report

meeting	**ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**	
date	7 June 2005	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF MEMBERS' SERVICES

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND ASSOCIATED ISSUES

1. Purpose of the Report

    To note the Committee's current terms of reference and to recommend the re-establishment of a Member Development Steering Group.

2. Information

    The Committee's terms of reference, which are included in the Council's Constitution, are as follows:-

    - The exercise of the powers and functions contained in this section are delegated by the County Council to the Administration Committee and are expressly excluded from the delegation of the authority to the Cabinet.

    - Approval for Members attendance at conferences and seminars and for travel abroad and for officer travel outside Europe or in excess of 4 days in accordance with the Council's Travel and Conference Policy previously delegated to the Policy Committee.

    - Appointments to outside bodies, relating to functions of Council.

    - Determining the level and nature of support services for Members of the County Council.

    - Authorising hospitality to be offered by the County Council.

    - Advising on electoral issues including revision of boundaries of and within the Council's administrative area.

The Committee has a range of established practices to support its consideration of the matters for which it is responsible. These are described in the following paragraphs.

a) Travel and Accommodation Policy

All travel and accommodation required by Members and Officers must have prior approval. Appendix A details the arrangements for those approvals. A template report is used to support travel and accommodation requests. This report should include all relevant details, including the full cost of the visit. It will also describe in detail any circumstances in which it is necessary to depart from the policy.

b) Conferences, Seminars and similar events

The policy referred to in the previous paragraph is not concerned with criteria for participation in conferences, seminars and other events. Work is ongoing to design appropriate criteria which will be brought to this Committee and then taken to full council for approval. This work is tied in to consideration of a new Councillor and non-Councillor Development Policy described below.

In the circumstances, the Council has agreed previously that, in considering requests for participation in such events, the Committee should have regard to existing policies and practices. These include a need for consideration to be given to the value to be gained from a particular event, how participation supports the Council's work and reputation, the number of representatives to be authorised to attend and the arrangements for evaluating attendance and sharing learning/information from the event within the Council. The template report tot which I have referred previously includes this type of information.

The Committee has agreed also that any representative authorised to attend an event should prepare a report which is brought to the next available meeting. Again, there is a template for these reports. After they have been considered by the Committee, they are used to inform future decisions as to representation at similar events and they will be deposited in the Local Government Library, along with copies of the conference papers, presentations, etc.

c) Councillor and non-Councillor Development

The Committee has a Steering Group of councillors which is working with officers to develop a policy and arrangements/processes for councillor and non-councillor learning and development. The immediate post-election

induction events, which are evaluated elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting, were developed with the Steering Group.

There is still work to be done in this area and, in the future, it will be the Steering Group's role to consider and make recommendations to this Committee about annual learning plans. It will also monitor the delivery of those plans.

It is recommended that the Steering Group should be re-established, with a membership which reflects the various roles which members perform (eg executive, scrutiny, chair, spokesperson). The membership was previously

d) Members' Services

The Committee is responsible for decisions required from the Council on matters relating to services for Members. In the past, these have included the IT policy for members, the Members' Internet and e-mail acceptable use policy, approval for Members' participation in training events.

It is envisaged that one of the features of future agendas will be the presentation of reports which both measure performance in these areas and discuss issues for future development of services for councillors.

e) Hospitality

Any hospitality to be offered by the County Council is approved in advance. The Council has a County Hospitality Budget, which is under the control of this Committee. There are also funds available to Chief Officers and Portfolio holders for hospitality. The approvals arrangement for different types of hospitality are outlined in Appendix B.

f) Electoral Issues

It is the Committee's role to consider and make recommendation in relation to electoral issues, such as boundary reviews.

RECOMMENDED

1.   That the report be noted.

2.   That the Member Steering Group referred to in paragraph C above be re-established and that the Committee determine its membership.

P A HOLT-MURPHY
HEAD OF MEMBERS' SERVICES

Legal Services Comments

To Follow

Director of Resources Financial Comments

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