

Ad-Hoc Requests from Members for Training & Development – A Protocol

Summary

1. This report suggests a protocol for dealing with ad-hoc requests from Members for individual training and development events or activities outside of the Annual Core Programme or Personal Development Reviews.

Background

Ad-hoc Requests

2. In the past, various Members have attended a range of external conferences etc offering relevant training in relation to their Council duties. These have been funded by one of two routes:
 - (a) through the **Standing List of Conferences budget** held by Democratic Services. This list set out a number of suitable conferences for attendance by Executive or Shadow Executive Members. Formally, this standing list no longer exists. It was not re-established at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2009. As a result, the accompanying budget (£1,000) has provisionally been offered as a budget saving for 2010/11 onwards;
 - (b) through the main **Member Development Budget** from which the provision of all other training is met. That budget is virtually fully allocated now for the remainder of 2009/10, given the recent approval of the full Core Programme;
3. Ad-hoc requests met from the Member Development Budget have been traditionally random and have been managed by the Senior Member Support Officer to ensure spend is within budget at the end of the financial year.
4. Annex A to this report shows the level of spend on ad-hoc requests since 2007:

5. The current practice has served well for a few years but with the removal of the Standing List and an increasingly structured approach to member development generally, it is suggested that a protocol be now agreed by the Steering Group clarifying the position on ad-hoc requests formally.

Draft Protocol

6. Attached at Annex B, is a draft protocol for discussion with the Steering Group on approving Members' attendance at individual ad-hoc events/activities, outside the main Core Programme. The key suggested features are:
 - Restricting the number of ad-hoc events/activities each Member can undertake annually;
 - Bringing back a revised 'standing list', based on external conferences directorates advise as being beneficial for Executive/Scrutiny/Quasi Judicial Members;
 - Shared payment between Democratic Services and Relevant Directorate;
 - Withdrawal of potential saving - £1,000 to be permanently vired to main Member Development Budget

Proposed Revised Standing List

7. Attached at Annex C is a draft revised Standing List of Conferences for Members consideration. Directorate consultation will need to take place on the draft.

Consultation

8. Due to the need to bring this report to the Steering Group urgently, it has not yet been possible to consult Directorates on the implications of this protocol. Clearly, soundings would need to be taken specifically in relation to shared funding and the revamped 'standing list',
9. Given that the protocol would be a formal change to existing practice, the Groups will also need to be consulted on support for such a development. Initially, though, the views of this Steering Group are sought on the protocol and the way forward.

Options

10. Members of the Steering Group can:
 - (a) support the introduction of a protocol as drafted at Annex A;
 - (b) suggest appropriate revisions to the draft protocol; or
 - (c) reject the protocol and propose an alternative solution to the issue in hand

Corporate Priorities

11. Establishing a protocol to deal with ad-hoc requests for Member training will contribute to the overall improved structure and effectiveness of Member training and development and thereby assist the Council in being an 'effective organisation'.

Implications

12. There are no known legal, human resources or other implications associated with this report. However, there are clearly financial and potentially equality of access implications associated with existing practices. The financial situation has been set out above and how ad hoc requests are dealt with in the future will continue to be a potential financial difficulty if no framework is put in place. Additionally, there are issues with placing the onus upon the Senior Member Support Officer to approve requests on an individual basis, however, fairly the postholder may attempt to do so.

Risk Management

13. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, the potential risk of not implementing a protocol for dealing with ad-hoc requests is that respect for the wider Member Development Policy will be marginalised. Equally, there will continue to be a risk that these requests cannot be managed within budget.

Recommendation

14. Members are asked to support the implementation of the proposed protocol as drafted or as amended.

Reason

15. In order to provide a structured approach towards dealing with ad hoc requests

Contact Details

Author:

Dawn Steel
Democratic Services Manager

Amanda Oxley

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Alison Lowton
Interim Head of Civic Democratic and Legal
Services

Report Approved



Date 17/112009

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

None

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None.

Annexes:

Annex A Assessment of Evidence for Charter Status

Annex B Councillor attendance at ad-hoc conferences and external training and development events – A Protocol

Annex C Standing List of Conferences