



meeting	ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE	
date	20 OCTOBER 2004	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF MEMBERS' SERVICES

TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION, CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND COUNCILLOR DEVELOPMENT

1. Purpose of Report

To report details of a recent decision of the full Council and to make appropriate recommendations about issues arising therefrom.

2. Background

At its meeting held on 7 October 2004, the full Council approved a new travel and accommodation policy and interim arrangements for approving

- (a) representation at conferences, seminars and similar events.
- (b) attendance by Members at training events

The Council's decisions in respect of these matters were:-

- “(1) (a) That approval be given to the draft Travel and Accommodation Policy the.....and that it be implemented with immediate effect.
 - (b) That the Head of Members' Services be instructed to prepare and circulate template reports to be used to support all requests for approval under that policy.
 - (c) That the Administration Committee be asked to consider and approve at its next meeting the urgency procedures described in that policy.
- (2) That it be noted a revised Training, Conference and Seminar policy will be brought to a future meeting, but in the meantime the Administration Committee continue to be responsible for approving participation in conferences, services and training events by Members and, where necessary, by Officers.

- (3) That approval be given to the revised terms of reference for Administration Committee the
- (4) (a) That the Director of Resources be instructed to bring together into a single budget all the budgets/resources currently available within Departmental budgets for Members' attendance at conference, seminars, and similar events.
 - (b) That expenditure against the budget referred to above be under the overall control of the Administration Committee.
- (5) That a report on issues arising from the policy be made to the full Council following its first 6 months operations."

Some action has already been taken arising from the Council's decision as follows:

- copies of the policy have been circulated to Departments with advice on how it is to be operated.
- the policy has been published on the Council's website.
- a template report has been prepared and circulated to all Chief Officers (see Appendix A)
- the Director of Resources is continuing his work to bring together the budgets/resources available for Member attendance at conferences etc.
- the paper version of the Register kept under the policy has been redesigned and ongoing work is taking place to ensure its publication on the website.
- revised processes have been put in place within Members' Services.

There are a number of areas where further detailed decisions are required from this Committee. Appropriate details follow.

3. INFORMATION, ADVICE AND MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 The Travel and Accommodation Policy

This Committee has become the approving body for any travel and accommodation to be arranged on behalf of the Council and which requires a specific Committee approval. This means that the following will need to be approved formally before any bookings can be made (including provisional bookings):-

Participant	Description
Councillors, Statutory and other co-opted Members	(a) All travel within the UK not described in the Members' Allowances Scheme. (b) All travel outside the UK.
Officers	(a) Travel to Europe which exceeds 4 days/3 nights. (b) Any travel to any other country, irrespective of the duration of the visit.

It is accepted that there may be occasions when it may not be possible to bring a report to a scheduled meeting of the Committee. The policy describes at paragraph 3.3 the arrangements for obtaining urgent approvals and these need to be approved formally by this Committee.

Members will wish to be aware that, arising from views expressed at previous meetings, I have indicated to Chief Officers the Committee's expectation that urgency powers should be considered only where strictly necessary and that the reasons for not reporting to the next available meeting are included in the decision report.

The policy requires annual reports to Standards Committee about its operation. This Committee may wish to consider receiving bi-annual reports from me on these issues, which could be amalgamated to form that annual report. It would then be possible for Members to receive a regular overview of the way in work in this area is progressing and to be able to consider whether any additions or amendments are required.

Notwithstanding any decision in relation to the previous paragraph, it is suggested that there should be a report back to this Committee in Spring 2004 describing any issues which have arisen during the first 6 months. That report would inform the report back required by the full Council.

3.2 Conferences, Seminars and Member Training

The policy referred to above is concerned only with travel and accommodation. It does not include criteria for participation in events. Further work is necessary in this area. It was felt that there should be a separate document, which sits alongside and is operated in conjunction with the Travel and Accommodation Policy. That document will be the policy which outlines the considerations/information to be taken into account when approving attendance. It should also include the arrangements for Member training (eg options for identification, delivery, monitoring and evaluation).

The report to Council also identified a need for the Administration Committee to consider, each year, a composite list of those 'regular' conferences etc where the authority would normally be represented.

All of the above represents a major piece of work which, by its nature, should involve Members in its development. When these issues were considered by Standards Committee prior to the report to Council. It was recommended that a Steering Group (including independent experts) should be established to take this work forward. The Committee is therefore asked to consider the appointment of such a group. The group's membership could be:-

- 3 members of the Labour Group (1 executive Member, 1 Scrutiny member and a Whip)
- 1 member of the Conservative Group.
- 1 member of the Liberal Democrats Group.
- The Monitoring Officer (or representative).
- The Head of Members' Services (or representative)
- experts from the Learning and Development sector to be invited/co-opted as required.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the work which has taken place to implement the new Travel and Accommodation Policy be noted.
- 4.2 That the Director of Resources be asked to report to the next meeting of this Committee in regard to the establishment of a single budget as described in Section 2 of this report.
- 4.3(a) That, in cases of genuine urgency which it is not possible to report to a formal meeting of this Committee prior to the expected date of travel, the following arrangements apply:-

Approval to be given by the Chief Executive following consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Administration Committee and the Leader of the main Minority Group and subject to a report back to the next available meeting of the Committee each time this urgency power is used.

- (b) That those requesting urgency approvals under 4.3(a) above be required to submit the same supporting information as they would if the request was to be presented at a formal meeting, together with the reasons for urgency in each case.
- 4.4 That a Steering Group be established as described in paragraph 3.2 of the report and that the Steering Group be asked to report back to the meeting of this Committee to be held on 11 January 2005.

4.5(a) That a report on the first 6 months' operation of the Travel and Accommodation Policy be made to this Committee at the appropriate time. That report, and any comments made by Members during its consideration would then be forwarded to the full Council in accordance with its decision of 7 October 2004.

(b) That the Committee consider whether it wishes to receive regular reports on the operation of the policy.

P A Mayfield (Ms)
Head of Members' Services

Statutory and Policy Implications

As described in the report, the Administration Committee is now the approving body for all formal decision under the Travel and Accommodation Policy. Steps have been taken to ensure that all reports follow usual decision-making requirements and corporate standards.

Future reports on individual requests for approval will include the specific statutory and policy implications arising from the decisions to be made.

Director of Resources Financial Comments

Legal Services' Comments

Background Papers Available for Inspection

Report to Council on 7 October 2004 (previously published)

Memo from Head of Members' Services to Chief Officers and others dated 13 October 2004.