

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

7 DECEMBER 2016

Present: County Councillor Clark(Chairperson)
County Councillors Dilwar Ali, Chaundy, De'Ath, Hyde, Murphy,
Robson and Wild

23 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Goddard.

24 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2016 were approved by the Committee as a correct record and were signed by the Chairperson.

The Committee received an update on the action points from 21 September 2016.

26 : MEMBERS SERVICES SUPPORT UPDATE

Support to Members

The Chairperson reminded Members that at its meeting on 20 January 2016, the Committee endorsed the report and recommendations of the Task Group on the Review of Support Services to Members. The Director of Governance and Legal Services had shared the report with the Cabinet Member for Skills, Safety & Engagement ahead of the Budget setting process for 2016/17.

The Cabinet Member had provided a response to the report on 20 September 2016, which was attached as Appendix A.

Members were reminded that at the Committee's meeting on 23 March 2016, Members noted that the Cabinet had commissioned a Councillor Support Review to consider the level of support available to Councillors. This exercise was facilitated by a former policy officer of Nottingham City Council and extracts of that report were provided to Members.

The Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members on Support to Members:

- Members discussed the Members Business Office at City Hall; it was noted that the location and facilities were not fit for purpose. Members were advised that a more suitable room had been identified, close to the West Entrance which the Whips have viewed and agreed. As part of the new offer IT facilities would be upgraded. It was hoped that the move would take place in the New Year once the room had been vacated.
- Members discussed access cards and were advised that the issue with access running out after a month had been resolved.

- With reference to the printer in the Members Library in County Hall, Members were advised that the computers were set to default to the Secure print machines as they are cheaper to print from.

Member Enquiry System (MES)

- Members discussed staff and resource support to Members and were advised that the review had recommended additional resources for Member Support including the Members Enquiry System and more general support and this budget would need to be agreed by Full Council; it was clarified that this review was the one that was commissioned by the Cabinet, which recommended £82k for 3 Member Business Support Officers.
- Members noted the time taken to receive a responses in general; Members were encouraged to use the Members Enquiry System to aid responses being received within timescales. Members further discussed technical issues they encountered when using the system and with officers closing cases that had not been fully resolved; these issues would be taken forward as actions.

Member Exit Survey

Members were advised that this Committee in collaboration with the Standards and Ethics Committee following the meeting of Full Council on 24 November had been asked to prepare an Exit Survey of all Members to seek to understand Members' experiences of being a Councillor; reasons for standing down; and their views on induction and training opportunities for new Councillors. A draft Survey was circulated to Members for comments.

- Members were generally pleased with the formatting and the fact that there were boxes so that free text could be entered to enable fuller views to be given.
- Members discussed the questions on ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation and whether these were essential. Members were advised that these questions were helpful in identifying themes that may emerge, but that questions were optional.
- Members discussed the name of the survey and suggested it could be changed to End of Administration Survey.
- It was noted that the survey results would be anonymised and any themes/trends identified would be reported to the Standards and Ethics Committee and Democratic Services Committee.
- The Chairperson asked that Members provide any further comments and feedback within a week in order that the survey could be circulated to all Members in January.

RESOLVED – That the Committee

1. note the response received from the Cabinet Member, Skills, Safety & Engagement;
2. note that the Director of Governance and Legal Services will be progressing the realignment of services to Members within her Directorate and the consequential resourcing of these services.

27 : MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AND INDUCTION CURRICULUM MAY 2017

The Chairperson advised that this report provided an update on the 2016/17 Member Development Programme and the draft Member Induction Programme 2017.

It was noted that not many Members had been able to attend the workshops that had been held this year. Members were advised that all the session would be available online imminently and the delay on this had been due to moving over to the NHS platform; all Council courses are currently online as per the Member Development Programme leaflet for 2016/17 which was circulated to all Members at Council on 29 September 2016.

Members discussed the Members Induction programme and the Chairperson asked for clarification on why certain parts of the programme were mandatory; the Director of Governance and Legal Services advised that she had asked the Group Leaders who wanted some elements of the programme to be mandatory, such as not being able to sit on a Scrutiny Committee unless the training had been undertaken, it was noted however that this would be a constitutional amendment.

Members discussed potential candidates having information of what would be expected from them if they became a Councillor, it was noted that this would be the responsibility of their political party and that there was a full guide to being a Councillor provided by the WLGA, the link for this would be sent to all Members.

Members considered that the induction programme provided in the report was comprehensive and discussed the timing of the induction training; Members considered that two different and staggered dates could be offered, including both daytime and evening sessions in an attempt to be as accommodating as possible to new Members.

RESOLVED - That the Committee

1. note that the Member Development Programme 2016/17 was circulated to all Members at Full Council in September in accordance with the WAO improvement recommendation;
2. agreed the draft Induction curriculum and the essential learning identified for all Councillors and recommend to the Constitution Committee that essential training be added to the terms of reference of Committees so that there is an obligation for Members to undertake essential training going forward.

28 : INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL FOR WALES (IRPW) - DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

Members received the draft Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) annual report 2017/18 as part of the consultation process.

A consultation meeting with the IRPW Panel for Chairs of Democratic Services and Heads of Democratic Services in the South East Wales Authorities was held on 21 October 2016.

The deadline for response on the consultation was 28 November however City of Cardiff Council had been given an extension so that the Democratic Services Committee if it should wish could respond following its meeting on 7 December. The Panel was meeting on 15 December to consider all responses.

The three main areas highlighted to Members were; Basic Salary; reimbursement of costs of Care and Sickness Absence for Senior Salary Holders.

Members felt it was important that all Members are encouraged to take up the reimbursement of cost of care and that officers should be proactive in encouraging this.

Members noted that the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) were proposing that Members receive a 0.75% increase in salary and staff were getting a 1% increase. The Director of Governance and Legal Services advised most Council's take the advice of the IRPW, some take less of an increase and some donate any increase to charities, to negotiate a higher increase would be difficult to administer. Members discussed special responsibility allowances and it was considered that groups should be sharing out responsibilities more widely, and Whips should address this.

RESOLVED - That the draft IRPW report be noted and issues raised be submitted to the IRPW on behalf of the Committee.

29 : WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

Members were advised that this report was to review the work plan priorities for the remaining meetings of the Democratic Services Committee and Member Development Steering Group for 2016/17.

Members requested that the outcome of the End of Administration Survey be added to the meeting of March 2017.

RESOLVED - That the Work Programme 2016/17, as set out in Appendix A to the report was agreed subject to the addition of outcomes from the Survey on the agenda for March Committee. .

30 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING - the next scheduled meeting is 1st March 2017 at 10.00am in Committee Room 4

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