken forward by the project team included the development of a 'contacting Members protocol' (e.g. using their preferred method of communication, more mobile-to-mobile calls to enable easier call-back, email subject heading convention) and ensuring that new members of staff in key teams included their team in their email name so that Members would not miss important emails (e.g. *Sam Jones (CX Business Support)*).

He pointed out that the other issues which had been raised by Members outside the scope of the Members' Portal project had been highlighted to the Corporate Management Team for further consideration:

- Enhance the external website to be able to search for events/classes/programmes by location;
- The ability to analyse Council-related information by District Electoral Area (e.g. participants on programmes);
- Progress on the outcomes from organisations receiving significant funding from the Council;
- Address the issue of the size of committee report packs (e.g. by re-introducing a two-page limit);
- Consideration of the role of a central support team for Members; and
- Consideration of how any new corporate approach to customer relationship management could be used to help Members manage constituents' queries (e.g. tracking outcomes of queries, generating reply letters, the use of 'live chat' chatbot on the website).

During discussion, the Working Group raised matters regarding server issues, linking online calendars, the possibility for adding department codes to emails, the timeliness of reports being issued, and the need for Councillors to respond to event invitations.

The Town Solicitor advised that the Project Team would take forward immediate and medium-term actions, as outlined in the report, to aim for a pilot demonstration for Members in January, 2017.

Noted.

Member Development Action Plan and Activities – Update

The Director of Organisational Development provided an update on the implementation of the Member Development Plan and related activities.

She provided an overview of the action plan and development activities that had been undertaken to date, which included training sessions on media, code of conduct, and welfare reform. She also highlighted the workshops which had taken place as part of the Planning Committee Continuing Development Programme and the Peer Mentoring for the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Planning Committee.

She advised the Working Group that the activities planned to be delivered by January, 2017, included Welfare Reform training on 30th November and Equality training.

She asked the Working Group to consider whether or not 'Information Governance' would be a suitable topic to develop as a pilot e-learning module (for refresher training purposes after a classroom session had been attended) and that any further suggestions on topics to be piloted would be welcomed.

During discussion the Town Solicitor raised the importance of the Data Protection Act training for Members.

The Working Group noted the contents of the report and agreed that 'Information Governance' would be a suitable topic to develop as a pilot e-learning module (for refresher training purposes).

<u>Elected Member Role Profiles and Knowledge and Skills Framework</u>

The Working Group was reminded that, at its meeting on 20th June, it had agreed that Council officers, working in consultation with elected Members, design and develop a range of bespoke Member Role Profiles and a Political Skills Framework for Belfast City Council.

The Director advised that the primary purpose of the proposed Role Profiles was to ensure clarity of the role and responsibilities that elected Members undertook as both a local representative and as civic leaders.

She outlined the draft set of suggested Member Profiles, as set out in Appendix One of the report, for the following roles:

- Elected Member;
- Civic Dignitaries - Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and High Sheriff;
- Party Leader;
- Committee Chairperson;
- Planning Committee Chairperson;
- Licensing Committee Chairperson;
- Audit and Risk Panel Chairperson;
- Member of Area Working Group; and
- Member Champion.

She explained that the draft roles had been developed in line with best practice Role Profiles of councils in England, Scotland and Wales that had Member Charters or Charter Plus accreditation for elected member development.

She provided an overview of the draft Knowledge and Skills Framework that had also been developed, as set out in Appendix Two of the report. The framework comprised six suggested core themes: 'understanding our city, our council and our customers'; 'strategic leadership'; community leadership'; 'working with others'; 'good governance and due diligence'; and 'personal impact'.

The Working Group noted the contents of the report, in particular:

- the suggested draft Role Profiles and Knowledge and Skills Framework;
- that the final documents agreed by the Working Group would be presented to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee; and
- that the agreed Role Profiles would be used to:
  - assist and support Members when they were first elected; to underpin and enhance the Members' Personal Development Planning (PDP) process from 2017 onwards;
  - inform the design and delivery of a Member capacity building programme for 2017-2018; and

    ○ inform future capacity building activities and programmes to support Members.

Revision of the Personal Development Planning (PDP) Process

The Director outlined the proposed approach to the review of the current Personal Development Plan (PDP) process for Members and outlined the following options regarding the future implementation of the process:

- **Option 1:** Members continue to complete a self-assessment exercise with no independently facilitated PDP meeting;
- **Option 2**: Party Leaders conduct their respective party colleagues' PDP meetings with Party Leaders being able to choose a provider from a select list of expert external providers to facilitate their own PDP meetings;
- **Option 3:** Commission an independent facilitator to facilitate Members' PDP meetings;
- **Option 4:** Commission a number of independent facilitators, to create a select list of providers, for Members to select a provider to conduct their respective PDP meeting;
- **Option 5:** A combination of all of the above options.

During discussion, Members raised issues regarding current PDP practices, current criteria and usage of the process, the changing role of the Councillor, and the possibility for modular accredited qualifications and capacity building.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed to the following:

- Option 4: Commission a number of independent facilitators, to create a select list of providers, for members to select a provider to conduct their respective PDP meeting.

It was also agreed that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Group regarding current PDP practices, to include benchmarking of the current PDP budget, Member participation, potential criteria and range of possible uses.

Chairperson