

## Rother District Council

Report to	-	Council
Date	-	4 May 2021
Report of the	-	Member Development Task Group
Subject	-	Annual Report of the Member Training and Development Task Group

---

**Recommendation:** It be **RESOLVED:** That the report be noted.

---

### Introduction

1. The Member Development Task Group (MDTG) provides a structured and on-going Member-led approach to Member training and development. This report provides Members with an annual update on Member Training and Development issues since May 2020.
2. The Membership of the MDTG is usually fixed for the life of the Council (as far as possible) but one change was made in the last year with Councillor Prochak being appointed as the Member Training and Development Champion and Councillor Brewerton leaving the Group. The current membership is confirmed as: Councillors Prochak (Member Training and Development Champion and Chairman), Bayliss (Labour Group Leader), Mrs Cook (newly elected 2019 Member), Dixon (Liberal Democrat Group Leader), Oliver (Independent Group Leader), Stevens (Conservative Group representative) and Timpe (newly elected 2019 Member). All Group Leaders are able to send a substitute if they are unable to attend and Councillor Gray has attended twice during the past year as a substitute for Councillor Dixon.
3. All Members are encouraged to contact their respective representatives if they have any training and development issues to be brought to the attention of the MDTG.
4. The MDTG has met three times since the last annual report. The minutes arising from the meetings are highlighted within the Members' Bulletin e-zine and published on the website (extranet).
5. Whilst the initial intensive training requirement for the newly elected Council has passed, there has remained a steady provision of Member Training and Development opportunities for Members during the past 12 months. This year has been a particularly challenging year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the move to holding all formal Council meetings on-line via MS Teams. This required an urgent need for training and development and the Council's Transformation and Democratic Services Teams have supported both Members and fellow officers in this regard.
6. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the majority of training sessions have also been delivered on-line via MS Teams. Whilst there have been benefits to receiving training on-line, the networking opportunity that face to face sessions bring has been lost and facilitators are now being requested to

introduce an “ice-breaker” into the beginning of training and development sessions, where appropriate.

## **Member Training Programme 2020**

7. This past year has seen the continuation of the Member Training Programme identified through the initial and revised Training Needs Analysis (TNA) undertaken in June 2019 and September/October 2020 respectively. As well as concentrating on essential service-related training and personal skills, more wide-ranging development / learning opportunities have included Universal Credit, Neighbourhood Planning, Dealing with the Media, Effective Meeting Skills, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, Environmental Health Update on COVID-19 and BREXIT, Chaining Skills, Community Engagement and Commercial Property Investment training.
8. A full list of the development activities that have been offered to Members during the last year is available on the Members’ Area of the website as well as the feedback received on these sessions, where appropriate.
9. Where possible and appropriate, relevant training and development opportunities have been offered to the town and parish councils, particularly with regard to planning matters.

## **Finance**

10. The Council continues to allocate both human and financial resources to Member Development and currently has a Member training budget of £15,000 per annum. A higher expenditure is usual in years 1 and 2 with less activity in years 3 and 4. Any underspent budget is not automatically carried forward year-on-year.
11. In order to ensure value for money (vfm) it is essential that once Members have requested a place on a training session that the date is reserved, particularly where an external consultant or other additional expenditure such as transport is involved; at the request of the MDTG, the cost of training per head is now advised to Members at the time that places are offered.
12. There have been occasions during the last year where the overall vfm has been compromised when the number Members have reduced due to last minute drop outs – it is acknowledged that there are occasions (sickness, family crisis etc.) which are unavoidable.

## **Member Training and Development Attendance Statistics**

13. The MDTG continues to receive an update at each meeting on the number of training events each Member has attended since the elections in May 2019; this information is primarily for use by the Group Leaders and the most recent update is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
14. Training and Development is not compulsory, except for those Members serving on the Council’s regulatory committees; each Member has very specific training and development requirements, based on their own personal circumstances which will include experience, role (both internal and external to Rother), interests, availability and length of service as a Councillor.

## **South East Charter for Member Development**

15. The Council was awarded the South East Employer's (SEE) Charter for Elected Member Development for a fourth time in March 2018. The Council has successfully retained the Charter continuously for over 10 years. A successful 18 month review took place in October 2019.
16. However, in February 2020, full Council agreed that the Council did not recommit to renewing the SEE Charter when it expires in March 2021. Cabinet's recommendation to Council acknowledged that whilst the high level training and development offer at the Council had been as a result of the introduction of the Charter back in 2007 there was now a culture of continuous learning and development and the renewal fee (£2,000) could be put to better use.
17. The retention of the Charter was not the key driver for the current standard and level of training and support provided to Members; Members are reassured that this will be maintained, by the continuation and stewardship of this Group.

## **Conclusions**

18. This civic year has been a challenging time for Member Training and Development – the move to on-line meetings and training in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has been embraced by officers, Members and professional trainers alike and I would like to thank all those involved. With expert officer support, our meetings are now professional and proficient, and I congratulate all who have risen to this challenge of our new way of working.
19. After the fairly intensive training in the early days of the new council, there is still the continued delivery of identified training needs, the mandatory annual training for licensing and planning, together with any other service specific training / development requirements as a result of service changes / new legislation etc. I would like to thank Democratic Services staff for supporting this ongoing programme so well, in particular Julie Hollands.
20. I am pleased to take this opportunity also to thank formally my fellow Task Group Members, Councillors Bayliss, Mrs Cook, Dixon, Gray, Oliver, Stevens and Timpe for the contribution they have made over the past year and the officer support that is provided both directly by Democratic Services, the Transformation Team and indirectly through all staff involved in guiding and providing assistance to Members in a number of ways.

Councillor Prochak  
Chairman of the Member Development Task Group

---

**MEMBER TRAINING ATTENDANCE STATISTICS 2019-2023**


---

1. Detailed below is a summary of the number of training events that each individual Member has attended since election in 2019 to date.

COUNCILLOR	TRAINING EVENTS		COUNCILLOR	TRAINING EVENTS	
John Barnes	21	↑ (1)	Polly Gray	47	↑ (3)
Mary Barnes	27	↑ (1)	Kathy Harmer	31	↑ (2)
Christine Bayliss	14	↑ (3)	Sally-Ann Hart	9	↔
Roger Bird	4	↔	Ashan Jeeawon	13	↑ (1)
Jay Brewerton	28	↑ (2)	Jonathan Johnson	8	↔
Graham Browne	7	↑ (1)	Eleanor Kirby-Green	5	↔
Terry Byrne	25	↑ (2)	Lynn Langlands	44	↑ (1)
James Carroll	4	↑ (2)	Chris Madeley	35	↑ (1)
Charles Clark	1	↔	Carl Maynard	1	↔
Sam Coleman	35	↑ (1)	Andrew Mier	45	↑ (2)
Vikki Cook	28	↑ (1)	Martin Mooney	5	↑ (1)
Paul Courtel	49	↑ (1)	Howard Norton	19	↑ (1)
Gary Curtis	13	↔	Doug Oliver	35	↑ (3)
Kevin Dixon	14	↑ (2)	Paul Osborne	2	↔
Brian Drayson	40	↑ (1)	Sue Prochak	42	↑ (1)
Deirdre Earl-Williams	13	↔	Gennette Stevens	31	↑ (1)
Sarah Errington	40	↑ (2)	Richard Thomas	31	↔
Kathryn Field	14	↑ (1)	Hazel Timpe	46	↑ (2)
Tony Ganly	16	↑ (3)	Jonathan Vine-Hall	28	↑ (3)

KEY	
↔	None attended since last MDTG meeting
↑ + (number)	Attended since last MDTG meeting