

CHESHIRE EAST BOROUGH COUNCIL

Governance and Constitution Committee

Date of meeting: 21 May 2009

Report of: Democratic Services Manager

Title: Member Attendance at Annual Conferences and Seminars

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 For the Committee to make recommendations to Cabinet in respect of Member attendance at conferences and seminars.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee give consideration to the proposed policy set out at Appendix B to this report, and make appropriate recommendations to Cabinet.

3.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs

- 3.1 None

4.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond

- 4.1 Democratic Services does not hold a budget to pay for attendance by Members at conferences and seminars: separate provision is made for Member training and development. Unless such a budget is created, the cost of attendance must be met from departmental budgets.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 It is appropriate for the Committee to make recommendations to the Cabinet upon the proposed arrangements for Member attendance at conferences and seminars, as this is an executive function.

6.0 Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Having an agreed policy will minimise risks to the authority and to individual Members.

7.0 Background

- 7.1 Appendix A to this report sets out a list of conferences and seminars which are often attended by local authority Members. Some of the organisations listed place their own attendance requirements upon local authorities eg Leader,

Portfolio Holder, Chairman etc to attend. Attendance at others is determined by the local authority in question.

- 7.2 Discussions have recently taken place, including at a meeting of the Member Learning and Development Panel, as to the way in which decisions should be made in response to requests for Members to attend such events. Such requests sometimes come from the Council's Directorates, or from Members themselves.
- 7.3 In order for officers to have certainty about how to deal with these requests, there should be an agreed policy. Such a policy would need to be adopted by Cabinet upon the recommendation of the Governance and Constitution Committee.

8.0 Proposed Policy

- 8.1 The Council should have a simple policy which clearly sets out the rules which will guide officers and Members.
- 8.2 Discussion at the Member Learning and Development Panel centred around the following points:
 - 8.2.1 Any requests from Members for attendance should first be filtered by the Group Leader of the Member in question.
 - 8.2.2 Approval of requests must be made on the basis of need, taking into account the Member's Council responsibilities.
 - 8.2.3 Attendance must be within budget. Payment would be expected to be made from within the budget of the Service Area in question.
- 8.3 The Council needs a flexible and responsive mechanism to deal with requests for Member attendance at conferences and seminars. It is therefore proposed that an officer should have responsibility for approving such requests but that, prior to doing so, consultation should take place with the Leader or, where non-executive responsibilities apply, with the chairman of the appropriate committee and the Leader.
- 8.4 Appendix B sets out a draft policy which the Committee is asked to recommend to the Cabinet.

For further information:

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Wesley Fitzgerald

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Background Documents: None

Documents are available for inspection at:

*Westfields
Middlewich Road
Sandbach
Cheshire
CW11 1HZ*

Appendix A

SCHEDULE OF TYPICAL CONFERENCES ATTENDED BY LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBERS

| TITLE OF CONFERENCE |
|--|
| North of England Education Conference |
| LGA Delivering Sustainable Communities Act Conference |
| Public Sector People Management Association (PPMA) Annual Conference |
| F40 Spring Conference |
| CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Conference |
| Trading Standards Conference |
| LGA Annual Conference |
| NWRA Annual Conference |
| RiP/RiPfa Seminar |
| LGA Annual Rural Conference |
| Annual Libraries Conference |
| *DICIDA (Development Initiative for Chemical Dependent Areas) |
| Standards Board for England Annual Assembly |
| National Children and Adult Services Conference |
| CCN Conference |
| LGA Annual Local Government Finance Conference |

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| North West Employers Organisation | |
| Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Network | |
| Network for Lead Members' of Children's Services | |
| Summer Planning School | |

Appendix B

Proposed policy relating to Member attendance at Conferences and Seminars

Any requests from Members for attendance must first be agreed by the Group Leader of the Member in question. Without such agreement, the request will not be processed. Confirmation of this will be sought from the proposed Member-delegate to this effect.

The Democratic Services Manager is authorised to agree requests for Member attendance at conferences and seminars on the following basis:

- Approval of requests will only be made on the basis of business-need, taking into account the Member's Council responsibilities. The appropriate Council service-area will be required to confirm whether or not there is a business need in respect of each request. Where there is no business-need, the request will not be progressed.
- Proposed attendance must be within budget. Payment will be made from within the budget of the Service Area with responsibilities for the subject-matter of the conference or seminar. Where there is no such budget, the request will not be progressed.
- Consultation with the Leader of the Council (or his Deputy) must take place prior to any request being approved.
- Where the conference or seminar clearly relates to a non-executive function of the Council, consultation with the chairman of the appropriate committee must take place prior to any request being approved.