

(Informal Joint) Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Review of the Terms of Reference of the Joint Member Development Group	
Report No:	CAB/FH/16/030	
Report to and date:	(Informal Joint) Cabinet	19 July 2016
Portfolio holder:	Councillor Stephen Edwards Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance Tel: 01638 660518 Email: stephen.edwards@forest-heath.gov.uk	
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Purpose of report:	The Cabinet is asked to consider tasking the Joint Member Development Group to review their Terms of Reference (and make any necessary amendments) to reflect the evolving role of Members, as Leaders, in the current and future challenging and changing times.	
Recommendation:	It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that Cabinet requests the Joint Member Development Group to review their Terms of Reference and programme to reflect the evolving role of members as Leaders in challenging and changing times, based on the structure outlined below.	
Key Decision: (Check the appropriate box and delete all those that <u>do not</u> apply.)	Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition? Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<i>The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.</i>		
Consultation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable 	
Alternative option(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable 	

Implications:			
Are there any financial implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any staffing implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any ICT implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any legal and/or policy implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any equality implications? <i>If yes, please give details</i>		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Risk/opportunity assessment:		<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>	
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
The Group becomes complacent and does not provide an effective support mechanism for Members	Medium	Regular review of the role of the Group and its Terms of Reference to ensure that it remains 'fit-for-purpose'	Low
Ward(s) affected:		All Wards	
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		None	
Documents attached:		<i>(Please list any appendices.)</i> Appendix A - Current Terms of Reference of the Joint Member Development Group Appendix B - Current Member Development Programme 2016	

1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation(s)

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The LGA has commenced work on the changing role of the '21st Century Elected Member', having recognised that we are living through very fluid and challenging in Local Government. Whilst the outcome of this piece of work will be of interest to us, our Members are already working with change on a significant scale. Impending and current Council challenges are likely to include understanding the impact of the East of England devolution package, including the most appropriate delivery model for local governance across West Suffolk, working across the wider Suffolk system with budgets and partner organisations to deliver services in a joined up and coherent strategy, whilst working as effective community politicians with local communities.

1.1.2 The Joint Member Development Group (JMDG) has provided a programme developed in part from a training needs analysis completed annually that aims to equip and develop members for their roles. This offer has been recognised as being successful and effective at the time of the joint award of the Charter for Elected Member Development in September 2014. The Assessors found the following particular strengths:

- ◆ Top political managerial/leadership in driving and supporting the Member Development Agenda.
- ◆ Joint Learning and Development Policy in place across both local authorities with a strong emphasis and reference to Member Development.
- ◆ Comprehensive Joint Member Development Programme in place across both authorities that is linked to corporate priorities and supports Members in achieving their future corporate ambitions.
- ◆ Joint Member Development Group had high calibre officer support available from both Human Resources and Democratic Services to support Members and Member Development.

1.1.3 However, given that this was two years ago we must not be complacent in the offer; and we aspire to continuous improvement in the work we do.

1.1.4 Feedback and evaluation of the current programme has been very positive (average 4.6/5 for the 2015/16 programme) albeit that attendance at sessions is very low at times (average 17% of Members in attendance) and it appears that often it is the same Members who attend. This has led the Group to consider how best to continue with effective member development that meets the needs of the widest group of members and increases participation and value.

1.2 Review of Terms of Reference

1.2.1 The Learning and Development Team have given some thought on the evolving needs of the members following the 2014-15 programme, whilst considering the views and attendance of members, along with discussions that have taken place with Members, both at the JMDG meetings and informally.

This has prompted the question – what else can be done in Learning and development terms to help Members with the challenges they face over the next three years.

1.2.2 The JMDG has been involved in new ways of supporting Members over the last two years. The 'Front-line Member Events' enabled Members to meet their colleagues at the partner Council, build their networks and working relationships, share intelligence and work together on joint issues. The work done on the shared priorities now in the Corporate Plan further developed the partnership. Core skills training sessions are always welcomed by those who attend – for example 'Understanding Local Government Finance' or working on the Scrutiny, DC or Licensing Committees.

1.2.3 It is clear now that there are four strands to the learning and development requirements of members. Members need to be skilled as:

- Community Leaders in their wards,
- Effective members and partners with outside bodies and partner organisations
- Robust decision makers and effective committee members to ensure good governance, scrutiny and decision making within legal and constitutional frameworks
- Confident and competent members, able to use a range of core skills in order to work smartly within time and priority pressures and be accessible active and effective in the role.

1.2.4 The Joint Member Development Group is tasked and given a budget (c£8000 joint per annum) to provide the necessary programme. The Terms of Reference have not been reviewed since December 2013 and Cabinets are therefore asked to consider tasking the JMDG to review their Terms of Reference (and make any necessary amends), and the strands detailed above with a view to supporting the development of a new offer directly linked to the structure and associated skills as listed above.