CARLISLE CITY-COUNCIL

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CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 16 October 2003

Title:

CONSULTATION ON THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEMBERS

Report of: **Head of Member Support & Employee Services**

Report reference: **ME 18/03**

Summary:

A broad framework for the training and development of Members was approved by the Executive in June.

Although this is a new approach it is presented in the knowledge that the Council has provided training for Members over many years and has much to build upon.

However, feedback from the recent CPA exercise clearly states that we need to improve our arrangements for Members development. As such the framework has proved timely and should go a long way to address what will become an improvement area within the pending CPA Action Plan.

This framework should also serve to stimulate all Members to aspire to review and enhance their performance, which it is recognised will in turn positively impact upon the success of the Council in coming years.

The Executive also endorsed a consultative exercise with Members over the summer in order to

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: report ME4/03

work up the details of the framework, and that this be presented for approval by full Council on 4 November 2003.

There are opportunities for all Members to present their individual views, but in addition the collective views of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee are being sought.

Contact Officer: David Williams   **Ext:**   7082

Consultation on the Framework for the development of Elected Members

1. The framework

This framework comprises the following:

- Members Development **Policy** describing purpose, scope, commitment and responsibility
- Members Development **strategy** showing how we will implement this framework, the key players and their roles, and its oversight
- **Needs analysis** - at both corporate (i.e. Executive, various committees) and individual Member levels, the latter conducted annually
- Some sort of agreed/shared understanding as to **'occupational standards'** that serve to articulate levels of performance by Members in their various roles
- A **Development Programme** updated annually, that disseminates and explains what is available to Members, the content of which is specifically designed to help Members achieve the 'standards'
- A range of **delivery methods** offering flexibility to Members in terms of preferred learning styles, time availability, experience and accessibility
- A range of quality training **providers,** both in-house and external
- A defined and sufficient **budget** with clear and coherent responsibility
- A fair and workable **process** for accessing this budget
- Appropriate underpinning **'national standards'** such as the North West Employer's Members Charter, Investors in People, Best Value that both amplifies the Council's commitment by allowing external scrutiny of the operation of the framework, and that enables continuous improvement.

2. The consultative process

A consultant Mr George Sandford has been appointed to work on behalf of the authority, to canvass Members' opinions, suggestions and explore options to arrive at a coherent and vigorous approach to Member Development.

The process adopted will allow all Councillors to put forward their views in order to assist officers to work up the Elected Member Development Policy, 'appraisal' system, provision of training, etc. The purpose is to have a clearer understanding from our Members to inform the paper that will go to full Council on 4 November.

In order to make the consultation process and dialogues meaningful and manageable, the scope is limited to a number of key questions to be addressed including:

- Why is Member development important?

- What is the best process for identifying Member training needs?

- How best to establish the requirements of the 'job'?

- Whether to create a set of generic occupational standards?

- Under what circumstances should mandatory prior development be required?

- How much development time over the course of a year should Members commit to?

- What are the most appropriate development methods?

Mr Sandford has:
- held *open surgeries* for Members to drop in individually or collectively as preferred
- distributed a *Questionnaire* to all Members by email and in hard copy
- conducted *Telephone interviews*
- *attended events* where Members are present in order to canvas views

In addition, Members from each Group have jointly accompanied officers on *visits* to three regional authorities that hold the coveted Members Charter. The intention is to learn from best practice elsewhere and to inform the thinking of the three political groups. These authorities are:
- Crewe and Nantwich
- Halton
- Preston.

The final report will be seen by the Executive on 27 October 2003, prior to full Council. The intention is to implement the framework immediately following approval.

The original framework document is attached as an appendix to this brief report.

David Williams
Head of Member Support and Employee Services

Appendix

1. **Introduction**

Although we have offered Members training for many years and continue to meet the needs of several individuals there is dissatisfaction among Members with current arrangements. It is now widely recognised that it is not only the performance of staff that can determine the success of a local authority, and it is apparent that our current approach to the development of Members is not sufficiently strategic. It is also unclear as to what benefits accrue to the authority.

A framework is proposed, one that is designed to enable Members to enhance both their and the Council's performance. This is the first time we will have adopted this approach.

The components of this framework are identified in this report but not yet the detail. This will follow once officers receive a steer from Members. The key to this will be the policy that Members choose to adopt.

2. **Policy**

2.1 This will explain why we wish to develop our Members. For example, it may be that the Council would wish to assure the quality of decision-making, the responsiveness of members to the needs of stakeholders, or for added credibility, or to enable each member to maximise their contribution to the Council.

2.2 It would describe which members are to be included within the framework (all we hope, but they will engage differentially).

2.3 It also should express the will of the Council to make it work and to reinforce this through commitment to national/regional standards. It could also go further and set Performance Indicators (e.g. the number of Members engaging with the Programme; all new members to receive induction etc) to both drive and measure the expected benefits.

2.4 Overall responsibility will be designated at both political and officer levels.

3. **Strategy**

3.1 This should clearly explain how it will all work.

3.2 It will probably include the setting up of a relatively informal steering group to provide strategic direction and oversight. They would agree a scheme of evaluation.

3.3 Members will need to be consulted of course and kept informed.

3.4 Other key players (including staff) will be identified with roles allocated.

3.5 This strategy should last for three years but should be reviewed each year. It will need to be

sufficiently robust to survive and indeed support a political transfer of power.

4. Needs analysis

4.1 There should be analysis of skills and knowledge at two *levels*: corporate and individual and in two *forms*: core and specialist.

- At the ***corporate*** level we must find a way of identifying what is required to:
  - be an Elected Member of Council, and
  - sit in full Council, and
  - serve a ward.

These are *core requirements*.

- Also the skills and knowledge required for those who may become part of:
  - the Executive
  - or of Overview and Scrutiny Committees
  - or of regulatory committees (e.g. licensing, planning)
  - or other committees such as appeals and employment.

All these are *specialist requirements*.

- At the ***individual*** level we need to know what skills and knowledge each particular Member already has and what they need to learn in order to carry out the above roles (or to enhance their performance in these roles).

4.2 The needs of individuals can only be determined properly when carried out as part of a planned 'assessment' exercise. This would need to be one-to-one and would be with another Member, although clearly there are going to be resource and role issues that will have to be addressed here. It is also not inconceivable that some form of 360-degree appraisal could be introduced, given that feedback from stakeholders is now recognised as so important.

4.3 This assessment should occur both at the moment they are elected and annually throughout their time of service. During which they will go from being a new Member to become established and experienced. In this time their needs will change. This could initially be the need for induction, then progressing to a requirement for a more in-depth understanding of certain areas. Or be the need to make the transition from core to specialist. Or it could simply be that their interests alter, or indeed, that Members become more self-aware.

4.4 We should also attempt to reflect the interests of Members who may want to learn for the sake of learning and not necessarily because it is expected of them. We may know not where such learning shall lead but it often will be worth a small investment.

4.5 Finally, in terms of skills we need to consider both the personal and the inter-personal. The former are likely to be role-specific (e.g. the attributes of a Chair of committee) whereas the latter could be required of all Members i.e. a range of core inter-personal skills (e.g. effective listening skills).

5. 'Occupational standards'

We are uncertain as to whether these actually exist or that we are in effect simply talking about formalising 4 above. We will research this further.

6. Development programme

6.1 The programme would be planned in outline prior to the start of each municipal year and endorsed by Members. Personal copies of this outline would be sent to each Member. Full details of each event would then be put onto folders.

6.2 It would contain a range of development activities to reflect the needs identified in 4 above. This could include the traditional workshop, induction event, and training course, along with the more unusual such as personal coaching, mentoring/shadowing, planned visits, perhaps even a Foundation Degree in Community Governance (or similar). It should also include the use of conferences, planned attendance at which can be a very useful means of updating and learning.

6.3 As regards methodology there would need to be a flexible approach adopted in order to maximise accessibility – evening events, a series of shorter events as opposed to one long session, perhaps Elearning etc.

6.4 Providers would include our own MSES people (e.g. to train in Overview and Scrutiny or in Health and Safety) and other Council staff (such as from Legal and Democratic) along with selected externals (e.g. North West Employers)

6.5 The important maxim here is that whatever development activity is selected it will be as a result of a planned process i.e. a one-to-one discussion between each Member and a designated mentor/experienced colleague. The programme may well offer a range of activities but the selections made must be managed and not simply be 'pick and mix'.

6.6 Finally, although we are some way from having this new framework accepted and introduced we have made plans *now* for the assessment and induction of new Members in May.

7. Funding

7.1 There is need to reconsider current arrangements if we wish to take a coherent approach. There are several issues to resolve:

- The Members training budget rests with one budget-holder (Head of MSES) and the Members conference budget rest elsewhere (with TCCE and Leader). Such a clear distinction may be inappropriate, particularly as MSES handle the administrative arrangements for both and both frankly, are essentially about learning
- There are some rather bureaucratic and time-consuming procedures that need simplifying
- Members are unhappy about the way that the training budget is divided up currently so that

each Member receives the same set allocation, arguing that there is often not enough funding to meet their individual needs.

- Members are perhaps perversely, equally unhappy (as expressed at Overview and Scrutiny) about the regular underspend occurring on these budgets.

7.2 We will clearly need to consult further on this but one option is to have just one overall operational budget, but with authorisation retained as currently. This way the Head of MSES would link the two budgets into one programme and approach but that he would only authorise expenditure as presently, with the Leader/TCCE continuing to authorise conference spend.

7.3 It is proposed that this overall budget be accessible by Members upon demand but only where each activity selected has the prior approval of a mentor/designated experienced colleague following a proper assessment exercise.

7.4 Where development activities are identified during the year that had not been anticipated at the time the individual needs analysis/assessment took place, then it is proposed that the Portfolio Holder be asked to give approval.

8. Taking this framework forward

8.1 The Leader has been consulted. The Portfolio Holder has contributed to the design of the framework.

8.2 This paper was discussed at CMT in May.

8.3 To assist officers to work up details of the programme there should be a visit to one or two authorities that hold the Members Charter or have 'beacon' status in this field. Salford, Blackburn and Darwin, and Halton are probably the most conveniently located.

8.4 All of this will be 'presentable' as evidence for CPA and although we will not complete the exercise in time before the assessors arrive we should nonetheless gain some 'credit' for our approach.

9. Consultation to Date.

The Leader and Portfolio Holder have been consulted. This paper was discussed at CMT in May.

10. Consultation proposed.

In addition to the Executive we propose full consultation with Members by email, at Overview and Scrutiny meetings and in discussion groups/meetings.

11.   Recommendations

Executive Members are asked to:

- Agree to this proposal to introduce a framework for Members development
- Mandate officers to further develop the component parts of this framework in conjunction with Members
- Steer officers as to direction of Policy
- Agree that officers subsequently return to Executive with a 'mature' framework ready to be then recommended to Council
- Agree that in the meantime Officers proceed with a comprehensive induction programme for newly appointed Members.

12. Reasons for recommendations

Whilst the authority can be quite satisfied with what it has achieved thus far it is now time to take Member development onto a higher level. Not only to enable continuous improvement, nor indeed simply because there are currently issues/concerns expressed by Members that need addressing, but also because this framework is designed to have a positive impact upon the Council's performance.