

Members Advisory Panel-New Constitution

A meeting of Members Advisory Panel-New Constitution was held on Friday, 20th June, 2008.

Present: Cllr Terry Laing(Chairman), Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Mrs Jennie Beaumont, Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr Ken Lupton, Cllr Bill Noble,

Officers: Margaret Waggott, Linda Lawty, Nigel Hart, Sarah Whaley(LD)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Lee Narroway; Cllr Steve Walmsley

MAP 7/08 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

MAP 8/08 Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th May 2008

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14th May 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

MAP 9/08 E Democracy and North East Connects Pilot

The Head of Democratic Services presented the Committee with a report outlining the Councils participation in a number of pilot schemes in association with North East Connects seeking to support Members in their community role by examining the potential use of E-Democracy to achieve more community engagement.

Members were introduced to, and invited to comment, on the areas which Stockton Borough Council had been asked to pilot by Rse Consultants, which were:

Mayors Blog
Leadership Blog
Virtual Ward surgeries

Members highlighted positives and negatives they felt may come from the pilots the Council had been asked to adopt and felt consideration should be given to the following points:-

-Blogs need to be kept up to date as past evidence has shown that blogs which are not updated regularly have resulted in a reduced numbers of readers.

-Information on blogs needs to be interesting to entice new readers and keep readers who have already visited returning.

-In relation to Virtual Ward Surgeries some Members raised concerns regarding the possibility that face to face contact with constituents could be lost and that traditional methods should not be abolished.

The Head of Democratic Services confirmed that Virtual Ward Surgeries were to be used as additional tools to enhance existing service provision giving members opportunities of choice in which to engage with the public and were not intended to replace the way in which Members were happy working.

Members also suggested that there may also be some future merit to engage with younger constituents by using text and social networks.

Some Members also requested that more time be spent on developing Members web pages as they felt this would be of great benefit in relation to community engagement.

AGREED that:

The Councils involvement in the North East Connects Pilot Projects be noted and the opportunity be given in the future to this Panel receiving demonstrations/showcase of the E-Democracy Tools being considered.

MAP 10/08 **Press Protocols and Budgets for Select Committees**

Consideration was given to a review of the existing arrangements for Press Protocol and Budgets for Select Committees in comparison with benchmarking with other North East authorities.

The Panel noted that the Council had a very flexible approach to press releases allowing for press releases to be issued at the start of a review and after Cabinets ultimate determination but with scope built in was at any period in between to engage the media should it be considered useful for the review.

Press releases were prepared by the communications Team with the approval of the Cabinet Portfolio Holder, Corporate Director, Chair and Vice Chair of the Select Committee.

AGREED that:

The current arrangements laid out in the report in relation to press protocols and budgets for Select Committees be continued.

MAP 11/08 **Format of Special Council Meetings - verbal**

Members were presented with a verbal report from the Head of Democratic Services regarding the format of Special Council Meetings.

The Panel heard that there was a special Council Meeting scheduled for July and it would begin with an end of year round up followed by Members being split into groups to focus on specific areas. Officers would also be present to offer suggestions regarding improvements.

The Leader of the Council suggested that formal invitations be sent out requesting members to confirm their attendance. If less than 25% of Members

confirmed their attendance then it was suggested that the meeting be cancelled.

It was also suggested that consideration be given to the venue in relation to acoustic quality as some venues were not ideal in this regard.

AGREED that:

1. The report be noted
2. Formal invitation for the Special Council meeting be sent to Members and the meeting be cancelled should less than 25% of Members be able to attend.

**MAP
12/08**

Formalisation of a Suitable Commemoration Procedure

The Panel noted the decision of the Executive Scrutiny Committee to agree the formalisation of a procedure to commemorate the lives of significant individuals based on their importance, connection and contribution to the Borough of Stockton on Tees.

The Panel was invited to approve the establishment of a small cross party of, 5 members working group to be established in accordance with political composition (2 Labour, 1 Conservative, 2 other members derived from the remaining political groups) in order to periodically judge the nominations received.

It was also confirmed that if the report was approved then nominations would be sought at the next Council meeting to confirm the appointed members.

AGREED that:

1. A small cross party 5 member working group be established in accordance with political composition (2 Labour, 1 Conservative, 2 other members derived from the remaining political groups) to periodically judge the nominations received.
2. Nominations be sought and an appropriate item placed on the next Council agenda to confirm the appointed members.

**MAP
13/08**

Civic Insignia

Members were informed by the Leader of the Council that he had received an application from Thornaby Town Council regarding the chains of the former Thornaby Borough Council being handed over to the Town Council.

The Panel discussed the initial implications involved in relation to legality, cost, security etc and it was agreed that more investigation would need to take place to determine all of the factors involved in such a request.

AGREED that:

A further report be presented to the Panel.