

Portfolio area: CORPORATE RESOURCES

Date of Meeting 26 th November 2001	
Public/ Private	
Key Decision: Yes/ No	Recorded in Forward Plan: Yes/ No

Title: REVIEW OF MEMBER SUPPORT NEEDS

Report of : TOWN CLERK AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Report reference TC 221/ 01

Summary

This report brings forward the information gathered during a review of Members' Support Needs including the role of Political Assistants.

Recommendation

The Executive agree

- a. the proposals in respect of Member Support Services contained in paragraph 9 of the report
- b. the administration of Member training and support budgets as set out in paragraph 10 of the report

and

- c. recommend any changes in respect of Political Assistants (and request a further report on implementation if change is to be recommended) .

Contact Officer John Mallinson Ext: 7010

Head of Corporate Policy & Strategy

1. Introduction

1. The Local Government Reform Working Group agreed that there should be two new posts created, one in support of the Executive and one in support of Overview and Scrutiny. The Working Group as part of that decision also requested that a review of Member support needs and of the future role of Political Assistants should take place.
2. The impact of the new political structure on Member support needs generally and the role of Political Assistants in particular may be emerging now that the new structure is in place. The demise of the service committees and, the extensive paperwork which they generated, will presumably have some impacts, as will the new support arrangements for the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny.

2. The Review Process

1. A draft Work Programme for the review was prepared and consulted upon with Group Leaders, Corporate Management Team, Political Assistants, their officer line managers (who are also managers for Member Support Services) and Unison. The draft was amended as a result of these consultations and the final Work Programme is attached as Appendix 1.
2. The timescale for the review was designed to conclude the review as quickly as was practical both in the light of the commencement of the new political structure and to limit the period of uncertainty for the staff affected.
3. As can be seen from the programme the key elements of the review have been a Member questionnaire, Group Leader's views, Political Assistant's views, an analysis of political assistants' work activity and line manager and Member support managers' views.
4. Obviously since the new political system was not in place or only in course of introduction the various views expressed during the review must predominately be based on experience under the 'old' committee system.

3. Members Questionnaire

1. Member's views were recognised as fundamental to the review and a questionnaire was designed to seek those views. The questionnaire had input from Group Leaders, Political Assistants and their line managers, managers responsible for Members Support Services, IT Services and Unison.
2. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix 2 and the report of the findings from the questionnaire is attached as Appendix 3. The findings provide considerable detail of Members' support as currently provided and importantly Members own views. Key points are also referred to later in this report.
3. A member expressed concerns relating to the questionnaire and a copy of his letter and the officer reply is also included in Appendix 2.

4. Group Leader's Views

1. Each Group Leader was invited to comment on the review, the Leader of the Council included his views in his response to the questionnaire whilst the other Group Leaders commented separately. Their views are attached as Appendix 4. The opposition Group Leaders both value the role of political assistants both personally and on behalf of their respective groups.

5. Political Assistants

1. Each Political Assistant kept a record of their work activity over a one-month period and summaries of this analysis is attached as Appendix 5. It is clear that analysis of committee papers, attendance at meetings, briefing Members, policy development, research activity of various types and communications are all common areas of their work. Members' questionnaire responses endorse these as important areas of their work. How this pattern of work will be effected by the new political structure may be starting to emerge and Members will be well placed to assess this themselves.
2. The questionnaire shows that 80% of Members use research and verbal briefings and 74% use information in addition to committee reports. 72% of members obtain this research/briefing/information from Political Assistants and 60% from officers. Several Members specifically commented on the importance of Political Assistants in research, information and briefing (page 10 and appendices 6 & 7 of the survey findings report).
3. 80% of Members feel that Political Assistants are important in supporting their work as a Councillor.
4. Political Assistants were asked for their comments on their future role under the new political structure and on the findings of the questionnaire and two

have commented and their comments are attached as Appendix 6 the third commented through his union (see Appendix 7).

6. Union Comments

1. Unison were invited to comment and those comments are attached as Appendix 7. Unison support the retention of Political Assistants, they support Members being reminded about the administrative and secretarial services available to them (which is recommended in paragraph 9). Unison members in IT Services raise some concerns and the Portfolio Holder and Head of IT Services will discuss those with Unison.

7. Line Managers & Members Support Managers

1. The Political Assistants' officer Line Managers (The City Solicitor and Secretary and the Head of Committee Services) are also responsible for Member Support Services. They were asked for their comments and these were mostly reflected in the content of the questionnaire. The City Solicitor and Secretary did comment further and those comments are attached as Appendix 8. The Head of Committee Services views were reflected in these comments although he did also suggest that Political Assistants should have in place a performance management framework including targets which could be monitored in the same way as have other Council staff.

8. Support to Executive and Overview and Scrutiny

1. As mentioned in the introduction two new posts have been created and by their nature these will presumably to some extent overlap with duties which have been undertaken by Political Assistants. Whether this is such as to question the future of Political Assistants posts is a matter of judgement based upon the duties of the new posts and the information on Members Support Needs and the role of Political Assistants included in this report. The Scrutiny Support Officer has been appointed and commences work on 3rd January 2002. The Executive Support Officer has not been recruited and consideration is being given to a revised arrangement for support to the Executive. The potential change involves a move to a post with a PA/administrative role and reinforces existing policy support arrangements. The job descriptions of the new Scrutiny Support Officer (as recruited) the Executive Support Officer (as originally drafted) and a draft for the potential revised administrative post are attached as Appendix 9.

9. Member Support Proposals

1. Some 40% of Members use secretarial/admin support from the first floor of Town Clerk & Chief Executive's department, of these, however 71% are satisfied with such support. Concerns expressed include awareness of the service amongst Members and confidentiality. In light of this it is proposed that the City Solicitor & Secretary remind all Members of the services which are available having first reviewed procedures relating to confidentiality so that Members can be also reassured regarding arrangements in this respect.
2. 76% of Members are satisfied with IT support and many Members made comments on this and IT training. These have been passed to the Head of IT Services and Head of Personnel Services who will take them into account in future planning.
3. Member satisfaction with training is less than in the above areas and the proposals in this report on Personal Training Budgets ought to help improve this in future.

10. Members' Personal Training and Support Budgets and Member Surgeries

1. These matters were discussed by the Local Government Reform Working Group, Policy and Resources Committee and at Council but not resolved. The proposal under consideration was for a sum to be allocated to each Member to be used at their discretion (funded from the two combined existing budgets). There is, however, a distinction between costs of surgeries (and stationery etc.) on the one hand and training on the other. If these were to be met from a single budget then Members would in effect be deciding whether to fund surgeries or address identified training needs which is not a satisfactory choice.
2. For these reasons it is proposed that there be two separate budgets one for surgeries and stationery (calling cards, diaries etc) administered by the Head of Committee Services and one for Members' Personal Training administered by the Head of Personnel Services.
3. If this approach is accepted then the surgeries budget would be initially set at the level of current expenditure (£4,600). It would, however, not be controllable and increased in future years if needed to reflect demand since in line with the emphasis on Member's community role the frequency of surgeries should reflect needs/demands.
4. The allocation of this sum would in turn mean that Member's Personal Training Budgets could be set at £210. Members could be allowed to carry forward any year end underspends to the following year.

11. Consultation

1. Consultation has been a cornerstone of the review and is reported above.

12. Staffing / Resources Comments

1. Paragraph 10 outlines a proposal for Member Personal Training Budgets to be set at £210 per member. Whilst the concept of individual training allocations is a step in the right direction, £210 per annum may prove to be inadequate to satisfy the training and development aspirations of Members in the new political arrangements.
2. Comments made by Members on training from the survey have been noted and will be taken into account in future plans.
3. If a decision to change the current arrangements for Political Assistants is taken, a further report on the staffing implications will be required.

13. City Treasurer's Comments

1. The proposals outlined in paragraphs 9.1 and 9.2 do not carry any financial implications not already covered in the budget provision.
2. Any option pursued in respect of the Political Assistants as detailed in paragraph 17 would carry financial implications. However these could only be assessed in the light of detailed proposals which would form the basis of a future report, if Members ask for any of the identified options to be developed further.

14. Legal Comments

1. The City Solicitor & Secretary has been consulted and his comments incorporated within the report.

15. Corporate Comments

1. Corporate issues are dealt with within the report.

16. Environmental Implications

1. There are no significant environmental implications.

17.

18. Options in respect of Political Assistants

1. Clearly any decision relating to political assistants is influenced by how Members assess the various findings brought out in this review. Also important is the impact of the new political structure and ways of working under it and of the two new posts created.
2. Dependent upon how Members judge these factors there would appear to be four broad options :-
 - a. make no change
 - b. move to part-time political assistants
 - c. abolish these posts
 - d. provide some level of additional research resource for all Members on a non-political basis as an alternative to these political posts

If Members wish to pursue option b, c or d then a further report on that option and its implementation would be prepared.

1. Determining the Review

1. Any changes to Member support services are a matter for the Executive to decide, however, any changes to Political Assistants posts are constitutionally a matter for full Council and would therefore be the subject of a recommendation by the Executive.

2. Recommendation

The Executive agree

- a. The proposals in respect of Member Support Services contained in paragraph 9 of the report
- b. the administration of Member training and support budgets as set out in paragraph 10 of the report

and

- c. recommend any changes in respect of Political Assistants (and request a further report on implementation if change is to be recommended) .

Peter Stybelski

Town Clerk & Chief Executive

Appendix 1

Review Work Programme

**Review of Member support needs and political assistants
Work Programme**

Date	Action
10/08/01	Prepare first draft survey questionnaire to all members
10/08/01	Seek political assistants' comments on work programme and input to questionnaire (and Unison comments) and agreement to keep periodic record/description of work activity (to be section in final report to LGRWG/EXECUTIVE)
10/08/01	Seek IT Services input to questionnaire
10/08/01	Seek line managers' (JME & IJD) input to questionnaire
10/08/01	Seek line managers' views on political assistants including current and future requirements and nature and extent of past workload (to be section of final report to LGRWG/EXECUTIVE).
13/08/01	Seek Corporate Management Team comments on work programme and input to questionnaire
17/08/01	Finalise draft questionnaire, copy to political assistants (and Unison).
17/08/01	Seek Group Leaders' comments on work programme, agreement to final draft questionnaire and their respective views on political assistants (their respective views to be section in final report to LGRWG/EXECUTIVE).
24/08/01	Finalise and despatch questionnaire to all members
05/09/01	Return deadline for questionnaire
01/10/01	Analysis of questionnaire and findings report completed (to be section in final report to LGRWG/EXECUTIVE)
10/10/01	Seek political assistants' comments on future role under new structure (reflecting new support posts) and outcome of questionnaire (to be section in final report to LGRWG/EXECUTIVE).
10/10/01	Prepare draft report to LGRWG/EXECUTIVE
10/10/01	Seek political assistants' (and Unison) comments on draft report
12/10/01	Seek Group Leaders' comments on draft report
12/10/01	Seek C.M.T. comments on draft report
05/11/01	Final report to LGRWG/EXECUTIVE

Appendix 2

Members Questionnaire

MEMBERS SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE, AUGUST 2001

In preparation for the new political structure changes in September, we are assessing the different types of support used and required by Members. Please can you take a few minutes to help us by completing this questionnaire and returning to Lynne Wild, in the enclosed, freepost envelope. The introductory demographic questions are included so that we can see if support needs vary by sex, age, length of service and employment status.

Q1 Are you male or female?

Male ☐ 1

Female ☐ 2

Q2 What age category are you in?

16-25 ☐ 1

56-65 ☐ 5

26-35 ☐ 2

66-75 ☐ 6

36-45 ☐ 3

76-86 ☐ 7

46-55 ☐ 4

87+ ☐ 8

Q3 How long have you been a Carlisle City Councillor?

Less than 12 months ☐ 01

18-20 years ☐ 08

1-2 years ☐ 02

21-23 years ☐ 09

3-5 years ☐ 03

24-26 years ☐ 10

6-8 years ☐ 04

27-30 years ☐ 11

9-11 years ☐ 05

31-40 years ☐ 12

12-14 years ☐ 06

41+ years ☐ 13

15-17 years ☐ 07

Q4 What is your MAIN employment status? (TICK ONE BOX ONLY)

In full-time employment (more than 30 hours per week) ☐ 1

In part-time employment (less than 30 hours per week) ☐ 2

Self employed ☐ 3

Unemployed/Seeking work ☐ 4

Retired ☐ 5

Looking after home/family ☐ 6

Full-time education ☐ 7

Other ☐ 8

If other please specify:

Q5 Are you any of the following (TICK ALL THAT APPLY)

Group leader ☐ 1

Committee Chairman ☐ 2

Committee Spokesperson ☐ 3

None of these ☐ 4

MEMBER SUPPORT:

Q6 In your role as Councillor, how often do you get support in the following areas from any staff in Carlisle City Council? (including Political Assistants) TICK A BOX FOR EACH OPTION

	Very often	Quite often	Occasionally	Not very often	Never
IT	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Arranging internal meetings with Officers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Arranging external meetings with Organisations	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Booking conferences	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Resident Referral Forms etc	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Provision of stationery, calling cards etc	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Secretarial/admin	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Training & Development	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Research/briefings	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Information/libraries	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Surgeries (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Diary & Appointments	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Communications/Media	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Q7 Do you use the Secretarial/Admin support on the 1st Floor, Town Clerk & Chief Executive Dept?

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

Q8 How satisfied are you with the support you receive, or have received?

Very satisfied ☐ 1 Dissatisfied ☐ 4
 Satisfied ☐ 2 Very dissatisfied ☐ 5
 Adequate ☐ 3

Q9 Is there anything you would like to say about Secretarial/Admin support from the Civic Centre?

Q10 If you do not use TCCE Secretarial/Admin support, where do you get your Secretarial/Admin support from?

Q11 How often have you received assistance with the following IT issues from any staff in Carlisle City Council? (TICK A BOX FOR EACH OPTION)

	Very often	Quite often	Occasionally	Not very often	Never
E-Mail/Public folders	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Council Intranet/Minute system	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Microsoft Office Software	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Internet	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
IT equipment (inc support and faults)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Featurenet	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
IT training/development	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Other IT related	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Q12 How satisfied are you with the support you receive, or have received?

Very satisfied.....☐ 1 Dissatisfied.....☐ 4
 Satisfied☐ 2 Very dissatisfied☐ 5
 Adequate.....☐ 3

Q13 If you get IT assistance from outside Carlisle City Council, where do you get this assistance from?

Q14 Are there any improvements that could be made to the IT service in general?

Q15 How frequently are your training and development needs as a Councillor identified through the following sources? (TICK A BOX FOR EACH OPTION)

	All of the time	Most of the time	Some times	Never
Your Political group	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Member Training Working Group	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Personnel Services	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Yourself	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Council Induction Scheme	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

If other please specify:

Q16 How satisfied are you with your training and development as a Councillor?

Very satisfied.....	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Dissatisfied.....	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Very dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Adequate.....	<input type="checkbox"/> 3		

Q17 If dissatisfied, how can this be improved?

Q18 Other than Committee papers, do you use Research, Information or Verbal briefings in your work as a Councillor? (TICK ALL THAT APPLY)

Research.....	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Verbal briefings	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Information	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	None of these (GO TO Q21)	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Q19 Other than Committee papers, how often do you use Research, Information or Verbal briefings which are obtained from the following sources? (TICK A BOX FOR EACH OPTION)

	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Not very often	Never
Political Assistants	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Council Officers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

If other, please specify:

Q20 Can you list any other sources that you obtain Research, Information or Verbal briefings from?

Q21 Is there anything you would like to say about obtaining or using Research, Information or Verbal briefings?

Q22 How often do you use the Members library in the Tartan Room?

Very often	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Not very often	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Often	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Never	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Occasionally	<input type="checkbox"/> 3		

Q23 How useful a resource do you find the regular update sheet (which advises of additions/changes to information in the Tartan Room)

Very useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Not very useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Useful	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	No use at all	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Q24 How often do you use the IT equipment in the Tartan room?

Very often	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Not very often	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Often	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Never	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Occasionally	<input type="checkbox"/> 3		

Q25 If you do not tend to use the Tartan room why is this?

Q26 If you use the Members library, how satisfied are you with it?

Very satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Satisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Very dissatisfied	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Adequate	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Don't use it	<input type="checkbox"/> 6

Q27 Who usually assists with arrangements for your surgeries? (IF YOU DO NOT HAVE ANY SURGERIES GO TO Q29)

	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Not very often	Never
Council Officers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Political Assistants	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Committee Section/Secretarial/Admin in TCCE	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Yourself	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

If other, please specify:

Q28 How often do you get help with the booking, appointments and advertising of surgeries?... (TICK A BOX FOR EACH OPTION)

	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Not very often	Never
Booking arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Appointments for surgeries	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Advertising the surgeries	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Q29 How often do the following people maintain your personal appointments? (TICK A BOX FOR EACH OPTION)

	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Not very often	Never
Council Officers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Political Assistants	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Secretarial/Admin in TCCE	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Yourself	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

If other, please specify:

Q30 Do you get help from Carlisle City Council staff when responding or communicating with the external media? (TICK ALL THAT APPLY)

Get help responding ☐ 1

Get help communicating ☐ 2

No, do all responding/communicating with media yourself ☐ 3

Never respond/communicate with media ☐ 4

Q31 When responding/communicating with external sources, how often do you get assistance, advice or other support from the following? (TICK A BOX FOR EACH OPTION)

	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Not very often	Never
Communications Unit	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Chief Officers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Other Council Officers (not Communications/Chief Officers)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Political Assistants	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

If other, please specify:

Q32 How often are your meetings/arrangements with COUNCIL OFFICERS organised by the following? (TICK A BOX FOR EACH OPTION)

	All the time	Most of the time	Some times	Never
Political Assistants	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Council Officers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Secretarial/Admin in TCCE	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Yourself	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

If other, please specify:

Q33 And how often are your meetings/arrangements with EXTERNAL PARTNERS/BODIES organised by the following? (TICK A BOX FOR EACH OPTION)

	All the time	Most of the time	Some times	Never
Political Assistants	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Council Officers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Secretarial/Admin in TCCE	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Yourself	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

If other, please specify:

Q34 How important is the role of full time Political Assistants in supporting your work as a Councillor?

Very important.....	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Not very important.....	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Important.....	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Not important at all.....	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

How often do you receive support from Political Assistants in the following areas?

	All the time	Most of the time	Some times	Never
Queries from ward residents	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Information on Committee Reports	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Group meetings/arrangements	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Council policy	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Research on group political items	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Group Committee Memberships	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

Q36 What other areas of support are currently provided by Political Assistants to Members?

(The page contains faint horizontal lines, suggesting it was part of a lined notebook or document.)

PLEASE TURN OVER/

1 Empire Road
Carlisle
CA2 5PA
5th February 2001

J Mallinson
Head of Corporate Policy & Strategy
Carlisle City Council
Civic Centre
Carlisle
CA3 8QG

Dear Mr Mallinson

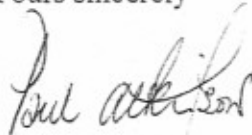
MEMBERS SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

Having considered the Local Government Reform Working Group's request I have decided not to complete the above questionnaire because I do not accept that the purpose of this exercise is to assess the different types of support for members. In recent months, with the impending 'changes', it has become apparent that there has been a concerted effort by some to challenge the necessity of group political assistants in the 'new structures'.

Whilst I accept the validity of such an argument I do not accept and totally oppose the view to make these jobs redundant. However, if the desire to review member support is to have value then 'trial by questionnaire' should be discounted. This method I believe is more likely to subject workers to the harmful effects of work-related stress than perhaps other systems of job evaluation.

It could for example produce an under or over evaluation of the persons work which runs the risk of demoralising and de-motivating consequences. I know this is not the intention of the survey but I am mindful that there are better and fairer ways of appraising and evaluating a persons job than the potential for harassment in a Members Support Questionnaire.

Yours sincerely



Paul Atkinson
City Councillor for Denton Holme

Cc Chief Executive

Town Clerk & Chief Executive Corporate Policy & Strategy Unit

Head of Corporate Policy & Strategy : J W Mallinson LLB

Civic Centre • Carlisle • CA3 8QG • Telephone (01228) 817000 Fax (01228) 817013

Document Exchange Quote DX 63037 Carlisle • Type Talk please ring 0800 95 95 98

Councillor Atkinson

Please ask for:

J.W. Mallinson

Direct Line:

817010

E-mail:

Your ref:

Our ref:

10 September 2001

Dear Councillor Atkinson,

Member Support Questionnaire

I thank you for your letter regarding the above and am sorry that you are unhappy about the questionnaire.

The purpose of the questionnaire is to gain factual information about Member support needs and Members' views in relation to the review, both of which are very important.

A draft of the questionnaire was consulted upon with Group Leaders, the political assistants themselves, their union and their officer line managers. As a result of these consultations it was substantially amended and did not go out until each Group Leader had agreed that it should.

The findings of the questionnaire is not the only information which I am gathering as part of this review. Other information, which will be put forward includes: -

Group Leader's views

Political Assistant's views

Line managers' views

Union views

Political assistants own analysis of their work.

Please be assured that my own role is to facilitate the review process in a neutral, open and inclusive way. I have no personal agenda whatsoever.

I have consulted widely at each stage so far and will continue to do so and my report will itself be consulted upon with Group Leaders, political assistants and their union.

My work programme anticipated reporting to the Executive in October but slippage in consultation responses makes this doubtful and November is looking more likely.

Yours sincerely

John Mallinson
Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Appendix 3

Yours sincerely

John Maitland
Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy

Questionnaire Findings

**CARLISLE
CITY COUNCIL**



RESULTS FROM THE MEMBERS SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

OCTOBER 2001

Corporate Policy & Strategy Unit
Lynne Wild

RESULTS FROM THE MEMBERS SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction:

During August 2001, a self-completion questionnaire was sent to all Members to ask their views on Member Support. 35 questionnaires were returned out of 52, giving a response rate of 67%. Results are accurate to the views of all Members to a + or -10% confidence interval. Analysis and report was carried out by Corporate Policy & Strategy¹. This report begins with a summary of the results and a brief outline. The in-depth review of results covers pages 5 to 16 and Appendices are on pages 17 to 26.

Summary of results:

Councillors often seek support from Council staff (including Political Assistants) when they need research/briefing and general information. Half the Councillors, or their families, do their own secretarial/admin work. For some, this is seen to be due to inadequate secretarial/admin provision by the Council. Others make the decision to do their own admin, as they prefer to work from home. Some members feel that secretarial/admin resources should be appointed by the groups, to maintain political confidentiality.

Members who have received support from IT tend to be satisfied with the service (76%), however several technical issues need to be addressed regarding e-mail, remote servers and problems associated with IT during out of office hours working. The majority of Councillors identify their own training needs. In this questionnaire, Councillors express an interest in IT training and utilising more innovative training methods such as the use of video's and training software programmes for learning foreign languages and sign language. This is due to some members, especially members in employment, not always having the time to attend training courses held during the day.

The Tartan Room is perhaps not as productive as it could be. At the moment almost two thirds of members do not use the members library and 85% of Councillors never use the IT equipment there. The Tartan Room is seen to be cold and lacking privacy, members prefer to work elsewhere.

Over half the Councillors often get help to advertise their surgeries, but they are more likely to make surgery booking arrangements and organise appointments themselves. Around eight out of ten Councillors often maintain their own personal appointments. Seven out of ten arrange their own external bodies meetings all, or most of the time.

Eight out of ten members think the role of full time Political Assistant is important in supporting their role as Councillors. Members say they would not have the resources to search through all the research and information themselves and Political Assistants also provide a useful communicative link between members, the party head office and other local authorities.

¹ Percentages may sum to 99% or 101% due to rounding.

Main results:

- Around half of members often get support from staff with research/briefings. 34% often get support with communications/media. 31% often get support with arranging internal meetings and 28% often get support with information/libraries.
- Two thirds of members do not often get support with secretarial admin/support and just over half say they do not often get support with diary and appointments.
- Around a half of members say they, or their families, do the wordprocessing/letters/emails themselves.
- 4 out of 10 members use the Secretarial/admin support on the 1st floor, TCCE. 60% do not use this support.
- 71% of members that have used the Secretarial/Admin say they are satisfied with the support they received. A further 14% say support is adequate.
- 76% of members are satisfied with the support they received from IT, a further 20% say support is adequate.
- The most common way for Councillors' training needs to be identified is by Councillors themselves. Followed by the Member Training Working Group, the Political Groups, Personnel Services and the Council Induction Scheme.
- Just under half of Councillors think their training and development is adequate, and a further third are satisfied with their training and development.
- 80% of Councillors use research and verbal briefings and 74% use information in addition to Committee papers.
- 72% of Councillors who use research information or verbal briefings often obtain the information from Political Assistants. 60% often obtain them from Council Officers.
- 63% of Councillors never use, or do not often use, the members library in the Tartan Room. 29% 'occasionally' use it.
- Main reasons for not using the Tartan Room are, "Never found it necessary"; "Work from home/IT equipment at home"; "Lack of privacy"; "Cold" or "Use the group room instead".
- 85% of Councillors never use the IT equipment in the Tartan Room.

- Two thirds of Councillors often arrange their own surgeries.
- Over half the Councillors often get help with advertising their surgeries and 30% occasionally get help.
- Councillors are less likely to receive help when making surgery booking arrangements and over half say they never receive help when arranging appointments.
- Around eight out of ten Councillors often maintain their own personal appointments.
- 43% of Councillors are likely to seek assistance, advice or other support from Political Officers, when responding/communicating with external sources.
- Around eight out of ten Councillors make their own meeting arrangements with Council Officers all, or most of the time.
- Seven out of ten Councillors make their own external partners/bodies meeting arrangements all, or most of the time.
- Eight out of ten Councillors say the role of full time Political Assistant is important in supporting their role as Councillor.

MEMBER PROFILE:

Gender:

Male	57%
Female	43%

Age:

16 -25	3%
26-35	0%
36-45	11%
46-55	29%
56-65	34%
66-75	17%
76+	3%
Did not answer	3%

Length of service as a Carlisle City Councillor:

Less than 12 months	3%
1-2 years	23%
3-5 years	23%
6-8 years	17%
9-11 years	6%
12-14 years	11%
15-17 years	6%
18-20 years	3%
21-23 years	6%
24-26 years	0%
27-30 years	0%
31-40 years	3%
41+ years	0%

Main employment status:

Full-time employment (>30 hrs per week)	17%
Part-time employment (<30 hrs per week)	14%
Self employed	11%
Unemployed/seeking work	3%
Retired	49%
Looking after home/family	3%
Full-time education	0%
Other	3%

'Other' answers:

"Council business takes too much time to be employed - even on a part time basis"

There are 3 group leaders, 8 Committee Chairman and 3 Committee Spokespersons in this sample.

MEMBER SUPPORT:

“In your role as Councillor, how often do you get support in the following areas from any staff in Carlisle City Council? (including Political Assistants)”

Around half of members often get support from staff with research/briefings. 34% often get support with communications/media, 31% often get support when arranging internal meetings with Officers and 28% get support with information/libraries. 72% of members do not often get support with booking conferences, (however, booking conferences may be inapplicable to some Councillors). Around two thirds (65%) of members say they do not often get secretarial/admin support. Over half (54%) do not often get support with diary and appointments, see Table 1:

Table 1

Areas	Very often	Quite often	Occasion-ally	Not very often	Never	Missing
Research/ briefings	9 (26%)	8 (23%)	9 (26%)	5 (14%)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)
Communica-tions/media	5 (14%)	7 (20%)	6 (17%)	6 (17%)	9 (26%)	2 (6%)
Arranging internal meetings with Officers	4 (11%)	7 (20%)	7 (20%)	5 (14%)	7 (20%)	5 (14%)
Information/ libraries	4 (11%)	6 (17%)	11 (31%)	7 (20%)	5 (14%)	2 (6%)
IT	6 (17%)	2 (6%)	11 (31%)	7 (20%)	4 (11%)	5 (14%)
Resident Referral Forms	2 (6%)	6 (17%)	9 (26%)	6 (17%)	6 (17%)	6 (17%)
Training & Dev	2 (6%)	6 (17%)	13 (37%)	10 (29%)	3 (9%)	1 (3%)
Diary & Appts	4 (11%)	4 (11%)	6 (17%)	8 (23%)	11 (31%)	2 (6%)
Provision of stationery, calling cards etc	1 (3%)	6 (17%)	16 (46%)	8 (23%)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)
Arranging external meetings with Organisations	3 (9%)	2 (6%)	9 (26%)	4 (11%)	11 (31%)	6(17%)
Secretarial/ Admin	0 (0%)	6 (17%)	2 (6%)	11 (31%)	12 (34%)	4 (11%)
Surgeries	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	15 (43%)	7 (20%)	5 (14%)	4 (11%)
Booking Conferences	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (9%)	8 (23%)	17 (49%)	7(20%)

“Do you use the Secretarial/Admin support on the 1st Floor, Town Clerk & Chief Executive Dept?”

4 out of 10 members use the Secretarial/admin support on the 1st floor, Town Clerk and Chief Executive Department. 60% do not use this support.

"How satisfied are you with the support you receive, or have received?"

8 (23%) did not answer this question, possibly because they have not used this service. Of the 27 that responded, 11 (39%) are 'very satisfied' with the Secretarial/Admin support they have received and 9 (32%) 'satisfied'. 4 (14%) say support is adequate and 3 (11%) are dissatisfied.

"Is there anything you would like to say about Secretarial/Admin support from the Civic Centre?"

19 members made comments. Over half (53%) say they have received friendly, helpful support when needed, or that they are satisfied with the service. 2 members have concerns about using the service as they can not be sure it is 'politically safe'. This feeling is echoed in a comment from a third Councillor: "Along with Political Assistants, groups should also have part-time secretarial/admin support. The support should be appointed by the groups themselves as Political Assistants are", see Appendix 1 for a full list of comments.

"If you do not use TCCE Secretarial/Admin support, where do you get your Secretarial/Admin support from?" (23 comments made)

18 members (51%) say they, or their families, do the wordprocessing/letters/emails themselves, see Appendix 2 for a full list of responses.

"How often have you received assistance with the following IT issues from any staff in Carlisle City Council?"

Given a range of IT issues, members are most likely to need help with IT equipment (inc support and faults). 20% need support with IT equipment 'very' or 'quite often'. Two thirds of members say they do not often, or never, receive help with Featurenet. Six out of ten do not often, or never, receive support with the Council Intranet/Minute system and the Internet, see Table 2:

Table 2

IT Issues	Very often	Quite often	Occasionally	Not very often	Never	Missing
IT equipment (inc support & faults)	5 (14%)	3 (9%)	12 (34%)	5 (14%)	8 (23%)	2 (6%)
E-mail/Public folders	3 (9%)	4 (11%)	6 (17%)	7 (20%)	12 (34%)	3 (9%)
Microsoft Office Software	3 (9%)	2 (6%)	7 (20%)	7 (20%)	13 (37%)	3 (9%)
IT training /development	4 (11%)	1 (3%)	9 (26%)	9 (26%)	9 (26%)	3 (9%)
Internet	2 (6%)	2 (6%)	6 (17%)	7 (20%)	15 (43%)	3 (9%)
Council Intranet /Minute system	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	6 (17%)	6 (17%)	15 (43%)	6 (17%)
Featurenet	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	4 (11%)	3 (9%)	20 (57%)	7 (20%)
Other IT related	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	4 (11%)	10(29%)	11 (31%)	8 (23%)

"How satisfied are you with the support you receive, or have received?"

25 members responded. 9 (36%) are very satisfied with the IT support they receive or have received. 10 (40%) are satisfied, 5 (20%) say support is adequate and 1 (4%) is dissatisfied.

"If you get IT assistance from outside Carlisle City Council, where do you get this assistance from?"

5 get assistance themselves or from family members:

- "Myself" *2
- "My daughter / Occasional advice from son (computer programmer) / Sometimes from son. Staff are ok, the equipment lets you down sometimes"
- "County Council" *2
- "Another Councillor"
- "It would be inappropriate to get IT assistance from an outside source for equipment that is owned by the Council!"
- "No, not get IT"
- "I have link to CCC via Intranet"
- "IT Professionals"
- "I have occasional IT training from my employer"

"Are there any improvements that could be made to the IT service in general?" (19 comments)

See Appendix 3.

"How frequently are your training and development needs as a Councillor identified through the following sources?"

The most common way for Councillors' training needs to be identified is by the Councillors themselves, followed by the Member Training Working Group, the Political Groups, Personnel Services and the Council Induction Scheme, see Table 3:

Table 3

Training Sources	All of the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never	Missing
Councillors	3 (9%)	16 (46%)	10 (29%)	0 (0%)	6 (17%)
Member Training Working Group	3 (9%)	6 (17%)	17 (49%)	4 (11%)	5 (14%)
Your Political Group	1 (3%)	9 (26%)	14 (40%)	4 (11%)	7 (20%)
Personnel Services	2 (6%)	2 (6%)	10 (29%)	9 (26%)	12 (34%)
Council Induction Scheme	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (23%)	11 (31%)	16 (46%)
Other*	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	33 (94%)

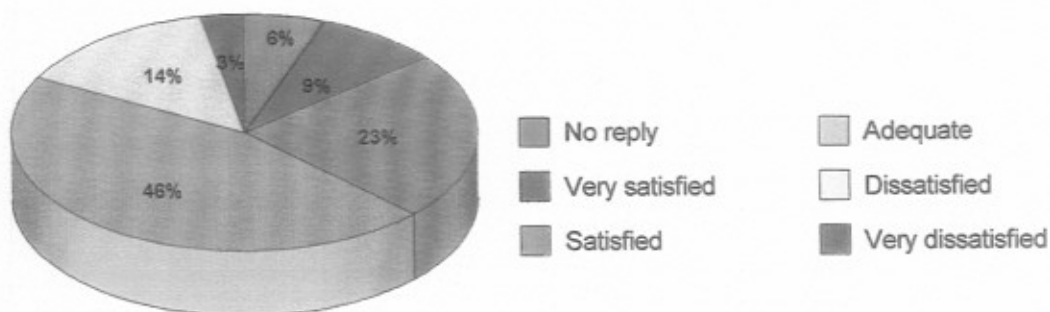
*Other: "North West Employers' Organisation" & "Outside courses which I pay for and attend or are provided by Cumbria County Council"

"How satisfied are you with your training and development as a Councillor?"

Just under half say their training and development is adequate and almost a third are satisfied, see Chart 1:

Chart 1

Satisfaction with training and development as a Councillor



"If dissatisfied, how can this be improved?" (8 comments)

- "I have identified 'Team Building' for political groups several times, but to date this has not been done"
- "More help. More training. Not left to sink or swim. A request for a "who does what" in the Civic Centre has been ignored"
- "New methods of training, use of video's, training software for improving knowledge i.e. languages, and sign language. (Councillors have limited time to come to courses)"
- "By attendance at specialised seminars, conferences etc. Council provided training tends to be aimed at broadest audience. Not always helpful if people want more advanced or specialised training"
- "More investment in Training & Development is needed as Councillor's roles become more demanding. Councillors were once seen as amateur do gooders. However, they are now responsible for administering huge budgets and making professional decisions"
- "As a relatively new councillor, training has been piecemeal. More training needed on council finances. There have been a great many new councillors in the last 2 years who need this and training on Best Value"
- "See note re IT. I also think all Councillors need more info as to where to go when they have queries, i.e. Officers/depts. Sometimes even knowing where Officers are located is a problem"
- "By being "paired" with an experienced Councillor"

“Other than Committee papers, do you use Research, Information or Verbal briefings in your work as a Councillor?”

80% of Councillors use research and verbal briefings and 74% use information in addition to Committee papers. 3% say they do not use any of them.

“Other than Committee papers, how often do you use Research, Information or Verbal briefings which are obtained from the following sources?”

Political Assistants and Council Officers are both used by Councillors to obtain research information or verbal briefings. 72% obtain them from Political Assistants ‘very often’ or ‘often’ and 60% obtain them from Council Officers ‘very often’ or ‘often’, see Table 4:

Table 4

Sources	Very often	Often	Occasion-ally	Not very often	Never	Missing
Political Assts	15 (43%)	10 (29%)	6 (17%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	3 (9%)
Council Officers	5 (14%)	16 (46%)	9 (26%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)	2 (6%)
Others*	2 (6%)	4 (11%)	4 (11%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	24 (69%)

Others*: “Web and other Councillors”; “Government and party websites”; “Websites”; “Internet”; “Internet. Head Office. Local professional media. Networks of contacts”; “Party briefing and other councils”; “Electorate, newspapers, Internet”; “Professional organisations connected with a topic under review”; “Other Members of the councils”; “Not specified” *2

“Can you list any other sources that you obtain Research, Information or Verbal briefings from?” (16 comments)

See Appendix 4.

“Is there anything you would like to say about obtaining or using Research, Information or Verbal briefings?” (9 comments)

- “Would not have time to do detailed research. Political Assistants very important in this area”
- “Political Assistant provides extremely valuable briefing research info etc. I could not be an effective Member without it”
- “Political Research Officers are the right people to find any information a group or a Councillor may require. They should be available 5 days a week to provide a good service”
- “Political Assistants are most important source. The system for groups and individual members was not very satisfactory before posts were created - too much information, too little time”
- “Political Assistants have a natural empathy with the way their own Members are thinking and can provide research material from this perspective. A non-political officer could not do this and the research would not be tailored to the needs of the individual Member”
- “Time consuming, but necessary”

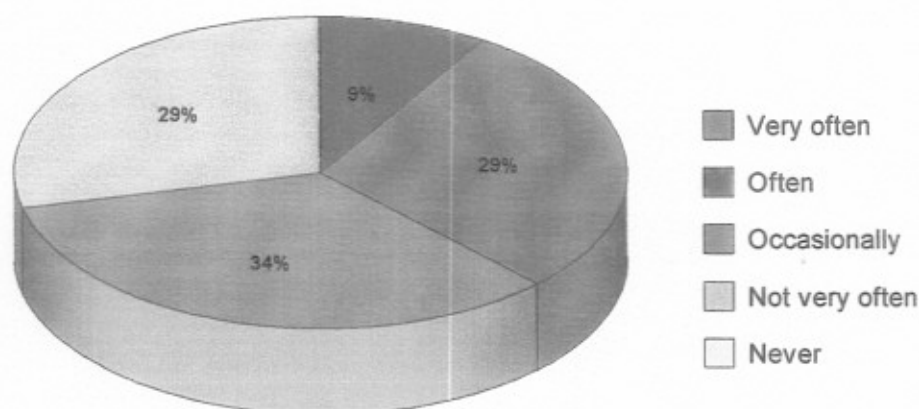
- "In the future it may need to be more formalised and as of a right therefore officer time may need to be more formally structured"
- "Excuses: On holiday. Out for a few minutes. Will be back later. Voice box (should be banned)"
- "It is extremely difficult to reach the appropriate person"

"How often do you use the Members library in the Tartan Room?"

63% of Councillors never use, or do not often use, the members library in the Tartan Room. 29% 'occasionally' use it, see Chart 2.

Chart 2

How often do you use the Members library in the Tartan Room?



"How useful a resource do you find the regular update sheet (which advises of additions/changes to information in the Tartan Room)"

Councillors are divided over the update sheet. Overall, 48.5% do not find the update sheet useful, compared to 46% that do, (5.5% did not answer the question). Not surprisingly, difference in opinion varies between Councillors that use the Tartan Room and those that do not. 77% of Councillors that use the Tartan Room find the update sheets useful. 70% of Councillors that do not use the Tartan Room do not find the update sheets useful, see Tables 5 & 6.

Table 5

Break % Respondents	
Base	13
How useful a resource do you find the regu...	
Very useful	8%
Useful	69%
Not very useful	15%
No use at all	8%

Table 6

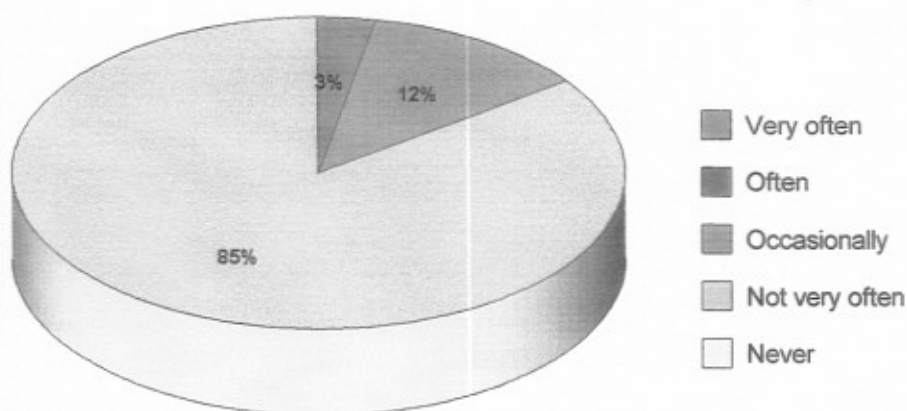
Break % Respondents	
Base	20
How useful a resource do you find the regu...	
Very useful	-
Useful	30%
Not very useful	45%
No use at all	25%

"How often do you use the IT equipment in the Tartan Room?"

Most Councillors never use the IT equipment in the Tartan Room, see Chart 3:

Chart 3

How often do you use the IT equipment in the Tartan Room?



"If you do not tend to use the Tartan room, why is this?" (25 comments)

The main reasons members give for not using the Tartan Room are:

"Never found it necessary" *6; "Work from home/IT equipment at home" *5; "Lack of privacy" *4; "Cold" *4; "Use the group room instead" *2.

For the full list, see Appendix 5.

"If you use the Members library, how satisfied are you with it?"

16 people answered this question. Of those that use the members library, 6 (38%) are satisfied, 9 (56%) find it adequate and 1 (6%) is dissatisfied.

"Who usually assists with arrangements for your surgeries?"

Over two thirds of Councillors make the arrangements for their surgeries themselves. However, this is not an exclusive approach. TCCE, Council Officers and Political Assistants help as required, see Table 6:

Table 6

Sources	Answers Missing	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Not very often	Never
Councillors	14	8 (38%)	6 (29%)	6 (29%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)
Cttee Section /Secretarial/ TCCE Admin	19	2 (13%)	4 (25%)	7 (44%)	1 (6%)	2 (13%)
Council Officers	20	1 (7%)	4 (27%)	6 (40%)	0 (0%)	4 (27%)
Political Assts	22	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	3 (23%)	0 (0%)	6 (46%)
Others*	27	3	0	5	0	0

Others*: "Other ward Councillors" *4: "County Council sometimes puts the "ad" in for the Ward Councillors" *2: "Book accommodation myself"; "Political Agent"

"How often do you get help with the booking, appointments and advertising of surgeries?"

Over half the Councillors often get help with advertising their surgeries and 30% occasionally get help. Councillors are less likely to receive help when making the booking arrangements and over half the Councillors say they never receive help when arranging appointments, see Table 7:

Table 7

Items	Answers Missing	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Not very often	Never
Advertising the surgeries	5	9 (30%)	8 (27%)	9 (30%)	1 (3%)	3 (10%)
Booking arrangements	6	5 (17%)	4 (14%)	6 (21%)	3 (10%)	11 (38%)
Appointments for surgeries	9	5 (19%)	1 (4%)	5 (19%)	1 (4%)	14 (54%)

"How often do the following people maintain your personal appointments...?"

Around eight out of ten Councillors often maintain their own personal appointments. Political Assistants often maintain appointments for a fifth of Councillors, see Table 8:

Table 8

Sources	Answers Missing	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Not very often	Never
Councillors	3	23 (72%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)	2 (6%)	4 (13%)
Political Assistants	3	5 (16%)	2 (6%)	6 (19%)	4 (13%)	15 (47%)
Secretarial/ Admin in TCCE	5	3 (10%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	21 (70%)
Council Officers	5	0 (0%)	4 (13%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	20 (67%)

Others: "My wife", "My personal assistant - my dear wife!"

"Do you get help from Carlisle City Council staff when responding or communicating with the external media?"

6 Councillors say they never respond/communicate with media. Of the remaining 29, 55% do their own responding / communicating with the media. 14 (48%) say they get help responding and 10 (34%) get help communicating with media.

"When responding/communicating with external sources, how often do you get assistance, advice or other support from the following?"

Councillors are more likely to seek assistance, advice or other support from Political Officers, when responding/communicating with external sources, see Table 9:

Table 9

Sources	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Not very often	Never	Missing
Political Assts	9 (26%)	6 (17%)	8 (23%)	5 (14%)	6 (17%)	1 (3%)
Chief Officers	2 (6%)	5 (14%)	9 (26%)	6 (17%)	7 (20%)	6 (17%)
Communications Unit	2 (6%)	4 (11%)	3 (9%)	2 (6%)	15 (43%)	9 (26%)
Other Council Officers (not Communications/CO's)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	8 (23%)	10 (29%)	4 (11%)	9 (26%)
Other*	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	31 (88%)

*Other: "Group Leader" *2, "Ask Council Officers so as to ensure I am accurate, do not ask them to respond on my behalf", "Colleagues"

"How often are your meetings/arrangements with Council Officers organised by the following?"

Around eight out of ten Councillors make their own arrangements with Council Officers all, or most of the time. Council Officers make the arrangements for a fifth of Councillors. Political Assistants and Secretarial/Admin staff do not tend to make these arrangements, see Table 10:

Table 10

Sources	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never	Missing
Councillors	17 (49%)	10 (29%)	4 (11%)	0 (0%)	4 (11%)
Council Officers	2 (6%)	5 (14%)	9 (26%)	10 (29%)	9 (26%)
Political Assistants	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	8 (23%)	17 (49%)	6 (17%)
Secretarial/ Admin in TCCE	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	5 (14%)	16 (46%)	13 (37%)
Other (Colleagues)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	34 (97%)

"How often are your meetings/arrangements with External Partners/bodies organised by the following?"

By far the most common way for Councillors to arrange meetings with external partners or bodies is to arrange the meetings themselves. This is true for seven out of ten Councillors, who do this all, or most of the time, see Table 11:

Table 11

Sources	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never	Missing
Councillors	10 (29%)	15 (43%)	5 (14%)	1 (3%)	4 (11%)
Council Officers	3 (9%)	1 (3%)	12 (34%)	10 (29%)	9 (26%)
Political Assistants	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	13 (37%)	14 (40%)	6 (17%)
Secretarial/ Admin in TCCE	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	4 (11%)	16 (46%)	14 (40%)
Other*	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	33 (94%)

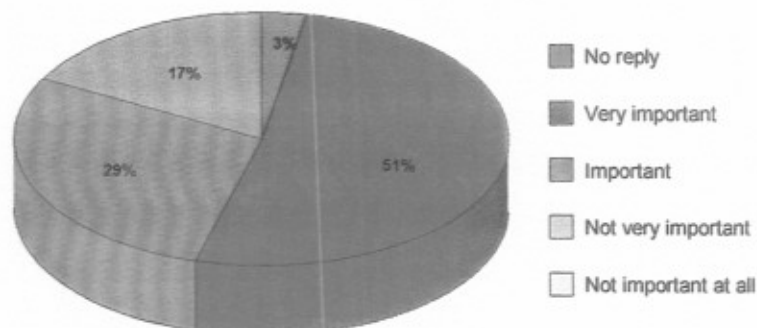
Other*: "Sometimes it is the external partner who arranges the meeting"

"How important is the role of full time Political Assistants in supporting your work as a Councillor?"

Eight out of ten Councillors say the role of full time Political Assistant is important in supporting their role as Councillor, see Chart 4:

Chart 4

How important is the role of full time Political Assistants in supporting work as a Cllr?



“How often do you receive support from Political Assistants in the following areas?”

Results from this question suggest that Political Assistants are heavily involved in supporting Councillors with group meetings/arrangements, research on group political items, info on committee reports, council policy and group committee memberships. However only 23% of Councillors say Political Assistants support them with queries from ward residents, see Table 12:

Table 12

Items	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never	Missing
Group meetings/arrangements	20 (57%)	9 (26%)	3 (9%)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)
Research on group political items	18 (51%)	10 (29%)	6 (17%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
Info on Committee Reports	13 (37%)	13 (37%)	8 (23%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
Council policy	14 (40%)	8 (23%)	10 (29%)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)
Group Committee Memberships	12 (34%)	8 (23%)	11 (31%)	0 (0%)	4 (12%)
Queries from ward residents	4 (11.5%)	4 (11.5%)	19 (54%)	4 (11.5%)	4 (11.5%)

“What other areas of support are currently provided by Political Assistants to Members?” (19 comments)

Comments suggest that members clearly see the Political Assistants' role as being crucial to their work as Councillors, see Appendix 6 for full list of comments.

“Do you have comments on any of the above areas of support, or any other general comments about support for Councillors?” (16 comments)

See Appendix 7.

APPENDIX 1

"Is there anything you would like to say about Secretarial/Admin support from the Civic Centre?" (19 comments)

- Very satisfied
- Friendly - approachable
- Everything ok as far as I am concerned
- Secretarial staff have always proved to be very helpful in arranging letters, letterheads on mail, passing information to Councillors and Political Officers
- Have never used secretarial support. Admin staff are very pleasant and helpful - usually only ask about post or paper, envelopes etc
- I have always found it satisfactory
- I have always received good support when needed
- Since using the computer for typing purposes and e-mail. I have not used the typing side very much lately. When I used it in the past they were always efficient and very obliging. When having to ask for help with the rest of the front office staff I have always been very happy with the service provided. Without exception they have all been very helpful
- They are very helpful in doing my typing quite often and other admin tasks
- They are all very helpful, pleasant on the telephone etc. The only complaint I have is the fact that when I telephone to say I shall be late for a meeting, the message is NOT passed to the Chairman of that meeting. I have noticed that this happens to other Councillors. Naturally this message is last minute because if I knew in advance I would inform the Chairman or Political Assistant
- Along with Political Assistants Groups should also have part-time secretarial/admin support. The support should be appointed by the groups themselves as Political Assistants are
- Support in my role within the Council is fine, but I am sure there is a need for better admin/secretarial support for members generally
- I do not feel everyone is aware of the service
- Do not recall any written evidence that this service exists
- I don't use it, preferring to do my own. How sure can we be that matters of a confidential nature can remain so? This, bearing in mind 'leaks' that occur from time to time
- Never used. Not regarded as politically safe.
- Do not use as I am always told no-one available
- It is not convenient for me to use this service as I am IT literate and able to type. I would much rather have proper letter head templates on my computer, so that I could type professional letters myself. I also consider that e-mail addresses should be on letter heads and calling cards as a matter of course
- Its always there should I need it, but I tend to do my own letters and I use e-mail

APPENDIX 2

"If you do not use TCCE Secretarial/Admin support, where do you get your Secretarial/Admin support from?" (23 comments made)

- Do it myself *10/Own resources/Home/Self & wife/Self & son/Wife
- I do my own. I often take advice on content and wording from Political Assistant. Especially where policy issues are concerned.
- Wordprocessing myself, using IT equipment provided. Internet. Political Research Assistant - admin support. Occasional use of TC&CE for travel information and travel warrants
- Use the members computer
- County Council
- Political Assistant, Housing admin
- Depending on nature of correspondence. Various avenues used. Can not stress enough that along with Political Assistants, it is vital that groups have admin/support if new structures are to work. In particular Political Assistants and admin assistants are essential for good opposition to work
- Often Secretarial help has been given with good advice from Political Research Officers, when Councillor requires information security kept
- I do not need admin support beyond arranging meetings with officers to discuss case work - go to the dept concerned, either directly or through political assistant

APPENDIX 3

"Are there any improvements that could be made to the IT service in general?" (19 comments)

- Less breakdowns - i.e. half a dozen times I have not been able to log on because "a service provider connection can not be established - try again" - i.e. another 10 mins lost!
- Lack of availability at times, including week ends. There are differences in the system between working in the Civic Centre (on the training machine) and at home - this is confusing for someone who is still IT illiterate. Although I understand that Featurenet connections should solve this
- I abandoned 'e-mail system' because it is too unreliable. I use my private e-mail address
- Information about Council Services in general to be found on-line. These services were seen on a visit to "Liverpool Direct" at the call centre and 'one stop shops' on housing estates
- Civic Centre needs to be aware that Councillors e-mail is not the same as in the Centre. It is only received when Members log onto the main server
- Information varies depending on which member of staff you consult. More consistency is needed. There have been occasions when I have been told something which even I knew was incorrect
- Training in evenings
- More training needed - more reliable equipment. There is limited availability for in depth training. When you are as hopeless as me you need lots!! Sometimes training manuals do not tie in with the screens you get on the home computers
- I could use the section more often for training etc, but I never seem to fit in the time. My fault.
- I feel the service is there, but I have been unable to avail myself of the training - due to work load. I have now retired and hope to take some IT training
- Easier training. Times
- Software could be installed to teach various issues for Councillors:- such as German language, Polish language, resolving problems for new Councillors, ward profiles etc
- Outsource
- Annoying when can't get connection via Civic Centre. Would like to access public folders from home. Concerned about reliability of connection, equipment etc when there is increased reliance
- Improved access to systems outside hours - particularly important with new structures
- Not really. However, support is geared to Council's internal needs
- Outsource. 24 hour support for system faults.
- All council papers should be available on-line. Electoral registers should be on-line (I accept that this is a national issue)
- Let's know about it

APPENDIX 4

"Can you list any other sources that you obtain Research, Information or Verbal briefings from?" (16 comments)

- Membership of external organisations e.g. Cumbria Branch LGA, Cumbria Sub Regional Policy Cttee etc
- Contact with the general public and various bodies especially voluntary
- General reading from a number of sources like local and national press and various publications
- LGIU (including their magazine). North West Employers' Organisation. County Council. East Cumbria Community Health. APSE by e-mail
- County Council Officers. The Castle Archives (planning). The Parish Council Archives and Parish Clerk. Local Residents. DEFRA
- Cumbria County Council, 2) Education Colleges, 3) Web, 4) Leaflets, 5) My own various research, 6) Conservative Councillors Association
- County Council Officers and Councillors. More helpful than City
- I have sought information from other local authorities via Chief Executives Office
- Local government publications. Party publications etc
- Websites. Political Parties. Other organisations.
- Policy docs. Libraries. Networks. National and local press
- Newspapers
- Labour party nationally. 'First' magazine
- The LGU magazine "first"
- Local Government information newsletters/magazine. Central Govt papers. Party newsletters. National press. When I get more IT training I hope to use the Internet also.
- Internet Sources. Reading Periodicals. Newspapers.

APPENDIX 5

"If you do not tend to use the Tartan room, why is this?" (25 comments)

- Little need if any
- Not necessary
- No need
- No great need
- Never have found it necessary
- Never found the need so far and had frankly forgotten what was available, although it may have been mentioned to me
- It is easier to work at home
- IT at home
- All my work is completed at my home. 20 miles round trip if I use the IT equipment in the Civic Centre. It is not worth the extra expense
- Because of equipment at home
- I work mainly from home, but I need to know what information is there, should I need it
- Not private
- The Tartan Room is not very private
- Not conducive to study or concentration. Lack of privacy
- I do not find this room user friendly and prone to being disturbed by its use as a 'corridor'
- It is uncomfortable, impractical, not private, and freezing cold
- It is unheated and a corridor
- Cold, noise, too large
- Too cold
- No time!
- Very little spare time due to workload
- Use group room
- Phone and many of the documents I need or want are in the Group Office. Plus, the political research assistant can usually alert me to the information I am seeking
- I am at work during office hours
- I use Tartan Room a lot

APPENDIX 6

"What other areas of support are currently provided by Political Assistants to Members?" (19 comments)

- A firm anchor politically "always available"
- Generally keeping me in touch with what's happening and giving general guidelines on how the council operates
- Sensitive Political research and contact with party research department and updates on what is happening in other Authorities
- Contacting other Councils/their Members for info/comparative data, b) fielding calls/taking and passing on messages, c) advising on media output, d) drawing attention to media coverage
- Communicating information to other group members. Relevant information from local newspapers or media - arranging meetings with media. Assistance with Chairman's briefings
- Not known
- Political advice/records/voting records of opposition etc
- Very good support - an essential service
- Political assistant most helpful person in the council system. Quite often no need to run around in circles, just ask assistant and they can get answer very quickly
- The Political Research Officers have valuable jobs and should have more training on finding and gaining info for Cllrs. Correct info in replies to ward constituents. Giving direction where a Councillor (should he/she wish to seek to research themselves) could find useful info. Makes stronger links to directions achieved by one research person negotiating for the group and group leader on major issues. Ward problems can be put into database to be investigated by the ward politicians. Group can be informed of National Policy from political sources such as political associations of Councillors and links to other political research officers in the same party in local government
- I don't understand the final area - Groups Committee Memberships. Are you suggesting that Political Assistants select Group Committee Memberships? The priority task of the Political Assistant is to undertake research and produce briefings. The Political Assistant is not there to provide secretarial/admin support. The Political Assistant does not arrange Group Meetings - that is the function of the Group Secretary
- To keep this in perspective, it is important to remember that a large proportion of the Political Assistants role is to provide a high quality research facility for group Members. I do not believe that many Members have the skills or time to carry out such research without the support of an assistant who is dedicated to information gathering from a specific political viewpoint. In the absence of such support, Members would either become overloaded or inadequately informed

APPENDIX 6 (CONT)

- Co-ordinating Councillor Activities. Advice on prioritisation. Networking. Sounding board. Interpretation of policy. Advice on meetings (agenda items). Manning of office - first response. Keeping Members up to date. Arranging substitutes for meetings. Attending meetings where Councillors can not
- Mainly research and information
- As a member with a full-time job, the Political Assistant provides a vital contact with other members of the Group. As it is sometimes necessary, through work, to miss members' training sessions and group meetings, he is able to keep us up to date with issues - not only the facts, but the groups thinking and the content of debate. As the Govt is keen to attract people into local govt who are young and employed, it is vital that this support is provided. As more members become IT literate it will become much more important than purely clerical support
- With all the 'paper' that comes out from Central Govt, Local Govt organisations - party and the Council itself it is extremely useful to have someone who is going through this info on a regular basis. It is impossible for a Councillor to be on top of everything even if your interest is confined to one small area of policy. The Political Assistant's role in drawing major changes in policy/thinking etc to your attention is invaluable. Sometimes you are aware that there has been some info put out but do not know where to look. Again the P.A. can be invaluable in directing you to where to look, even if they do not actually get the info for you. A lot of time is saved in this way. If you are able to deal with constituent's queries or play a better part in formulating policy making decisions etc it is better for local democracy. If you are concentrating upon one area of the council's work/councillors role the P.A. can provide you with info as to how that fits in with what else is happening in the council. I think that as the structures change and there will be fewer numbers of any one political group on a committee - there is a danger that individual Members may feel isolated and out of touch even with other Members of the group. At the moment there are group meetings before committee meetings and there is the opportunity to exchange/develop views etc. Also under the new structures - until they become more familiar, Members will be unsure as to where to go to for info and support. The P.A. will be more in demand to provide the 'political' info to indiv Members
- P.A. is very important, but it could be a Part time post
- Our Political Assistant acts as a "Liaison Officer" between Members of our group. He helps with material which we need to put out, i.e. leaflets on specific ward matters (non-political), providing information etc. He also provides bullet points from previous committee meetings etc
- At Q34 I said "Not very important", this is in regard to having full time P.A.'s. Part time would be sufficient

APPENDIX 7

"Do you have comments on any of the above areas of support, or any other general comments about support for Councillors?" (16 comments)

- As from 12 September 2001, I anticipate:
 - a) increased support for the Executive
 - b) increased support for Overview & Scrutiny functions
 - c) both a & b as a dedicated function
 - d) increased support for "back-bench" Councillors to ensure they are kept "abreast of events"
 - e) if a, b, c, & d are provided, a decreasing role for political assistants, possibly part-time, will suffice.
 - f) increased admin/secretarial support for "back-bench" Councillors to enable them to fulfill their community/ward responsibilities more effectively than at present
- As work in the member's ward is to be a main and central commitment from ALL councillors with all the areas listed in the job description, there is bound to be an increased back flow into the "civic centre". Provision will need to be made to accommodate this extra work at Officer support level
- As a new councillor, I have probably had the greatest part of my support from other experienced councillors, who have been most helpful in "showing me the ropes". I have also found officers to be patient, helpful and informative whenever I have approached any of them
- Essential, along with retention of Political Assistants that admin support part-time basis be provided to groups. This appointment like Political Assistants should be made by groups
- The facilities Members have are poor. The Tartan Room is virtually unusable. I think Members should be provided with ID cards like Officers for use in the building
- Local Government modernisation will require different types of support to portfolio holders and Members involved with Scrutiny. I feel unable to comment on the type of support until the work has started. Officer support will have to take a different format - working with all Members of the Executive. A more Corporate approach will have to be adopted
- To be able to believe what Officers tell you is correct - being led up the garden path to discover later that information is incorrect
- Suggestions:
 - a) To improve access to languages such as German and Polish suitable software should be made available for installation by IT staff into city pc's. This could also include other learning packages on software.
 - b) Video conferencing is a step needed to be progressed.
 - c) Digital camera courses are needed.
 - d) We as Councillors need to be reassured that Senior Officers and Directors do read their IT e-mail regularly daily??
 - e) With new structure set in being, there is a need to consult better the back bench Councillor by officers to either Political Research Officers or Councillors themselves

APPENDIX 7 (CONT)

- Main support is provided by Political Assistants. Their role is not to provide sec/admin support, but to undertake research etc under direction of Group/Group Leader. Also help provide party political input which can't be given by Council Officers. If Political Assistants were not available to Groups, a great deal of Chief Officer and departmental time would be taken up to provide info members require (that is, of course, providing the Council believes that members should have access to as much info as possible in order to make informed decisions). Role of Political Assistants especially important to opposition groups. Opposition's role will be of increased importance under new constitution. That opposition, if it is to serve adequately the people who elected it, require specialised support which will help it carry out overview & scrutiny, i.e. provide the democratically necessary checks & balances to the Executive. I am not aware of any support available to opposition groups/members from the Communications Unit.
- Where the Political Assistant has researched a particular topic, which is of interest to more than one member, this can easily be disseminated to the rest of the group to keep them up to speed. As different political groups have different priorities, I do not believe that a generic research facility could deliver the targeted service which Political Assistants provide. This would be to the detriment of the groups individual members and constituents alike and would disadvantage members who do not hold key positions. Political Assistants should not be regarded as just another Officer who is there to provide administrative help. They provide unique support which is able to gather information from many sources, including party political sources, which are not accessible by all Officers. They are better positioned to provide a custom made support service to members, than anyone else
- I do not believe that this questionnaire will provide any accurate data for Officers as it is generally recognised as an instrument that could be used to either relegate or eliminate the position of Political Assistants. Please note the last Council press release on public folders today (04/09/01) is from 22/09/01. This is despite promises that these folders would be kept up to date. This is the rule not the exception!
- I am happy with the support I have but would not like to see anything changed. The groups need the help of the political assistants because we do not have the time to do it all ourselves
- I would like to see adaptations to the IT system to take into account the fact that most members are in employment during Civic Centre office hours. Suggestions:
 - 1) A 'message of the day' function. This would also be of use to staff - it would advise on accommodation issues, fire alarm resting etc. For members, its main use would be to advise on when work will be done on the server, so that members know why they are unable to log in. This would solve work for the IT department. Hopefully they would no longer receive fault calls from members when the whole system is down.

APPENDIX 7 (CONT)

- 2) A 'commitments' system for senior staff. They would fill in a diary sheet each week, which would be available on line to both staff and members. members would then know whether e-mails sent in the evenings were likely to be read by their recipients the next day.
- 3) 'A family tree' with telephone numbers for each dept available on-line.
- 4) Shared mailboxes for depts, so that rather than contacting Chief Officers, members could notify e.g. routine housing repairs, to a central point. All these changes would presumably need to be discussed with the Unions, but they are all standard Civil Service practice
- I believe that ward members should be kept better informed by Officers on matters directly affecting their ward, where city council officers are involved. Some departments are good at keeping us informed, i.e. planning matters, but we often have to play "catch up" with other matters. This lack of information leads to embarrassment and frustration when we hear about things from other sources which we ought to have heard from our own officers
- I think a better induction service should be provided to members, particularly new ones. At the moment you get booklets etc and the opportunity to meet Chief Officers and little else. There is little information as to how the political system fits with Civic Centre structure even a map of the building with location of staff would be useful

NB: 3 comments which have been judged to be of a personal nature have been withheld from the report at the request of the TCCE.

Appendix 4

Group Leader's Views

Heather Bradley: Member Support

My comments are not intended to underestimate the extent of the help and advice available to members from the officers of the Council.

Political Assistants

1. Member support before Political Assistants posts were created

- i. I am one of the few members who remember life before political assistants. I believe that we have had these posts since approx. 1989/90, i.e. since the legislation allowed these posts to be created. Neither of the other Group Leaders was a Council member at this time.
- ii. Member support consisted of secretarial help with typing and the support of officers for advice.
- iii. Individual members had to undertake additional research personally into new policy developments, background information on any aspect of Council work etc. They did this by contacting Council officers and asking for help and advice on where to obtain information or asking officers to provide such information; by perusal of relevant local government publications; by any other means available to them.
- iv. This was difficult for those who were in the controlling group where the group was setting Council policy and thus could legitimately call on the help of officers. For the opposition group members, it must have been far more difficult.
- v. This was extremely time-consuming for members and officers, and not necessarily productive because of the amount of reading of non-relevant material required to find the particular areas of interest. For members not trained in this type of research, the prospect was perhaps daunting.
- vi. If dealing with a cross cutting issue, members would need to contact more than one officer/department. The amount of time spent would vary according to the availability of the officers and the complexity of the issue. It was not a particularly efficient and effective way of carrying out research.

2. Benefits for members

- i. Research is a special skill in which not all members have training. It requires a level of expertise in choosing the appropriate research tools, and each piece of research requires at least a brief mental, if not more formal, literature review. It also requires time to become familiar with the tools of research, to undertake the research, and to produce the results of the research in an appropriate format.
- ii. Political assistants have made it far simpler to gather the relevant information. They are an especially important resource for Group Leaders and Spokespersons – as important to a controlling group as to the opposition groups. It is important that each political group has the same post available – and this is underlined by the Constitution.
- iii. It could be argued that Council officers can provide this – but we are working within a party political framework. It is not always appropriate to ask Council officers to undertake research which has a party political dimension. Nor would Council officers have access to the political party networks of advice and information which political assistants have.

- iv. In some cases, there is a need for confidentiality for political reasons. This can be difficult for Council officers. Their duty is to the Council and the Council leadership without party political bias. This means that information requested from a chief officer by an opposition group is copied to the controlling group, thus revealing the areas of interest of that opposition group.
- v. The availability of research via the Internet has made research both more simple and more difficult – simpler in the ease of access, more difficult in terms of the amount of information. There is now a plethora of information available, and it is part of the researcher's job to know which route is going to be most productive in procuring the information appropriate to the task. To identify the most useful sources in any given area requires familiarity with the sites and search engines. This requires more time than many members have available.
- vi. The political assistant provides information to members in an appropriate format and on an appropriately selective basis. The political assistant can cater more effectively and efficiently for the differing interests and responsibilities of each member.

3. Benefits for the Council

- i. It is in the interests of the Council and the electorate that members have as comprehensive view of issues as possible. Members need access to relevant information from a broad range of sources, including the experience and expertise of other authorities.
- ii. Political assistants, through their own formal and informal networks, can access this more easily in some cases than can other Council officers.
- iii. Research undertaken by political assistants can be, and has been, shared with the Council on a cross party basis. (e.g. Local Government Reform) Political assistants can thus augment the expertise available to the Council, particularly in areas where there is cross-party agreement.
- iv. Individual members can pursue their own particular policy interest and future developments through the services of the political assistant, whereas this might not be possible through the services of a Council officer.
- v. Without the presence of political assistants, more officer time will be taken in responding to members' inquiries and requests for research and information.

4. Overview and Scrutiny

- i. There appears to be a view current within some sections of Carlisle City Council that O & S committees will take over the role of the opposition, and that the political assistant posts could be thus be redefined to service the Executive and O & S functions. This raises a number of issues:
 - O & S is a cross party function and is not intended to subsume the role of political opposition (although some officers & politicians might like that to happen). Revised Labour Party Rules and Standing Orders make this very clear (and I assume that other political parties have taken the same stance).
 - Officers serving O & S would not be able to access (nor should they) the political party information, guidance etc and could not/should not provide the political input which is given by political assistants.
 - Council officers give supposedly objective information and advice – a difficult basis for mutual trust between former political assistants and members from opposing parties.

- Support given to members through a dedicated O & S officer could not replace the support given by the political assistant, because s/he could not undertake the political aspects of the work.
- Carlisle City Council has only one independent member without allegiance to a political group or party. The driving force behind progress in the city has been the controlling political group with a mandate from the electors. Party politics is a fact of life in Carlisle and cannot be ignored. Electors vote for the member and his/her political party - those electors deserve the best service possible from their councillors. In order for members to provide that service, members must determine the form of support they need, rather than officers defining what they believe members need.

5. Role, responsibilities and duties of political assistants

- i) It is apparent that other Council officers are not fully aware of what political assistantss actually do. (See responsibilities of Labour Group Political Assistant attached.). A better description of the job would be 'political researcher'.
- ii) As far as the Labour Group is concerned, the Political Assistant does **NOT** routinely
 - Draft and type letters for members
 - Maintain any member's diary
 - Organise, summon, arrange agendas, produce minutes etc for Group meetings - this is part of the Group Secretary's function.
 - Act as contact between Council officers and members or public and members other than as described in the role of the Labour Group political assistant.
- iii) The Labour Group's political assistant acts primarily as researcher (see attached description)

IT support

- i. Members will rely increasingly on IT support under the new structures.
- ii. The Labour Group has already raised concerns about the adequacy of the IT support which will be available. Currently, the support is adequate for present requirements. Apart from the problems experienced with IT equipment by individual members, there are, however, a number of general concerns:
 - Lack of availability of a corporate connection at weekends when work is being carried out at the Civic Centre. Many members read papers at the weekend - if these are only available electronically, there may be a problem in members accessing notification of key decisions etc.
 - Lack of access at home to public folders and lack of information in those folders
- iii) Some members are reluctant to use IT despite the availability of training. Extending the use of IT under the new structures presumes that all members have basic computer literacy.

Training & Development

- i) It is not easy for members in full/part-time employment to attend training sessions during the day, especially when the sessions cover a full day.

- ii) Spokespersons from opposition groups mainly do not have the opportunity to attend seminars and conferences which would extend and update their knowledge of the area of interest.
- iii) Training arranged by the City Council tends to target as many councillors as possible and thus cannot cater for the varying levels of knowledge and expertise of the individual members.

Communications Unit

- i) The Communications Unit does not support individual members or political groups other than the controlling group.
- ii) If help is available to individual members or political groups, the opposition group members are not aware of it.
- iii) Despite asking that Press/Media releases are made available directly to group leaders, press releases are only available via the Council's web site or via the public folder when at the Civic Centre.
- iv) Even on issues where there is cross party support, opposition members are rarely informed of media briefings or media interest – which could be especially important when there is a controversial issue involved, but where there is cross party agreement.

Duties of Labour Political Assistant

- Monitor on daily basis national and local press, informing group members (particularly leader and spokespersons) of items and issues of interest
- Research policy development and other issues as directed by Group, using all available resources including Internet
- As directed, contact other local authorities in order to research innovations, Best Practice etc
- Write papers on policy and other issues, based on above research
- Monitor local government publications on a weekly basis, informing group members of items of interest.
- Read all committee papers and, after discussions with Group spokesperson, produce briefing paper for committee members prior to meeting. This will also involve additional research on some items.
- Monitor parliamentary proceedings including passage of legislation, publication of green and white papers etc
- Monitor Labour Party publications, policy information etc and maintain file of Advice Notes, briefings etc.
- As directed, obtain Labour Party advice on Council constitutional matters, queries on policies etc
- Attend Group meetings and provide information and briefing papers as directed
- Act as point of contact between Council officers and Labour Group members if members cannot be contacted directly by council officers
- Act as point of contact between Group members and spokespersons, leader etc if members cannot contact them directly
- Act as point of contact for members of public with Labour members (NB this happens when residents ring the Council switchboard and want to speak to a councillor – not necessarily a Labour member)
- Attend committee meetings as directed and take notes of proceedings
- Maintain files of information on Council policies, decisions etc
- Write and issue weekly briefings to members on Council, local and national issues as appropriate
- Meet regularly with Group leader to discuss and set out work programme

Report on Political Assistants

To: Mr. P Stybelski
From: Cllr. J M Guest
Date: 15 September 2001

Terms of Reference: Unclear!

I assume that you would like my views on the current review being undertaken by Mr, J Mallinson. Naturally, as you would expect, I am quite happy to express my humble opinions.

Firstly, I am unhappy, and have been from the outset, that the review is taking place at all. Although this was "agreed" at a meeting of the Local Government Reform Working Group, however, Heather and I both registered our reservations at that time. Each group utilise the services of their assistants in different ways and this is reflected in their different job and person specifications. I composed Alan's specifications, to indicate the kind of person I required: and the job I needed my assistant to perform within the group. These specifications were then checked and agreed by the Authority's Personnel Department.

Within the Lib-Dem & Independent Group, Alan is responsible to me for his work programme (or my deputy in my absence), which for the most part is either policy or research based. Our office receives daily communications from Cowley Street and other Lib-Dem offices in the UK. Alan is also involved in helping to develop local party policies at the initial stages. This involves a lot of discussion with myself and colleagues, as well as research of national, regional and county policies.

In the course of my duties I often have occasion to meet with outside agencies to discuss matters affecting Lib-Dem wards. The arrangements for these meeting can be quite complex and time consuming, so I usually leave these matters in Alan's capable hands. Additionally, I also have a very busy itinerary, consequently Alan has to act as my diary to avoid the possibility of double bookings or other mishaps. This also helps me to co-ordinate the activities of other group members when cover for absence is required through work, sickness, holidays, etc..

Many enquiries from the public are received through the office and Alan is the first line of contact. Although he does not deal directly with their enquiries, he is able to put them in contact with the councillor best able to do so. This is invaluable, as many councillors are unavailable during office hours due to other commitments e.g. work. This function would be seriously impaired if his duties were part-time.

Alan also has a support role to play within the group. The democratic process allows persons of differing academic and intellectual ability to become councillors and consequently, the level of support needed by individual councillors varies considerably. This support may range from explaining complex items within committee reports, to assisting with speech writing and help composing replies to constituency enquiries (I must emphasise that this does not include acting as a secretary. Alan also advises councillors on their 'legal' responsibilities and limitations, as well as Health and Safety matters.

One function Alan performs very well is acting as a 'sounding board'. I like to bounce ideas off him because I know he will give an impartial response outlining the drawbacks as well as the advantages of any proposal I may make. He will then give me his opinion of how the other political groups within the council may respond so that we may discuss modifications to make it more politically acceptable.

As we are a minority group with radical views we realise that a certain amount of cunning (for lack of a better word) is often necessary if we are to succeed in obtaining our goals. That is why we often have to moderate our demands and be seen as conciliatory rather than adversarial (a policy that has paid dividends to date). Alan's experience in television where he was a manager and trade union representative has proved extremely useful in this particular area.

Like all political groups, we have our 'loose canons', and Alan is, often because of his position, able to warn me of any impending surprises. Consequently, I can take appropriate action, and implement damage limitation (this applies to the Authority as well as the group).

What I have outlined above is all in addition to his 'normal' duties such as perusing agendas and reports and verbally briefing members prior to meetings, etc.. Above all, Alan is man I have every confidence in. He respects the confidential nature of his position and I know he will not disclose any party business in the wrong quarters (unless I have briefed him to do so).

I trust that this brief report is of some assistance to you, however, if you should wish to discuss it further for clarification or any other reason, I will be more than happy to oblige. Additionally, they may be other matters or questions that I have not covered; again I am at your service if required.

J M Guest
Leader of the Liberal Democrat and Independent Group.

Appendix 5

Political Assistant's Work Activity

REVIEW OF MEMBER SUPPORT

CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL ASSISTANT: RESULTS OF WORK DIARY EXERCISE

As part of the review of member support the Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy requested that I keep a work diary and report its findings.

For four weeks during August and September I maintained a daily work diary. I conducted this exercise prior to the adoption of new political structures on 12 September. I present the results of this exercise in the following brief report.

This is not a comprehensive hour-by-hour task-by-task breakdown. It is a broad overview of tasks that helps indicate the role in this organisation of the political assistant. I present the tasks in no particular order.

Analysis of Committee Reports.

Most reports generate a decision-making process involving approval, amendment, or rejection of officers' recommendations. Informed decision-making produces better decisions than uninformed decision-making. The political assistant analyses reports for accuracy and consistency, appraises available options, and suggests possible actions. Additionally, the political assistant often conducts wider research relevant to a given report, placing issues in local, regional, national and historical contexts.

Group Meetings.

Members meet prior to committee meetings to debate issues, formulate strategies, and discuss decisions. The political assistant offers information and advice to aid such proceedings.

Committee Meetings.

Committee meetings provide the forum for formal decision-making. The political assistant records all decisions made and any reasons given for making them. During committee meetings new information often emerges from officers. The political assistant records all such information for immediate use and future reference. Opposition members present alternative arguments and propose recommendations different from those of the controlling group. The political assistant records these in order to clarify for members the range of arguments and specific position of opposition groups on particular issues.

Briefings with Officers.

Prior to meetings the chairs of committees hold briefings with senior officers to discuss specific reports and general issues. The political assistant often attends such briefings to provide input into discussions and record any salient points that emerge.

Briefings with Members.

The political assistant informs Members of general ongoing developments. This often takes the form of informal briefings or discussions on a one-to-one basis either in the office or over the telephone. Such briefings typically range in length from ten minutes to more than an hour, and play a vital role in disseminating information and formulating ideas.

Policy Development.

Members require support to develop raw ideas into firm proposals to present to officers. The political assistant contributes research, ideas, and a 'sounding board' off which to bounce such proposals. Such activity takes the form of general discussions or brainstorming sessions, and is vital to the policymaking process.

Communications.

The political group does not operate in a vacuum. It has relationships with members, officers, external bodies, the media, the general public etc. The political assistant maintains effective working relations with these stakeholders. Typical tasks include:

- being a point of contact between members and officers
- drafting internal and external correspondence
- responding to telephone and written enquiries from the public
- responding to media enquiries (NB: not every media contact goes to or comes from the Communications Unit)
- liaising with other Conservative political organisations, including Conservative Central Office, the Conservative Group at the Local Government Association, Conservative political assistants in other local authorities, Conservative Members in other local authorities, local Conservative associations, Conservative Members of Parliament.

Media Monitor.

Local, national and international decisions and events potentially affect the day-to-day running of the authority and the decisions and policies of the Council. It is essential that political groups are aware of general social, political and economic contexts and have up-to-date knowledge of specific policy developments. Members must understand the impact of such developments and be able to respond quickly and effectively. The political assistant monitors the media, which includes keeping abreast of:

- Local print and broadcast media
- National print and broadcast media
- Specialist local government publications
- Electronic media (websites of government departments and agencies, newspapers, specialist publications, political parties, pressure groups, think tanks etc)

General Administration.

The effective operation of a large political group involves a large amount of administrative tasks. These include:

- Drafting and circulating memos, letters, documents etc
- Arranging and servicing group meetings
- Arranging other meetings
- Maintaining an archive of committee reports
- Maintaining a library of other reports and publications etc
- Maintaining an archive of local press coverage

Conclusion.

The above outline is not exhaustive. The tasks of the political assistant are numerous, various, and occasionally unpredictable. This outline might include some tasks that other political assistants, in this authority and beyond, do not do. Likewise, it probably excludes some tasks that other political assistants do carry out.

However, a clear message emerges from this cursory analysis: the political assistant plays an important role in the effective operation of the political group and the local decision-making process.

But I would say that, wouldn't I?

David O'Brien
Political Assistant (Conservative Group)
Ext. 7067
09/10/01

Work Time report Sep 3rd – Oct 10th

As requested by the Head of Corporate Policy I have listed below a brief description of duties and time spent on each. It is impossible to do an exhaustive list of duties, as each day is never the same. My main duties are as follows.

Research
Member Briefing
Attending Committee meetings
Attending Briefing from Officers
Servicing Group Meetings
Media Relations
Monitoring media/publications

Research

Members of the Group, Committee reports or items of future interest can direct this. 55 hours

Member Briefing

Briefings take two forms, verbal and written. Verbal Briefings can last as little as 5 minutes up to 2 hours. Written Briefings also vary depending on the agenda of a meeting. 41 hours

Attending Committee meetings

I have included time it takes to type up notes on each meeting. 39 Hours

Attending officer Briefings

Only a small amount of time, mainly due to the period monitored. 7 Hours

Servicing Group Meetings

This includes not only attendance but also the preparation (Providing reports) 6 hours

Media Relations

This is the most variable item, when the council has a heavy or controversial agenda this role becomes more time consuming.

Monitoring Media/Publications

This also varies with workload, in busy periods this is usually the aspect of work that is sacrificed. 32 hours

During this period I also attended the Labour Party Conference for 4 days. Attended 2 days of O & S training, and took 2 days Holiday.

The above list can in no way cover all the responsibilities undertaken by myself, or in fact the other Political Assistants. It is an extremely varied role, never predictable and unique in so far as the main working relationships are with Elected Members and not officers of the authority.

The Political Assistant role, and support for political Groups, is increasing within Local Government. The number of Labour Groups supported by Political Assistants/Researchers has increased by 4 since the decision at a Local Government Working group to look at the future of Political Assistants in Carlisle. (Without a single example of one being lost)

James Shires
Labour Group Political Assistant

REPORT by ALAN PATEMAN
LIB-DEM & INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ASSISTANT

Report on work undertaken between 13th August & 10th September 2001

BACKGROUND

I was asked to write this report by the Head of Corporate Planning as a part of a survey to evaluate Members satisfaction with the work undertaken for them by the Political Assistants.

Generally in line with my job specification, I provide support to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat & Independent Group. I enable him to operate efficiently with particular emphasis being placed upon: scrutiny of reports and investigative work concerning enquiries received.

Act as a researcher and correspondent for enquiries received from, and by the Leader, in order to enhance the efficient operation of the Group.

Update Group Policies specified by the Group Leader and prepare policy reports.

Undertake research studies; prepare briefing notes and help draft local policy statements as required by the Leader and other members of the Group.

Brief and support members on all relevant matters through the Group Leader and liaise with outside organisations, local contacts and sources.

Organise and operate group office including all ancillary equipment, databases and other files

Deal with media enquiries and maintain good relationships between the media and the Group and ensure it is not to the detriment of the 'authority'.

WORK RECORD

I do not normally keep a detailed record of how I spend my time during a normal working day but for this exercise I have done.

Below I have listed **average time spent over a one week period** during the month records were kept. Owing to the confidential nature of these records I am unable to be more specific.

NORMAL ACTIVITIES

Dealing with E-mails, telephone messages, correspondence and filing
At least 5 hours

Reading, research, scrutinise committee reports with regards to group policy and briefing members
10 hours

Reading newspapers and dealing with the media on behalf of the group
5 hours

Attending Committee Meetings
5 hours

Meetings with individual members(not briefings)
10 hours

Meetings with leader
10 hours (some meetings in my own time)

Other meetings
2 hours

General enquiries – external
2 hours

Updating of local policies and analyse achievements with policy aims
1 hour

Best Value – preparing documents for leader
1 hour

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES OVER PERIOD

Research for Botchergate Residents and Traders Meetings
3 hours

Attendance at Botchergate meetings
3 hours

Training Exercise – New Political Arrangements 6th Sept.
7 hours

OWN TIME ACTIVITIES

Young Enterprise Advisor

PERSONAL VIEW

As a political assistant I act in an advisory way and carry out my duties in line with my job specifications and as the group leader or, in his absence, the deputy group leader have directed me.

I try to act in a fair and objective manner and have no personal difficulty in treating members equally as to their agreed needs.

ATTACHMENT

I have attached a report by Cllr John Guest, which he has already been sent to the Chief Executive. Cllr Guest is happy for the Head of Corporate Planning to use this report as a part of the evaluation process.

ALAN PATEMAN

1st October 2001

Appendix 6

Political Assistant's Comments

REVIEW OF MEMBER SUPPORT NEEDS
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL ASSISTANT

COMMENTS ON THE REPORT/SURVEY

The survey results and Members' comments indicate strong support for full-time political assistants. 35 of 52 councillors (67%) completed the survey. Eight out of ten of these believe full-time political assistants are important in supporting their role as councillors. Any politician would describe an 80% share of the vote on a turnout of 67% as an overwhelming mandate.

Officers typically fail to understand the work political assistants carry out. One valuable outcome of the survey is a revelation of the true role of political assistants. The Members' survey clarifies the point that political assistants are research professionals not administrators. One Member comments that "The priority task of the Political Assistant is to undertake research and produce briefings. The Political Assistant is not there to provide secretarial/admin support." Another Member states that "the Political Assistant's role is to provide a high quality research facility for group Members".

The survey also emphasises the point that the political assistants' work is unique. No other officer of the council can produce the same information and advice as political assistants. One Member comments that "Political Assistants have a natural empathy with the way their own Members are thinking and can provide research material from this perspective. A non-political officer could not do this and the research would not be tailored to the needs of the individual Member". Another Member states that "It is not always appropriate to ask Council officers to undertake research which has a party political dimension. Nor would Council officers have access to the political party networks of advice and information which political assistants have".

Some revealing comments come from Members who recall when this authority did not employ political assistants. Prior to the appointment of political assistants it seems that research for members was inefficient and uncoordinated. One Member comments that research "was extremely time-consuming for members and officers, and not necessarily productive . . . It was not a particularly efficient and effective way of carrying out research".

Another important function of political assistants is to keep Members informed and up to date with events. This is even more important under the new structures where there is greater potential for some Members to become isolated. One Member highlights the importance of the political assistant in "generally keeping me in touch with what's happening". Another Member comments that "the Political Assistant provides a vital contact with other members of the Group . . . he is able to keep us up to date with issues – not only the facts, but the groups' thinking and content of debate".

POLITICAL ASSISTANTS UNDER THE NEW POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Local government is a political environment. Carlisle City Council is a political organisation. It is naïve to believe the new structures erode this fact. Overview and Scrutiny and the Executive are functions that operate as part of the political structure. They do not replace the political functions of control and opposition. Party groups will continue to operate as organs of policy development and political co-ordination. Local decision-making will continue to be informed by and implemented within a political context. High quality decision-making therefore requires a high standard of political information and advice. Political assistants are uniquely equipped and positioned to provide this.

IMPACT OF NEW POSTS ON POLITICAL ASSISTANTS

The appointment of a dedicated Overview and Scrutiny Officer has been made but the appointee is not yet in post. The appointment of dedicated Executive support has been delayed. To comment on the impact of these posts on the role of political assistants therefore requires speculation. I prefer facts to speculation so am not prepared to comment. However, it is clear that the new posts are non-political and therefore cannot provide many of the services currently provided by political assistants.

David O'Brien
15/11/01

COMMENTS by ALAN PATEMAN
LIB-DEM and INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ASSISTANT
As requested under 5.4.

Findings of the Questionnaire

Noting 2.4. In the Report to the Executive it states, 'views expressed during the review must predominately be based on experience under the 'old' committee system.' Therefore, I must pose the question as to whether this report is of any value whatsoever. On the other hand, one may presume that members have taken this into account when expressing their views.

Looking at the report as a whole it is obvious that the vast majority of members wish to retain independent political assistance.

For this to be effective only full time Political Assistants will adequately serve the members with the commitment a full time position demands. When, for example, would these part time hours be? Would these hours be arranged to meet members needs in a morning, afternoon or evening or on Monday, Wednesday or Friday? Would hours be changed from say daytime to evening to accommodate attending a full Council Meeting or other evening meeting? Would, on occasions, the working hours be extended to a full weeks work to enable the assistant to go to a Party Conference or a training course? The list could be endless!

Also, from a purely financial point of view, the salaries paid on a part time basis would be inadequate to live on therefore other part time work would be required.

At the present time where members queries, questions or problems could be dealt with say on a weekend or evening this would not be possible using part time political support.

Some people in the authority seem to think that the Overview & Scrutiny committees are taking over the role of opposition and that non-political officers can replace Political Assistants!

Political Assistants provide a unique support to members every day, which no other officers are able to give.

Future role under the new political structure

I notice that the Political Assistants job descriptions and person specification are not included in the report so I have attached mine to this paper.

Future role includes: -

Support the leader of the Group to operate efficiently and carry out investigative work concerning enquiries received; non-secretarial administrative support and work required by the Group as a whole.

Help to develop and write policies for the Group.

Scrutinise reports with special regard to Group Policies.

Prepare reports for the Group comparing achievements with policy aims.

Undertake research studies, preparing briefing notes and policy statements as required for the Group.

To read and digest Government papers, party political papers and newspapers/journals etc.

To attend Group Meetings and other meetings where appropriate.

To promote and maintain good relationships between the media and the Group.

As the new structures develop and eventually when 'Area Committees' evolve it will naturally fall on the Political Assistants to provide considerable input to these meetings.

Whereas I believe all the groups, whatever their size, should have a full time Political Assistant larger groups should also have secretarial/admin support appointed by the groups themselves.

It is the role of the Political Assistant to advise, assist and to help the members carry out the electorate's wishes and to guide them also, in the political sense, to achieve the aims of their party and group.

Alan Pateman
15-11-2001.

Carlisle City Council
Town Clerk & Chief Executive's Department

Job Description

The following information is furnished to assist staff joining the Council to understand and appreciate the work content of the post and the role they are to play in the organisation. However, the following points should be noted.

1. Whilst every endeavour has been made to outline all the duties and responsibilities of the post, a document such as this does not permit every item to be specified in detail. Broad headings, therefore, may have been used below, in which case all the usual associated routines are naturally included in the Job Description.
2. Over a period of time the duties and responsibilities outlined below may vary without changing the general character or level of responsibility of the job. Officers should not refuse to undertake work which is not listed below, but they should record any additional duties they are required to perform and these will be taken into account if the job description is reviewed.

<u>Title of Post</u>	Political / Research Assistant (Liberal Democrat Group)	<u>Post No</u>	SP0212
-----------------------------	--	-----------------------	--------

<u>Departmental Section</u>	Liberal Democrat Group Office	<u>Grade</u>	Scale 6
------------------------------------	-------------------------------	---------------------	---------

1. Purpose of Job

To provide support to, and to undertake research on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group.

2. Responsible To

2.1 The post is on the establishment of the Town Clerk and Chief Executive's Department and for such aspects as pay and conditions of services, will come under the Chief Executive.

2.2 Work allocation / prioritisation will be scheduled and controlled by the Group Leader.

3. Responsible For

Not applicable.

4. Decision Making

Postholder will be required to make some decisions about priorities or urgency of incoming enquiries.

5. Responsibility for Assets

Not applicable.

6. Main Activities

- 6.1 Provide support to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group so as to enable him / her to operate efficiently with particular emphasis being placed upon: scrutiny of reports; investigative work concerning enquiries received; non-secretarial administrative support and work required by the Group as a whole.
- 6.2 Act as a researcher and correspondent for enquiries received from, and by the Leader, in order to enhance the efficient operation of the Group.
- 6.3 Prepare reports for the Group comparing achievements with policy aims.
- 6.4 Undertake research studies, prepare briefing notes and policy statements as required for the Group.
- 6.5 To promote and maintain good relationships between the media and the Group.
- 6.6 To carry out such other duties and responsibilities as may reasonably be directed by the Group Leader or his / her nominees(s).

7. Special Features

- 7.1 The post is provided under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and is offered on the basis of a fixed term, renewable contract of employment.

8. Conditions of Service

- 8.1 Salary scale 6 Spinal Column Points 26 to 28, currently £16,719 to £17,838 per annum.
- 8.2 The post is subject to the Conditions of Service of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services and to the provisions of the Local Government Pension Acts.
- 8.3 There will be a sick pay scheme in accordance with National Conditions.
- 8.4 Leave will be granted in accordance with the following:

Length of Service	Days Leave
Up to 5 years	23
Over 5 and up to 10 years	28
Over 10 and up to 15 years	30
Over 15 and up to 20 years	31
Over 20 years	33

You should note the following:

- 8.4.1 The extra statutory holidays on Easter Tuesday, Autumn Bank Holiday Tuesday and the Local Spring Bank Holiday Tuesday are incorporated into the annual leave entitlement.

8.4.2 On those occasions when Christmas or New Year holidays fall in such a way that only one day intervenes between the holiday and a weekend, staff will be required to take this day as a deduction from Annual Leave, should the Council wish the Civic Centre to remain closed.

8.5 Qualifying length of service is based upon Continuous 'Local Authority' service.

8.6 Subject to any future decision of the Council, the post is based at the Civic Centre, Carlisle

8.7 A 37 hour, 5 day week is in operation.

June 1999

CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL

PERSON SPECIFICATION FORM

POST: Political Research Assistant (Liberal Democrat Group) POST NO: SP0212

ESSENTIAL	DESIRABLE	SCORING SCHEME
QUALIFICATIONS / TRAINING / COMPETENCIES		
➤ Good standard of education.	➤ GCE 'O' or G.C.S.E grade A-C in English Language and Mathematics – CLAIT.	
RELEVANT EXPERIENCE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Academic or professional research. ➤ Membership of Liberal Democrat Party. ➤ Media experience. 	➤ Public or private sector experience of committee procedures and / or interdepartmental liaison.	
KNOWLEDGE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ General political awareness. ➤ Appreciation of the political environment of Local Authorities. ➤ Sound understanding of national and local Liberal Democrat Party policies. ➤ Understanding of community politics. ➤ Understanding of research methods. 	➤ Portfolio of local contacts and sources.	
SKILLS / ABILITY		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Proven skills in research activities. ➤ Good IT skills, including word processing, spreadsheets and databases. ➤ Report writing and data entry. ➤ Ability to identify quickly matters of political significance and / or relevance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Presentation skills. ➤ Internet, E Mail, Microsoft Office, Microsoft Project. 	
PERSONAL SKILLS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Relate well and communicate effectively, orally and in writing, at all levels. ➤ Develop and maintain good working relationships. ➤ Work without direct supervision. ➤ Prioritise workload appropriately. ➤ Appropriate respect for confidentiality and matters of sensitivity. ➤ Good organisational skills 	➤ Willingness to learn, and participate in training and development schemes as deemed appropriate.	
SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES		
➤ Some attendance will be required out of normal office hours.		



Carlisle City UNISON
Local Government Branch

UNISON response to report TC 221/01.
To be presented to the Executive meeting 26th Nov 01

This response follows consultation with members of UNISON in the TC & CE Dept and in IT Services. The focus of the report is on the 3 groups of workers concerned and does not comment on other areas such as the Tartan room.

IT Services

UNISON welcomes the survey results that 74% of Councillors are satisfied or very satisfied with the service provided. UNISON would like to see many of the issues listed in Appendix 3 tackled along with concerns of UNISON. Many Councillors and members of UNISON in IT identified more training for elected members; this would not only raise the knowledge of elected members but also cut the number of problems experienced due to experimenting.

UNISON consultation identified that the installation of unsupported software is a continuing problem experienced by members of IT staff. The correct installation of IT packages has also caused some confusion with some elected members receiving different IT packages than council staff, causing frustration when trying to communicate with the Civic Centre. UNISON members also expressed issues around the Maintenance of Central Services and the Helpdesk. An out of hours service has been broached and any extra service introduction would require further consultation, but more importantly, adequate resources.

UNISON considers that the problems expressed by both elected members and members of UNISON can and should be dealt with relatively quickly. Therefore UNISON recommends that a joint working group is established with UNISON to ensure that the service maintains it high level of satisfaction and improve in the future.

Political Assistants

UNISON welcomes the results of the survey and would like to highlight the high percentage (80%) of councillors who feel that full-time Political Assistants (Appendix 1 p15) are important in supporting the work of a Councillor.

UNISON does not accept the comments in 1.2, 2.4, 5.1 and 17.1 regarding the impact of the new political structures, or that the result of the survey are in anyway out of date due to being in the 'old' committee system. Any comments about future roles are pure speculation, exacerbated by a lack of understanding of the role of Political Assistants by fellow officers. The results of the survey will in themselves go a long way to informing officers of the value many Councillors have for the role of Political Assistants.

UNISON does not accept that the new political structures will see a decline in workload for Political Assistants. The political workload has not deteriorated, and in many ways has increased. Nor has the content changed, the issues facing Carlisle City Council have not changed because we have moved to a new political Structure.

UNISON is clear in its view that any new positions that support the work of the Executive and O & S committees will not impact on the work of Political Assistants. The survey results clearly support the political content of the post. UNISON has expressed concern in the past that any new roles within the authority are not politicised and are regarded in the same way as other officers of the Authority, as non-political posts providing support to Councillors, not a political party.

With regards to Option D, UNISON would like to make it clear that for any consultation to be meaningful all the options need to be presented as early as possible and preferably with supporting evidence for inclusion. Option D was only introduced in the final draft and with no prior indication. UNISON has received no intimation of support for option D from elected members or fellow officers. It was not part of the detailed survey of elected members, nor was it part of any previous discussion with UNISON or Political Assistants. It is a concern to UNISON that after a thorough and open consultation process, any option may be added, for no apparent reason or supporting thought process, which was not open to UNISON.

UNISON would require further consultation and details on the possibility of dedicated secretarial support for political groups.

Paragraph 17.2

UNISON supports Option A.

Option B has very little support from elected members (2 comments) and the overwhelming majority support full-time Political Assistants (80%) and is not supported by UNISON.

Option C is not supported by any elected member and is not supported by UNISON

It is the view of UNISON that Option D is not appropriate for this review.

Secretarial and Admin Support

Once again UNISON welcomes the fact that 71% of Councillors are satisfied or very satisfied with the support they receive.

UNISON is however alarmed at the low usage of the secretarial and Admin support, especially when coupled with comments such as 'I do not feel everyone is aware of the service' and 'Do not recall any written evidence that this service exists'. These comments clearly need addressing and all services available to elected members should be highlighted at regular intervals and part of any induction course.

UNISON would strongly emphasise the point that all members of staff in the Secretarial and Admin section work in a non-political environment.

Recommendations

1. It is the view of UNISON that Option A, make no change, be accepted in paragraph 17.2.
2. A joint working group with UNISON is established to tackle issues raised by elected member and members of UNISON in IT Services.
3. Admin and Secretarial services are highlighted to elected members at regular intervals and are part of any induction course for new members.

James Shires

TC & CE Department Steward

Appendix 8

Line Managers and Members Support Managers Comments

Carlisle City Council

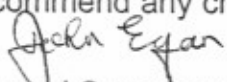
INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

From:	City Solicitor and Secretary	Please ask for:	Mr Egan
		Extension:	7004
To:	Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy	E-mail:	JohnE@carlisle-city.gov.uk
		Your ref:	
Fao:		Our ref:	JME/GH
			09 August 2001

RE: REVIEW OF POLITICAL ASSISTANTS

Thank you for copying me into the Work Programme. I would make the following points:

1. Ian and I will comment on the questionnaire. In terms of line management, the reality is that Ian looks after the political assistants from an administrative point of view only in terms of flexi time, holidays, sick records etc. Direction in terms of their workload and priorities should come from the Group Leaders. The expectation is that, initially with the advent of the new political structures, the workload is likely to increase but this will be dependent to some extent on how and whether the new Executive and Scrutiny Support posts will cut across work which hitherto has been done by the Assistants. The political groups will give direction on the work which they require their respective assistants to undertake and monitor the workflow.
2. The Work Programme envisages that the Local Government Reform Working Group will continue after 12 September next when Executive arrangements are in place. I do not think that this will be the case. I imagine that the Group will disappear and the question of the future role of Political Assistants will primarily be a matter for the Executive to make recommendations on but I imagine that they may wish to seek a view from the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee which deals with corporate resources to obtain a wider input. The Constitution does provide that any review of the allocation of Political Assistants Posts should be reserved to the Council so that, if the Executive were to recommend any changes, this would need to be approved by the full Council.


City Solicitor and Secretary

Appendix 9

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

From: City Solicitor and Secretary
To: Head of Corporate Policy and Strategy
Date: 08 August 2007
Subject: Job Descriptions – Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Support Posts

RE: REVIEW OF POLITICAL ASSISTANTS

Thank you for copying me into the Work Programme. I would make the following points:

Job Descriptions – Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Support Posts

The Work Programme envisages 7 at the Local Government Reform Working Group will continue after 12 September next when Executive arrangements are replaced. I do not think that this will be the case. I imagine that the Group will disappear and the question of the future role of Political Assistants will primarily be a matter for the Executive to make recommendations on but in doing so they may wish to seek a view from the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee which deals with corporate resources in order a wider report. The Committee does provide that any review of the situation of Political Assistants should be referred to the Council so that if the Executive were to recommend any changes, this would need to be approved by the full Council.

City Solicitor and Secretary

Carlisle City Council
Town Clerk and Chief Executives Department

Job Description

The following information is furnished to assist staff joining the Council to understand and appreciate the work content of the post and the role they are to play in the organisation. However, the following points should be noted.

1. Whilst every endeavour has been made to outline all the duties and responsibilities of the post, a document such as this does not permit every item to be specified in detail. Broad headings, therefore, may have been used below, in which case all the usual associated routines are naturally included in the Job Description.
2. Over a period of time the duties and responsibilities outlined below may vary without changing the general character or level of responsibility of the job. Officers should not refuse to undertake work which is not listed below, but they should record any additional duties they are required to perform and these will be taken into account if the job description is reviewed.

<u>Title of Post</u>	Scrutiny Support Officer	<u>Post No SP</u>
-----------------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------

<u>Departmental Section</u>	Town Clerk & Chief Executive	<u>Grade PO 1-4</u>
------------------------------------	---	----------------------------

1. Purpose of Job

To facilitate reviews of the Council's Forward Plan, it's policies and performance and those of other agencies.

To support the scrutiny of Executive decisions.

To assist with Member's involvement in the conduct of Best Value Fundamental Performance Reviews.

To provide support to the work of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

2. Responsible To

Town Clerk & Chief Executive (pending any future review)

Day to day supervision by the Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

3. Responsible For

N/A

4. Decision Making

N/A

5. Responsibility for Assets

N/A

6. Main Activities

Co-ordinate and support the conduct of individual reviews including council and external agencies' inputs.

Commission, co-ordinate or carry out research and consultation input to reviews.

Analyse review findings and prepare or co-ordinate review reports.

Monitor and report on the progress of the agreed programme of reviews.

Provide reports or information on Executive decisions which are called in as necessary.

Assist the Best Value Officer in co-ordinating the conduct of Best Value Fundamental Performance Reviews by Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Assist in the development of the council's approach to overview and scrutiny activity and training in support of the review process.

Carry out such other duties and responsibilities as may reasonably be directed by the Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees or the Town Clerk & Chief Executive.

7. Special Features

Attendance at occasional evening meetings may be required.

8. Conditions of Service

8.1 Salary scale PO 1-4 Spinal Column Points 33 to 36, currently £22,341 to £24,072 per annum.

8.2 The post is subject to the Conditions of Service of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services and to the provisions of the Local Government Pension Acts.

8.3 There will be a sick pay scheme in accordance with National Conditions.

8.4 Leave will be granted in accordance with the following:

Length of Service	Days Leave
Up to 5 years	23
Over 5 and up to 10 years	28
Over 10 and up to 15 years	30
Over 15 and up to 20 years	31
Over 20 years	33

You should note the following:

- 8.4.1 The extra statutory holidays on Easter Tuesday, Autumn Bank Holiday Tuesday and the Local Spring Bank Holiday Tuesday are incorporated into the annual leave entitlement.
- 8.4.2 On those occasions when Christmas or New Year holidays fall in such a way that only one day intervenes between the holiday and a weekend, staff will be required to take this day as a deduction from Annual Leave, should the Council wish the Civic Centre to remain closed.
- 8.5 Qualifying length of service is based upon Continuous 'Local Authority' service.
- 8.6 Subject to any future decision of the Council, the post is based at Civic Centre, Carlisle.
- 8.7 A 37 hour, 5 day week is in operation.

Persnl/Masters/Job Description

Carlisle City Council
Town Clerk and Chief Executives Department

Job Description

The following information is furnished to assist staff joining the Council to understand and appreciate the work content of the post and the role they are to play in the organisation. However, the following points should be noted.

1. Whilst every endeavour has been made to outline all the duties and responsibilities of the post, a document such as this does not permit every item to be specified in detail. Broad headings, therefore, may have been used below, in which case all the usual associated routines are naturally included in the Job Description.
2. Over a period of time the duties and responsibilities outlined below may vary without changing the general character or level of responsibility of the job. Officers should not refuse to undertake work which is not listed below, but they should record any additional duties they are required to perform and these will be taken into account if the job description is reviewed.

<u>Title of Post</u>	Executive Support Officer	<u>Post No SP</u>
-----------------------------	----------------------------------	--------------------------

<u>Departmental Section</u>	Town Clerk and Chief Executive	<u>Grade PO 1 - 4</u>
------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	------------------------------

1. **Purpose of Job**

To provide support and assistance to Executive Members in the discharge of their duties.

2. **Responsible To**

Town Clerk and Chief Executive (pending any future review)

Day to day supervision by Leader of the Council and Executive Members

3. **Responsible For**

N/A

4. **Decision Making**

N/A

5. **Responsibility for Assets**

N/A

6. **Main Activities**

Co-ordinate meetings, arrange or provide briefings and respond to information requirements of Executive Members.

Provide a 'signposting' and co-ordination service between Executive Members and chief/senior officers.

Ensure Executive Members have access to all the Council's corporate, strategic and policy documentation.

Ensure Executive Members have access to all research and consultation findings undertaken by or on behalf of the Council.

Commission, co-ordinate or carry out other research input where required.

Monitor progress, processing, documenting and actioning of decisions delegated to Executive Members.

Assist with preparation of Forward Plan.

Ensure identification of training needs of Executive Members and opportunities to address those needs.

Liase with Communications Unit on media issues as necessary.

Ensure necessary typing, clerical and administrative work required by Executive Members is provided by liasing with those providing such work.

Carry out such other duties and responsibilities as may reasonably be directed by the Leader and Executive Members or the Town Clerk and Chief Executive should this be required.

7. Special Features

Attendance at occasional evening meetings may be required.

8. Conditions of Service

8.1 Salary scale PO 1 – 4 Spinal Column Points 33 to 36, currently £22,341 to £24,072 per annum.

8.2 The post is subject to the Conditions of Service of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services and to the provisions of the Local Government Pension Acts.

8.3 There will be a sick pay scheme in accordance with National Conditions.

8.4 Leave will be granted in accordance with the following:

Length of Service	Days Leave
Up to 5 years	23
Over 5 and up to 10 years	28
Over 10 and up to 15 years	30

Over 15 and up to 20 years	31
Over 20 years	33

You should note the following:

- 8.4.1 The extra statutory holidays on Easter Tuesday, Autumn Bank Holiday Tuesday and the Local Spring Bank Holiday Tuesday are incorporated into the annual leave entitlement.
- 8.4.2 On those occasions when Christmas or New Year holidays fall in such a way that only one day intervenes between the holiday and a weekend, staff will be required to take this day as a deduction from Annual Leave, should the Council wish the Civic Centre to remain closed.
- 8.5 Qualifying length of service is based upon Continuous 'Local Authority' service.
- 8.6 Subject to any future decision of the Council, the post is based at Civic Centre, Carlisle.
- 8.7 A 37 hour, 5 day week is in operation.

Persnl/Masters/Job Description

Carlisle City Council
Town Clerk and Chief Executive Department

Job Description

The following information is furnished to assist staff joining the Council to understand and appreciate the work content of the post and the role they are to play in the organisation. However, the following points should be noted.

1. Whilst every endeavour has been made to outline all the duties and responsibilities of the post, a document such as this does not permit every item to be specified in detail. Broad headings, therefore, may have been used below, in which case all the usual associated routines are naturally included in the Job Description.
2. Over a period of time the duties and responsibilities outlined below may vary without changing the general character or level of responsibility of the job. Officers should not refuse to undertake work which is not listed below, but they should record any additional duties they are required to perform and these will be taken into account if the job description is reviewed.

<u>Title of Post</u>	<u>PA to the Executive</u>	<u>Post No</u>	<u>SP</u>
<u>Departmental Section</u>	<u>Town Clerk and Chief Executive</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Scale 3/4</u>
1. Purpose of Job			
To provide a confidential, efficient administrative and secretarial service to the Leader, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holders			
2. Responsible To			
The Town Clerk & Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council			
3. Responsible For			
To provide high quality administrative and secretarial support to Executive Members, ensuring an efficient and effective service enabling Portfolio Holders to make the most effective use of their time.			
4. Decision Making			
To decide which mail and callers to pass to the Leader, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holders and which to direct elsewhere or handle his/herself.			

5. Responsibility for Assets

Not applicable.

6. Main Activities

- 6.1 Deal with incoming post, answering where possible, or passing to the most appropriate person and attaching any relevant information or files, and dealing with outgoing mail.
- 6.2 Act as a receptionist to personal callers to the office; deal with those he/she can personally and pass others to the most appropriate person. Provide tea/coffee/refreshments for meetings etc as appropriate.
- 6.3 To screen telephone calls, answer questions and give information courteously and promptly to all callers and visitors.
- 6.4 Provide secretarial and administrative support for Executive Members. This includes copy typing, transcription from audiotape, word processing of reports and other confidential correspondence, filing, record keeping, photocopying, maintaining mailing/distribution lists, assisting with the organisation of and providing support for internal and external events.
- 6.5 Provide general administrative and secretarial support including, scheduling appointments, screening telephone calls, taking effective messages, answering enquiries, maintaining current databases and filing systems.
- 6.6 Distribute a range of information as appropriate, to other departments/Officers, partner organisations and other external bodies.
- 6.7 Arrange travel and accommodation, make bookings for conferences and other meetings in liaison with the Town Clerk & Chief Executive admin assistant.
- 6.8 To acquire and maintain a good working knowledge of the Department and Authority as a whole, with particular emphasis on the secretarial support required for the Executive, the Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holders.
- 6.9 Carry out such other duties and responsibilities as may reasonably be directed by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive or the Leader of the Council.

7. Special Features

None.

8. Conditions of Service

- 8.1 Salary scale 3/4 Spinal Column Points 14 to 17, currently £12,618 to £15,342 per annum.

8.2 The post is subject to the Conditions of Service of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services and to the provisions of the Local Government Pension Acts.

8.3 There will be a sick pay scheme in accordance with National Conditions.

8.4 Leave will be granted in accordance with the following:

Length of Service	Days Leave
Up to 5 years	23
Over 5 and up to 10 years	28
Over 10 and up to 15 years	30
Over 15 and up to 20 years	31
Over 20 years	33

You should note the following:

8.4.1 The extra statutory holidays on Easter Tuesday, Autumn Bank Holiday Tuesday and the Local Spring Bank Holiday Tuesday are incorporated into the annual leave entitlement.

8.4.2 On those occasions when Christmas or New Year holidays fall in such a way that only one day intervenes between the holiday and a weekend, staff will be required to take this day as a deduction from Annual Leave, should the Council wish the Civic Centre to remain closed.

8.5 Qualifying length of service is based upon Continuous 'Local Authority' service.

8.6 Subject to any future decision of the Council, the post is based at the Civic Centre.

8.7 A 37 hour, 5 day week is in operation.

August 2001