

Members Advisory Panel-New Constitution

A meeting of Members Advisory Panel-New Constitution was held on Wednesday, 14th May, 2008.

Present: Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Lee Narrowway, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr Ken Lupton, Cllr Bill Noble and Cllr. Mrs Mary Womphrey (Vice Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont)

Officers: D. E. Bond, N. Hart and M. Henderson (LD)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont and Cllr Steve Walmsley

MAP 1/08 Appointment of Chairman for Municipal Year 2008/2009

AGREED that Councillor Terry Laing be appointed Chairman for the Municipal Year 2008/2009

MAP 2/08 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

MAP 3/08 Minutes of meeting held on 29th January 2008

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 29th January 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

MAP 4/08 Councillors' Commission Report

Members considered a report relating to recommendations coming from a review that examined the incentives and barriers to individuals standing at local elections. The review was undertaken by the Councillors' Commission and was chaired by Dame Jane Roberts former Leader of London Borough of Camden. Following the review the Commission made 61 recommendations aimed at National and Local government, Political Parties and the business community.

Members noted that Stockton was already involved in work associated with many of the recommendations. There were, however, other recommendations that Stockton might wish to pilot:-

- Promoting Democracy – recommendation 1
- Direct Contact – recommendation 6
- The Public Eye – recommendation 7
- Youth Engagement – recommendation 14

Members were asked to consider whether there were any particular recommendations that Stockton should consider taking forward. Members discussed the recommendations and a number of comments were made, these included:-

- Members did not support recommendation 17 relating to a reserve list.
- Recommendations 13 and 14 relating to engaging young people were considered to be unrealistic in parts.
- Four year elections for all authorities was considered to be a positive move.
- Welcomed moves to abolish political restrictions based on salary.
- Disappointed that incentives to voting had not received more attention.
- The development of recommendations relating to engaging and raising awareness with employers was considered to be a key issue.
- Recommendations relating to support for councillors were considered to be positive
- Direct Contact/Public Eye - agreed that local authorities should be involved in promoting the role of Councillors and increasing their visibility.

Members were reminded that Dame Jane Roberts would be present at a Council seminar on Friday 16th May 2008, where members would receive a presentation from her and have the opportunity to discuss recommendations further. The Panel requested that a further reminder about the importance of Members attending this event be circulated to all Members of the Council.

AGREED that:-

1. the Panels comments be noted and that the areas identified in the report as possible pilots be pursued.
2. a further reminder relating to Dame Jane Roberts' visit to the Council be circulated to Members.

**MAP
5/08**

Learning and Development Strategy for Members - Progress Report

The Panel considered a report that provided an update on progress made with regard to meeting members' Personal Support Plans. The report also provided an update on the development of an in house database for the recording and sharing of learning and development opportunities.

Members requested clarification of financial information relating to spending on Member Training. Officers present undertook to provide this clarification to Panel members following the meeting.

Members noted that a Database was being developed which would have the ability to record securely members support needs, linked to a programme of available resources both internally and externally, with the ability to chart progress in meeting members identified needs. The system would also maintain a record of training/support provided; with opportunity for members to submit feedback helpful in evaluating the suitability and success of the resource offered and would allow learning to be shared with other members.

It was explained that the system would merely automate current practice and provide a remote means of access for members who wished to use it. An initial 'setting the ground rules' discussion had been held between relevant officers regarding the outline specification for the system, following completion of an outline project brief document. Updates on the development of the system would be provided to this Panel, and it was suggested that the Chairman of MAP (the Member Development Champion) be invited to participate in the

Officer Steering Group discussions overseeing the development of this system.

Members identified priority training areas that were considered to be necessary in the near future, these included Planning, Licensing, Health Select Committee and Housing and Community Safety.

It was agreed that training issues should be a regular item for discussion by the Panel.

AGREED that:-

1. the update position regarding the delivery of support resources to members arising from their PSP for 2007/8 be noted; and efforts continue to be made to source the remaining required support with regular update reports provided to both this Panel and the Member Development Champion.
2. updates on the development of a Learning and Development Database for Elected Members system be provided to this Panel, and the Chairman of this Panel (the Member Development Champion) be invited to participate in the Officer Steering Group discussions overseeing the development of the system.

**MAP
6/08** **Council Meetings Issues**

Members discussed issues relating to the Members' Questions element of Council meetings and some concerns were expressed at its format and value.

It was agreed that a report on the process and possible alternatives be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel

The Panel also discussed the future of the Leader's report to Council and its relevance. Following the discussion the Leader indicated that he would consider this issue further.

AGREED that a report relating to the Members' Question process be presented to a future meeting of the Panel