

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO COUNCIL

**30th APRIL 2014
REPORT OF THE
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

MEMBERS POLICY SEMINAR PROGRAMME

SUMMARY

This report provides Council with an overview of content from the most recent Members Policy Seminars and includes feedback from the pilot to test holding seminars pre Council meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Council are recommended to:

1. Receive this report and note its contents.

BACKGROUND

1. Members Policy Seminars are an important vehicle for both informing and consulting with Members on a variety of topics from Policy and Legislative changes, contributions to Government consultations, and providing an update on local service provision from partner organisations. They have been in place since January 2009 and are particularly useful for those issues which are of importance to the Council or partners but are in the early stages of development, or those which will be of interest to Members, out with the usual reporting arrangements.
2. A programme of seminars is set annually with events planned on a monthly basis. Topics are reviewed monthly by the Corporate Management Team to ensure issues are current and discussions and information provision is timely. Special, additional seminars are arranged as required.

SUMMARY OF THE TOPICS COVERED

3. Due to the postponement of the item scheduled for the March seminar and heavy diary commitments in the democratic diary in early April, both the March and April seminars were cancelled. The next seminar is scheduled for early May, with many topics already programmed in the forward plan for the 2014/15 programme.

MEMBERS POLICY SEMINAR - PILOT

4. The Executive Scrutiny Committee on 22nd October 2013 made a recommendation that the Member Policy Seminars be programmed to move to a Wednesday evening before full Council in order to increase attendance. Consideration was given to this proposal by CMT on 29th October 2013 and a pilot took place during December and January to run the seminar on a Wednesday evening prior the Council meeting.
5. The December seminar commenced at 5p.m, with a single item agenda – An update from the Police and Crime Commissioner, the January seminar commenced at 4.30 p.m., a

single item agenda on Children's Safeguarding. Attendance numbers were 25 and 20 respectively for each session.

6. Attendance analysis over the last 12 months indicates that attendance levels vary from session to session; the pilot did not indicate a significant increase in attendance. Over the last 12 months attendance levels range from 34 to 10, with all political parties being represented at seminars at least once, in the past 12 months.
7. The programme looks to alter the days where possible and attendance appears to vary depending on the topics covered, rather than the day or time of the seminar.
8. The Corporate Management Team considered the analysis of the pilot including comments received from members and recommended that the suggested change to the scheduling of the seminars does not go ahead on the basis of :
 - Council is only every 6 weeks and seminars are usually held monthly
 - The likelihood that more "Special "seminar sessions would be required.
 - Attendance did not show a significant increase through the pilot
 - Consistency of venue availability in the Jim Cook suite is more problematic on a Wednesday
 - Some negative feedback from both members and officers on the arrangements.
9. Following this recommendation the proposed dates for the 2014/15 have been arranged. Invitations will be sent out to members shortly via outlook to secure these dates in diaries.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

11. There are no financial implications arising as a direct result of this report.

Legal

12. There are no legal implications arising as a direct result from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

13. This report is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

14. This report is not subject to Equality Impact Assessment as it makes no proposals for service development or policy change.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

15. Members Policy Seminars help the Council achieve all its objectives as outlined in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

16. No external consultation has taken place on this report.

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Background Papers

Slides/ Presentation from the member seminar programmes.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Members Policy Seminars affect all wards in the Borough.

Property

This report has no implications for the Council's Capital Programme and Asset Management Plan.