MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PANEL

Tuesday, 25th September, 2012

Present:-   Cllr Loades – in the Chair

Councillors   Boden, Miss Cooper and Kearon

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Miss Olszewski and Cllr J. Williams.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2012 be agreed as a correct record.

The Chair of the Member Development Panel confirmed that with regard to item 7 on the minutes, clarification was required regarding the location training. With regard to item 8, the Chair would obtain more information regarding the risk strategy and Member's risks. Both of these would be actioned for the next meeting.

4. **MEDIA TRAINING - REQUIREMENTS AND OVERVIEW**

The Member Development Panel considered the Media Training that was scheduled for 29 October 2012. The Head of Communications sought a steer from the Panel and advised that the training had been run before, but the attendance had not been good. It was questioned whether the training should be for all Members, or for key Members only. The Chair of the Panel confirmed that from the information provided on Member's Personal Development Plans, there was a desire to receive media training from all Members. It was felt that newspaper reporters giving tips would be beneficial.

The Head of Communications referred to brief notes that had already been produced regarding interacting with the media and asked if these should be made available to all Members which the Panel agreed to. The Chair considered that there could be two training sessions. One based upon the existing notes and one specifically focussed on interacting with reporters. These should be evening sessions; 29 October would remain and would be for the first session with the second session to follow. The Head of Communications would brief the Chair of the Member Development Panel. It was noted by Members that there was a radio studio in the Civic Offices and this could be used for media training.

Members considered that the training documents should be distributed to Members in advance and their receipt should be acknowledged. The documents could then be referred to in advance by Members.

The Head of Communications considered that the existing document would be utilised for 29 October and there should be one session. Local journalists should be

involved in the training session, with the training taking place in the Council Chamber.

Members of the Panel referred to previous media training that they had received where they had done a spoof television and radio interview and how they had found this very useful in seeing what they did well during interviews and what not so well.

The duration of the training session was discussed. The length of the session was dependent upon what content was desired and the number of attendees. The Head of Communications considered that the document could be distributed and considered by Members prior to the training session and could be referred to quickly. There could then be interviews and a review of these. The whole session could probably be delivered in an hour and a half.

The Chair asked the Panel whether the training should be for every Member. The Panel agreed that it should be. The Chair suggested that another session could be run in the New Year for Members who were unable to attend the October session. Good records needed to be kept of the attendees.

RESOLVED: (a) That the media training go ahead on 29 October 2012.

5.   **MEMBERS ICT TRAINING PLAN**

The Council's ICT Operations and Development Manager informed the Member Development Panel that 28 members had returned their Data Protection Act administered registration forms. There was a possibility that some members were already registered and it had been requested on the letter sent to Members that Officers be informed if Members were already registered. The Chair requested they receive a list of the returned forms.

There had been nine attendees at the Data Protection Act training. There had been four sessions with a small attendance at each. The Chair requested a list of the nine Members that had attended the training. The Chair questioned whether the training had frightened Members. The ICT Operations and Development Manager considered that the training had provided more eye opening moments rather than scared Members and considered that another session could be provided if necessary. The Chair concurred that another session may be necessary, but feedback was required from the attendees and non-attendees. There was concern from the Panel regarding the lack of attendance and the importance of Members attending the Data Protection Act training.

There was a specific Data Protection training course on StEP (Staffordshire E-Learning Portal). The ICT Operations and Development Manager would send all members of the Panel a link to this training.

The Panel also gave consideration to Outlook training and it was considered that this could be covered in one hour. Eight Members could be accommodated in the ICT training room. It could be done in advance of major meetings or as independent sessions. The Panel agreed that the training should be delivered as independent sessions. The Chair requested a briefing of the training in the first instance.

6. **THE PAPERLESS MEMBER**

The Council's ICT Operations and Development Manager informed the Member Development Panel that the cost of printed materials, excluding the cost of staff was £60,000 per annum. The cost including staff was £81,952 per annum. The courier service cost £6,240 per annum and the print recharge to Member Services was £41,437 per annum.

The Chair of the Panel considered it cost effective to start going paperless subject to review of costs etc. It was suggested that a summary of figures was required and a date set for trialling a 'paperless member'. It was necessary to firm up the exact print costs and to ascertain the costs for Member's or public documents. It needed to be clarified what Member costs were. There would be a proposal at the next meeting with a solution for a trial to paperless members.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities considered that they had signed up to be a paperless member when they were first elected. It was not physically possible to balance a laptop in the Council Chamber as there was not enough space. It would be necessary to consider the practical elements of going paperless. It was also felt that there would need to be a list of what a member would be expected to receive in the early stages of going paperless, so they could check that they had received everything that they should have done. It would be necessary to consider different systems. There may be hidden costs and these would need to be considered. Live links would be needed within documents to make it quick and easy to use documents in meetings. There would need to be the function to jump to a bookmark.

More detail would be provided for the panel at the next meeting. The Chair of the Panel questioned whether Staffordshire County Council was paperless. They were partially paperless and had the facility to be paperless. There was consideration that agendas might be a problem, this would be considered at the next meeting. The ICT Operations and Development Manager would send out an email to ascertain Member's use of ICT. It would assess Members on a basic level. There were no objections from the Panel with regard to this.

Members questioned whether the savings would be if all Members were paperless, if some Members were paperless and some were not there would still be costs. It was confirmed that the saving would be if all Members were paperless and all Members would have to paperless for the idea to work. A system would be required for the most technophobic of users.

7. **TRAINING ON THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

The Chair asked the question whether training was required on the consultation process. It was felt that it was required and that Members needed to be aware and get involved in the consultation process.

The Panel agreed that a prompt sheet would be the best way forward. It should be kept simple and there should be no training session unless absolutely necessary. Members were at the forefront of consultation and it was important to purport to the public what was happening at the Council.

RESOLVED: That a prompt sheet be created for Members on the consultation process.

8.   **CHAIR BEST PRACTICE**

The Chair informed the Members Development Panel of the intention to attend a meeting of all committees to observe best practice that is taking place.

There were no objections from the Panel, however Members noted that care should be taken not to be personal.

Chairs of committees had been written to, notifying them of the intention to attend one of their meetings. There would be no names mentioned when the results of the Chair Best Practice were brought back to the 31 January 2013 meeting of the panel.

RESOLVED: That Chair Best Practice be conducted and the results be reported at the 31 January 2013 meeting.

9.   **MEMBER USE OF OFFICE SPACE**

The Panel considered whether office and meeting room space available for the day to day use of elected Members was adequate, or if improvements were required.

It was questioned whether the current space available was worthwhile, effective and useable at the present time. Space needed to be made more efficient if possible. It was considered that Members needed to be asked what their thoughts were regarding the issue.

There were no objections from the Panel for a review of Member office space. It was noted that there was a drop in room for Members by ICT.

The Chair requested a list of rooms that were available to Members.

RESOLVED: That a list be compiled of the rooms available for Member use and a review be conducted if it is considered necessary.

10.   **REPORTS TO FULL COUNCIL FROM MEMBERS ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Panel considered whether Members on outside bodies should report to Full Council.

It was considered that it was for Members to ask should they want to know anything about an outside body and it should not be focussed on the Member who sits on the outside body. The Chair proposed a report for the next meeting from Link to Officers. It was also considered that space could be made available on the Member's website for outside body updates.

The Panel resolved that outside body updates should be included on the Full Council agenda.

RESOLVED: That outside body updates be included on the Full Council agenda.

11. **MEMBER'S WEBSITE**

The Panel gave consideration to the Member's website. It was suggested by the Chair that the front page of the website should have a space where questions or information could be logged such as the dates of training sessions.

The Chair of the Panel suggested that the Member's website could incorporate a Member's forum. Members could use this forum to make suggestions as to what they want the Panel to look at, and it could be used to provide updates from the Panel and Officers.

The responsibility of the Member's website was split between the Head of Communications and the ICT Operations and Development Manager. The template had been set up by the Communications Department and the Head of Communications was of the opinion that the template was adequate. There was concern that Members did not make enough use of the website and were accessing their emails from other areas. It would seem that some Members were able to access their emails directly and it was considered that all Members should be accessing their emails through the Member's website.

The website could be used to promote training courses e.g. the media training course could be advertised on the website a week before it was due to take place. The website should be more user friendly. There was space at the top of the home page where the logo was that could be used for useful content. The website should be improved first; Members should then be asked what they wanted from their website.

The Panel considered that improvements to the website were constrained by the content management system. This was confirmed by the Head of Communications. The current content management system was nine years old and a new website was being designed for implementation by the end of March. The question was then raised whether it was prudent to focus efforts on a new web page.

RESOLVED:

12. **URGENT BUSINESS**

There was discussion regarding the suggestion raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee meeting on 24 September 2012 that there may be a requirement for more scrutiny meetings.

The Chair posed the question to the panel as to whether more meetings were required or if it would produce a duplicated work load. The Panel agreed that more scrutiny meetings were not required. There was a need for more working groups.

RESOLVED: That more meetings of the scrutiny committees were not required.

Chair