



AGENDA

SELECTION AND MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE

Friday, 14th March, 2008, at 10.00 am Ask for: **Mary Cooper**
Stour Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Telephone **(01622) 694354**
Maidstone

Tea/Coffee will be available from 9.30am outside the meeting room

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

1. Substitutes
2. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this meeting.
3. Minutes - 16 January 2008 (Pages 1 - 2)
4. Modernising Democratic Services and Local Leadership (Pages 3 - 8)
5. Member Development Policy (Pages 9 - 12)
6. Update on the work of the IMG: Member Information (Pages 13 - 14)

EXEMPT ITEMS

(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

Peter Sass
Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership
(01622) 694002

Thursday, 6 March 2008

Please note that any background documents referred to in the accompanying papers maybe inspected by arrangement with the officer responsible for preparing the relevant report.

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SELECTION AND MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Selection and Member Services Committee held at Sessions House, Maidstone on Friday, 14 March 2008.

PRESENT: Mrs P A V Stockell (Chairman), Mrs A D Allen (substitute for Mr J A Davies), Mrs T Dean, Dr M R Eddy, Mr G Gibbens (substitute for Mr P B Carter), Ms A Harrison, and Mr R Parry (substitute for Mr A J King, MBE).

OFFICERS: Mr G Wild, Director of Law and Governance, Mr S C Ballard, Head of Democratic Services and Mrs M E Cooper, Democratic Services Manager.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

7. Minutes
(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

8. Modernising Democratic Services and Local Leadership
(Item 4)

(1) As requested at the Corporate Policy Overview Committee on 25 January 2008 this report set out the ongoing modernisation programme for the Democratic Services and Local Leadership Unit and the engagement of Members and other stakeholders in order to bring about an excellent and continually improving service.

(2) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the report be noted;
- (b) a questionnaire on Members' needs and how the Democratic Services and Local Leadership Unit might meet these needs be prepared for consideration at the Committee's next meeting; and
- (c) a "Member Development" Seminar be arranged for all Members during June and the agreed questionnaire be completed by Members following the Seminar.

9. Member Development Policy
(Item 5)

(1) Mrs T Dean moved, seconded by Mrs P Stockell, that the Member Development Policy Statement be approved, subject to the Terms of Reference for the IMG on Member Development being circulated to the Committee.

For 5; Against 2. Carried

(2) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the progress in working towards the South East Employers Member Development Charter be noted;
- (b) agreement be given to the Elected Member Development Policy Statement being submitted to the County Council for approval; and
- (c) a report be submitted to the next meeting giving details of the Member Training Budget.

10. Update on the work of the Informal Member Group: Member Information
(Item 6)

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the report and progress made be noted; and
- (b) the draft questionnaire on Member Information be circulated to all Members of the Committee for comment by Monday 17 March 2008.

By: Geoff Wild, Director of Law and Governance

To: Selection and Member Services Committee – 14 March 2008

Subject: Modernising Democratic Services and Local Leadership

Summary: To note the ongoing modernisation programme for the Democratic Services and Local Leadership Unit and the engagement of Members and other stakeholders in order to bring about an excellent and continually improving service.

Unrestricted

Introduction

1. When the Corporate Policy Overview Committee considered the report on the modernisation of Democratic Services on 25 January 2008, it concluded that there should be a detailed discussion at Selection and Member Services Committee on the modernisation programme and the engagement of Members in this process as one of the 'key customers' of the Unit.

Context

2. (1) In October 2005, Peter Gilroy set the management team of the Democratic Services Unit a challenge to modernise the Unit. This was against the backdrop of a decreasing budget, year on year efficiency savings and new or pending legislation aimed at greater community engagement and accountability to the public.

(2) At the heart of the current legislative framework is the requirement for public bodies through governance arrangements to provide the community ('community' is undefined) with improved and transparent access to the decision making process.

Modernisation Programme

3. (1) Members are already aware of the structural changes to deliver all Democratic Services (including the 'localism governance arrangements') and Member Support Services under the new Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership, Peter Sass, who takes up his post on 1 April 2008.

(2) The County Council budget for 2008/09 includes £345k to equip the Unit with the resource to take forward the County Council agenda of community engagement and leadership. This will shortly be the subject of a report to Cabinet and the County Council.

(3) Members will also be aware that at the conclusion of the recent CPA inspection in February areas of comment of which Democratic Services need to take cognizance include:

- “Should look to developing modern community leadership more inclusively”;
- “In the Council membership, allow better engagement of the opposition for ultimately stronger decision making”; and
- “In local communities – a re-think on local boards“.

Taking the Modernisation Programme Forward

(4) There are a number of important work streams already underway which will contribute significantly to the modernisation programme and will result in greater capacity for the support the Unit can provide to Members to discharge their role. These include:

- (a) A Committee Management system has been installed which will go live in April. One of the key features of the system is its ability to automatically assist with the creation of agendas, minutes and the Forward Pan of key decisions. The main features of the system are set out in the Appendix to this report. Once staff are happy with the core applications of the system, further work will be undertaken to develop new applications which will build capacity.
- (b) Working towards the accreditation of the South East Employers Member Development Charter. The goal is to achieve accreditation and the award of the Charter by April 2009. Ownership by the Members for Member development and having the appropriate skills required to discharge the role of an effective ‘Frontline Councillor’ will help build capacity for both Members and officers.
- (c) Improving the information made available to Members to discharge their role. Currently, Members are overwhelmed by information. The information sources are many and varied, both in terms of quantity and quality. A Member Group is currently looking at streamlining information flows and improving the quality of the information available so it is more useful to Members in discharging their function.

Customer Survey

(5) Last summer, the political group whips asked Members to complete a short questionnaire on a range of Member services. The results of this are already being taken forward by this Committee and through a number of Member Groups, including those for Member Information and Member Development.

(6) The Informal Member Steering Group on Member Information has asked that a survey be undertaken of Member information needs.

(7) Reflecting on the views expressed at the Corporate Policy Overview Committee, I am proposing (subject to this Committee’s agreement) that a comprehensive survey of Member needs, and how the Democratic Services and Local Leadership Unit might meet those needs, should be conducted.

Innovation

(8) The Unit is constantly looking at ways of enhancing its service, exploring innovation both in terms of new technology and process by looking at best practice both in the UK and overseas.

(9) For example, the Unit has recently trialled a 'computer tablet' which, through handwritten recognition, turns the handwriting into electronic text. Whilst the technology has improved over the last two years since it was last trialled, it is not quite as good as it needs to be in order to be useful at this stage - but it is only a matter of time and its future development will be kept under review.

Benchmarking

(10) Staff in the Unit already engage, network, and participate in a number of cross Authority working groups throughout the South East. However, I am now asking the Unit to look to other areas where it is known that there is evidence of best practice and innovation which Kent may wish to embrace. I am keen to not only capture and incorporate the best practice from elsewhere, but to also be able to benchmark KCC's services against that practice, to plot its progress against it using clear, measurable and comparable data.

Meetings of the County Council

(11) The County Council has continued to experiment with formats in which it can involve more effectively both the Members of the County Council and the public.

(12) Webcasting meetings of the County Council and extending the programme of webcasts to other meetings. The following meetings are already webcast:

- Council
- Cabinet
- Cabinet Scrutiny Committee
- School Organisation Advisory Board
- Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

It is proposed that the programme be rolled out further over the coming year to include the following meetings:

- Highways Advisory Board
- Adult Social Services Policy Overview Committee
- Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee
- Communities Policy Overview Committee
- Environment and Regeneration Policy Overview Committee
- Planning Applications Committee
- Regulation Committee
- Governance and Audit Committee

This will provide the public with greatly increased access to the democratic process and allow them greater involvement in and awareness of the decision makers who take the decisions.

(13) In addition to extending the programme of webcasts of meetings held at Sessions House, the Unit will also be exploring the possible piloting of webcasts in venues outside Maidstone.

(14) Select Committees will, where appropriate, engage witnesses via video conferencing links. Electronic consultations will also be conducted.

Streamlining Decision Making and Democratic Services processes

(15) The Unit will continue to review on a systematic basis ways in which it can streamline the decision making processes and build capacity. Initially, it is planned to review the individual Cabinet Member decision process, the process for the Community Grant Schemes and School Admission and Transport Appeals.

(16) Agreeing work programmes and exploring the potential to pool resources will be pursued and is a key component to the emerging overview, scrutiny and localism agenda.

Conclusion

4. Good progress has been made on the modernisation programme to take the Unit forward so it is fit for the 21st century. The modernisation programme will only succeed, however, if it has:

- (a) the commitment and ownership of the Members and staff (both within the Unit and across the authority) and
- (b) the necessary investment, both in terms of new equipment and staff resource, made available to it.

Recommendation

5. The Committee is asked to:

- (a) note the on-going programme to modernise the Democratic Service and Local Leadership Unit; and
- (b) approve the conducting of a comprehensive survey of Member needs, as referred to in paragraph 3(7), above.

Main features of modern.gov (Committee Management System)

- Make the production of Agenda, minutes and the Forward Plan easier and more consistent by using the systems member database, reports and other information to self populate them.
- Agenda and papers for meetings can be automatically prepared in pdf format, put together as a pack, indexed and send direct to County Print for printing.
- Democratic Services will be able to publish committee papers directly to the web - ensuring that statutory deadlines are met.
- Keyword and free text search of all Committee Minutes and agenda from 2001 - which will eliminate the need to carry out time consuming manual searches for information.
- Calendar of meetings - on the web and intranet, easy to update and will link to meeting information - which will help to avoid the problems caused by officers in other directorates arranging Member events which clash with programmed meetings.
- Deadline reminder feature.
- Outlook Calendar integration - meeting dates and links can appear in Members and Officers Outlook Calendar automatically.
- Members and others will be able to register for email alerts when information on a specific issue is published - which will avoid the need to contact Democratic Services officers and ask for information.
- Some automation for the processing of Cabinet Member decisions with a colour coded decision tracking system.
- Committee statistics can be produced from the system including records of Members attendance and an email alert if a Member has not attended for a specific period.
- Some of the visible benefits that will be seen by Members and officers:
 - Agenda/Minutes - quicker publication to the web.
 - Calendar of meetings - which will link to more information about the meeting.
 - Searchable on-line library of Minutes and reports
 - Outlook Calendar integration - which some Members have been asking for.
 - Email alerts - which will ensure that Members and Officers are sent a link whenever an agenda or a Committee report on a specific subject is published.

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By: Mrs P A V Stockell, Chairman of the Informal Member Group: Member Development

To: Selection & Member Services Committee – Friday 14 March 2008

Subject: Member Development Policy

Introduction

1. The Committee will be aware that it established an Informal Member Group: Member Development comprising Mr Parry, Ms Harrison, Mrs Dean and myself to oversee the work required to achieve accreditation from the South East Employers for the award of the Member Development Charter. The Committee are reminded that the plan is to achieve the Charter by April 2009 in advance of the County Council elections.

Member Development Charter

2. (1) Members are reminded that the South East Employers Charter has a number of objectives:-

- (a) Being fully committed to developing elected Members in order to achieve the Council's aims and objectives;
- (b) Adopting a Member-led strategic approach to elected Member Development;
- (c) Having a Member Learning and Development Plan in place that clearly identifies the difference development activities will make;
- (d) Seeing that learning and development is effective in building capacity; and
- (e) Addressing wider development matters to promote work life balance and citizenship.

Charter Milestone and Standards

(2) In terms of Charter milestone/standards some of the tests that will be applied to demonstrate the commitment to Member Development include top political managerial leadership commitment to development of elected Members; a policy statement; equality of opportunity and access to learning and development; budget; officer resource support and dissemination of learning.

Strategic Approach to Member Development

(3) Charter milestones and standards here include a demonstration of a Member-led strategy; linkage to Council corporate plan; Member roles clearly set out;

process for identification of needs at individual and Council-wide level; structured and timely approach to promoting development opportunities; appropriately learn with external partners; strategy for induction; addresses political leadership and team development and mechanisms for evaluation informing future plans identified.

Member Learning and Development Plan in place

(4) To demonstrate that the County Council has Member Learning and Development in place at the heart of the organisation it will need to demonstrate that it addresses development priorities; identifies what development activities should achieve; sets out how, when, where and who is responsible for these development opportunities and access to them; links individual plans and the Council's corporate and other plans together and ensures that a representative group of the elected Members are consulted.

Learning and development is effective in building capacity

(5) A further standard is for the County Council to demonstrate that Members do learn and develop effectively; that they share best practice where appropriate with others, including officers and other stakeholders; there is a clear evaluation in terms of impacts and benefits of the learning and development opportunities to ensure that the investment represents good value for money and how improvements to the learning and development activities can be achieved.

Elected Member Development provides work life balance and citizenship

(6) The final standard/Charter milestone is around assisting those elected Members with family responsibilities; reviewing how Council business is conducted to allow for equality of access to key political decision making mechanisms and ensuring that events are held for the community to become community leaders.

Member Development Policy

3. (1) The Informal Member Group (also act as the Members Champions within the three political groups) has considered a self assessment of where the County Council is so far in terms of evidence to support its application for accreditation for Member Development; identified the gaps and is assembling the evidence required before the South East Employers will be invited in to make an onsite assessment.

(2) The Informal Member Group has also considered a draft of an elected Member Development Policy statement which is attached as an appendix to this report. Following this Committee's consideration of this policy statement the County Council, on 3 April 2008, will be invited to approve the policy for incorporation into the Constitution of the County Council.

Recommendation

4. The Committee are asked to note the progress in working towards the South East Employers Member Development Charter and approve the elected Member Development Policy statement for onward transmission to the County Council for approval.

Paul Wickenden
Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager
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Background Information: Include ALL background information taken into account in preparing the report. (This does not include previous Committee Reports)

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By: Mrs T Dean, Chairman of the Informal Member Group: Member Information

To: Selection and Member Services Committee – Friday 14 March 2008

Subject: Member Information

Introduction

1. The Committee will recall that it established an Informal Member Group to look at the issue of Member Information which is key to building capacity across the County Council for its elected Members and staff. This piece of work is being undertaken to take forward the County Council policy agreed in March 2006 to ensure that the focal point of Member Information is the Information Point.

Informal Member Group: Member Information

2. (1) The Group has shared its terms of reference with David Cockburn, Director of Policy and Business Solutions and Amanda Honey, Managing Director Communities whose staff operate the Information Point.

(2) The Group noted some work that has been commissioned on behalf of the Managing Director Communities and the Director of Policy and Business Solutions to audit and map the information flows across the County Council. This will help inform the Informal Member Group who will be preparing some options for providing Members with the information they require in a more effective and friendly manner following a survey the Group are undertaking of Member information needs.

(3) The Informal Member Group are visiting other organisations who have systems and software which may be of interest to the County Council in delivering and providing information across the County Council more effectively.

(4) To date the Group have visited Westminster City Council and the Informal Member Group will be visiting the Houses of Parliament to look at their information system on 28 March 2008.

(5) Arrangements are being made for a demonstration to take place from modern.gov who have recently been procured by the Democratic Services and Local Leadership Unit to provide the software for a Committee Management System which will allow much more information and production of papers to be prepared electronically and published direct to the web. The software for this system may already, or if not could be developed to, provide what the Members require in terms of 'Member Information'.

(6) The Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Service operate a software programme "sharepoint" which Informal Member Group members will be reviewing.

Recommendation

3. Members are asked to note the report and the progress made.

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