

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Councillors' Network Meeting

12 November 2009

Report of Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides information about a new Councillors' Network for member development for the Committee to note and consider the basis of participation in future meetings.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATION

That the arrangements for the new Councillors' Network be noted and that consideration be given to the basis of participation in future meetings.

(1) Background

On 14 August 2009 the Head of Democratic Services received an email invitation from South Lakeland District Council's (SLDC) Cabinet Member with the portfolio for Member Development. The invitation was extended to the most appropriate Elected Member within Lancaster City Council to attend an informal discussion session in Penrith on 18 September 2009 with counterparts in authorities neighbouring SLDC to consider potential joint training opportunities and a possible joint Member Development Conference next year.

The Vice-Chairman of Council Business Committee attended the session on 18 September 2009 and the notes of the meeting are attached for information.

(2) Proposal

The Network agreed that meetings should be continued, perhaps on a quarterly basis, with the next meeting scheduled for the end of November 2009 and the group be extended to allow officers to attend with Elected Members. The network will provide a forum to pursue joint training opportunities and share good practice.

It was also agreed that meetings be hosted by each Authority in turn (alphabetically, with Allerdale Borough Council hosting the November meeting.)

The importance of seeking out joint training opportunities with other authorities has been flagged up several times recently. When assessing Lancaster City Council for the Member Development Charter, North West Employers Organisation's Assessor commented that the Authority should "*consider sharing more good practice and training and development with other local authorities and public bodies which could also help with costs*". An agreed action for Democratic Services from an internal audit

which included Member Development earlier this year was to “*explore opportunities for sharing good practice with other Authorities; to participate in external training wherever possible and provide Members with access to a wider variety of development and networking opportunities*”. Finally, the Audit Committee, at its meeting on 30 June 2009, resolved “*That the Council Business Committee be requested to consider establishing partnership working in relation to Member Development*”. This new network provides an excellent opportunity to build on the work already being done to address these issues.

(3) Conclusion

The Committee is requested to note the arrangements for the new Councillors' Network and to confirm:-

- the basis of participation in future meetings will be the attendance of the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Council Business Committee and an appropriate officer at each network meeting
- the costs of hosting any future network meetings by Lancaster City Council will be met from the Member Development budget (cost of refreshments, etc).

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

None arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Hosting the network will incur some costs which the Committee is being asked to fund through the Member Development budget. There will also be some travelling costs for Members and Officers attending meetings in Cumbria which can be met from existing Democratic Services budgets.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

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

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appended. Notes of the first Network meeting held on 18 September 2009.

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