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REPORT TO EXECUTIVE			
PORTFOLIO AREA: CORPORATE RESOURCES			
Date of Meeting:		29 SEPTEMBER 2003	
Public			
Key Decision:	Yes	Recorded in Forward Plan:	Yes
Inside Policy Framework			

Title: **OPTIONS FOR ELECTED MEMBERS SUPPORT SERVICES**

Report of: **HEAD OF MEMBER SUPPORT & EMPLOYEE SERVICES**

Report reference: **ME 11/03**

Summary:

This report considers the options available to the City Council for the support of Elected Members in their Constitutional role.

Recommendations:

1. The Executive are requested to consider the proposals detailed in this report and recommend to Council a preferred option and;
2. The Council is requested to determine the option to be progressed and approve budgetary provision on an on going basis.

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2. BACKGROUND

Members will be aware that the following broad support arrangements for Members are in place:

- For the Executive – 1 Personal Assistant Support Officer (Full time)
- For Overview & Scrutiny – 1 Overview & Scrutiny Manager (Full time)

1 Overview & Scrutiny Officer (Full time)

- For the Democratic Process – Administrative support from Legal & Democratic

Services in connection with committee services

- For Elected Members – Some administrative support from Legal & Democratic

Services & Customer Services in connection with typing

of letters, advertising of surgeries, travel bookings etc.

- Support from Member & Employee Services in

connection with Member's training,
allowances and IRP

facilitation etc.

- For Mayoral and Civic – provided by the Mayoral and Civic Officer in Legal &

Functions Democratic Services for Civic and Ceremonial purposes

Members will also be aware that until Spring 2002 each group had the benefit of one full time officer who gave support on a political basis within the terms of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989. This facility was withdrawn by the Council in April 2002.

1. PURPOSE

The scope of this report is to present options for increasing the support available to all Elected Members acting in their representational and constituency role. This is in recognition that there is general agreement that Councillors lack the necessary support in respect of case load work, research and the provision of proactive Ward information.

This is impacting on Councillors' ability to carry out their roles effectively.

In the light of the Council decision that Member Support Officers should not be "politically appointed" (in accordance with Section 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989) the proposals in this report are on the basis that any officers directly supporting Members will be non political and able to work for any Member of the Council, as is the case with the officer core generally.

If this is not the intention, then the Executive should recommend to the Council that the support should be in accordance with Section 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

2. SERVICES NEEDED

Group Leaders have indicated that support is needed (varyingly) in the following categories:

- Administrative / Secretarial support to deal with telephone calls, communication between councillors and to act as a point of contact for the public, staff and other members.
- Policy work to research areas of policy and provide intelligence to support debate and decision making
- A combination of both administration and policy work

At the time of the Organisational Review of the Council in December 2002, proposals were put to the Council for two additional members of staff to support councillors. These staff were to be located as part of the functions of the newly established Member Support and Employee Services Business Unit, but this option was not supported.

1. POSSIBLE APPROACHES

There are three broad approaches that could be adopted.

Approach A

A pool of staff located in Member Support and Employee Services and available to support all Members irrespective of party.

This could range from, say, 1 to 3 officers (full time) or 1 to 3 officers (part time), or combinations thereof.

Approach B

Individual officers apportioned to support Political Groups.

On either a full time or part time basis.

Approach C

A proportional allocation of officer time to each Political Group according to the number

of seats held on the Council.

Illustrative Job Descriptions, are appended to this report for the post of Member Support Admin Assistant Scale 1 / 2 and Member Support Officer Scale 3 / 4. The gradings for these posts are indicative at present and could conceivably be higher. Once the option for support is chosen and Members' requirements clearly identified, then Job Descriptions would be formally drawn up and the grading determined accordingly.

The costs of each of these approaches clearly will depend upon whether full or part time appointments are made and upon the nature of duties required by Members. Thus, if it were determined that in order to provide the requisite service a Scale 4 / 5 graded post would be required, rather than as illustrated Scale 3 / 4, the estimated costings shown for the options below would each need to be increased by up to £2k per Support Officer post.

From a management perspective it is considered most effective and efficient to manage a service from the Member Support and Employee Services Business Unit (MSES). This would provide a consistent approach, greater sharing of data (with confidentiality assured), and cover for absence, with the ability to undertake integrated training and development.

This would also offer the potential for MSES to provide a One Stop Shop administrative support service for Members to replace the current disparate arrangements.

Whatever option is chosen (below) it is strongly recommended that it also include one clerical post based in MSES to enable there to be rationalisation of these currently unsatisfactory arrangements. Particularly given the likelihood that services desired by Members would include both administration and policy work (section 3 above). Were there to be an option selected without any scale 1 / 2 provision then there would be an issue that Scale 3 / 4 staff will need to carry out duties of a routine nature that are not commensurate with their grade.

Should staff be allocated to work directly for Political Groups it is emphasised this would be for work of a non-political nature in support of their work on the Council.

Members have raised the possibility of transferring staff from the Legal and Democratic Services Business Unit to the Member Services Business Unit to provide a support role for members, particularly as part of the work is currently undertaken in that unit. However, it is clear that the services currently provided to members from Legal and Democratic Services utilise some spare capacity resulting from more than one employee. It is therefore impracticable to transfer this resource and it has been earmarked in the Legal and Democratic Services business plan to meet essential improvements in committee administration and land searches. The prospect of transferring existing staff has therefore been discounted.

5. DETAILED OPTIONS

Using the broad approaches set out in section 4 the options are as follows

Approach A

A 'pool' of staff, located in Member Support and Employee Services, available to all

members on demand.

Option A1 One Officer part time at Scale 3/4 Estimated Cost £9,684*

A2 One Officer full time at Scale 3/4 Estimated Cost £19,367*

A3 Two Officers part time at Scale 3 / 4 Estimated Cost £19,367*

A4 Two Officers full time Scale 3 / 4 Estimated Cost £38,734*

A5 Three Officers part time Scale 3 / 4 Estimated Cost £29,050*

A6 Three Officers full time Scale 3 / 4 Estimated Cost £58,101*

Please note in the example above that part time equates to 18.5 hours.

* costs exclude the addition of a Scale 1 / 2 post. Several permutations are possible with approach A in order to accommodate a scale 1 / 2 Admin Assistant. Estimated costs would be between £25k and £66k depending upon the preferred 'package'.

For example :

Illustrative Option A7 - Three part time Member Support Officers plus a Scale 1 / 2

Admin assistant, full time. This example would cost £44,601.

Comment

These options allow good integration with the Member Support and Employee Services Business Unit, but with the part time options there would not be the capacity to undertake all duties required. Any issues of priority for resources between groups could be problematic and would rest with the Head of the Business Unit to resolve.

There could also be problems of confidentiality if staff worked for all groups.

Approach B

An individual Officer appointed to each group.

Option B1 Three members of staff full time, on the basis that one member of staff is

assigned to each group at Scale 3 / 4 Estimated Cost £58,101

Option B2 Three members of staff part time, on the basis that one member of staff is

assigned to each group at Scale 3 / 4 Estimated Cost £29,050

Part time is defined as 18.5 hours.

There is a potential third option (B3) whereby we have 3 Member Support officers at

Scale 3 / 4 either full or part time, plus one additional Scale 1 / 2 Admin assistant either full or part time, supporting all groups. Estimated cost between £37k and £74k.

Comments

These options have the advantage to political groups in giving dedicated support. Group leaders and the Head of Member Support and Employee Services would ensure that work allocated was not of a political nature.

Cover and support may be difficult to provide between the post holders if there were issues of trust and confidentiality.

Approach C

In this option the hours worked by each post holder would be directly proportionate to the number of Members in each respective party.

Option C1 – Three part time members of staff at Scale 3 / 4

The allocation of a single post holders hours would be:

Conservative $23/52 \times 37$ hours = 16.25 hours per week approx.

Labour $22/52 \times 37$ hours = 15.5 hours per week approx.

Liberal Democrat $5/52 \times 37$ hours = 3.5 hours per week approx.

The option is estimated to cost £19,367. This excludes the additional Scale 1 / 2 post costing (full time) £15551.

Comments

This approach would give greater support to the groups with most seats on the Council, but would be difficult to operate as the proportions and hours available

would not equate to full time equivalents and could change each year. Thereby prompting recruitment difficulties.

Furthermore, the hours of the post holder could not be guaranteed due to the possibility of changes to Member representation on the Council following each election. Thereby prompting contractual difficulties.

2. Summary of options

The table below does *not* include a Scale 1 / 2 Admin Assistant appointed in addition to the Scale 3 / 4 staff shown.

The costs of a full time Admin Assistant would be £15551 in addition to the figures shown below.

Option	Approach	Number of Full Time Equivalent posts	Number of post holders	Cost to the Authority
A1	One Officer part time	0.5	1	£9,684
A2	One Officer full time	1	1	£19,367
A3	Two Officers part time	1	2	£19,367
A4	Two Officers full time	2	2	£38,734
A5	Three Officers part time	1.5	3	£29,050
A6	Three Officers full time	3	3	£58,101
B1	Three Officers Full time	3	3	£58,101
B2	Three Officers Part time	1.5	3	£29,050
C1	Three Officers Part time	1.0	3	£19,367

7. CONCLUSION

It is important for the future development of the City Council that Elected

Members are

properly supported in their role and this report sets out the broad options to guide officers

in bringing forward detailed financial and staffing proposals. Members are requested to express their preference and to request the Council for funding provision.

8. CONSULTATION

Consultation to Date.

CMT

Leader of the Council

Portfolio Holder

Group Leaders

Town Clerk & Chief Executive

Consultation proposed.

Executive Members 29 September 2003

Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny 16th October 2003

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Executive are requested to consider the proposals detailed in this report and recommend to Council a preferred option and;
2. The Council is requested to determine the option to be progressed and approve budgetary provision on an on going basis.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Provision of Administrative support for Elected Members must be considered and progressed as the lack of support to councillors is impacting on their ability to carry out their roles effectively. A concern of this nature emerged during the recent CPA exercise.

IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing / Resources - Each option involves appointment of additional staff
 - New posts would need to be classified as politically-restricted.
- Financial - The cost of the proposed options are set out in the main body of the report and range from £10,000 up to £74,000 depending on the preferred option chosen. A recurring supplementary estimate request to Council would need to be approved to enable the immediate funding of these posts. However, the current projected revenue funding gap for 2004/05 onwards is estimated at over £600,000 (as detailed elsewhere on this Agenda). This gap is before consideration of any other new bids, commitments and saving proposals that the Council may wish to consider as part of the budget process. It is recommended therefore that unless this issue is thought to be an urgent one, the consideration of funding of these posts be deferred and considered as part of the budget process.
 - In addition to the salary costings provided there will be one-off associated costs in relation to providing an office, furniture etc. Due to the many options presented in this report, it was not possible to provide estimations of these costs within the body of the report at this stage.
 - Ongoing costs for supplies and services etc. have not been included either , again because there are too many variables to make reliable estimations. These costs, when determined, should be able to be covered from the existing Democratic Process budget.
- Legal - None
- Corporate - None
- Risk management – None
- Equality issues - None
- Environmental - None
- Crime and Disorder - None

APPENDIX A

CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL

MEMBER SUPPORT & EMPLOYEE SERVICES

ILLUSTRATIVE JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE: Member Support Officer

Grade: Scale 3/4

Post reference: *

Responsible to: Pay & Member Services Manager

Responsible for:

-

OVERALL PURPOSE

- **To Provide support to Elected Members of the Council to enable them to operate efficiently & effectively in their representational role & Democratic duties.**
- **In the absence of the PA to the Executive, cover the duties of that post to ensure continuity of service.**

Key Areas of Responsibility

1. To undertake & co ordinate research & information gathering for Elected Members of all parties.
2. Act as a researcher & correspondent for enquiries from members of all political groups.
3. Provide admin support to all Elected Members.
4. Monitor the processing of issues raised by constituents and referred to Officers by Elected members.
5. Information gathering in relation to Member Development framework in liaison with the Training Co-ordinator
6. Provide cover, as required for the Member Support clerical assistant
7. Provide cover arrangements during the absence of the PA to the Executive Members, to ensure continuity of service.
8. Promote Best Value, excellence in customer service, a focus on continuous improvement and the promotion of these in the delivery of services and

employment within the context of equality of opportunity and cultural diversity.

9. Implement and monitor a positive performance culture, complying with policies and procedures that enable delivery of agreed targets and service standards.
10. Establish and maintain effective two-way communication with staff, colleagues, Members and customers, seeking out and responding to opinions in order to further enhance the quality of service delivery.
11. To promote best practice in meeting the requirements of Health & Safety legislation and to comply with other relevant statutory legislation.
12. Undertake such other duties that are required from time to time and are commensurate with this position, including assisting in other areas of the Business Unit.

Special Features

The position may be a Job Share and each post holder will be expected to provide cover during the planned absence of the other post holder.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Member Support officer

All criteria are essential, unless stated as 'Desirable'

Criteria	Competency
<i>Education & Qualifications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High standards of literacy & presentation of written work. • Recognised Data Processing qualifications – desirable • Competent in using Microsoft Office
<i>Experience, Knowledge & Understanding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of communicating effectively with a wide range of people. • Experience of using IT systems including Word Processing, Database, Spreadsheets, DTP etc

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of providing a wide range of administrative support. • Experience of working in Local Government – desirable • Ability to work effectively within a team • Understanding of City Council structure and functions – desirable • Political awareness - desirable
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to work on own initiative • Able to demonstrate a flexible approach to tasks • Able to work to deadlines and to manage and prioritise own workload.
Personal qualities & Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must maintain confidentiality of information. • Ability to respond to issues with tact & diplomacy. • Ability to demonstrate a high level of interpersonal skills
Other factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible in approach to working hours

APPENDIX B**CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL****MEMBER SUPPORT & EMPLOYEE SERVICES****ILLUSTRATIVE JOB DESCRIPTION****JOB TITLE: Member Support Admin Assistant**

Grade: Scale 1/2

Post reference: *

Responsible to: Pay & Member Services Manager

Responsible for:

-

OVERALL PURPOSE

- **To provide clerical & administrative support to Elected Members in their representational roles and Democratic duties.**
- **Assist with the administrative arrangements within the Member Support & Employee Services Business Unit**

Key Areas of Responsibility

1 To provide an efficient, accurate & professional typing service to Elected Members enabling them to provide an effective service to and on behalf of their constituents.

1. Act as liaison between Elected Members & officers and arrange meetings as required.
2. Provide general administrative support to Elected Members, as directed by the Pay & Member Services manager.

Including: Conference, travel & hotel booking arrangements

Meeting arrangements

Secretarial & typing support service

Arrangements for Surgery advertising

Producing ward information leaflets

Provision of personalised stationery

3. Provide clerical & administrative services to the Overview & Scrutiny support team & the Emergency Planning function.
4. To provide clerical & administrative support for Members Development in liaison with the training co-ordinator.
5. To assist with administrative & clerical duties within the Member Support & Employee Services Business Unit as required.
6. Establish and maintain effective two-way communication with staff, colleagues, Members and customers, seeking out and responding to opinions in order to further enhance the quality of service delivery.
7. Work in accordance with Health & Safety guidance at all times.
8. Undertake such other duties that are required from time to time and are commensurate with this position..

Special Features

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Member Support Admin Assistant

All criteria are essential, unless stated as 'Desirable'

Criteria	Competency
<i>Education & Qualifications</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of RSA 2/3 typing/word processing or equivalent. (to be determined when post is advertised) • High standards of literacy & presentation of written work. • Recognised Data Processing qualifications – desirable • Competent in using Microsoft Office

Experience, Knowledge & Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of communicating effectively with a wide range of people. • Experience of using IT systems including Word Processing, Database, Spreadsheets, DTP etc • Experience of providing a wide range of administrative support. • Experience of working in Local Government – desirable • Ability to work effectively within a team • Understanding of City Council structure and functions - desirable
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to work on own initiative within a team • Able to demonstrate a flexible approach to tasks • Able to work to deadlines and to manage and prioritise own workload.
Personal qualities & Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must maintain confidentiality of information. • Ability to respond to issues with tact & diplomacy. • Ability to demonstrate a high level of interpersonal skills
Other factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible in approach to working hours

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