

By: Gary Cooke, Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services

To: Selection and Member Services Committee – 5 March 2015

Subject: Review of Support for Elected Members.

Summary: This report proposes changes to the support to all Members receive.

1. Introduction

- (1) This report covers the support available to all Members. It is not concerned with the dedicated support available to the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or Leaders of Opposition groups.
- (2) The proposals in this report have been shared with the Opposition Group Leaders and those staff impacted on by the proposed way forward.

2. Background

All Members are able to seek the support of staff that work on the Members' Desk for their official KCC duties. The Head of Democratic Services has a Democratic Services Manager (Members) who line manages Member Support staff for the Opposition Group Leaders, the Member Support to all Members and the Civic Office. There is also support to Members available from a number of other areas across the County Council, e.g. Information Point, highway stewards, etc.

3. Member support available to all elected Members provided by staff in Democratic Services

- (1) During the last two years or so, there has been a much greater reliance on Members using technology and "self-service" functionality, e.g. when submitting expenses claims. There have also been two retirements of part-time members of staff from the Members' Desk during the same period and after careful consideration it was decided not to replace these colleagues. It nevertheless remains an important function to support all Members with administrative, secretarial and ICT assistance.
- (2) Whilst several Members use the Information Point as a resource, a number of Members have said that they would welcome dedicated research resource. With this in mind, the Head of Democratic Services has bid for two graduates from the Graduate Placement scheme to commence work in April 2015.
- (3) Several Members have also asked for secretarial and administrative support to be made available via the Members' Desk.
- (4) Taking all these factors into account I have asked the Head of Democratic Services to:

- (a) Ensure that there are adequate staff available on the Members' Desk between 8.30am and 5.00pm daily; and
 - (b) Bid for two graduates from the graduate scheme to support Members with research enquires, as well as deliver specific projects to support all Members, such as maintaining and improving the Members' KNet pages.
- (5) Additional funding of £50,000 from a re-structuring in another part of the Council has been made available to the Head of Democratic Services with effect from 1 April 2015 to deliver these changes. The funding will provide for an additional 1.5 FTE at KR7 (£39.8k with on-costs) and for two Graduate placements. (£6k).

4. Support provided outside Democratic Services

- (1) When Members have a problem with their ICT equipment, they ask for support from the ICT Team.
- (2) With effect from 1 April 2015, I am proposing that a member of the team is transferred to Democratic Services to provide support to help Members maximise their benefit in the use of this technology. The post-holder will also develop the technology to support the governance and decision-making processes of the Council. This staffing transfer will be fully-funded by the ICT unit.
- (3) Following recent discussions, proposals have been drawn up for a new more integrated approach to Member support at a District level. These proposals have been shared with the staff affected. A formal consultation with the staff was launched on 25 February 2015. Amanda Beer will attend the meeting to update the Committee and respond to questions.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

- a) Authorise the Head of Democratic Services to recruit additional staff to support the elected Member in terms of support at the Members' Desk as described in section 3 above;
- b) Note that a dedicated member of staff for technological support to all Members and Democratic Services will be transferred fully funded to Democratic Services from 1 April 2015; and
- c) Note the way Member support is to be reconfigured at a District level.

Paul Wickenden
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Background Documents - None