

Executive Committee

No Direct Ward Relevance

20 May 2009

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP 6 MAY 2009 – MINUTES / REFERRALS

(Report of the Head of Legal, Democratic and Property Services)

1. Summary of Proposals

The Committee is asked to consider a range of recommendations arising from a recent meeting of the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) regarding the Member Development and Members' Support budgets for 2009/10.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to RESOLVE that

- 1) in the light of recent Council budget decisions, the Member Support budget be divided to now provide £300 for each Member's individual support needs and £200 x 29 = £5,800 to be held centrally for Member Development purposes;
- 2) individual Members' existing commitments above £300 (and up to £500) be honoured at the present time;
- 3) the budgetary situation be reviewed at half year;
- 4) no new IT equipment be provided to Members until the question of funding is settled; and
- 5) consideration be given to the baseline provision of equipment to Members, and how this might be established, with a view to its implementation in May 2010, subject to the Council's approval of the necessary bids.

3. Financial, Legal, Policy, Risk and Sustainability Implications

Financial

- 3.1 The proposals seek clarification of earlier Council decisions in relation to current Member Development and Support budgets.

There are financial implications arising from aspects of this report. The IEG ('Implementing Electronic Government') capital fund is now regrettably exhausted leaving the Members' IT equipment area currently unfunded.

Legal

- 3.2 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. The Local Government Act 1972 establishes the authority for the Council to provide the necessary support to Members in their various roles.

Policy

- 3.3 The Council has agreed that the Member Development Programme and the Council's intention to gain West Midlands Local Government Association Charter Status should be supported and further pursued.

The Council has a policy of providing a computer – PC or laptop – to every Member of the Council who requires one as a minimal IT provision. All current requests, except one, have been met.

The first line of communication with Members is now electronic rather than paper based.

Risk

- 3.4 It is important for the maintenance of good governance arrangements at the Council that Members receive sufficient opportunity for personal development and the necessary support to enable them to undertake their roles efficiently.

Sustainability / Environmental

- 3.5 No significant sustainability / environmental implications have been identified as arising from this report. Efficient IT support does of course help reduce the reliance on paper copies of Council papers.

Report

4. Background

- 4.1 At the meeting of the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) on 6 May 2009, Members considered the outcomes of budget decisions taken at recent meetings of the Council.
- 4.2 The meeting of Council on 9 March 2009 agreed a recommendation from the MDSG that the Member Development Programme be supported by pooling £500 from every Member's individual personal budget into a corporate Member Development budget of £14,500.
- 4.3 Subsequent to the decision taken in March, it was agreed at the meeting of Council on 6 April 2009 that the overall Member Support Budget be halved from £29,000 to £14,500 for 2009/10, because of

savings regularly accruing in the Members' Support Budgets.

- 4.4 The MDSG considered other aspect of Member Support and Development, including the recent news that the capital fund which until recently had supported the provision of IT equipment to Members was now exhausted.

5. **Key Issues**

Revenue Funding

- 5.1 The MDSG identified that the mechanisms by which the reduction of Members' Support Budgets would be implemented had not yet been specified. Guidance was therefore sought as to whether it was intended that the savings should be made from the individual Members' element, from the pooled element, or from both. The MDSG made recommendations as detailed in Section 2) of the report above: that £300 to be allocated for the individual use of each Member and that the balance of £5,800 be held centrally.
- 5.2 It was agreed that current Member Support commitments which had been based on an expectation of a £500 allocation per Member, should continue to be honoured, but that the situation should be reviewed at half year time. This was on the basis that the decision to reduce these budgets had been taken because of regular savings accruing each year.

Capital Funding

- 5.3 In terms of budgets to fund further IT equipment for Members, it was noted that new funding would need to be approved since previous sources had now been fully spent. Work was still outstanding in terms of updating the Council's agreed baseline provision of IT equipment. The Steering Group noted Members' increased interest in equipment such as Blackberries, which were not currently provided.
- 5.4 The MDSG further proposed that no new IT equipment should be provided to Members until such time as the funding issue had been resolved, and agreed that further decisions were required re the 'baseline' provision of IT equipment, with a view to implementing any changes from May 2010.

6. **Other Implications**

No Asset Management, Community Safety, Human Resources or Social Exclusion implications have been identified.

7. **Lessons Learnt**

None specified.

8. **Background Papers**

Agendas and Minutes of various meetings of the Executive Committee and Council.

9. **Consultation**

There has been no consultation other than with the MDSG itself, and with Democratic Services Officers.

10. **Author of Report**

The author of this report is Steve Skinner (Democratic Services Manager) who can be contacted on extension 3256 (e-mail: steve.skinner@redditchbc.gov.uk) for more information.

11. **Appendices**

None