

18 December 2018

Agenda Item: 11

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.

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. This 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. A breakdown of costs relating to the following resources are detailed in **Appendix B**:-
 - Printing and photocopying (including business cards) – where the costs exceed £10
 - Room Hire for Councillor Surgeries
6. The Committee's views are sought on the expenditure and whether any further information or actions are required on specific items of expenditure.
7. The Committee's views are also sought on whether there are other resources they would like to receive information on in future such reports.

8. It is proposed that for the purpose of clarity, printing and postage costs relating to the Nottinghamshire County Council Chairman and Vice-Chairman civic roles are recorded and reported separately.

Postage

9. In line with the spirit of the Protocol, an increasing amount of Members are choosing to collect their incoming mail from their political group rather than having this posted out to their home address.
10. With regard to outgoing mail from the political groups, there have been no requests received from any Councillors for the Committee to consider the need for the 50 item limit on postage to be exceeded for specific items. Currently Central Mail Room only alert Democratic Services retrospectively to any significantly large mail outs from the political groups and individual Councillors. None have been flagged in this period.
11. In order to maintain an ongoing record of all postage costs relating to Councillors it is proposed that Central Mail Room be requested to log all such outgoing mail from this point onwards. It is also proposed that the requirement for advance Committee approval be reinforced to Councillors and clarified with relevant officers. The message to Councillors will also include a reminder about the financial benefits of using the corporate letter template (correct use of this template enables automatic franking and reduced postage costs).

Printing and Photocopying

12. **Appendix B** includes levels of charges (over £10) relating to both Councillors and the support officers for each of the political groups and for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the period April – October 2018.
13. At this point it is not possible to separate the charges relating to support to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman but this will be enabled going forward to give greater clarity.

Room Hire for Councillor Surgeries

14. Councillors are expected to use County Council premises for surgeries, and are encouraged to use local libraries particularly.
15. A few Councillors had booked non-County Council venues within their Divisions for surgeries for the whole of 2018 in advance of the new Code of Conduct and Use of Resources Protocol being agreed and therefore these existing bookings have been honoured.
16. Shireoaks Village Hall has been used at a nominal fee of £8 per monthly session, as detailed in Appendix B. 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. It is therefore proposed that the Committee consider agreeing the continued use of this venue for this purpose in 2019.
17. As well as using a County Council venue (local library) for surgeries, the Mansfield North Councillors also use Focus Point, a community venue on Vale Road, Mansfield Woodhouse.

The two-hour surgeries held at Focus Point attracts attendance from a different resident population. The surgeries at both venues are well attended. The annual costs of the room booking at Focus Point is £900. Again, the Committee is asked to consider agreeing the continued use of this venue for this purpose in 2019.

Other Options Considered

18. None – the report provides an update on expenditure as required in the revised Code of Conduct and the revised Councillor and Co-opted Member Protocol for use of Resources and seeks relevant approvals where required.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

19. 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.
20. To ensure full and complete information in use of resources reports in future.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. 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.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:-

- 1) Considers the resources expenditure for the period April-October 2018 and decide whether there is any further information required or any actions required on specific items of expenditure.
- 2) Agrees that postage and printing and photocopying costs relating to the Nottinghamshire County Council Chairman and Vice-Chairman civic roles are recorded and reported separately from this point onwards.
- 3) Agrees that the requirement for advance Governance & Ethics Committee approval for outgoing mail outs in excess of 50 items and the use of alternative venues be reinforced with Councillors.
- 4) Agrees that all outgoing mail from Councillors be sent from the political groups (or from the Governance Team in Democratic Services in relation to non-aligned Councillors) and the cost be logged on an ongoing basis from this point onwards.

- 5) Considers the continued use of Shireoaks Village Hall as a venue for Councillor Surgeries at a cost of £8 per month.
- 6) Considers the continued use of Focus Point as a venue for Councillor Surgeries at a cost of £900 per year.
- 7) Considers whether there are any other areas of expenditure Members would like to see included within the next overview report to this Committee.

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 3/12/18)

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 [RWK 05/12/2018]

There are no specific financial implications arising directly from the 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