



meeting	ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE	
date	6 April 2005	agenda item number

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF MEMBERS' SERVICES

THE POST ELECTION PERIOD

Purpose

1. To inform the Committee of the agreed arrangements for disseminating the election results and to recommend a timetable and process for the period immediately following the County Council Elections.

Background

2. The County Council Elections are to be held on 5 May 2005. At the time of writing this report, it is not clear whether there will also be a General Election on the same day. It is, however, appropriate to take account of such a possibility when planning the provision of Members' Services for the period immediately following the Elections.
3. This report describes a proposed timetable of events for the period immediately following the election and makes recommendations as to further provision, especially in regard to an extended induction process specifically for councillors elected to the County Council for the first time.

Results

4. As with previous elections, Members' Services and colleagues from Corporate Communications and IT will be providing an elections results service, during which the Chief Executive will announce each of the results in the County Electoral Divisions as they come in and we will be able to forecast the final outcome in a range of different ways. Alongside this information-sharing, employees from Members Services also start to put together the information required for the authority's business to continue (mailing lists, updating the web-site, etc). Although this event is primarily aimed at the media, councillors and employees from the departments are welcome to attend.
5. If there is not to be a General Election, the results service will run from the close of the poll on the Thursday until the final result is available.
6. If there is a General Election, then the County Council votes will not be counted until Friday 6 May. In these circumstances, the results service will run from about 11.30am, again until the final result is available.

7. Our experience previously has been that, as individual results have become available, councillors come along to County Hall to assess the situation within the Council as a whole and respond to press queries and requests for interviews immediately if that is appropriate.

Welcome service

8. Before a councillor is able to act in that role, s/he is required to make a declaration of acceptance of office. The arrangements for that to happen will be described in a letter to be sent to all candidates. Declarations are taken during a welcome session which Members' Services hosts at County Hall, although we also have a back-up arrangement for any councillor who is unavailable to attend on the days we have arranged.
9. The welcome session is something which we introduced for the first time following the last elections in 2001 and which proved to be very useful for both returning and newly-elected councillors and for the County Council. Briefly, it provides the opportunity for councillors to make the declaration of acceptance of office referred to above and to start their induction, through a process of making initial contact with other members, the Groups and officers of the Council. From a Members' Services perspective, it enables us to gather all the information needed from individual councillors to enable us to plan and provide their immediate support and to issue, for example, identity cards, the Constitution and similar documents. For 2005, we have planned two possibilities as follows:-
10. **If there is a General Election** the welcome session will be available from lunchtime on 6 May and will run alongside the results service already referred to. It will continue until 6.45 pm on that day and be repeated from 9.30am until 5.00 pm on Monday, 9 May.
11. **If a General Election does not take place on 5 May**, the welcome session will be available from 9.30am on both 6 and 9 May, again continuing until 6.45pm on Friday the 6th.
12. The reason for the finishing time on Friday 6 May is to recognise the possibility of a political group meeting during that evening. This will avoid the need for councillors to have to come to County Hall more than once on that day. As more information becomes available from the groups as to the planned dates and times of their meetings, Members Services can, if required, hold additional welcome sessions, again to avoid unnecessary travel.

The County Council diary

13. Although the Council's Constitution includes details of Cabinet, Committees etc, the impending elections make it seem imprudent to draft a full diary. This is because, at its Annual Meeting (which has to be held on the third Thursday in May as required by Standing Orders), the Council will be asked to determine its cycle of meetings and to appoint the Cabinet and Committees. Both of these decisions will affect

the way in which the timetable of meetings for inclusion in the diary is put together.

14. In these circumstances, the diary currently printed includes only two meetings post-election, both are Council meetings – the annual meeting on 19 May and a potential further meeting 6 weeks later on 30 June. This latter meeting is capable of being changed to comply with any revised cycle of meetings agreed by the Council. One of Members Services' first tasks following the election will therefore be to work with the Groups to start work on the diary. However, the Committee will note from the appendix to this report that the opportunity has been taken to suggest early dates for both Cabinet and the committee responsible for Planning (currently Planning and Licensing Committee). This is to ensure the continued transaction of business.

Induction

15. The absence of a formal programme of meetings in the first two weeks immediately following the elections helps with planning the first stage of induction for councillors. This is something which has been considered by the Member Development Steering Group and discussed with the Labour Group whips and Leader of the Conservative Group.
16. There are wide-ranging benefits for councillors and the Council from a strong and properly planned induction programme. The induction process needs to be sufficiently robust so as to ensure that councillors receive the necessary information and guidance to enable them to settle quickly into their new roles, whilst recognising the possibility of different structures and political management arrangements. It also needs to allow space for individual councillors to work within and gain knowledge and support from their respective political groups where appropriate and from experienced councillors.
17. Councillors bring a range of skills to their roles, irrespective of whether they are newly-elected or returning for a further term of office. Ongoing discussions point to recognising those skills and experiences, many of which are useful as a councillor, whilst ensuring that the necessary information and further support is available as and when it is needed. It is therefore suggested that the 'general' induction to be available for all councillors should range from initial contact with Members Services at the welcome session (where councillors will receive information, advice and guidance on, for example, Members Allowances and IT, their copy of the Constitution, Health and Safety for Councillors), through information-sharing about the council's services, to specific training for all councillors about conduct and ethics. The induction period should also include space for training any councillor who may be appointed to serve on those regulatory committees where formal training is a requirement eg Planning.
18. Attached to this report is a possible timetable for the first weeks following the elections. It includes a range of specific training sessions, together with a general information day about the Council's services.

Topic, service or Committee-specific Learning

19. The induction timetable attached to this report includes specific training only for the Planning and Appeals Committees, as this is a requirement for membership. Other Committees, together with the Corporate Management Board will have the opportunity to suggest specific training and/or seminars for inclusion in a longer term plan. In particular, the Pensions Committee will need to consider the provision of Trustee training for its members and make an appropriate recommendation. (The costs of Trustee training are protected within the available budget.) These will require approval by this Committee separately in accordance with the usual arrangements for Travel and Accommodation and any further requirements which may be built in to the Councillor and non-Councillor Development Policy.

Councillor development Policy

20. During the induction period, there will be the opportunity for councillors to participate in skills and knowledge audits, with the outcomes informing a properly planned and managed councillor development programme to be agreed by this Committee and arranged/monitored by Members' Services. The precise arrangements for those audits will be agreed with the Groups and will later be included in a Councillor and non-Councillor Development Policy which the Steering Group referred to earlier has been considering. That policy, which will come back to this Committee before its presentation to the full Council for approval, is likely to clarify that the authority's arrangements in this area will be councillor-led, with professional support as required. This is different to previous practice whereby all development needs identification and planning was undertaken by an officer. The new policy will recognise both the role of Group officers in identifying development and evaluating performance, and the processes for those councillors who may not be members of a political group. It will also distinguish between those responsibilities and the facilitation/monitoring of the programme.

Mentors

21. Councillors, especially those elected to the Council for the first time, have commented previously on the benefits they have received from mentor support. Mentors have wide-ranging skills and knowledge about the role of a councillor, particularly with Nottinghamshire County Council. These are particularly useful during the early days of membership, when new councillors are finding their way around the organisation. A number of existing councillors have offered to be mentors for their newly-elected colleagues and the arrangements for matching them up will be made during the welcome sessions.

22. Anyone who has volunteered to be a mentor will be expected to contribute information, advice, support and guidance **as required by the person they are mentoring**. The role is not to teach the new councillor, but to provide non-judgemental support to her/him in the first

few months of membership. It is likely that this [period would be not longer than six months.

23. Some of the Councillors who have volunteered to be mentors are not seeking re-election in May. It is understood that travelling and subsistence expenses can be paid.

Financial Implications

24. The budget available in 2005-6 for councillor development is £x. Any costs associated with the provision of learning and development for councillors can be met from this budget. However, it has been the Committee's previous practice to investigate alternative funding streams, which has led to the Planning Committee training for instance, being part funded from the Environment portfolio.

25. As far as the suggested programme is concerned, the estimated costs currently available are:-

Welcome Session	no training costs involved. The cost of printing, staffing, refreshments will be met from existing Members' Services budgets
Conduct/ethics etc	£500
Overview of services	Buffet lunch – to be met from Members Allowances Budget £500 – max contribution towards costs to be met from Members Training budget
Media Skills	£2,500 (max) – Members Training budget
Planning	£2,000 – to be shared between Environment portfolio and Members' Training budget
Appeals	£1,500 – Members Training budget
Financial Overview	nil
Property Overview	Travel and subsistence only, to be met from Members Allowances budget
Scrutiny/Partnership working	To be confirmed

RECOMMENDED

26. That approval be given to the proposals outlined in the report.

Patricia Holt-Murphy
Head of Members' Services

Legal Services' Comments(EB 24.3.05)

27. The matters for consideration and the decisions to implement the proposals in this report are within the constitutional delegation to the Administration Committee.

Director of Resources Financial Comments (MB)

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

Background Papers Available for Inspection

29. Nil.