

Minutes

Local Government Reform Reform-Cabinet Sub Group

20th February 2008



Present:

Members	Present
Councillor J Abbott	Yes
Councillor Mrs J Beavis	Yes
Councillor G Butland	Yes
Councillor Dr R L Evans	Yes
Councillor M Gage	Yes
Councillor N McCrea	Apologies
Councillor J McKee	Apologies

30 **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

INFORMATION: There were no declarations of interest.

31 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 30th January 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

32 **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT**

Sharon Lowe, the Head of Law and Governance, reminded the Sub-Group that a Member Development Policy Statement had been adopted at an earlier meeting. This Policy Statement was the first part of the Member Development Model and Members were now being asked to consider the second and third parts of the Model namely: (a) the Skills and Knowledge Framework; and (b) the Evaluation Strategy.

Skills and Knowledge Framework: The Sub-Group considered the 14 role descriptions set out as A to N within the Framework. Mrs Lowe explained that the intention was to review the Member roles currently outlined in the Constitution to ensure that these reflect the role descriptions identified within this document.

When reviewing the document Members made the following suggestions/comments:

- To consider how this could be provided to Members in a user friendly way
- To insert a column to enable Members to score themselves/make comments regarding their own specific needs;
- Row A3 under “Knowledge required” to be amended to allow for Independent Councillors;
- Under C “All Members” to consider inserting a further row that would include information about Member Allowances, how to claim, issues around the potential impact on benefits, the need for these to be declared to the relevant agency and what information is required by the Payroll Department etc.
- Under D “Ward Representative” reference was made to a Member handbook and it was felt that information about Member Allowances could usefully be included in such a handbook.
- Row C8 refers to Health and safety regulations and it was felt that this could be expanded to include information about personal safety, taking sensible precautions, the dangers about working alone, including travelling and parking in well lit areas.

Subject to the above comments the Sub-Group endorsed the draft Framework outlined in Appendix 1 of the Officer’s report.

Member Development Evaluation Statement: This draft document was detailed in Appendix 2 to the Officer’s report and it set out to affirm the Council’s commitment to the development of elected Members’ skills and professionalism and how this would be undertaken.

Page 32 of the agenda outlined some suggested local performance indicators. Following a discussion the Sub-Group felt that comparisons should be made with other good or excellent performing authorities to see what measures were in place and set some standards against which performance could be measured.

Subject to this additional information on performance indicators Members endorsed the Evaluation Strategy.

Member Services Questionnaire: The Sub Group reviewed the draft questionnaire and made the following suggestions /comments:-

- That question 21 be revised to refer to external training and development. It was noted that records already existed for Members attendance on in-house courses/seminars;
- That the questionnaire be made available in an electronic format;
- That electronic and hard copy versions of the agreed questionnaire be distributed to all Members with a request for responses inside two weeks;
- That in order to achieve a 100% return officers look at telephoning non-respondents and that Group Leaders be kept advised of progress;

Subject to the above comments the content of the questionnaire was endorsed by the Sub-Group.

Personal Development Plan for Members: The Sub-Group considered a possible Personal Development Plan (PDP) for Members as outlined at Appendix 4 to the Officer's report. In considering the issue of PDP's Members expressed concern at raising the expectations of Members. It was therefore agreed that it would be more suitable to start with a small number of core areas of development (perhaps as few as six) where the Council could deliver a programme of development based on the anticipated level of demand. It was agreed that a list of the draft core areas be emailed to Members of the Sub-Group for their comments in order to move this matter forward prior to the next meeting.

The Chairman concluded this item by asking for comments on the questions identified within the report.

DECISION:

- (1) That elements of the Member Development Model be taken forward as set out above;
- (2) That PDP's be completed by all Councillors on a one to one basis with Group Leaders;
- (3) That if it becomes evident that the budget for Member Development is insufficient then, at that stage, a case be made for additional funding.
- (4) That an Annual Report be made to the Council on Member Development.

33 **MEMBER CONFERENCE**

The Leader sought the views of the Sub-Group on a proposed Member Conference similar to that organised for Managers of the Council in January. The Sub Group were very supportive of the proposal. Members reviewed the discussion paper from the Head of Law and Governance and made the following suggestions/ comments:

- That the event be held at a conference venue such as Towerlands;
- That the preferred dates are the first Saturday in June with the first or second Saturday in May being a second option;
- That external speakers be contacted with two options of South-Somerset Council and the IDeA being supported (Councillor Dr Evans referred to two excellent speakers that he had come into contact with from the IDeA);
- That a separate budget be made available to fund the Conference;
- That the title of "the Front-Line Councillor – Bridging the Gap" be used
- That the event be linked to the "Shaping up for Excellence" theme;
- That displays be used where appropriate and where they can add value without putting too much additional strain on the organisation;

DECISION: That the Member Conference be supported subject to the comments/ideas as set out above.

34 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- (1) **LGIU Supporting Councillors: A Manifesto for Councils.** The Head of Law and Governance circulated a paper from the LGIU in which Councils were asked to sign up and support its 12 point Manifesto. The Manifesto sets out objectives to support local councillors to be as effective as possible in undertaking their range of duties.

The Sub-Group and in particular the Group Leaders present endorsed the Manifesto and it was agreed that the Leader be asked to write indicating this Council's support for the Manifesto indicating it has cross party support.

DECISION: That the Leader be requested to write to the LGIU on behalf of the Council indicating full support for the Manifesto.

- (2) **Council Meeting – 18th February 2008 reference from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 23rd January 2008 concerning CCFA (Minute 41 refers)**

The Sub-Group received the extract of the Overview and Scrutiny Minutes on 23rd January concerning its views on the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) in response to the Government's Consultation Paper entitled 'Local Petitions and Calls for Action'.

It was noted that the Council had requested that the Leader refer this matter to this Sub-Group for consideration. The Sub-Group endorsed the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

DECISION: That the Leader be requested to respond to the Consultation Paper along the lines of the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as detailed in the minutes of its meeting held on 23rd January 2008.

35 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Group was scheduled to take place at 6pm on Monday 7th April 2008.

The meeting commenced at 6pm and closed at 7.15pm.

G BUTLAND

(Chairman)