

By: Alex King, Deputy Leader
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To: Selection & Member Services Committee – 13 March 2009

Subject: Electronic County Council diary

Introduction

1. As part of the IMG Member Development's consideration of the Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA) framework and invitation to all local authorities to sign up to a "Supporting Councillors Declaration" (which complements the Members Development Charter) to put in place and make available to elected Members the tools to perform their role as a County Councillor a discussion took place on making available on KNet the official County Council diary.

Official County Council diary

2. (1) The IMG's aspirations is that elected Members of this Council should be better informed 'electronically' of all the events taking place in which Members are/could be involved so that as far as possible clashes do not occur and Members are aware for example, when visits by other Members, i.e. Cabinet Members, are taking place within their electoral division.

(2) I recognise that this is a 'cultural shift' for the organisation and will be difficult to develop unless it is done effectively but in incremental steps. I have however decided that the most appropriate repository for maintaining this information should be the Head of Democratic Services & Local Leadership. I have accordingly asked that an electronic diary be prepared which can be piloted on the County Council's intranet (KNet) as from the beginning of April and made more widely available following the elections in June 2009.

Modern.gov

(3) The Selection and Member Services Committee will be aware that the Democratic Services and Local Leadership Unit has recently purchased and is using the modern.gov software to electronically prepare and publish meeting papers. One of the applications of this package is the production of a diary which can be linked to the public papers. It will therefore be possible to have this element of the system up and available for piloting on the intranet by the beginning of April 2009.

IMG Member Information

(4) Members are also reminded of the ongoing work of the IMG Member Information in implementing recommendations of that Group approved by the County Council on 11 December 2008. Implementation is being led by me with the IMG Members and Dr Peter Welsh, Head of Analysis and Information.

(5) This is the subject of a further report on this agenda at item 5. However, Members will note that this review of information will also impact on the work to

develop a comprehensive electronic diary which will be available to Members and staff across the County Council.

What this electronic diary should include?

(6) Achieving an electronic diary that is completely comprehensive will take some time and this Committee's views are sought on what information ideally they would like to see in the electronic diary. For example, the County Council diary currently comprises all meeting dates of the County Council and public meetings of its Committees which as indicated above in sub paragraph 3 (1) can be linked to the publicly available papers for that meeting.

(7) The second range of meetings relate to events such as briefings, visits outside of a democratic Committee process such as the Planning Applications Committee site visits, visits of Cabinet Members to Member(s) electoral division(s) etc. The Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership or his Unit are not aware of all official County Council Members activities to another Member(s) electoral division(s) e.g. Cabinet Member.

(8) Thirdly, there are a whole range of single party events which take place which are not in the public domain and therefore the Committee's views are sought on whether it would be appropriate in an electronic calendar to be made available to include them in the intranet.

Paper diary

(9) Depending on the responses to the questions above and recognising that it is unlikely that an electronic diary could ever entirely be 'foolproof' or comprehensive the Committee's views are sought on whether a paper diary will still be required.

Next steps – Protocol

3. (1) Over and above the public meetings relating to County Council Committees which will be piloted on a modern.gov calendar as from the beginning of April the Committee's views are sought on what other meetings/events should be included in an electronic diary.

(2) The 'culture of the organisation' needs to change. I propose that a protocol is developed so that officers from across the organisation are clear of all those meetings/events which must be included in the County Council electronic diary. I recommend to the Committee that the Head of Democratic Services & Local Leadership in consultation with the Managing Directors and myself prepare and implement a protocol on the events (which involve Members) which should be included in the electronic diary.

Recommendation

4. The Committee is asked to:-

- (a) note that a pilot electronic diary to include all County Council public meetings will be available on the County Council's intranet site as from 1 April; and

- (b) authorise the Head of Democratic Services & Local Leadership to prepare in consultation with the Managing Directors and myself a protocol for those events (which involve Members) which mandatorily should be included on the electronic diary which will be available on KNet.