



Report of the Chief Democratic Services Officer

Member Management Committee

Date: 1st June 2009

Subject: Members Attendance at Conferences and Seminars - update

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

1. The objective of this project is to revise the process for authorising Members attendance at conferences and seminars in light of concerns raised by the Member Management Committee regarding certain aspects of the current guidelines.
2. The report sets out proposals for altering the process that must be followed for all requests by Members to attend conferences and seminars.
3. The report also clarifies arrangements for agreeing the attendance at conferences and seminars by Members of the Standards Committee and for informing Members of forthcoming conference events.
4. Note the updated list of approved conferences.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is seek the views of Members of Member Management Committee on the proposals for a revised process for authorising attendance by Members at conferences and seminars, including Members of the Standards Committee.
- 1.2 The report also details arrangements for informing Members of forthcoming conference events.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The process for authorising attendance by Members at Conferences and Seminars was originally set out in an Executive Board report in May 2000 and revised in a subsequent Executive Board report in October 2005.
- 2.2 The revision document of October 2005 altered the agreed list on Conferences, the authorisation process and set up the mechanism which allows the Member Management Committee to monitor attendance.
- 2.3 This Committee has asked that the arrangements be reviewed.

3.0 Main Issues

Approval Procedure

- 3.1 In the original document it stated that Members who wished to attend a conference or seminar should make a request to the Chief Democratic Services Manager for consideration.
- 3.2 In practice the majority of such requests are sent directly to the Member Development Officer, therefore it has been suggested that the responsibility for processing requests be passed to the Member Development Officer acting on behalf of the Chief Democratic Services Officer.
- 3.3 As before the Member Development Officer would consult with the Chair of Member Management Committee and the applicable Executive Board Member.
- 3.4 In cases where there is no obvious Executive Board Portfolio, the Member Development Officer will consult with the Leader in addition to the Chair of Member Management Committee. If a there is a difference of opinion between the two, the Member Development Officer will act on the advice of the Chair of Member Management Committee.
- 3.5 The guidelines currently state that requests to attend conferences and seminars received from the Independent Chair of the Standards Committee are sent to the Member Development Officer who seeks approval from the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) in her role as the Monitoring Officer.
- 3.6 It is suggested that the system should be revised so that approval for any requests from Members of the Standards Committee who are not Leeds City Council Councillors should be sought from the Executive Board Member (Central and Corporate Functions) as well as the Monitoring Officer. This will ensure that Members are kept informed of any such requests. Any requests from Elected

Members would follow the usual process involving the Chair of Member Management Committee.

- 3.7 Requests to attend conferences and seminars from non-Leeds City Council Members of the Standards Committee are not covered by this procedure. All such requests will be submitted on the same application form and will be the subject of consultation between the Executive Board Member (Central and Corporate Functions) and the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Governance) in her role as the monitoring officer.

A revised procedure including the proposed changes is attached at Appendix 1.

Approved Conferences

- 3.8 Following consultation with Directors and Heads of Service, the list of Approved Conferences has been updated. This is attached at Appendix 2

Notice of forthcoming events, monitoring of attendance and evaluation

- 3.9 It is proposed that the Member Development Officer circulate information about relevant forthcoming events to group whips for their consideration.
- 3.10 Details of attendance will continue to be circulated to whips for their information by the Member Development Officer.
- 3.11 The Member Development Working Group has committed itself to a rigorous process of evaluation of all learning undertaken by Elected Members, linked to the Personal Development Plan (PDP) process.
- 3.12 Thus Members should be encouraged to bring back copies of handouts/literature from any events they attend. This will allow the knowledge to be shared with colleagues. The Member Development Officer will contact them for feedback after the event as a matter of course in order to ensure that the Council is receiving value for money.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 4.1 Appropriate attendance at conferences if essential to meet the learning needs of elected Members and a robust application procedure allows that the most appropriate Member attends, thus giving value for money.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications and the spending on conferences and seminars will be met within existing resource allocated.

6.0 Conclusions

This report revises the current process of authorising attendance by Members at conferences and seminars.

The report also sets out the procedure for the monitoring attendance, evaluating the quality and usefulness of the event and the circulation of information regarding forthcoming events.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 The Member Management Committee is asked to;

- Endorse the revised Attendance at Conferences and Seminars procedure (Appendix 1)
- Endorse the revised approved list of conferences (Appendix 2)
- Note the new arrangements for monitoring of attendance and evaluation and the circulation of information about forthcoming conference events to whips
- Note that the revised procedure and list will be discussed with the Executive Member (Central and Corporate Functions) and taken, as appropriate, as an officer decision or referred for a decision of the Executive Board.