



## Council 28 June 2011

### Schedule of Referrals from Cabinet and Democratic Renewal Working Party

(A) Referrals from Cabinet: 27 April 2011

1. Safeguarding Children Policy

*Forward Plan Reference: May11/10*  
*Cabinet Member: Cllr Robert Everitt*

*Report B587*

**RECOMMENDED:-**

***That the updated Safeguarding Children Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to Report B587, be approved.***

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on district councils and other organisations to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The Council has already developed a Safeguarding Children Policy which was originally recommended by Cabinet and approved by full Council on 4 April 2006 (Minute 108(A)(2) refers).

The Safeguarding Children Policy has been regularly reviewed and updated since then, and Report B587 is the latest review and update of the Policy.

The Safeguarding Children Policy was developed in 2006, and has been implemented throughout the Council. It establishes the role and responsibilities of staff and Councillors in relation to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people. It also outlines procedures for reporting concerns and recording information, and includes guidance and good practice and advice for those staff and Councillors working directly with children and young people.

Since adoption, the policy has worked well, and is available on the Council's intranet. Staff have undergone basic awareness training, and a new programme of refresher training, and awareness training for new staff is being developed. The Policy and procedures for reporting concerns has also been the subject of staff briefings in 2010.

Safeguarding Children is also included within the induction for new staff and Councillors, and is included in Service Plans.

In 2010/2011 an internal audit of Safeguarding was carried out which gave 'substantial assurance'.

The Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board also request regular performance information from all the partners to the Board, and are satisfied that this Council is fulfilling its statutory obligations with regard to safeguarding children. A further 'self audit' will be carried out using a toolkit from the Safeguarding Children Board in 2011, which will then be reported to the Board in March 2012.

The Council's Safeguarding Children Policy has been updated to include the most recent changes from the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) with regard to recruitment and selection.

**(B) Referrals from Cabinet: 25 May 2011**

There are no recommendations to Council emanating from this meeting of the Cabinet.

**(C) Referrals from Democratic Renewal Working Party: 9 June 2011**

**Chairman of the Working Party: Councillor Mrs P A Warby**

**1. Member Development: Update (Report C12)**

***RECOMMENDED:-***

***That the Member Development Policy, attached as Appendix A to Report C33, be approved.***

The Working Party considered revisions to the Member Development Policy and recommends that every Member of the Council reads this short document. For ease of reference the revised Policy is attached to this Council report as Appendix A

**2. Payment of Members' Travel Expenses**

***RECOMMENDED:- That***

- (1) the proposed process for the payment of Members' expense claims outlined in Report C13 be approved; and***
- (2) new paragraph 12.2 detailed in paragraph 5.2 of Report C13, replace paragraphs 12.2 and 12.3 in Part 6, Members' Allowances Scheme, in the Council's Constitution.***

On 19 May 2011 Council considered Report C3 and requested that the Democratic Renewal Working Party consider proposed changes to the process in respect of payment of Members' travel expenses.

The process for claiming of Members' expenses had been reviewed to improve the efficiency and accuracy of payments to Members. The current system incorporated that where there was an official attendance sheet for Council meetings which were held at West Suffolk House and the Member signed the appropriate box, travel expenses were paid automatically. This assumed that the Member travelled independently to the meeting by car from their home. It was then necessary for a member of the Payroll Section to analyse the attendance sheets and make monthly transfer of travel details in order to generate payments. This transfer and

the resultant 'double checking' meant that the Payroll Section spent a considerable amount of time in respect of paying these expenses. In addition, the Payroll Section had to generate a separate detailed pay slip to inform Members of the journeys included in their payment.

It was proposed that Members complete one travel claim, preferably monthly but on a regular basis, to claim expenses due. It was considered that this was a sound process from an audit point of view and that the Member would be responsible for the accuracy of the claim. There was also an opportunity for the Council to claim back from the Inland Revenue the VAT element paid for fuel. However, Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs required Members to provide fuel receipts where possible to support the expense payments.

Most of the Working Party recognised that there was a need to improve the efficiency of the current payment system of travel expenses to Members and there was a consensus that Members should be responsible for their travel claims and not the Payroll Section.

During the discussion the Human Resources Manager agreed:-

- (1) to examine the possibility of completing travel claims on-line;
- (2) that travel claims did not need to be completed monthly but should be completed on a regular basis;
- (3) to examine the format of the claim forms in order to make them more relevant to Members; and
- (4) that it was not essential for Members to submit VAT receipts and photocopies would be acceptable.

*(Councillor Cox wished it be recorded that he was totally against this recommendation.)*



## **Council**

### **28 June 2011**

#### **Schedule of Referrals from Cabinet and Democratic Renewal Working Party**

(A) Referrals from Cabinet: 27 April 2011

**2. Review of the Grant Terms and Conditions for the Recreation, Village Halls and Play Area Grant Scheme (RVHPAGS) and the Rural Areas Community Initiatives Fund (RACIF): Single Rural Grant Scheme**

*Forward Plan Reference: May11/01*  
*Cabinet Member: Cllr Robert Everitt*

*Report B583*

***RECOMMENDED:- That***

- (a) the Council's Grants Policy be amended as set out in Appendix A to Report B583; and***
- (b) the Corporate Director for Community, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for grants, be authorised to make minor typographic, grammatical and/or factual changes to the Council's Grants Policy before it is re-published, and to keep it updated in relation to any future changes made by Cabinet in relation to its own delegated decision-making powers to officers in consultation with the Grant Working Party.***

On 31 March 2011 the Grant Working Party considered Report B529, Review of the Grant Terms and Conditions for the Recreation, Village Halls and Play Area Grant Scheme and the Rural Area Community Initiatives Fund. The Working Party recommended to Cabinet that the Council's Grants Policy be amended to reflect the following changes:-

- (1) to introduce a minimum grant threshold of £250 for the Rural Areas Community Initiative Fund (RACIF) and a maximum of £4,000; and a minimum threshold of £4,001 for the Recreation, Village Halls and Play Area Grant Scheme (RVHPAGS) and a maximum of £10,000;
- (2) to retain the email voting system for awarding grants up to £5,000, and extend it to be applicable to both the RVHPAGS and the RACIF grant schemes;

- (3) to set the level of match-funding for the RVHPAGS at a maximum of 40% of the total project cost or £10,000, whichever is the lesser figure, but maintain it at maximum of 50% for the RACIF;
- (4) to apply any reference to 'total project cost' for match-funding purposes on the basis that it excludes VAT for those organisations able to reclaim the VAT element; and
- (5) to apply the two-year time lapse in which applicants may reapply to the RACIF to Parish Councils as well as community groups.

However, at the same meeting, the Working Party also held a detailed discussion on whether the two schemes should actually become elements of a single 'umbrella' rural grant scheme; retaining their separate funding budgets, criteria and objectives but making the process easier for applicants. Under such a system, applications would be made on a single application form and the officers would then determine from which funding 'pot' the grant would most appropriately be awarded, managing the available funds efficiently and equitably.

Keeping the two funding pots separate within the one scheme would also ensure that existing allocations in the capital programme were protected for their originally intended purposes, particularly funding for village halls and recreation facilities. £60,000 (plus any underspends from previous years) has been allocated for the RACIF until March 2014 i.e. around £20,000 a year for the next three years. Similarly, funding of £60,447 is currently available for the RVHPAGS. RVHPAGS funding is reviewed annually and an additional £45,000 was added to the 'pot' on 1 April 2011.

In summary, the proposal of the Working Party was to create one Rural Initiatives Grant (RIG) scheme with two 'tiers' of grants, each with its own funding allocation:-

- (a) grants of up to £4,000 for capital projects which benefit rural communities (as per the existing RACIF scheme); and
- (b) grants of between £4,001 and £10,000 for capital projects specifically related to village halls and recreation facilities (as per the existing RVHPAGS scheme).

To support the introduction of the new single scheme a revised Grant Policy has been written and was approved by Cabinet on 27 April 2011. The opportunity has been taken to simplify the wording of the policy and the new combined application form.

At the Cabinet meeting, it was clarified that, under the new policy, the new time periods governing re-applications would apply retrospectively, and this will be incorporated in the final wording of the new document.

Suggested new Member Development Policy



*St Edmundsbury*  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

June 2011

# Member Development Policy

Supporting our Councillors



# St Edmundsbury Borough Council

## Member Development Policy

### INTRODUCTION

St Edmundsbury Borough Council is committed to meeting the needs of its residents, and recognises that Councillors have a crucial role to play in helping to shape and deliver the Council's priorities to meet those needs. The Democratic Renewal Working Party has responsibility for ensuring that Councillors receive the training and development opportunities they need.

### COMMITMENT TO MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

#### **Individual commitment to Member Development**

The frontline Councillor job description developed by the Working Party and incorporated into the Council's constitution makes explicit the expectation that all elected Members will "Participate fully in Councillor training and development programmes, especially those relating to statutory requirements."

#### **Council commitment to Member Development**

Since February 2005 the Council has been committed to working to the level of the South East Employers Charter for Elected Member Development. This commits the Council to working to meet five criteria:

- Commitment to Member Development
- Strategic Approach to Member Development
- Member learning and development plan in place
- Learning and development is effective in building capacity
- Councillors are supported.

Working to Charter level ensures a consistent approach to development, and provides a good practice framework within which to continually improve Member Development at St Edmundsbury.

### THE MEMBER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Democratic Renewal Working Party has put the following procedures and reporting structures in place to evaluate and monitor Member Development activity.

#### **The elements of the internal Member Development Programme**

The Working Party requires that in any one year the programme provided in-house should consist of a number of elements:

1. The recurring development needs of particular committees or groups of Councillors such as Cabinet, the overview and scrutiny committees or Development Control and Licensing and Regulatory committees.
2. Providing development opportunities/briefings to reflect national priorities.
3. Providing development opportunities/briefings on local priorities and initiatives.

4. Meeting the top collective development needs identified by Members through the annual Training Needs Analysis.

In addition, in-house events are supplemented by attendance at specialist external events and seminars where appropriate, for example by Portfolio Holders and Committee Chairmen.

### **The development plan/training needs analysis process and establishing collective priorities**

Each year every Member is sent a Training Needs Analysis questionnaire to complete to log those areas in which they want to develop further skills and knowledge. The questionnaire is grouped under several thematic headings, including "general skills and knowledge of a councillor", "committee specific", "personal skills" and "community role". Members assess their current level of expertise under each theme, and this enables them to analyse areas where they want to develop their skills, and to think about how they would like to achieve this.

When returned, these development plans are analysed to establish the top collective needs of our Councillors. These are addressed through the provision of an annual Member Development Programme of both in-house and, where appropriate, externally facilitated sessions. Through consultation with senior managers, development activities to meet national and local priorities are also provided.

### **Evaluation and Monitoring**

To ensure that the development opportunities being provided are appropriate and focus on corporate priorities, a pro-forma has been developed to capture the aims and objectives of all in-house events. A brochure sets out details of each development opportunity to be provided across the year, including the aims and objectives of each session, its link to the Council's Corporate Priorities, how the session will be run, who will be delivering it and which Members the session is particularly aimed at. Members attending events are asked to evaluate them to establish:

- whether they met the identified aims and objectives;
- whether the development need has been fully met and/or if a further development need has been identified as a result of attending; and
- the most important piece of learning which was gained from the activity.

Where external events are concerned, the Councillor is also asked to share any presentations or other useful information with other Members through the Members' Bulletin.

The results of the evaluations are assessed in relation to the usefulness of the opportunities provided. Feedback is analysed, and good and bad experiences are learnt from in the planning of the following year's Member Development Programme.

### **Development opportunities outside formal events**

Member Development is taken to mean any learning or development activities designed to provide Members with opportunities to update the skills and knowledge required to undertake their individual and collective roles effectively and to the benefit of the organisation.

At least as important as formal events are the many development opportunities offered by the way the Council chooses to work. Through becoming a member of a panel or review



group set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to take forward a particular piece of work, many Councillors are developing their knowledge in specialist areas. Similar opportunities are available through membership of working parties on major projects, or of our external partnerships.

### **Opportunities to contribute to the debate on Member Development**

The Democratic Renewal Working Party extends an open invitation to any Member to attend and contribute to discussions on Member Development. Member Development updates are reported to full Council through the Portfolio Holder's report, providing a further opportunity for Members to discuss Member Development.

## **SUPPORT, RESOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **Support for Member Development**

The Democratic Renewal Working Party has overall responsibility for the provision of Member Development opportunities at St Edmundsbury, and receives a report at every meeting outlining the current situation with provision of Member Development. Its responsibilities include:

- approving the development sessions which are planned each year;
- monitoring attendance by Members at internal and external sessions;
- suggesting any necessary changes to the Training Needs Analysis questionnaire;
- analysing the results of the annual questionnaire;
- analysing the results of individual development session evaluations;
- monitoring the progress of the actions on the Member Development Action Plan;
- induction planning in election years;
- ensuring the Member Development Policy continues to meet the Council's Corporate Priorities and individual Members' needs;
- working towards achieving the Member Development Charter; and
- monitoring the Member Development budget.

### **Accessibility**

There is equality of opportunity in accessing development opportunities across the Council. Events in the Member Development Programme are an approved duty qualifying for the payment of carers and travel allowances. Additionally, Members are asked to indicate via the Training Needs Analysis whether there is anything else the Council could do that would make training more accessible.

### **Resources**

The Scrutiny Manager is currently the officer responsible for Member Development, and dedicates approximately one day per week to this task.

Additionally, a budget exists for the provision of Member Development activities. In 2010/11 this budget is £8,100 for development sessions, and £2,900 for individual attendance at conferences and external events.

### **Further information**

For further information on Member Development, please contact the Scrutiny Manager on 01284 757613.

## Appendix C

### Member Development Budgets – 2010/2011

#### 0610 1290 – Training Expenses – budget £8,100

Date	Detail	Cost
19/04/2010	Member Development Charter	2,000.00
30/03/2010	Local Government Association - Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference	360.00
24/05/2010	Media Friendly - Presentation Skills training	890.00
01/06/2010	Ward Walk peer expenses	205.20
23/09/2010	Impact - Getting the most out of your partnerships	439.00
01/12/2010	Module 4 leadership academy fees	220.00
31/12/2010	Catering December	16.30
13/12/2010	Impact - Influencing and negotiating/working with officers	439.00
02/02/2011	Babergh - Licensing training	180.00
15/02/2011	Impact - Handling challenging situations and people	435.00
04/03/2011	Centre for Public Scrutiny Parliamentary Seminar	40.00
10/03/2011	Councillor Quest profile	55.80
<b>Total spend 2010/11</b>		<b>£5,280.30</b>

#### 0610 3850 – Conference Expenses – budget £2,900

Date	Detail	Cost
05/11/2010	Psychology of Leadership	275.00
28/05/2010	Travel expenses	202.55
01/06/2010	Local Govt Association - Annual Conference	519.00
25/08/2010	Local Govt Association - Annual Conference accommodation	374.37
25/09/2010	Annual Rural Conference 2010	229.00
01/10/2010	Annual Rural Conference accommodation costs	212.77
09/10/11/2010	Chartered Institute of Housing Annual Conference	314.00
3/4/3/2011	Local Govt Association - Culture, Tourism and Sport Conference	288.00
<b>Total spend 2010/11</b>		<b>£2,414.69</b>