

Members Advisory Panel-New Constitution

A meeting of Members Advisory Panel-New Constitution was held on Wednesday, 25th March, 2009.

Present: Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile, Cllr Jim Beall, Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr David Coleman, Cllr Robert Gibson, Cllr Terry Laing, Cllr Ken Lupton, Cllr Bill Noble, Cllr Maureen Rigg and Cllr Steve Walmsley

Officers: D.E.Bond, N.Hart, Mrs J.McGeeney, Mrs M.Waggott (LD)Ms C.Straughan (DNS).

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Councillors Mrs Beaumont and Mrs Fletcher.

MAP 28/08

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

MAP 29/08

Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th November 2008.

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th November 2008 were confirmed as a correct record.

MAP 30/08

Learning & Development Strategy for Members-Progress Update

Consideration was given to an update of progress made regarding the delivery of the Member Learning and Development Strategy, and in particular developments regarding:-

- Refresh of Member Role Guides
- Personal Support Planning (PSP)
- Member Support System
- Member Learning and Support Activities
Mentoring

Emerging training needs had been identified via the Members PSP process based on reviewed member roles. This process was now made more efficient by the introduction of an electronic Member Support System (Database), which provided members with remote access to their learning records and identified roles and the opportunity to self assess their learning requirements. The system recorded securely members support needs, linked to a programme of available resources both internally and externally, and charted progress in meeting and delivering those identified needs. Members could also provide feedback on any resources received, and the system was useful for the purpose of evaluation and influencing the content of future programmes and learning opportunities, as advocated by one of the recommendations of this Council's Member Charter Assessment. In response to Members' queries it was indicated that the system could produce certificates of completion of courses/events, which members could provide as evidence when obliged to undertake similar training by partner organisations such as Tristar, Fire Brigade etc; so as to avoid unnecessary duplication of training undertaken. Members referred to training received at events such as Planning Summer School, which should be incorporated within training records; and questioned if any co-ordination was undertaken with training provided by School Governing Body Support. It was agreed that both of

these suggestions should be undertaken; and that each member would also receive a report identifying their own individual training record, detailing the training requested and what had actually been delivered.

A review of training delivered during the current year, which included the introduced Member Policy Update sessions, was provided. A schedule of forthcoming Planning, Licensing and Employee Appeals training opportunities was also submitted, along with details of mentoring opportunities provided via the North East Improvement Partnership.

AGREED that:-

1. Updates on the development of the Member Support 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.
2. The content of the report in relation to ongoing work regarding Member Support, Learning and Development be noted.
3. The arrangements made with regard to training to be provided in 2009/2010 in respect of Planning, Licensing and Employee Appeals, be noted.

**MAP
31/08** **New Executive Arrangements**

Further to the Members Seminar held on 16th May 2008, consideration was given to the background to, and details of the Council approach, to the adoption of new executive arrangements.

Part 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”) revised the 2000 Act provisions and introduced new executive arrangements requirements. Authorities, such as Stockton, which were presently operating an “old-style Leader and Cabinet executive” as provided for in the 2000 Act, must make a change in governance arrangements in accordance with the 2007 Act’s requirements. The Council therefore had to vary its present arrangements, and look to introduce a different form of executive as provided for and permitted by the 2007 Act. The 2007 Act now allowed for only two specific executive models:-

- Mayor and cabinet, or
- Leader and cabinet

The report provided members with a range of related research, together with details of central Government policy, in order to inform the process of changing governance models. In addition, the report contained an account of Stockton's experience when assessed against the research findings and the assumptions made by policy makers. The July 2008 White Paper, Communities in Control: real people, real power continued to develop the Government’s commitment to more visible and accountable leaders. Members attention was drawn to the following paragraphs within the White Paper:-

"1.4 Councils need governance models that readily deliver strategic

leadership, sharp accountability and effective and efficient decision taking. The Government recognises that the directly elected mayoral model can readily deliver this. It also recognises that governance models where there is an indirectly elected council leader can equally deliver these outcomes. It is for this reason that the Government has legislated in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to give councils a choice between directly elected mayors and indirectly elected leaders. This should be a choice that the local community can make.

1.5 Accordingly this consultation paper focuses on proposals to make it easier for people in England to demand that their local leaders hold a governance referendum on moving to a new form of governance arrangements. It includes proposals to make it easier for local people to decide to have a directly elected mayor. Equally the consultation includes a process whereby a decision to have a directly elected mayor can be reversed by a governance referendum or vote of the council."

Members views were invited prior to making a preliminary decision on proposals for changing the Authority's executive arrangements. It was proposed that each of the political Groups should be consulted on their views on both the Mayor & Cabinet and Leader & Cabinet options, with a brief simplified summary of each, alongside a draft timetable for each option including the possibility for a referendum. After such consultation had taken place, it was agreed that a report should be submitted to Cabinet and Council.

AGREED that:-

- 1.The report be noted.
- 2.The Director of Law & Democracy carry out the proposed consultation with each of the political Groups, as identified, prior to a report being submitted to Cabinet and Council.