

Extract from the notes of the Member Development Group meeting of 7 November 2022

2. Councillor Personal Development Plan Proposal

Matthew Evans, Democratic Services Officer, introduced the report to the Group. He explained that the Council had tried to introduce Personal Development Plans in the past, but this had not been overly successful. Given changes in ways of working, particularly the flexibility to engage more remotely, and with online forms becoming a more efficient way to collect information from Councillors, coupled with a greater political desire to drive Councillor development forward there was now much more scope for the successful introduction of a PDP process. Some form of PDP process would be vital for any successful bid for Charter Plus status.

It was proposed to build a process based on the existing Training Needs Analysis form. The responses to the TNA would be used to populate a PDP for each Councillor, unless they specifically opted out. The process would also build in an opportunity for a discussion with either with the relevant Group Leader or Democratic Services. In developing the proposals officers had consulted with Essex County Council who had operated a PDP process for several years, and their experience had helped inform this proposal.

Training needs identified through the process would be met in a number of a different ways. Where the process indicated a widespread training need this could be met through a session in the member development programme. However, it was anticipated that many individual needs could be met through signposting to resources provided by organisations such as the LGA and the LGIU. It was appreciated that some work needed to be undertaken by Democratic Services to bring these resources together in one easily accessible location.

In discussion, the Group welcomed the work that had been undertaken in developing the process and indicated their support for the proposals. In view of previous experiences, where support for the process had been patchy across the political groups and in view of the importance of the role of Group leaders in the process he Group requested that the views of Group Leaders be sought before the processes was formally referred to Cabinet for approval. It was also suggested that Group Leaders should be able nominate other members within their Group to carry out 121 discussions on their behalf.

Other suggestions made by the Group in respect of the process included:-

- In order to maximise buy in, the possibility of having a session where members could be invited to attend and complete the form, possibly linked to Council meeting with refreshments available.
- Opportunities to work across Councils on the provision of training needs that were identified, to share costs.
- The PDP process could be used to introduce a form of CPD for Councillors. This could involve packages of basic and advanced training on key subjects, on the completion of which Councillors would receive a form of certification.
- Links to the Apprenticeship Levy should be explored.
- IT skills were essential for Councillors and should be included in the training options on the Training Needs form.
- Given the importance of scrutiny and challenge to the work of Councils, it was important the process identified those who needed development in those skills.

RESOLVED that: -

- (a) The Group endorsed the proposed Councillor Personal Development Plan Scheme, and requested that consideration be given to the suggestions made in the meeting.
- (b) The proposed timescales for the implementation of Councillor Personal Development Plans be noted.
- (c) The views of Group Leaders on the proposals be sought before the proposals were referred to Cabinet.