

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Elected Member Development – Cabinet Support

12th November 2009

Report of Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise Members on the outcome of the review of Cabinet Support

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee note the report and make any suggestions for the future improvement of Cabinet Support.

1 Background

Members may recall that included as a priority in the Member Development Strategy is Political Leadership –

“Development of political leadership, in particular improvements to induction and support for Cabinet Members. Consultation with existing and former Cabinet Members is ongoing as part of this project.”

2.0 Consultation

Officers have interviewed both past and present Cabinet Members to identify what sort of support would have helped them in their role. Members were also asked what could be offered to existing and new Cabinet Members to make their jobs easier.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to interview all Cabinet Members due to time commitments.

Set out below are some of the comments that were made :

- It was impossible to be a Cabinet Member if you work full time – need to work part time/retired
- More evening meetings would encourage working Councillors to be on Cabinet
- Officer support is adequate
- Too much paperwork
- Late reports were a problem – not enough time to absorb the information
- Introduce executive summaries on lengthy reports
- Council should define roles and responsibilities of Cabinet Members
- Cabinet meetings too long
- Shadow for all Cabinet Members would help

- Outside body appointments for Cabinet Members are time consuming – could be done by Shadow Cabinet member
- Political Assistant would help
- Introduce an upper age limit for Cabinet/Councillors
- Introduce more informal Cabinet meetings
- Politics make decision making difficult
- Cabinet and O&S social evening was beneficial
- Regular liaison with the Leader of the Cabinet on particular issues
- Cabinet Members should interact more – not act as silos
- Diary keeping and setting up meetings for all Cabinet Members
- Cabinet Members to meet and tour round their services and with Leader if possible
- Outside Bodies – B&P to consider whether the allocation of Members onto all Outside Bodies is correct – free up Cabinet Members and allocate to non Exec – value in Community Leadership with non exec representing LCC.

Overall, it seems the main issues for Cabinet Members are the amount of paperwork they have to read, which can often be received late, and the time commitment.

Some Cabinet Members suggested the introduction of Political Assistants would alleviate some of the time constraints and make the life of an Executive Member easier. This would have to be undertaken and funded by the political groups however and not something that could be put in place by the Council.

One other suggestion that came forward was the introduction of a shadow for each Cabinet Member to alleviate their workload and make the role of a Cabinet Member more accessible to working Councillors. Consideration would have to be given to the basis of such a role, in terms of allowances and appointment.

One other suggestion was to request Budget and Performance Panel to examine the allocation of Cabinet Members on outside bodies and look at options which might free up time for the Cabinet Members and give non-executive Members more involvement within the community.

The possibility of diary keeping for Cabinet Members could be considered in more detail but this would obviously have resource implications.

Council Business Committee is requested to consider the issues raised by Cabinet Members and how support for Cabinet Members could be improved.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

Cabinet support and development helps to improve Cabinet's skills and knowledge and support to assist in the delivery of Council priorities.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

There are no direct implications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is a budget for Member Development for all Councillors, including Cabinet Members,

set at £9,800 in total for 2009/10. Any of the options mentioned in the report will have financial and resource implications which will have to be identified and considered in the context of other work and budget pressures.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Member Development Strategy

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