

30 January 2019**Agenda Item: 10****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND
EMPLOYEES****UPDATE ON USE OF RESOURCES BY COUNCILLORS****Purpose of the Report**

1. To present Committee with an overview of the use of resources by Councillors and seek agreement for appropriate actions.

Information and Advice**Background**

2. At the meeting of Full Council on 10 May 2018, a revised Code of Conduct for Councillors and Co-opted Members was agreed.
3. The new Code included a range of protocols, including the Councillor and Co-opted Member Protocol for use of Resources (attached for the Committee's reference at **Appendix A**).
4. Some of the Protocol's guiding principles include the need to be mindful of costs and not using resources for political purposes. It also provides specific guidance, for example about volumes of printing, post and stationery, and stipulates that the only printing facilities to be used are the Council's Multi-Function Devices and Central Print service. Governance and Ethics Committee is responsible for taking an overview of the use of resources. This overview role includes considering:-
 - requests to exceed the 50 item limit on outgoing mail
 - requests to fund the use of venues other than County Council premises for Councillor Surgeries
 - possibly charging Councillors for excessive resource use (via direct debit)
5. The Committee considered its first such report at its meeting on 18 December 2018 and asked for further information on:-
 - i. the printing costs relating to the Councillor for Ashfields Division;
 - ii. the variation in costs relating to the printing of business cards;
 - iii. the reasons for use of non-County Council venues for case surgeries by the Councillors for Worksop West and for Mansfield North Division.

6. Members also wanted Committee to consider whether printing limits for Councillors and support officers were appropriate and to look again at arrangements for external postage and taxis given alternative and cost-effective, electronic means of contacting constituents are readily available.
7. The information provided to Committee in December showed the printing costs for the Chairman and Mansfield Independents together to reflect the fact that one person provided support to both. Whilst it is difficult to separate this historically, it was agreed to report this separately going forward.

Printing and Photocopying

8. The Councillor for Ashfields Division has clarified that a proportion of his printing charges were in relation to private print jobs for which he intended to reimburse the Council at the end of the financial year, in line with a process he states he had discussed with the previous Monitoring Officer. He also states that he provided his own supplies of printer paper for some of these jobs.
9. There were eleven larger jobs within the overall list of jobs, totalling £636.34. The Councillor for Ashfields Division will liaise with the Print Office directly to identify which were private print jobs and arrange for payment by the end of the financial year.
10. It should be noted that undertaking and paying for private print jobs through the Council is a facility that is open to both Officers and Councillors. However, it would be more transparent and cheaper for such private print jobs to be agreed with the Print Office team in advance to ensure the most efficient means of production is used. It is therefore recommended that in future any private printing must be identified and agreed by Councillors in advance with the Print Office team, who will then raise a charge for that work in line with their usual business practices.
11. With regard to business cards, it has been clarified by the Print Office Team that the standard charge for Councillor's business cards produced to the current specification is £33.00 for 250 and £45.00 for 500 – for a new card or reprint. Where final costs have gone over the standard charge this has been due to Councillors asking for amendments after the initial job has been submitted and proofed. It is therefore recommended that Councillors make no further changes to the content of their business cards after they have approved the proof.
12. With regard to the potential for introducing printing limits for political groups, it is proposed that members are reminded of the existing provisions relating to printing rather than looking to agree changes and that this is monitored and reported back to Committee as necessary.

Room Hire for Councillor Surgeries

13. As stated in the report to Committee in December 2018, Shireoaks Village Hall has been used by the Councillor for Worksop West at a nominal fee of £8 per monthly session (£72 to date during the current financial year). The Councillor had previously underlined that the village of Shireoaks has no other County Council establishment which offers easy access to residents which the Village Hall does. The use of this venue enables community engagement better

than other alternative approaches such as individual home visits. The Committee is asked to consider agreeing the continued use of this venue for this purpose in 2019.

14. For their surgeries, the two Councillors for Mansfield North use two venues: Mansfield Woodhouse Library which is a popular venue in the centre of the village and Focus Point, a community venue towards the edge of their constituency on Vale Road, Mansfield Woodhouse.
15. The Councillors advise that the Library is a more informal setting with limited privacy, whereas Focus Point, which they have jointly used for many years, offers something different in that it provides a private consulting room, a waiting area for residents who are greeted on arrival by office staff, photocopying facilities and the space for public meetings all within the cost. It also ensures that there is someone in the venue at all times which offers added security in the event that either member is holding surgeries alone.
16. The Councillors have underlined that the joint two-hour surgeries held at Focus Point attract attendance from a different resident population to those at the Library. The surgeries, which are held at both venues on a monthly basis, (one at the library and one at Focus Point) are well attended. The annual costs of the room booking at Focus Point is £900 between the two Councillors, which equates to £37.50 per Councillor per month. This includes free room hire for other meetings arranged by the Councillors including five or six public meetings each year covering a range of subjects such as school issues, parking, speeding, road humps, fracking and the quarry. The numbers attending such meetings range from 8 to 40 people.
17. The Councillors emphasise that they use the Library because of where it is but that it doesn't meet all of their constituents' needs, whilst Focus point provides a different location and variety of services enabling both Councillors to consult and engage with their community, reaching well in excess of 100 of their residents. Again, the Committee is asked to consider agreeing the continued use of this venue for this purpose in 2019.

External Postage

18. The Use of Resources Protocol states:-

Councillors should be economical in their use of post; volume use (anything in excess of 50 items) is not acceptable unless approved in advance by Governance and Ethics Committee. Use email or hand-deliver instead where possible. The Post Room reserves the right to open any post to ensure policies are being adhered to.

19. The limit of 50 items per mailshot was introduced to encourage members to be mindful of the costs associated with postage and the need to be economical in their use of post and to use other means wherever possible. Rather than revisiting the recently agreed threshold, it is suggested that officers explore any effective mechanisms for monitoring postal usage and report back at a future meeting.
20. One Member of the Committee has also queried whether the Protocol's rule may potentially disadvantage Councillors in relation to equalities issues. The Committee may wish to consider that particular point and whether such Councillors could, for example, arrange hand delivery of mail by other means for mailshots over 50 items.

Use of Taxis

21. The Use of Resources Protocol states:-

At all times your chosen method of travel must be the most cost effective method, taking into account the value of time saved, anticipated subsistence and other expenses and any other relevant matters. More details are available in the Travel and Accommodation Policy.

22. The Travel and Accommodation Policy within the Council's Constitution states:-

If a claimant travels by taxi, the claim must not exceed:

- a. in cases of urgency or where no public transport is reasonably available, the amount of the actual fare and any reasonable gratuity actually paid;*
- b. in any other case, the amount of the fare for travel by appropriate public transport.*
- c. Any claims by Members for travel costs where the Council has provided shared transport will only be payable in exceptional circumstance and subject to the agreement of the Team Manager (Democratic Services).*

23. It is proposed that members are reminded of the existing provisions relating to taxis rather than looking to agree changes and that this is monitored and reported back to Committee as necessary.

Other Options Considered

24. The report provides further information and issues for consideration by Governance and Ethics Committee following the initial consideration at the meeting of 18 December 2018.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

25. To update the Committee and seek relevant approvals in line with the requirements of the revised Code of Conduct and the revised Councillor and Co-opted Member Protocol for use of Resources.

Statutory and Policy Implications

26. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 1) Notes the planned reimbursement of the costs of personal printing jobs by the Councillor for Ashfields division and endorses the recommended approach that any private printing by Councillors must be identified and agreed in advance with the Print Office team, who will then raise a charge for that work in line with their usual business practices and that this be communicated to members.
- 2) Agrees not to introduce a printing limit for each political group at this time but that this matter be kept under review and that reporting on printing costs for the Mansfield Independents and the Council Chairman be shown separately in future.
- 3) Considers the continued use of Shireoaks Village Hall as a venue for Councillor Surgeries by the Councillor for Worksop West at a cost of £8 per month.
- 4) Considers the continued use of Focus Point as a venue for Councillor Surgeries for the Councillors for Mansfield North at a cost of £900 per year.
- 5) Agrees that officers explore any effective mechanisms for monitoring postal usage and report back at a future meeting
- 6) Agrees that members are reminded of the provisions of the Travel and Accommodation policy and that this is monitored and reported back to Committee as necessary.
- 7) Agrees that members be reminded of the provisions of the Protocol on use of Resources including the Travel and Accommodation Policy.

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Constitutional Comments (SLB – 22/01/2019)

Governance and Ethics Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report. If Committee resolves that any actions are required it must be satisfied that such actions are within the Committee's terms of reference

Financial Comments [SES 22/01/19]

There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All