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WARD MEMBERS' WORKING GROUP

4 July 2013 – 6.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor J Smith (in the Chair), Councillors Castle, M Coleman and Fairhead.

Councillor Collins attended for Councillor Hacon and Councillor Stone attended for Councillor Plant.

Group Manager – Governance, Group Manager – Neighbourhood and Communities and Cabinet Secretary.

1. MINUTES

The minutes of 24 April 2013 were confirmed.

2. ROLE OF WARD COUNCILLORS

The Cabinet Secretary reminded the Working Group that this Group had been set up as a Sub-Committee of the Scrutiny Committee to fully examine the issue relating to the role of Ward Councillors. Accordingly, following the Working Group's initial meeting on 24 April, Members were now asked to give detailed consideration to the following issues:-

(a) A Mentoring/Buddying System for New Councillors

The Working Group agreed that it would be good practice to have a named officer who would provide a mentoring/buddying system for both new Councillors and existing Councillors. The Working Group also agreed that new Members should receive an induction with regard to community issues.

(b) Members' Handbook

The Working Group was asked to examine the content of the current Members' Handbook issued to newly elected Members.

The Working Group agreed the following recommendations:-

- To make use of the Council's design and print service to make the Members' Handbook more user friendly and also to reduce its size.
- The provision of a named officer who would be able to advise Members on "common" problems.

- The deletion of the List of Members together with their email addresses as this matter was duplicated in the details shown in the Members by Ward section of the handbook.
- Members' details to be linked to the website.
- Outside bodies' details to be amended.
- The inclusion of a comprehensive telephone directory.
- A directory of local groups to be included.
- The future format of the handbook to be A5 rather than A4.
- To investigate whether the handbook could be made available electronically.

The Working Group agreed that the Cabinet Secretary should produce a revised Members' Handbook for consideration by the Working Group at its next meeting.

(c) Members' Equipment

The Working Group discussed what equipment Members needed to carry out their role as Ward Councillors. The Group Manager (Governance) reminded the Working Group that most Members have now been issued with ipads but that in any event other Members would be provided with a laptop. The Chairman suggested that an investigation should be carried out with other local authorities to determine how they provide their information using the new technology available.

The Working Group were of the opinion that as the recent ipad technology had only been issued to Members very recently, it would be more appropriate to review this issue after six months' usage.

(d) Case Work and Engaging with the Community

The Working Group gave consideration on how to deal with case work and engaging with the community. The Group Manager (Neighbourhoods and Communities) reported that the Neighbourhood Managers would be able to provide Members with on the ground support in order to fulfil their role in the communities. The Working Group discussed the level of support currently being provided for the rural areas and it was acknowledged that the requirements of urban and rural Members was quite different.

The Group Manager (Governance) suggested that a dedicated Member Services Officer could be nominated in order to help with Members' case work.

The Chairman asked whether the recent Cabinet meeting with students from Caister High School had been well received and the Group Manager (Neighbourhoods and Communities) reported that this had been a very successful session and it was agreed that further details of youth involvement should be considered at the Working Group's next meeting.

(e) Ward Councillor Compact

The Working Group was asked to fully examine the proposal to introduce a formal Ward Councillor Compact which would include a rural profile of all Councillors and suggested activities to help Councillors fulfil the compact and their constitutional role.

The Cabinet Secretary pointed out that a significant amount of detail contained within a Ward Councillor Compact was in fact already included as an appendix to the current Council's constitution.

The Working Group agreed to request the Cabinet Secretary to submit details of the current appendix attached to the constitution relating to Members' role for consideration at the

Working Group's next meeting together with the provision of a simpler modified version of a proposed Ward Councillor Compact.

3. CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm.