
REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

REVIEW OF SUPPORT SERVICES TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE

Reason for this Report

1. To receive an update on the response to the January 2016 Review of Support Services Task and Finish Group report progress.

Background

2. 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.
3. The Cabinet Member for Skills, Safety and Engagement, Councillor De'Ath had provided an update on the recommendation in relation to the growth bid for 2016/17 for the Committee on 23 March 2016.
4. In addition the Committee at its meeting on 23 March 2016 was 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 outcome of the review is still awaited.

Issues

5. Set out below are the recommendations from the Task Group and the progress on implementation:
 - (1) The Director Governance and Legal Services submit a growth bid for 2016/17 to fund a permanent Member Support Assistant post and no reduction in services to Members be made to the Committee & Member Services budget. *(Completed)*
 - (2) The Constitution Committee undertake a review of the number and frequency of meetings; the effectiveness and purpose of Council meetings; and the remits of the committees to see if there is scope to combine roles or revise terms of reference to avoid duplication. *(Conclusions of Democratic Services Committee submitted to Chair of Constitution Committee)*

- (3) The Elected Members Handbook May 2012 be reviewed and updated to make clearer the services available to Members and delete provisions that have already been removed such as the dictation service. That this provision be subject to the permanent support arrangement as identified in Recommendation (1) above. *(Review of Members Handbook included in Democratic Services Committee 2016/17 Work Programme)*
- (4) The Democratic Services Committee receive a report from the Director Governance and Legal Services on the Welsh Government consultation on the draft second Local Government Wales Bill and provide their comments to input into the consultation process in particular to highlight concerns on the restrictive nature of the requirements and the need for direct consultation with Members by Welsh Government on the future proposals. *(Completed)*
- (5) The Committee and Members Services Manager in preparation for the next Municipal Year considers how the provision of the helpful information formerly in the Members Yearbook can be made available in an economical format to Members if the consensus of Members is that this would be a valuable tool that they wish to re-introduce. *(Recommendation to be considered as part of the Review of Members Handbook included in Democratic Services Committee 2016/17 Work Programme)*
- (6) The Director Governance and Legal Services submit a bid for 2016/17 to reinstate an appropriate budget for the provision of hot drinks facilities at a minimal cost in the County and City Hall Members rooms, and that the Committee & Members Services Manager negotiate a base cost for this provision with Cardiff Catering. *(Completed)*
- (7) Cardiff Catering is requested to ask the vending service provider to provide more healthy and less sugary food in its facilities. *(Request made to Cardiff Catering Manager. Some products available in the current vending facility are of a healthy, less fat and less sugary variety including Fair-Tarde products. However a greater selection of products including fresh products would require a change in vending machines which would be considered as part of any contract review.)*
- (8) The list of suggestions made by Members for improved support is taken on board as part of the provision of the permanent support arrangement as identified in Recommendation (1) above. These include other areas that could be managed and developed to support Members in the future which would require a level of staff resources: -
 - (a) It was welcomed that following requests by Members, Scrutiny Chair's letters issued following meetings now appeared electronically alongside the minutes of the meeting agenda page. The next step was to include all Chair letters and Cabinet responses for the whole municipal year *(This had been implemented for 2016/17 Municipal Year as business as usual. This would require resources to back date information for previous years).*

- (b) Improve communication from the Welsh Government on their work programmes and published data (*Request submitted as part of the Cabinet response to the Local Government Bill 2016?*);
- (c) Refresh the Members Handbook and ensure it is kept up to date and details such as organisation charts of senior managers and operational managers including contact details are published alongside the Handbook on the intranet pages (*Completed*);
- (d) Reference copies of Council papers to be kept in an easily accessible location (*To be catalogued and available as part of the review of the Member Library*);
- (e) Continue to develop and improve the data available; and review the indexing on the on Line Information System (MOLIS) so that it is easily accessible to members and include the following data if available
- Registers of Council licences/permits. For example, Skips, Scaffolding, (*awaiting of confirmation of when these will be available on –line*) Alcohol and Food Premises (*details available on the website*); Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) Licences (*awaiting confirmation on whether this can be made available on-line*);
 - Officer decision register on Cardiff Council website to have same level of detail as that e-mailed to Councillors (*Work ongoing on providing greater transparency on the Committee Management System (Modern.Gov)*).
 - Section 106 Register sent to the relevant ward members (*details on 106 and other planning obligation funds are supported by City Operations Directorate = Planning Section and is the subject of a current consultation*)
 - Comparative performance information for school governors (*methods of accessing this information are currently being explored*).
 - Contractor complaints/performance: work scheduling, contract management and how contracts can be reviewed (*contract monitoring procedures are undertaken by the Directorate and Contract Management. Consideration is being given on how such information can be made available to Members*).
 - Member briefings and training materials after despatch or delivery (*Members & Committee Services are supporting this process and it is being completed as part of the 2016/17 Member Development and briefing programme*)
 - Good Council practice for example Association of Public Service Excellence, National Strategic Indicators (NSI's) and Public. Accountability Measures (PAM's) (*data provided to Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee to be distributed and published for Members information*)
 - Performance data with other Welsh Councils and core cities in England. (*as part of Cardiff's Benchmarking strategy further work is being undertaken to make accessible performance data from core cities*)

Legal Implications

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

Financial Implications

7. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

8. The Committee consider the responses to the recommendations of the January 2016 Review of Support Services Task and Finish Group report and consider whether further action is necessary.

G Shimell
Interim Head of Democratic Services
19 September 2016