
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

Members Survey 2016

3. An action from the Governance Directorate Service Plan 2015/16 was the undertaking of a Member Survey, and the Scrutiny Research Team where commissioned to undertake this work.
4. A survey of Members' views on service delivery matters; the principles of effective scrutiny; and the Member Development Strategy; Member Induction and learning programme was undertaken in May/ June 2016.
5. 44 Councillors (58%) completed the survey which closed on 15 June 2016.
6. Outcomes from the survey will enable and feed into the Organisational Development Governance Programme which features projects on future Member Support; Member Induction 2017 and Member learning and development opportunities.
7. Analysis of the survey results have been undertaken, and the Scrutiny Manager, Paul Keeping and, the Scrutiny Research Officer, Gladys Hingco will be in attendance to present the findings and feedback on the key elements of the survey which fall within the remit of this Committee.

Support to Members

8. At its meeting 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.

9. The Council at its budget meeting on 25 February 2016 approved a growth bid of £100,000 linked recommendation 1 of the report and the funding of a permanent Member Support officer, and a requirement for the Council to meet its statutory obligations under the Welsh Language Standards as from 1 April 2016.
10. At the Committee's meeting on 23 March 2016, Members were advised of a review commissioned by the Cabinet to consider the level of support available to Councillors. This exercise was facilitated by a former policy officer of Nottingham City Council. The methodology involved three stages: -
 - Stage 1 – establishing existing position and practices;
 - Stage 2 – benchmarking with Core Cities;
 - Stage 3 – recommendations to better support democracy in Cardiff within the context of external reviews; budget constraints and the changing legislative framework.
11. Stages 1 and 2 of the exercise were completed in May and June 2016 and the final report and its recommendations are due to be shared with the Cabinet shortly. This Committee will be keen to consider the recommendations alongside the outcomes from the Member Survey 2016 and the Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment Follow On Report – Statement of Action.
12. Actions in relation to the other 7 recommendations are ongoing and the Committee will receive details of progress at the meeting.

Member Enquiry System (MES)

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

Enquiry Type	June 15	March	April	May 16	June 16
Total Enquiries	250	281	261	219	215
Member	167	217	174	147	134
Officer	83	64	87	72	81
Request for Service	23	30	22	11	10

15. A total of 215 cases were recorded during June 2016 remaining consistent compared to May with the majority of calls logged on Waste Management and Street cleansing – Dumped Rubbish & Fly-tipping being the highest; and Highways – Potholes and Surface repairs being the highest.

16. 63% of the cases were recorded by Members and 37% by officers on behalf of Members.
17. 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 issues and trends to inform service improvements.

Member IT Project

18. Further to the update provided at the Democratic Services Committee 23 March 2016, transition arrangements for the new devices has been undertaken and to date 36 Members have exchanged; 3 have indicated that they do not want to have a device; and we have currently 3 calls open awaiting either allocation or decision on whether they wish to receive a tablet.
19. There is scope for Members who do not currently have the tablet device to exchange with their current equipment, and 1 Member wishes to take up the option to move from the Xtreme device to a tablet.
20. A short feedback email will be sent to Members shortly to get data on how the roll out went and on the new device and we will contact those Members who haven't taken up the option to have an overview of the device with the option to and exchange if they wish.
21. Anecdotal feedback has been positive about the connectivity, accessibility and usability of the new device with some occasional Wi-Fi connectivity issues which IT have been able to address quickly.
22. Protective cases with keyboards have been purchased and to date 18 of these have been issued on request.
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 project in 2015/16 met its 10% additional reduction in printing costs and has a further 7% target to meet in 2016/17.

Member Annual Reports

24. The Committee is reminded that all Elected Members are provided with the opportunity to complete an Annual Report in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Act 2011. The annual report details the work of the Councillor over the previous year and is published bilingually on Members' individual webpages.
25. Details of the number of Members who have published their annual reports are reported to the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) for Wales as requested by the Minister for Public Services.
26. Members are requested to complete their annual report for 2015/16 and submit them to the Committee & Members Services Manager using the standard template which will be forwarded to Members for this purpose shortly. The reports will be

checked for formatting prior to publication by 6 September 2016. Members are therefore requested to submit their final report by 5.00pm on 24 August 2016.

Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW): Care Allowance

27. At the Annual Council meeting in 2015 and 2016 Members have raised matters in relation to non utilisation and what has been seen as inhibitors for Members in claiming the support provided under the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' framework in respect of care allowance. It is the responsibility of this Committee to take steps to encourage and facilitate eligible Members in claiming these allowances.

28. The Council's published Schedule of Member remuneration sets out framework from the IPRW panel for Cardiff as follows: -

7. Care Allowance

7.1 Care Allowance shall be paid to a Member or Co-opted Member, who has caring responsibility for dependent children or adults, provided the Member incurs expenses in the provision of such care whilst undertaking 'approved' council duties.

7.2 Care Allowance applies in respect of children who are aged 15 or under and other persons for whom the Member or Co-opted Member can show that care is required. If a Member or Co-opted Member has more than one dependent the Member may claim more than one allowance, provided the Member can demonstrate a need to make separate arrangements for care.

7.3 Eligible Members may claim Care Allowance for actual and receipted costs up to a maximum amount of £403 per month. All claims for Care Allowance should be made in writing to Democratic Services detailing times, dates and reasons for claim. Receipts are required for both informal and formal care arrangements.

29. In addition, the IRPW in its annual report in February 2016 determined that all authorities must also provide for the reimbursement of necessary costs for care of personal assistance needs (provided by informal or formal carers) up to a maximum of £403 per month. Reimbursement shall only be made on presentation of receipts from the person providing the care. The Full Council on 28 July 2016 will as part of its approval of the Schedule of Member Remuneration 2016 – 2017 consider this additional determination.

30. Attached as **Appendix A** is the application form for Care Allowances and **Appendix B** the monthly claim form which are available to Members who wish to claim and meet the eligibility criteria.

31. The Committee may wish to investigate ways of encouraging and supporting Members as identified in the IRPW report.

Legal Implications

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

Financial Implications

33. The Council budget approved on 25 February 2016 an additional allocation to Members Support Services for 2016/17 and the Directorate budget has been adjusted accordingly.
34. 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.
35. 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.
36. The cost of the ancillary protective cases for Members tablets has been met from the Members hardware budget for 2016/17.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to

- (1) receive and consider the findings of the Members Survey 2016;
- (2) request that the Councillor Support Review report initiated by Cabinet be provided to the Committee as soon as practicable to be considered alongside the Council's own Member Survey findings to enable the Committee to fully consider the findings and make its recommendations for the future service provision;
- (3) the Committee & Members Services Manager circulate the template for Member Annual reports and timetable for submission for publication on 6 September 2016.
- (4) consider whether the Committee would wish to undertake any further work in relation to the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report determinations in relation to Care allowances and the take up by Members.

GEOFF SHIMELL

Acting Head of Democratic Services

12 April 2016

Attachments

Appendix A - Application Form for Care Allowances

Appendix B – Care allowances Monthly Claim Form

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
Independent Remuneration Panel Annual Report February 2016
Members Survey 2016