
REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

MEMBERS SUPPORT SERVICES UPDATE

Reason for this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Democratic Services Committee with information relating to the support provided to Elected Members.

Background

2. The Democratic Services Committee's remit is to consider matters relating to support services provided to Elected Members in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Act 2011.

Issues

Support to Members

3. 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 Governance and Legal Services shared the report with the Cabinet Member for Skills, Safety & Engagement ahead of the Budget setting process for 2016/17.
4. In accordance with Recommendation 1 of the report, the Director Governance and Legal Services submitted a growth bid for 2016/17 to secure funding within the Committee & Members Services budget for a permanent Member Support post currently funded on a temporary basis from savings in Scrutiny Services.
5. The Council at its budget meeting on 25 February 2016 approved a growth bid of £100,000 linked to the funding of a permanent Member Support Officer and the statutory duties to meet the Welsh Language Standards requirements for bilingual services for the Council from 1 April 2016. A recruitment process will be undertaken to appoint to these permanent posts.
6. Actions in relation to the other 7 recommendations are ongoing and will feature as part of the future work plan for the Democratic Services and Constitution Committees.

7. In addition, the Democratic Services Directorate is participating in a benchmarking exercise on the support provided to Members being undertaken with core cities network and led by Leeds City Council; and a Peer Review with a former officer of Nottingham City Council. The outcomes of this exercise will be reported to Committee.

Members Survey

8. In accordance with the Governance Directorate Service Plan 2015/16, a Members Survey will be undertaken during April / May 2016 which will seek Members views on service delivery matters; the principles of effective scrutiny; and the Member Development Strategy and programme. The aim is to receive feedback and comparator data to influence future service delivery to meet the requirements of Elected Members. This will be an online survey, with Members being offered the opportunity to complete in a different format or with the support of the Democratic Services team if they wish. The last Member Survey was undertaken in 2014.

Member Enquiry System (MES)

9. This Committee has previously received updates on the Member Enquiry System to allow for feedback and discussion.
10. The table below provides an update on the number and types of Member enquires made on the months specified below.

Enquiry Type	Feb 15	Nov 15	Dec 15	Jan 16	Feb 16
Total Enquiries	206	259	196	279	297
Member	148	193	134	207	200
Request for Service	-	(43)	(16)	(33)	(35)
Officer	58	66	62	72	97

11. A total of 297 cases were recorded during February 2016 with the majority of calls logged on Waste Management, Highways and Housing Repairs cases
12. The 35 “requests for service” cases made in February 2016 were assigned as follows:
- 13 dumped rubbish;
 - 2 waste collections;
 - 4 street cleansing/litter;
 - 14 housing repairs;
 - 1 estate cleaning; and
 - 1 noise pollution.
13. 67% of the cases were recorded by Members and 33% by officers on behalf of Members.

14. The guide to the Members Enquiry System was circulated to all Members in March 2016 to ensure that enquiries are logged effectively and Members receive the response that is required.
15. The system provides useful data on trends and tracking of cases for directorates and it is important that enquiries are logged on this system to give an accurate analysis of casework. It is therefore proposed that the Members who previously opted out of the system be reinstated on the named list to support the tracking of all cases.
16. The benefits to Members of the system are:-
 - 24 hours access to the online form allowing Members to log issues out of hours and whilst at surgeries or meetings with constituents;
 - a dedicated telephone line for use only by Members and Service Area Coordinators;
 - once an enquiry has been logged, it will automatically be routed to the appropriate area and prioritised and handled by a Service Area Coordinator;
 - the system allows enquiries to be monitored for progress and hotspots identified;
 - once the enquiry has been closed, the Member receives a message prompting them to check the outcome of their case.

Member IT Project

17. Further to the update provided at the Democratic Services Committee 20 January 2016, the new tablets have been received by IT, and are being configured. At the configuring stage it was agreed that the upgraded model should provide Members with the latest operating programmes which included the new Direct Access feature and Windows version 10.
18. Councillor Dilwar Ali and Hyde were asked to test these upgraded features and report back. Both Councillors have confirmed that these features were useful updates to the current package.
19. As part of the transition arrangements the Committee & Members Services team have tested the tablet and are now familiar with the features to allow them to be able, with IT officers, to support Members.

Transition arrangements

20. The transition arrangements to the new devices has begun with 3 further devices being issued to date, and other Members being invited to exchange devices over the next month.
21. Upgraded devices for Members will be provided in either at County Hall or by arrangement with the individual Member at their home. Members will need to make themselves available for approximately two hours to handback their old device with the charger (if possible in the original box); receive their new device; have a demonstration on the log on process; connecting to Wi-Fi; and the additional new features which also includes Good Messaging and the Modern.Gov App.

22. Further enquiries have been made on the costs of a compatible protective cover with keyboard following advice received from Members on the importance of protecting devices as a council asset. A cost effective price for a batch of 30 covers including key board has been agreed at an overall charge of £1500 which can be met as a one off cost from the Members hardware budget for 2016/17.
23. The Member IT Project is an 'Invest to Save' project financed over 3 years from cost savings in printing and ancillary revenue budgets such as stationery and postage. The 2014/15 out-turn on printing costs for Democratic Services showed a saving of 54.49% compared to the previous year, which in budget terms was £21,697, and the service is on target to meet the additional 10% reduction for 2015/16 budget.

Member Development

24. The Committee will be aware that the Wales Audit Office (WAO) published its Corporate Assessment 'Follow On' report on 26 February 2016 on its assessment undertaken in October 2015. The report was received formally by the Cabinet on the 10 March 2016.
25. The WAO report identifies improved arrangements in financial planning, HR management, performance management, asset management, IT, and governance with the latter helping to promote a better culture of accountability and risk management.
26. Paragraph 50 of the WAO report refers specifically to Member training; attendance at training sessions; and what training should be considered essential for Members to discharge their role effectively.
27. The Corporate Assessment 'Follow On' Report contains one statutory recommendation and 14 proposals for improvement. The single statutory recommendation is that the Council must ensure that it addresses these proposals for improvement to deliver improved outcomes within the next 12 months.
28. In response to the statutory recommendation the Council has prepared a statement of action and proposed timetable. Improvement action P5 (b) and (c) are relevant to the remit of this Committee and are set out below:-

"Enhance Member accountability by:

b) strengthening member development and learning programmes based on competency assessments to improve skills and understanding to enable them to undertake their roles more effectively; and
c) determining what training should be considered essential for Members to discharge their role effectively."
29. The following was put forward to Cabinet on 21 March 2016 in relation to improvement proposal P5: - (see table)

Ref	Action	Timescale	Responsible Officer(s)
P5b	Democratic Services Committee to review Member Development & Training and agree new approach and programme to commence in May 2017	December 2016	Democratic Services
P5c	Democratic Services Committee to agree essential training and frequency of training prior to start of new council term in May 2017.	December 2016	Democratic Services

Current Member Development Programme 2015/16

30. The Member Development Programme from January to July 2016 was prepared to include essential 'curriculum' development identified in the Member Development Strategy and by the Member Steering Group.
31. The following sessions have been held since the last meeting in January 2016:
 - Staying out of trouble and all you need to know on Information Governance, Data Protection and Freedom of Information;
 - Local Development Plan Briefing / Planning Governance & Protocols
 - Budget Overview for Scrutiny Committee Budget sessions;
 - All Member Briefing on Corporate Plan and Liveable City;
 - All Member Briefing on Cardiff Capital Region City Deal & Great Western Cities initiative;
 - All Member Briefing on WAO Assessment Follow on Report.
32. The following topics have been identified for delivery from May to July 2016:
 - Member Workshop Session on Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act;
 - Guidance for Members on being a Corporate Parent;
 - Safeguarding – Adults and Children;
 - Early Help Strategy;
 - Planning Act Requirements and protocols;
 - Urban Design Team and Design Council for Wales: the design process; best practice; Supplementary Planning Guidance;
 - Prevent and Contest Strategy in Cardiff and the Role of Councillors.

Legal Implications

33. There are no other direct legal implications arising from the content of this report.

Financial Implications

34. The Council budget approved on 25 February 2016 for 2016/17 will be adjusted accordingly to include the provision for additional funding allocated for Members Support Services.

35. The Members IT project business case agreed in April 2014 indicated a potential saving of £56,204 over a three year period (2014/15 2015/16/ 2016/17). The cost of the new equipment was capitalised in the 2014/15, and the project was undertaken as an invest to save scheme with the initial cost of the equipment and other facilities being financed from reductions in the cost of printing and other associated revenue budgets.
36. The end of year 2014/15 out- turn on printing costs for Democratic Services showed a saving of 54.49% on printing costs which in budget terms was £21,697. The target savings for 2015/16 is an additional 10%.
37. There is a risk that should Member IT requirements change then this will impact on the model and could result in increased costs. If this occurs, then any additional costs would have to be met from within existing Council budgets or by a drawdown from reserves.
38. Any additional costs of ancillary protective covers for Members tablets should be met from 2016/17 budget.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to

- (1) note that the funding bid for a permanent Members Services Support officer from 1 April 2016 was approved at the 25 February 2016 Council meeting;
- (2) note the outcome of further testing of the new model tablet and the transition arrangements;
- (3) consider and approve the use of funds from the Members hardware budget 2016/17 to purchase ancillary cover and keyboard unit to protect the new tablet device as a Council asset used by Members;
- (4) note the Member Development programme for May to July 2016;
- (5) agree that the Member Development Steering Group meet to take forward the actions from the WAO Corporate Assessment Follow On report statement of action;
- (6) consider the membership of the Member Development Steering Group.

GEOFF SHIMELL

Acting Head of Democratic Services

17 March 2016

Background papers

Report of the Democratic Services Committee on Review of Support Services to Members January 2016.

WAO Corporate Assessment Follow On Report February 2016

Cabinet report on Corporate Assessment 'Follow On' Report- Statement of Action 21 March 2016

Member Development Strategy 2016/17