

ST EDMUNDSBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL WORKING PARTY

**Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 13 September 2012
at 5.00 pm
in Room GFR12, West Suffolk House, Western Way, Bury St Edmunds**

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs P A Warby (Chairman)
Councillors Clifton-Brown, Farmer, Mrs Levack, Redhead
and Thorndyke

BY INVITATION: Councillor Ray (Portfolio Holder for Performance and
Resources)
Councillor Cox

1. Election of Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: -

That Councillor Mrs P A Warby be elected Chairman of the
Working Party for 2012/2013.

2. Substitutes

No substitutions were declared.

3. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2012 were confirmed as a
correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED: -

That Councillor J Thorndyke be elected Vice-Chairman of
the Working Party for 2012/2013.

6. Declarations of Interests

Members' declarations of interests are recorded under the item to
which the declaration relates.

7. Member Development: Update

The Working Party considered Report D117 (previously circulated) which updated Members on a number of issues related to Member Development, and sought their views.

As requested at the last meeting of the Working Party, a programme of events had been developed reflecting the areas identified through the Training Needs Analysis and Corporate Priorities. Appendix A to the report set out a diary of events planned to date for the remainder of the 2012/2013 Member Development Programme. In considering this list, and in particular the training events planned to be held jointly with Members of Forest Heath District Council, Members reiterated the need for officers to be clear on start times for these events.

Following the handover of responsibility for the management of Member training for both St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath to the Learning and Development Team, there were a number of efficiencies in the processes that could be achieved. With the merger of the HR system used in both organisations, learning activities and attendance could be recorded. Members would be able to request a record of the training they had attended, and the Learning and Development Advisor sought Members' views on what information would be required at a general and individual level. Members advised that it would be helpful to be able to request a record of their attendance at training events, including for previous years, in order to be able to check whether they had previously attended any particular session. They also agreed that collection of information in the database would provide useful evidence for the Member Development Charter, and for the annual evaluation by the Working Party of all Member attendance at training events.

It was also proposed to move to a both qualitative and quantitative method of recording evaluation information. The proposed joint evaluation form to be used following Member Development sessions was provided at Appendix B1 of the report, together with the existing Borough Council form at Appendix B2 for comparison. Members agreed that the proposed new form would allow for the collection of information both for numerical assessment, and also for comments and general observations. They requested, however, that the 1-10 evaluation score lines at sections 3, 4, 5 and 8 of the form be changed to 1-5, and also that sections 1 and 2 also include the 1-5 evaluation score line, rather than a simple yes or no response.

The Learning and Development Advisor reported on the South East Employers Network Meeting which had taken place on 3 July 2012. Issues discussed had included the Member Development Charter, the Vine East e-learning platform (which would be launched for officers and staff in the Autumn, and hopefully a Members training area would be set up for early 2013), the impact of the Localism Act and Mid Sussex District Council's provision of i-Pads to all Members. Attendance at this meeting enabled officers to keep up to date with developments in member training, and to ensure that Members were equipped with the knowledge and skills required in their role as community leaders. Councillor Ray advised the Working Party that the ICT Team would undertake a project, when priorities allowed, to examine how mobile technology could be integrated into the Council's ICT system, given the constraints of security requirements, and how such technology could help us all work more efficiently.

The Learning and Development Advisor also advised that whilst at St Edmundsbury the Member Development Programme was driven through the Democratic Renewal Working Party, at Forest Heath there was an informal Member/officer group consisting of 6 Members and the Learning and Development Manager. It was suggested that the membership of Forest Heath's informal Member/officer group should be widened to include two St Edmundsbury Councillors. Members expressed concern that only two St Edmundsbury Members had been requested to sit on the group, where there were 6 Forest Heath Members, and also requested more detail on the remit of the group. The Learning and Development Advisor advised that this was an informal group which looked at issues such as start times of specific training events, and other housekeeping issues with regard to training, and that any major issues with regard to Member Development would continue to be brought to the Democratic Renewal Working Party. She suggested that two Councillors be nominated, and that they report back on the work of the group to a future meeting of the Working Party. The Chairman and Vice Chairman were therefore nominated to join the group, which would meet bi-monthly, and would assist with a shared Member Development Programme and initiatives across both councils.

There were two main budgets which were used to pay for Member Development activity. A budget of £8,100 was used for the Member Development Programme, including funding externally sourced sessions which were delivered in-house, places on sessions offered by other councils or organisations, the Member Development Charter and other costs. A separate budget of £2,900 paid for attendance at external conferences by individual Members. In addition, there was £1,500 available for travel and subsistence payments. The current position of the two main budgets for 2012/2013 was detailed in Appendix C to the report. The main £8,100 budget was currently showing no expenditure, and this was because to date training events had been delivered by key officers internally. However, other planned events in the 2012/13 Member Development programme would be commissioned externally, and the Learning and Development Advisor advised that the speed reading training had now been commissioned, at a cost of £750. Some economies would be achieved, however, by sharing of costs with Forest Heath District Council. The £2,900 conference budget was shown at 73% spent. However, the majority of the expected annual conferences had now been accounted for.

Members requested that for future reports, the conference budget be further broken down to show the number of Members attending each conference, and the number of nights' accommodation where accommodation costs were shown.



RECOMMENDED:- That

- (1) *the current evaluation form completed by Members following Member Development sessions be replaced by a joint form to be used by both St Edmundsbury Borough Council and Forest Heath District Council Members, as shown in Appendix B1 to Report D117, subject to the 1-10 evaluation score lines at sections 3, 4, 5 and 8 of the form being changed to 1-5, and also that sections 1 and 2 include a 1-5 evaluation score line, rather than a simple yes or no response; and***

- (2) ***Councillors Thorndyke and Mrs P Warby be nominated to join Forest Heath District Council's informal Member Development Working Group, and that they report back on the work and remit of that group to a future meeting of the Working Party.***

RESOLVED:- That

- (3) when monitoring of learning activities and attendance commences on the i-trent HR system, information be provided to Members on request regarding their attendance at training events; and
- (4) for future reports, the conference budget be further broken down to show the number of Members attending each conference, and the number of nights' accommodation where accommodation costs are shown.

(Councillor Mrs Levack arrived during the consideration of this item).

8. Appointment of Chief Executive as Returning Officer

The acceptance by the Council of Report C354 on 15 February 2012 outlining the appointment of a Joint Chief Executive for Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council contained at Section 5.7 a view that it would be impractical for the Joint Chief Executive to be the Returning Officer for both authorities, as there would be occasions when there would be two counts taking place at the same time. As a result of the acceptance of Report C354 the reference to the Joint Chief Executive being the Returning Officer for St Edmundsbury Borough Council was removed from the Council's Constitution.

Whilst this situation was being reviewed the Chief Executive used the urgency powers contained within the Council's Constitution to appoint another officer as Returning Officer in a temporary capacity until such time as the Council formally appointed to the role. The situation had been reviewed, and there appeared to be no reason why the Chief Executive may not act as Returning Officer for both authorities.



RECOMMENDED:-

That the powers and duties of the Joint Chief Executive, as set out in Part C of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers in the Council's Constitution, be amended to include an additional power, "to act as Returning Officer, and any variation thereof as appropriate to different elections, and to act as the Electoral Registration Officer".

9. Amendment to the Schedule of Polling Places

The Schedule of Polling Places was last amended and approved by full Council on 27 September 2011 (report C116 and Council minute 47(D)(1) September 2011 referred).

The Electoral Services Manager advised Members of a proposal to amend the Schedule of Polling Places to allow electors in Honington Parish (Village Ward) to poll in Sapiston Parish when required to avoid any unnecessary disruption to Honington Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary (CEVCP) School. As the polling stations involved were only 500 yards apart, this would not inconvenience voters.

The addition to the Schedule was provided in a narrative on the agenda, and Members supported the recommendation.



RECOMMENDED:-

That the Schedule of Polling Places be amended to allow electors in Honington Parish (Village Ward) to poll in Sapiston Parish when required to avoid any unnecessary disruption to Honington CEVCP School.

10. Dates of Future Meetings

The Working Party was reminded of the following agreed meeting dates:-

6 December 2012;
14 February 2013; and
2 May 2013.

All dates were Thursdays and meetings would commence at 5.00 pm.

The meeting concluded at 5.55 pm.

CHAIRMAN