

## MONITORING OF MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS AND TRAINING SESSIONS

### 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 At its last meeting the Committee requested a report on how effective monitoring of attendance might be implemented. This report considers both attendance and the determination of minimum levels of competency training.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In January 2002 the Independent Remuneration Panel produced a report and recommendations on Members' Allowances which included the following recommendations:

*that the business of the Council can only be effectively carried out with the active participation of all its Members and that the minimum of 60% attendance (of those Committees of which the Councillor is a Member) would be under the authority of an appropriate Committee, as determined by Council. The Panel would also recommend that there should be an automatic cessation of the payment of all allowances for any Members who do not achieve the minimum attendance without just cause.*

*that the Head of Administrative & Member Services should take responsibility for determining a minimum level of competency training that would enable Councillors to be effective within their duties and responsibility and that the Panel would be advised of such training when they meet for their regular review. Oversight of this would be the responsibility of the Overview/Scrutiny Committee*

- 2.2 Council considered the report on 22 February 2002 but did not accept the recommendations in their entirety. It was resolved (a) not to implement the requirement for a qualifying 60% attendance and (b) that this Committee should be responsible for determining minimum levels of competency training. Further, in adopting terms of reference for this Committee, the Council included the requirement to monitor attendance.

#### 2.3 Responsibilities of the Standards Committee

From the above and the terms of reference of the Committee, it is clear that the Council's intention is that the Standards Committee should

ensure that the type and amount of training available to Members is sufficient for the purpose. It is not this Committee's responsibility to monitor whether or not an individual Member has attained a minimum level of competency training although the Committee is required to monitor individual attendance both at meetings and at training sessions.

### **3 DETERMINATION OF MINIMUM LEVELS OF COMPETENCY TRAINING FOR MEMBERS**

- 3.1 At its last meeting the Committee agreed an outline programme of Member Training and identified some key topics to commence on 18 September. Officers have now effected this and the complete programme is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.2 Members are invited to consider the adequacy of this programme and decide whether it achieves the required minimum level of competency training.

### **4 MONITOR OF MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS AND TRAINING SESSIONS**

- 4.1 At every meeting of the Council, the Committee Administrator keeps a record of attendance. This is published at the end of each municipal year. A copy of the attendance record for last year is attached as Appendix 2 by way of example.
- 4.2 The form and content of the record was reviewed by the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 26 November 2002. Council approved an amended version, attached as Appendix 3, but asked this Committee to consider how this form might be improved upon and offer comments.
- 4.2 One point of concern has been that there are occasions when a Member is unable to attend a meeting of a Committee because of other Council commitments, for example representing the Council on an Outside Body. Nevertheless, this is recorded as an absence in the attendance register. A footnote is included explaining this but Members can feel that the attendance recorded does not reflect the effort they put in to Council business.
- 4.3 In addition, the Committee Section monitors long term absence and will advise a Member, and if necessary the relevant Group Leader, should a Member near six months absence which would disbar him/her from the Council.

- 4.4 It is suggested that the Standards Committee receive a report in November and April of each year summarising the attendance of Members to date in a form similar to that currently produced annually.
- 4.5 With regard to training sessions, a record of attendance is kept for each session. It is suggested that a summary of attendance be produced at the end of the current programme for Members' consideration.
- 4.6 If concerns arise with regard to any individual's attendance, generally or in connection with training, the Committee may wish the Chairman to write in confidence to that person drawing attention to the matter and inviting comment and/or explanation. If concerns persist, the Member may be invited to attend a meeting of the Standards Committee to discuss the matter.
- 4.7 Officers will continue to monitor attendance as outlined above and will inform the Chairman of this Committee as well as the relevant Group Leader should serious concerns arise with regard to a Member's attendance.

## **5 MONITOR OF PLANNING TRAINING SESSIONS**

- 5.1 Separately, Members' attention is drawn to the Minute 434/02 of a meeting of the Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 19 September 2002 with regard to specific issues in relation to the planning function. This Committee is requested to determine the minimum attendance requirement at planning training sessions. The current course provides two sessions with planning related content.
- 5.2 If a specific level of attendance is required, it is necessary to ensure that enough sessions are provided over a sufficient period to ensure all Members have an equal opportunity to attend. Members may wish to consider whether a series of planning specific sessions should be arranged and if so, whether attendance should be compulsory for at least one such?
- 5.3 Alternately, it may be considered sufficient for a Member to attend at least one planning related training session say every three years? Members' views are sought.

## **6 RECOMMENDATION**

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) That summary reports be received in November and April of each year on Members' attendance at Meetings.

- (2) That a summary report be received on Members' attendance at training sessions at the end of every training programme.
- (3) That any concern about attendance be dealt with informally direct with the Member in the first instance and in confidence through the Chairman of this Committee
- (4) That the level of Councillor attendance required at planning training sessions be decided. CD(LPA))

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**Background Papers:**

None

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