

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Attendance on Training Courses and Developmental Conferences and Seminars

Report of the Head of Democratic Services 26th June 2008

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider a process for determining attendance at training course, conferences and seminars in accordance with the Member Development Strategy.

This report is public

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to approve:

- **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**
- **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.

2. Introduction

2.1 Members will be aware that the Council has increased its commitment to Member Development over the past two years and as part of this progression the responsibility for Member training was transferred from the Learning and Development Officer based in Human Resources to Democratic Services.

2.2 Responsibility for the budget therefore now lies with the Head of Democratic Services.

3 Proposal

3.1 A Member Development Strategy was first produced in 2007 as part of the work towards reaching Level 1 of the North West Charter for Member Development. Since then a system of one to one interviews with Members resulting in individual Personal

Development Plans has been introduced which provide a clear picture of Members' needs with regard to support and development.

- 3.2 The Strategy has also been now been reviewed and using other information gathered through Member workshops and considering the Council's Corporate priorities a series of training priorities has been developed.
- 3.3 When responsibility for the budget was first transferred to Democratic Services there was an over-riding need to deliver a wide-ranging Induction Programme and to ensure that all Members received sufficient initial information for them to perform their duties. This has now been completed and the programme of development and support is starting to address the more individually expressed needs contained within Members' Personal Development Plans.
- 3.4 It is now therefore an opportune moment to consider how decisions should be taken in respect of future training expenditure, assuming that there will be insufficient budget to allow all requests to be approved, but also to ensure that funds are targeted in the right direction and the training provided offers value for money.
- 3.5 This Committee is asked to agree a process and/or criteria by which any such applications should be judged.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

4.1 Option 1

That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to approve:

- 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
- training to be purchased externally or attendance at developmental events costing more than £100 per Member, subject to any such events meeting training or developmental needs identified in the Personal Development Plan of the individual concerned.

4.2 Option 2

- That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to approve 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; but
- The approval of training to be purchased externally or attendance at developmental events costing more than £100 per Member, subject to any such events meeting training or developmental needs identified in the Personal Development Plan of the individual concerned, be delegated to the Head of Democratic Services in consultation with the Chairman of the Council Business Committee.

4.3 Option 3

- That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to approve 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; but

- The approval of training to be purchased externally or attendance at developmental events costing more than £100 per Member, subject to any such events meeting training or developmental needs identified in the Personal Development Plan of the individual concerned, be determined by the Council Business Committee.

4.4 Option 4

- That the Head of Democratic Services be authorised to approve 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; but
- The approval of training to be purchased externally or attendance at developmental events costing more than £100 per Member, subject to any such events meeting training or developmental needs identified in the Personal Development Plan of the individual concerned, be determined by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Democratic Services.

4.5 There are other variations of these options in terms of the level of expenditure which Members consider is appropriate to delegate to the Head of Democratic Services and the criteria against which any judgement should be made before approval to attend is granted.

4.6 It is also suggested that where any member attend 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.

5.0 **Officer Preferred Option (and comments)**

5.1 Whilst option 1 is the simplest to administer, if Members wish to retain some input into the decisions where a higher level of expenditure is involved, options 2 and 4 are easily manageable and replicate the current system of the relevant Cabinet Member approving member attendance at any ad hoc conferences or seminars. Option 3 is not felt to be workable in some instances as a quick decision is often required in order to take advantage of beneficial booking rates, or on occasions to gain a place at a popular event.

6.0 **Conclusion**

6.1 Members are requested to set up a process for dealing with requests for training and offers of training to ensure that funding is properly targeted in accordance with the Member Development Strategy.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK
None
CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)
None

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The budget for Member training and development has been set at £10,700 for 2008/09. The purpose of this report is to ensure that spending of this budget is controlled and properly targeted, with effective evaluation.

Within the Democratic Representation budget there is also funding for Member attendance at Conferences and Seminars. Control of this budget is delegated to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Democratic Services and is utilised for attendance at large national or North West conferences where a City Council presence is felt to be of benefit to the Council as a whole. This budget is currently also used to fund Member attendance at smaller ad hoc conferences and seminars, subject to the approval of the relevant Cabinet Member. Consideration is being given to attendance at such events being more appropriately viewed as a development opportunity for an individual member, often assisting a Cabinet Member, for example, in their understanding of their portfolio area, with a view to such requests being forwarded to the Head of Democratic Services to include in the programme of member development and training funded by the Member Training budget. Should a decision to vire any part of this budget to the Member training budget be taken prior to this meeting, Members will be advised of the details.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer would advise that the administration and control arrangements should be proportionate to a budget's size / impact and the preferred option seems a sensible way forward in this regard.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: Gillian Noall

Telephone: 01524 582060

E-mail: gnoall@lancaster.gov.uk