

Protocol – Member Attendance at External Conferences/Events

This protocol applies specifically to external conferences or events which it may be appropriate for Members to attend but which fall outside of the Core Annual Training & Development for Members. Attendance at party political conferences are specifically excluded from this protocol and all expenses associated with attendance at these events will be met by the relevant group or the individual concerned.

External conferences, seminars and events governed by this Protocol usually fall within three categories:

- 1 Conferences which are included on the list of Annual Conferences (see Annex 1 to this protocol) This is a guide provided to Members indicated which annual conferences in service areas the Council would consider advantageous for Members in specific roles to attend;
- 2 Conferences/events received directly by individual members from an external source.
- 3 Local, regional or national Conferences reported to Democratic Services through networks, the Local Government Group, the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) etc.

Conferences largely result from changes in legislation or forthcoming new initiatives emerging locally, regionally or nationally. Often the subject matter is of particular value to Cabinet Members, Chairs of Committees or backbench Members working on topical scrutiny reviews. Under the terms of this protocol and to ensure appropriate Members have the opportunity to attend conferences or events key to their learning, each of the 4 Groups on the Council retains a 'conference pot' from which expenses for their Members attending such external events will be met.

'Conference Pot'

This 'pot' will be provided from the overall Member Development Budget managed by the Head of Civic & Democratic Services. For the financial

year 2012/13, the 'pot' will amount to £5k and will be allocated to Groups on the following percentile basis:

Labour Group:	50% (£2,500)
Conservative Group:	20% (£1,000)
Liberal Democrat Group:	20% (£1,000)
Green Group + Independent	10% (£500)

Spend from the 'pot' allocated to each Group will be managed and agreed by the Group. The Group's representative on the Member Development Steering Group will be responsible for informing Democratic Services when a Member has been 'authorised' to attend a 'conference or external event', providing details of the event, costs and travel or subsistence arrangements. Democratic Services will then make the necessary booking and travel/subsistence arrangements.

Under this Protocol, it is recognised that many Members have additional duties given to them by their Groups as a part of their Council life. Groups with Cabinet Members may need to prioritise some spend from their 'allocation' on Cabinet Members, since many external conferences/events are increasingly aimed at Cabinet Members and key officers. Cabinet Members being responsible for a significant amount of expenditure on behalf of the Council and for making key decisions. It would therefore be appropriate for some weighting to be given by Groups towards Cabinet Members as part of their allocation. This equally applies to Group Leaders, who are heavily involved in the strategic development of the Council and need to keep their learning and development at an appropriately 'high' level.

The remainder of the Member Development Budget will be managed by the Head of Civic & Democratic Services for the provision of a Core Programme and, in election years, an induction programme aimed at newly elected Members.

Groups cannot overspend their 'allocation' under the terms of this Protocol, since the budget is actually managed overall by the Head of Civic & Democratic Services. Any requests to overspend will be reported to the Member Development Steering Group and the overall budgetary implications will be identified.

Joint Funding

Funding for any external conferences, etc, agreed under the terms of this Protocol and as provided by the 'pot', will still be met in part from the 'pot' and in part from the relevant Service Directorate. This is operated on a 50-50 matched funding basis and covers all associated costs under travel and subsistence.