
MEETING	MEMBER SUPPORT STEERING GROUP
DATE	8 MARCH 2012
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS GUNNELL (CHAIR), BARNES, DOUGLAS, RUNCIMAN (VICE- CHAIR) AND WISEMAN

PART A - MATTERS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS.**31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests they may have in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

32. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the Member Development Steering Group held on 26 January 2012 be approved and signed by the chair as a correct record.

33. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

34. MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY UPDATE AND REVISED PROTOCOL ON EXTERNAL CONFERENCES

Members considered a report which presented the updated Member Training & Development Policy which had previously been reviewed by Members in December 2011. Members were also asked to consider a revised protocol, which sits within the overall policy, on attendance by Members at external conferences/events.

Members acknowledged that there were ongoing issues associated with the current protocol for Councillor Attendance at Conferences and External Training and Development Events, with the effect that it was proving to be rather restrictive.

The revised protocol would provide Political Groups with an allocation from a “conference pot”, provided from the overall Member Development Budget, from which attendance at external conferences/events by Members of each Group would be funded. This would give Groups the opportunity to decide how to spend their allocation of the money. Members agreed that this was a fair and simple way to allocate the available budget and it was important for groups to take responsibility and prioritise themselves.

Members discussed the suggested method for allocating the “conference pot” on a percentile basis as detailed in the report and as follows: Labour Group (50%), Conservative Group (20%), Liberal Democrat Group (20%) and Green Group and Independent (10%). Some Members felt it would be fairer to allocate the pot based on each Group’s proportion of the overall number of Councillors.

The Head of Democratic Services agreed that the “pot” could be allocated on a “per head” basis and this would equate to £106.38 per Councillor. However, it would still be up to individual Groups how they spent the monies.

Members briefly discussed opportunities for income generation through offering places on planning training courses to Parish Councils and offering places on other courses to Members from other local authorities at a reasonable cost. Members agreed to discuss these options further when they considered the Core Programme for 2012-13 at the next meeting and look at where opportunities exist.

- RESOLVED:
- (i) That the updated Member Training and Development Policy be endorsed.
 - (ii) That the proposed revised protocol on attendance at external conferences/events be amended to clarify that the “Conference Pot” be allocated to Groups on a “per head”

basis rather than on the percentile basis as detailed in the report.

REASON: To enable the policy and protocol to remain relevant and flexible enough to serve the best interests of providing well trained elected Members.

35. OUTCOMES FROM THE MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT SURVEY

Members considered a report which set out the outcomes of the recently undertaken Member Training and Development Survey. They were asked to comment on the results of the survey and agree to it taking place in future in September and March of each municipal year

The survey had asked all Members for their views on the training provided to date and asked for suggestions on what they may like to see included in the Core Training Programme for 2012-13.

The Group noted that fewer than half of Members had responded to the survey, however they felt that the views which had been expressed were fairly representative of Councillors generally and did not feel that it was necessary to seek further feedback.

Members made the following comments:

- It was acknowledged that longstanding members would have different training needs to newly elected Members and it was suggested that it should be indicated in the booklet if an event is more suited to newer Members, for example.
- With regard to the scheduling of training sessions, many Members expressed a preference for late afternoon/early evening sessions to fit around work commitments. Officers confirmed that Democratic Services try hard to arrange sessions for when the majority of Members are available but asked that Members acknowledge that it is not always possible to suit everyone.

- With regard to e-learning opportunities, some members had suggested increasing the amount of e-learning and Members agreed that this could be promoted more actively.

RESOLVED: (i) That Members comments on the survey, and the responses to it, be noted.

(ii) That agreement be given to further surveys taking place in September and March.

REASON: In order to ensure that Members views are considered when developing new training and development programmes.

36. EVALUATION REPORT ON THE CORE TRAINING PROGRAMME AND NEXT STEPS IN THE CORE TRAINING PROGRAMME

Members considered a report which informed them of the take up of events offered to date, provided them with a summary of the feedback received and an analysis of the take up and provided them with information on the next steps in the core training programme.

An analysis of attendance at training and development activities between 16 November 2011 and 27 February 2012 was attached at Annex A. It was noted that a large number of Members had exceeded their annual target by a large extent.

Officers clarified that the published statistics were based on information provided by Members to Democratic Services. It was acknowledged that some Members organise development activities themselves and unless they notify Democratic Services of these, they would not be included in their attendance statistics.

The Group agreed that some clarification on what constitutes a development activity would be useful to ensure that all Members are correctly notifying Democratic Services of any events that could count towards their training totals. It was agreed that this information would be included with the next core training and development programme.

Members then considered details of the feedback received between 17 November 2011 and 27 February 2012 (annex B). Officers stressed the importance of Members completing feedback forms as it is used in assessing the efficiency and usefulness of training. Members agreed to pass this onto their Groups.

Members stressed the importance of ensuring that all members sitting on Planning Committees (including substitutes) attend mandatory core planning training and refreshers. Members noted that core planning training was taking place on three different occasions during March.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

REASON: In order to comply with the monitoring arrangements set out in the Steering Group's Terms of Reference as approved by Council.

37. WORK PLAN

Members considered the work plan for the Steering Group for the remainder of the 2011-12 municipal year.

Members raised the issue of Pre-Council Briefings and agreed to look at this further during discussion on the Core Programme for 2012-13 at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the work plan be approved.

REASON: In order to provide the Steering Group with a work programme for future meetings.

PART B - MATTERS REFERRED TO COUNCIL.

38. REMIT OF THE MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP

Members considered a report which proposed a revised remit for the Member Development Steering Group to enable it to advise on some proposed terms of reference and a subsequent renaming of the Group.

Officers explained that training and development cuts across other strands of supporting Members, such as travel and subsistence expenses and the format in which learning opportunities should be provided (i.e. e-learning and whether the provision of existing IT software is fit for purpose).

Presently, the remit for the Group only enables it to advise on matters strictly relating to training and development however it would be beneficial for the remit to be widened so that Members of the Steering Group can work with Democratic Services on managing appropriate support to Members in general.

It was suggested that the name of the group should be changed to reflect the wider remit to 'Member Support Steering Group' instead of 'Member Development Steering Group'.

Members considered and agreed that the revised remit for the group detailed at paragraph 8 of the report should contain the following:

- “1. To advise the Head of Civic & Democratic Services upon the provision of support to Members in accordance with the Council’s Member Development & Training Policy and its Scheme of Allowances and Entitlements to Members;*
- 2. To liaise with Group Members where appropriate on matters affecting the provision of support to them and as considered by the Steering Group.”*

RECOMMENDED: That Council approves:

(i) The name change of the Committee to
“Member Support Steering Group”.

(ii) The proposed changes to the future
remit of the Steering Group.

REASON:

To enable closer cross party working
with Members on all aspects relating to
Member support.

Councillor J Gunnell, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.00 pm and finished at 6.20 pm].