

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Attendance at Conferences and Training Courses

31 October 2019

Report of the Democratic Services Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To allow Council Business Committee to review and update the procedures regarding Members' attendance at Conferences and Training Courses, which were put in place in 2008.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That

- (1) Members review the resolutions made in 2008 by this Committee regarding Members' attendance at Conferences and Training Courses (set out in Paragraph 1.0)**
- (2) The Committee considers the options put forward in Paragraph 3.0 of the report and decides how it wishes to update the procedures.**

1.0 Background

1.1 On 26 June 2008, the Committee considered a report of the Head of Democratic Services recommending a process for determining attendance at training course, conferences and seminars. The recommendations were adopted and the Committee resolved:

- (1) That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to approve:
 - a) training to be offered in house and therefore at minimal cost and attendance at external training or developmental events costing less than £100 per Member, subject to the event meeting priorities identified in the Member Development Strategy; and
 - b) training to be purchased externally or attendance at developmental events costing more than £100 per Member in consultation with the Chairman of Council Business Committee, subject to any such events meeting training or developmental needs identified in the Personal Development Plan of the individual concerned.

(2) That where any Member attends a training or development event costing more than £100 per member, they be asked to provide a report on their return to be available to other interested members and to be used in evaluating the event for the future.

(3) That a standard evaluation report template be produced to allow Members to report back on the benefit of attending the event. ***(Appended for information)***

1.2 When the Head of Democratic Services role was disestablished in 2010, the authorisation was delegated to the new post of Democratic Services Manager. The holder of that post is also the responsible spending officer for the Member Development budget, which is usually a little over £2k per year, although for a post-election “induction year” such as 2019/20, that amount is increased to allow for the expense of training new Councillors.

2.0 Changes since 2008

2.1 There are number of things that have changed since 2008. In 2008, the Council was working towards, and finally achieved, the Member Development Charter from North West Employers (NWE). A panel of Members who were very active in promoting Member training took forward the bid for the Charter assisted by the Head of Democratic Services. The Charter placed emphasis on demonstrating that the programme of Member development was led by Councillors themselves and all our Members, at that time, were encouraged to have one-to-one meetings with Democratic Support officers to establish their own Personal Development Plan (referred to in 1) b) above). Due to very low take up from Members in recent years, the one-to-one meetings are no longer undertaken. Personal Development Plans no longer exist.

2.2 There has been a reducing interest overall in attending member training events over the last ten years. This was most noticeable after Morecambe Town Council was established, and a significant number of City Council Members sat on both Councils. Increased demands on their time affected the numbers attending training quite dramatically. The budget for Member Development has also reduced over the years, and the amount of funding available for attending external training events became more limited. Officers in neighbouring authorities began to open up training events to other councils each time they brought in an outside provider and Lancaster City Council joined in this reciprocal arrangement to enjoy the significant cost savings.

2.3 NWE Charter Status also required the Council to maintain a Member Development Strategy, a lengthy detailed document which has lapsed over the last few years. Elsewhere on this agenda there is a Member Development Update Report which suggests adopting a “statement of intent” regarding training and development activity for the remainder of the four year term of office. The statement of intent is a generalised statement and set of principles, rather than a detailed plan.

3.0 Options

3.1 Some of the things Members may wish to consider are:

- Replacing the words “Head of Democratic Services” with “Democratic Services Manager”.
- Replacing “subject to any such events meeting training or developmental needs identified in the Personal Development Plan of the individual concerned” with

“subject to any such events meeting training or developmental needs relevant to the Member’s role on the Council (Cabinet Member, Committee Chairman, or Vice-Chairman).” This fits with the suggested wording of the statement of intent document (to be considered in the next item of business).

- Increasing the £100 limits to £200, since there are very few conferences or training courses costing under £100 now.
- The usefulness of the evaluation form (template attached) and whether that could be improved.
- In 1) a) replacing “subject to the event meeting priorities identified in the Member Development Strategy” with “subject to the event meeting priorities identified in the Council Plan or required by the Constitution.”

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The Committee is asked to decide what arrangements it would like to put in place regarding determining attendance at training courses, conferences and seminars.

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| <p>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)</p> <p>None arising from this report.</p> | |
| <p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.</p> | |
| <p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>There are no legal implications arising directly from this report</p> | |
| <p>SECTION 151 OFFICER’S COMMENTS</p> <p>The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments.</p> | |
| <p>DEPUTY MONITORING OFFICER’S COMMENTS</p> <p>This report has been drafted by the Deputy Monitoring Officer in her role as Democratic Services Manager.</p> | |
| <p>BACKGROUND PAPERS</p> <p>None</p> | <p>Contact Officer: Debbie Chambers Telephone: 01524 582057 E-mail: dchambers@lancaster.gov.uk</p> |