

**COUNCIL BUSINESS  
COMMITTEE**

5.00 P.M.

12TH NOVEMBER 2009

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Rob Smith (Chairman), Roger Dennison, Geoff Knight,  
Joyce Pritchard and Malcolm Thomas

Apologies for Absence

Councillors Susan Bray, Karen Leytham and Morgwn Trolinger

Officers in attendance:-

Debbie Chambers	Principal Democratic Support Officer
Jenny Kay	Democratic Support Officer
Peter Loker	Corporate Director (Community Services) (part)

**14 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2009 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**15 CONSULTATION RESPONSE - REFORM OF COUNCIL HOUSING FINANCE**

The Corporate Director (Community Services) presented a report which requested Members to consider a response to a consultation on the reform of Council Housing Finance which had been submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government by the Council.

The proposed reform would see a fundamental dismantling of the current Housing Revenue Account subsidy system which would be replaced with a devolved system of responsibility and funding. This new system would see the historic debt accumulated by housing authorities redistributed across all the authorities.

Members asked a number of questions relating to the proposals.

***Resolved :***

That the response dated 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009 sent to the Department of Communities and Local Government on the Reform of Council Housing Finance be confirmed.

**16 PROTOCOL ON PLANNING PROCEDURE**

Members considered a report which set out a proposed revised protocol on Planning Procedure to be included in the Council's Constitution.

It was reported that the Standards Committee had considered the revised protocol before submitting to Council Business Committee for approval. The main revisions to the Protocol reflected the fact that Code of Conduct complaints would now be made to the Standards Committee and not the Standards Board. It also set out guidance for Councillors who were not Members of the Planning Committee and who wanted to address the Committee on how they should interact with applicants, developers and objectors.

**Resolved :**

That Council Business Committee approve the revised Protocol on Planning Procedure to be included at Part 7, Section 5 of the Council's Constitution.

**17 CONSULTATION RESPONSE - THE LANCASHIRE ECONOMIC STRATEGY 2010 FRAMEWORK OF PRIORITIES**

The Principal Democratic Support Officer presented a report which set out the proposed response from the Council on Lancashire County Council's consultation on the Lancashire Economic Strategy 2010, Framework of Priorities.

Members discussed the proposed response and felt there needed to be particular reference to Lancaster in certain parts of the document.

**Resolved :**

- (1) That the Committee broadly support the comments contained in the draft response to the Lancashire Economic Strategy 2010 Framework of Priorities, but asks that officers revise the response to reflect the Committee's comments regarding the Framework document as follows :

Page 6 Section 3 "Shared Priorities for Action part ii Spatial" ;

- a) Paragraph 1 should include Lancaster district, not just Preston and wider Central Lancaster and
  - b) Paragraph 3 refers to "the City of Lancaster." It should refer to "Lancaster District."
- (2) That the revised draft response be re-circulated to Committee Members by Democratic Services and agreed via e-mail.

**18 LOCAL COUNCILLOR SHADOWING PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Democratic Services on the Local Councillor Shadowing scheme.

Members were reminded that at the last meeting of the Committee a request had been considered from 'The Youth of Today' on the scheme. A number of questions were raised over the scheme and further information was requested particularly regarding the selection process of the young people taking part.

It was reported that there was no officer capacity currently in Corporate Strategy to undertake all the work necessary to support the project, for example sourcing suitable young people to take part in the scheme, pairing the young people with Councillors, administering the bursary money and arranging Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for Councillors.

Concerns were also raised regarding health and safety, travelling arrangements and the strict criteria for selecting young people set by The Youth of Today.

**Resolved :**

- (1) That the Council does not take part in the Youth of Today's Local Shadowing Scheme.
- (2) That the Head of Democratic Services write to inform the Youth of Today of the Committee's decision and the reasons for making the decision.

**19 COUNCILLORS' NETWORK MEETING**

The Principal Democratic Support Officer presented a report relating to a new Councillor Network meeting that had been introduced.

South Lakeland District Council had invited the relevant Councillor from Lancaster to attend the new network which will be held on a quarterly basis. Members were reminded that the importance and cost benefits of joint training with other authorities had been highlighted recently and this network would offer an opportunity for further joint working in providing Member training.

As the Council would be expected to host the meetings on a rolling basis, Members were requested to agree this arrangement as it would be funded from the Member Development Budget.

**Resolved :**

- (1) That the arrangements for the new Councillor's Network be noted.
- (2) That the basis of participation in future meetings be the attendance of the Chairman or Vice Chairman of Council Business Committee and an appropriate officer at each network meeting.
- (3) That the costs of hosting any future network meetings by Lancaster City Council be met from the Member Development budget.

**20 ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

Members considered a report which provided an update on Member Development in the first 6 months of the year.

The report included a comprehensive list of all development opportunities that had been held over the past 6 months, who had attended and the costs of these sessions. It was reported that a number of development sessions had been cancelled due to lack of numbers. Officers were now working on a four year programme of Member Development to run from election to election.

The introduction of regular service briefings had begun with Service Heads offering 24 topics to update Members on. This list had then been prioritised by Members.

An update on project areas was given which included details of laptops and Equality training for Members.

**Resolved :**

That the report be noted.

**21 ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT - CABINET SUPPORT**

The Democratic Support Officer presented a report which informed the Committee of a review of Cabinet Support that had been undertaken. Members were reminded that one of the priorities agreed in the previous year's Member Development Strategy was to carry out a review of support for Cabinet Members.

It was reported that a number of past and present Cabinet Members had provided their views on the current level of support they received. A number of comments had been received but the main issues raised were that of the amount of paperwork they received and the time commitment.

It was suggested that an executive summary on reports would be useful for all Members.

Members went on to discuss the possibility of introducing "Shadow" Cabinet Members who could alleviate the workload of Cabinet Members and make the role of a Cabinet Member more accessible to working Councillors.

The Committee was advised that with regard to role and responsibilities of Cabinet Members, these were currently being prepared at the request of the Internal Audit for inclusion in the Member Development Strategy and a report would be submitted for the Committee's consideration at a future meeting.

Members went on to discuss the current Cabinet structure that was in place. It was suggested by some Members that the current structure excluded most Members who no longer felt part of the decision making process. It was also noted that Councillors who worked would find it very difficult to cope with the time commitment necessary to serve on Cabinet. It was agreed that these comments should be referred to the Barriers to being a Councillor Task Group.

**Resolved :**

- (1) That Officers investigate further the possibility of introducing "Shadow" Cabinet Members looking at current practice in other authorities, and report back to a future meeting of the Committee.
- (2) That comments on the current Cabinet structure and time commitment necessary to serve as a Cabinet Member be referred to the Barriers to being a Councillor Task Group.

**22 INNOVATION AND LEARNING FUND - POST ELECTION MEMBER TRAINING DVD PROJECT UPDATE**

Members were given an update on the Induction DVD that was being produced funded by the Innovation and Learning Fund.

It was reported that a production company had been agreed upon by the Working Group and work had begun on the project.

**Resolved :**

That Council Business Committee notes the progress being made with the DVD project.

**23 URGENT BUSINESS REPORT**

A report was submitted by the Head of Democratic Services setting out actions that had been taken by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman of Council Business Committee.

It was reported that Councillor Sylvia Rogerson had been appointed as a substitute Member of Overview and Scrutiny in replace of Councillor Peter Williamson.

**Resolved :**

That the actions taken by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of Council Business Committee in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, be noted.

**24 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP**

Group Administrators were invited to put forward nominations for any changes to memberships of committees. The changes submitted by the Free Independent, Labour and Independent Groups were accepted.

**Resolved :**

That the following nominations and changes to membership of committees be accepted.

**Free Independent Group**

Planning Committee – delete Peter Robinson (and add as substitute)  
add Paul Woodruff (and delete as substitute)

Licensing Act Committee – delete Paul Woodruff  
add Peter Robinson

**Labour Group**

Council Business Committee -delete Rob Smith  
add Ron Sands

Overview & Scrutiny - delete Rob Smith as substitute  
add Ron Sands as substitute

**Independent Group**

Personnel Committee – delete Keran Farrow  
add Roger Dennison

**25 CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

The Chairman announced that this was his last meeting as he was standing down as Chairman and from the Committee due to time constraints. He thanked the Committee, Debbie Chambers and Jenny Kay for their support.

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Chairman

(The meeting ended at 6.20 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Jenny Kay, Democratic Services on 01524 582065  
or e-mail [jkay@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:jkay@lancaster.gov.uk)**