

TAMESIDE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR ELECTED MEMBERS IN TAMESIDE

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RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

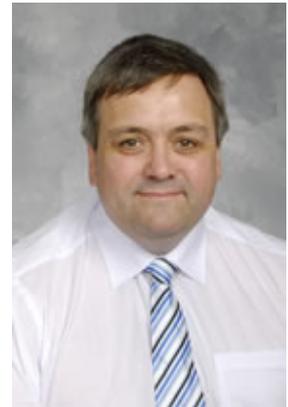
SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR ELECTED MEMBERS IN TAMESIDE

1. CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

I am very pleased to be able to present the report of the review carried out by the Resources and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel of the Provision of Support, Learning and Development for elected members in Tameside.

The Scrutiny Panel was invited by the Standards Committee to review the current provision using the recommendations in the report of a Parliamentary Inquiry on the support provided by councils.

As part of this review we have interviewed officers responsible for providing support and development and have sought good practice from other local authorities. The Scrutiny Support Officer for this Panel has also undertaken on our behalf a series of focus groups with elected members and her work on this review has been invaluable. We have therefore, given a wide consideration to the support offered to members and have catalogued this in the report. We have also quoted freely from a contribution that the Executive Leader made to the Councillors Commission that also looked at the role and support for elected members and his views have also proved to be a useful benchmark as what we should be providing in Tameside.



There is no doubt that both Organisational Development (O&D) and Information Technology (IT) are making great efforts to engage elected members in training and IT and of course training for IT. There is however, great scope for further use of IT that would make the role of the councillor more effective as well as providing a significant cost saving in material and time. The Panel has also given considerable thought to the induction for new members, including members elected at by-elections and we have made specific recommendations as to how this can be improved with an example of what we consider to be good practice. We have also noted universal praise for the service provided by Members' Services and recognise that this is highly valued support for elected members that should be maintained.

We have found that this authority meets in some way every benchmark that was recommended by the Inquiry and in many exceeds the recommended provision, but Tameside always seeks ways to achieve improvements and the recommendations in this report will help in that improvement process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Smith'.

Councillor M Smith
Chair of Resources and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel

2. MEMBERSHIP OF PANEL

Councillor Michael Smith (Chair), Councillor Lynn Travis (Deputy Chair)
Councillors, Brelsford, Buckley, Carter, W Downs, Sidebottom, White and Whitley

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Aim of the Scrutiny Review

“To review the support, learning and development for elected members in Tameside and benchmark it against the good practice recommended by the report of a Parliamentary Inquiry (LGIU and STEER) and good practice elsewhere”

Objectives

- A.** To ascertain what level of support, learning and development is currently provided to elected members;
- B.** To ascertain whether there are any proposed changes planned for the provision identified by Objective 1 above;
- C.** To benchmark current and proposed provision against the good practice recommended by the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry;
- D.** To seek examples of good practice in operation elsewhere;
- E.** To make recommendations for changes to provision where it is considered necessary.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The Panel consulted with 33 elected members and the Council’s First Deputy to discuss their views on current provision and requirements for support, learning and development in order to fulfil their role, now and in the future.
- 4.2 The Panel met with the Head of Democratic Services in order to discuss the current provision of support for elected members (including provision for newly elected members) and any proposed future changes.
- 4.3 The Panel met with the Head of District Assemblies in order to discuss support for elected members relating to local Ward services and information, and any proposed future changes.
- 4.4 The support provided by the Scrutiny Support Unit for Scrutiny Panel Members was evaluated through consultation with scrutiny members, the results of which are included within this report.

- 4.5 The Panel met with the Head of Organisation Development and Training to discuss learning and development opportunities for elected members in Tameside and any proposed future changes.
- 4.6 The Panel met with the Service Unit Manager, Information & Communication Technology (ICT) (Technical & Development) to discuss the provision of ICT equipment and support for elected members.
- 4.7 The Panel met with the Head of Policy to discuss the availability of Ward and Council information to elected members (e.g. Quality of Life information).
- 4.8 The Panel contacted 11 local authorities (Greater Manchester Authorities, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and Blackpool Borough Council) in order to seek examples of good practice with regard to support, learning and development for elected members. Responses were received from Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, Manchester City Council, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council and Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council.

5. BACKGROUND – REPORT OF A PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY ON THE ROLE OF COUNCILLORS¹

- 5.1 In 2005, the All Party Parliamentary Local Government Group was established in order to bring members of the House of Commons and House of Lords together to discuss local government issues, including local government powers, neighbourhood devolution and local government finance.
- 5.2 In early 2007, the Group decided to establish an inquiry into the role of councillors. The purpose of the inquiry was to put forward proposals to strengthen and make more effective the role of ward councillors.
- 5.3 A Panel was drawn from the All Party Parliamentary Group to undertake the inquiry and included:
 - Alison Seabeck MP (Chair)
 - Lord Best of Godmanstone
 - Paul Rowan MP
 - Baroness Scott of Needham Market
 - Chris Mole MP
 - **Andrew Gwynne MP**
 - Lord Hanningfield of Chelmsford
 - Clive Betts MP
- 5.4 The Panel was supported by the Local Government Information Unit and Connect Public Affairs.

¹ Report of a Parliamentary Inquiry – The Role of Councillors

- 5.5 The report of the Parliamentary Inquiry on 'The Role of Councillors' was published in June 2007 and is divided into 6 sections addressing the following issues:
1. What do councillors do?
 2. Can councillors make a difference?
 3. **What support do councillors need?**
 4. **What support with learning and development should councillors have?**
 5. How do we improve the public's understanding of the role of councillors?
 6. Who wants to be a councillor?
- 5.6 The Panel made a number of recommendations for change which are directed at the government, the media locally and nationally, political parties, organisation's representing and working with local government, and councils and councillors themselves.
- 5.7 Following consideration of the report by the Standards Committee, at its meeting held on 31st July 2007, it was recommended **'that although Tameside was at the forefront of member support, learning and development facilities, it would be beneficial to undertake an audit of current provisions and that the Council's Scrutiny Function be invited to undertake a review of member support, learning and development using the recommendations contained in the inquiry as a benchmark'**. This recommendation was endorsed at a meeting of full Council held on 4th September 2007.

6. PROVISION OF SUPPORT FOR ELECTED MEMBERS IN TAMESIDE

6.1 Background

- 6.1.1 The Borough of Tameside is divided into nineteen wards and is represented by fifty seven ward councillors, politically composed as follows:
- 45 labour
 - 8 conservative
 - 3 independent
 - 1 liberal democrat
- 6.1.2 The Executive Leader is the Head of the Council's Cabinet and has a role in all Council affairs, however, in most areas of operation are assigned to designated deputies, although the Leader retains individual responsibilities.²
- 6.1.3 In Tameside, responsibility for Democratic Services, a service which provides support for members, is included within the Warrant of Office of the Council's First Deputy.³
- 6.1.4 The responsibility for members training and development is included in the Warrant of Office of the Cabinet Deputy for Co-ordination Services.⁴

² <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/profile/executiveleader>

³ <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/constitution/part3b/2>

- 6.1.5 The views of the Executive Leader in relation to support, learning and development for elected members were recently communicated to the Councillors' Commission in the form of a submission of evidence and opinion on work undertaken around the Commission's report 'Representing the Future' which was published in December 2007. This piece of work looked at the role of councillors and sought ways of encouraging able, qualified and representative people to come forward for election as councillors, to secure public interest and recognition for the work they carry out.
- 6.1.6 Although the views of the Executive Leader do not relate directly to the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry, on which the report of the Scrutiny Panel is based, his comments include views on 'what would be helpful to councillors' and 'how councillors and prospective councillors would be best supported to develop the skills needed to do their job. They are therefore very relevant to this report.

6.2 What support do councillors need to undertake their role?

- 6.2.1 Section 3 of the Parliamentary Inquiry Report examined the support provided by Councils for their councillors' needs. The report states that support needs to be rethought and redesigned to encompass the increasing demands and expectations on councillors in their community-orientated role and that improved support is also vital to enable councillors to make better use of their time, and if necessary to combine the role with work and other commitments.
- 6.2.2 The report recommends that there should be a minimum basic standard of support provided by all councils and should include support for childcare, and any specific support needed by disabled councillors, to ensure a wider range of people can take on the role. The report also states that there is also a need to recognise and take seriously the cost of democracy in acknowledging that proper support is necessary if communities are to have effective democratic representation.
- 6.2.3 The recommended minimum basic standards of support which all councils should provide is set out in the parliamentary report in the form of a **member services checklist**.
- 6.2.4 In Section 7 of this report, the Scrutiny Panel addresses each aspect of support on the 'checklist' (in bold), in relation to current provision in Tameside; outlines any proposed changes the Panel was informed of during its review and identifies examples of provision from other local authorities, where the Panel felt they were examples of good practice.

6.3 Views of the Executive Leader, Tameside MBC

- 6.3.1 In his response to the work of the Councillors Commission, referred to in paragraph 6.5, the Executive Leader describes the following support as standard practice for members of Tameside Council.

⁴ <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/constitution/part3b/4>

- (i) “Every new councillor should be given an in depth induction course which includes meeting chief officers and departmental heads”.
- (ii) “There should be quality accommodation ranging from a councillors’ common room, fully equipped with technology through to specific offices for Executive Members, the Leaders of political groups and associated Whip’s offices”.
- (iii) “All the above require administration support, which includes secretarial and research officers covering all elected members”.
- (iv) “Each member should, if they request, be able to have such aids as mobile phones, lap tops etc and be trained in the use of the latter, and preference would be a one-one activity”.
- (v) “A reference facility, properly staffed with research officers, should be provided to enable councillors to access information so as to better equip them with the means of questioning or answering in debate”.
- (vi) “Assistance should be provided for councillors who are carers, be that for children or older dependents, without a means test of income”.
- (vii) “Where possible an “open door” approach should be available for councillors to approach the senior officers, executive members for consultation, advice and information”.
- (viii) “Paperwork and agendas of meeting should be in the hands of councillors in good time and items that may be added later minimised in content and well explained in detail at the meeting”.

7. REVIEW FINDINGS - SUPPORT

Support that council’s should provide, as suggested in the Parliamentary Inquiry Report in the form of the Member Services Checklist⁵

The following paragraphs detail the Member Services Checklist and the support provided in Tameside for elected members.

7.1 Administrative/secretarial services for all councillors, including support in dealing with post and communications, message taking, diary management, travel arrangements

In Tameside administrative/secretarial services for elected members forms a major area of business for Democratic Services. It was noted that although there are two dedicated members of staff who provide an administrative/secretarial service within the Member Services area for approximately 45 non-executive members, support is

⁵ Parliamentary Inquiry – The Role of Councillors

also provided by other officers in Democratic Services, together with the Borough Solicitor. This service is provided on a non-party political basis and includes:-

- A typing facility for elected members' correspondence
- Investigation of specific or general constituent complaints, requests for service and enquiries, in liaison with the appropriate Council service or external organisation, and progress chasing;
- Research assistance and advice on specific and general issues;
- Contact information point for members of the public, Officers of the Council and other external visitors;
- Booking and publicising elected members; advice surgeries;
- Arranging appointments and meetings for elected members;
- Arranging elected members' attendance at approved conferences, including conference booking, accommodation and travel arrangements;
- Covering service for elected members' incoming post for holiday periods (on request);
- Collection point for internal/external mail.

Although elected members who took part in the consultation considered the administrative support provided to them to be an excellent facility, not all members, are aware of the depth of support available, particularly those elected more recently.

Conclusion

- (1) Administrative/secretarial services are an essential aspect of support for elected members. The support provided by Member Services in Tameside is highly valued; however, it is important that all members, particularly those new to the council, are fully aware of the services provided by Member Services to assist them to undertake their role.**

Recommendation

- (1) That the level of administrative/secretarial support currently provided by Member Services should continue and be appropriately developed; and that the service explores new ways to publicise the extent of the support available to elected members, especially new elected members.**

7.2 Office base at council premises, members' area. Access to meeting rooms and confidential interview rooms

Elected members have access to a Members' Lounge which is provided as a relaxation area, with access to a television. Although not defined as an office base, the Lounge contains members' pigeon holes, lockers, two notice boards, containing

general information and forthcoming training events, a blue bin for paper recycling and two telephones for internal/external calls. An IT suite is accessed via the members' Lounge and houses four computers allowing members to access the Council's website, Intranet and a Members Portal

A Members Interview Room is available to elected members during business hours for meetings with constituents, officers or other elected members, and can be booked in advance through Member Services. The Head of Democratic Services informed the Scrutiny Panel that the provision of a confidential area for the use of personal computers is in the process of being arranged.

In view of increasing demands and expectations of members in their community orientated role, it was suggested that office accommodation should be available within their town/District Assembly area. During consultation, however, the Panel found that this varied as, although not through a formal arrangement, some members already had the use of office accommodation within their District Assembly office.

Conclusions

- (2) Elected members need to be aware of the accommodation that is available to them especially in District Assembly areas. The Panel welcomes the establishment of an area for the confidential use of personal computers.**
- (3) Consideration needs to be given to the increasing demands and expectations of members in their community orientated role and whether the current accommodation will meet member's needs in the future.**

Recommendation

- (2) That greater publicity be given to the accommodation available to elected members both in the council offices and in the community, and any proposed future changes should take into account the future needs of elected members.**

7.3 Specific Support for disabled councillors, for example with particular communication needs.

The Council has an obligation in accordance with disability discrimination legislation to ensure that elected members can undertake their role despite having a disability. Members are encouraged to inform Democratic Services of any special needs they may have in order that any provision can be made.

Members are familiar with facilities currently provided for people with disabilities within the council offices such as lifts, power assisted doors, loop/audio systems and toilet facilities. However, they felt that in some circumstances individuals may feel more comfortable in discussing their support needs in confidence. An example of this would be if a member had a non physical disability and required specific support.

An example of specific support with regard to communication needs was obtained during the Scrutiny Panel's consultation with other local authorities. Although for a limited period, Manchester City Council provided an interpreter for an elected member who did not speak English.

Conclusions

- (4) The Council currently provides physical adaptations to accommodate people with disabilities in accordance the disability discrimination legislation.**
- (5) The Panel is confident that specific support would be provided should an elected member require it to undertake their role.**

Recommendation

- (3) That a designated officer or elected member be identified to discuss in confidence the particular needs of elected members and offer guidance and advice.**

7.4 Equipment for use at home (free loan) such as filing cabinet, personal computer/laptop

Member Services provide the following equipment, on request, for members use at home for their term of office:-

- Answering machine
- Filing cabinet
- Stationary

In addition, the Council is undertaking a three-year rolling programme to equip all members who want it with a range of IT equipment. The scheme has been introduced to help transform the way Members do business and communicate with other Members, Officers and their Constituents. Paragraph 7.11 describes the programme and the type of IT equipment and support which it will make available to members.

The Panel compared the level of equipment available for members' home use with that of other local authorities. Bolton MBC provides members with a home personal computer, a printer and all consumables but no furniture. Manchester City Council provides a computer, computer table, printer, fax and mobile phone.

Conclusion

- (6) The level of equipment available for elected members' home use is adequate and good support is available so that equipment, especially IT equipment, can be used to its full potential.**

7.5 Access to catering at council premises at hours when official business is taking place.

Refreshments are provided for elected members when attending official meetings of the Council being held within the main Council Offices. The provision of refreshments at District Assembly meetings varies due to the facilities available at some venues.

Until April 2007, members had access to a staffed Members Served which provided light refreshments to members when attending the Council Offices during business hours (10am to 2pm). The Served also served as a place where elected members could take their guests.

In common with all Services efficiency savings were required to be made by Democratic Services and the Service had to consider how savings could be achieved without compromising service delivery. Where opportunities for savings have arisen for example the retirement of local government librarian (paragraph 7.9 refers) these have been realised following an analysis of service demand. On this basis, the Service also considered what no longer needed to be provided, and resulted in a Council decision to close the Members' Served.⁶ The Panel heard that although this Members' Service is no longer staffed, some facilities are available for elected members to make their own hot drinks.

Conclusions

- (7) The availability of refreshments is important when elected members are attending official business, particularly when attending directly from their days work and many elected members who were consulted, considered the current facilities could be improved and made more convenient.**
- (8) The trial of vending facilities in either the Served or Members' Lounge for a fixed period would test whether was an actual rather than a perceived demand for an extension of these facilities.**

⁶ Budget 2008/09 & Future Years – page 63

Recommendation

- (4) That the feasibility of providing a vending machine for hot drinks for a trial period be considered.**

7.6 Meeting support (Committee Clerk Services): arrangement of official council meetings, record keeping and information distribution.

Each year, a calendar setting the dates of official council meetings for the forthcoming year is approved by the Council. Every elected member receives a copy of the calendar at the beginning of the municipal year incorporated into their official council diary.

Except for the Scrutiny function (paragraph 7.7 refers), support for member related meetings is provided by the Democratic Services Unit. Democratic Services comprises of Member Services, Elections; and Committee Services. The Committee Services element of Democratic Services comprises of six committee administrators and an administrative assistant who along with the Head of Democratic Services, undertake meeting management, including the arrangement of member meetings, provision of guidance and advice, maintenance of statutory records and collation and distribution of associated information.

7.7 Support for overview and scrutiny roles including meeting management, policy development, organisation of investigative work and consultation.

In Tameside, Overview and Scrutiny operates through 4 Scrutiny Panels, comprising non executive councillors and some co-opted members. Scrutiny members are supported in their role by a dedicated Scrutiny Support Unit, which consists of a Head of Scrutiny; an administrative officer; and 4 support officers, each providing support to their individual Scrutiny Panel. Support includes project planning; research; consultation; the preparation of agendas and minutes and drafting of Scrutiny Panel reports.

Each year, following local elections, the Scrutiny Support Unit undertakes a training session to introduce new scrutiny members to the scrutiny function by explaining the background to scrutiny, how scrutiny it is undertaken in Tameside, the role as a member of a scrutiny panel and support provided by the Scrutiny Support Unit. This session is independent of the formal induction programme for new members.

The Unit has also, in liaison with Organisational Development, organise several development sessions for scrutiny members to help equip them with some of the skills and knowledge required to effectively undertake their role.

The Scrutiny Support Unit has recently carried out its fourth customer survey with Scrutiny Panel Members, including co-opted members to gather their views on the support provided for this function. (A copy of the full consultation document is appended to this report as **Appendix 2**)

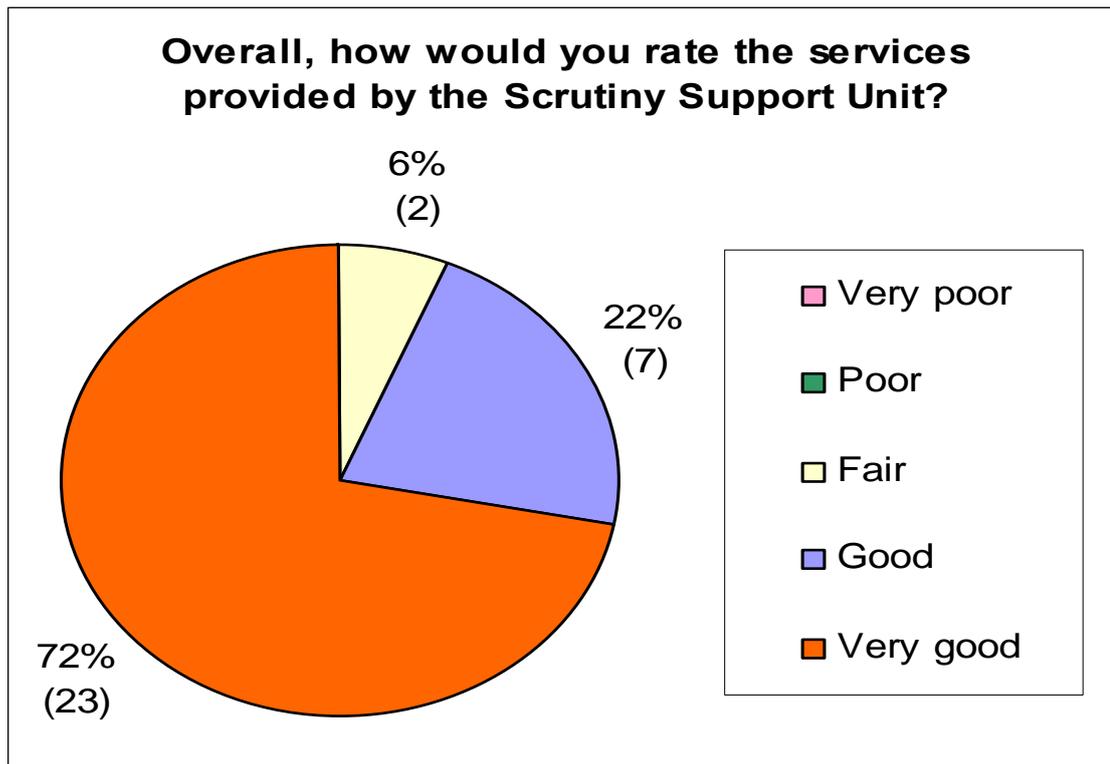
The survey covered the following areas:-

- Importance of being a Scrutiny Panel Member
- Understanding Scrutiny and the role of Scrutiny Panel Members
- Value added to services under review and contribution of Scrutiny Panel Members
- Involvement
- **Services provided by the Scrutiny Support Unit and its overall performance of the Unit**

Feedback from Panel Members indicates that the aims of the Scrutiny Support Unit are being achieved and that the mechanisms put in place by the Unit are meeting the needs of Panel Members.

Panel Members were positive about the service provided by the Scrutiny Support Unit which reflects anecdotal evidence received by the Unit as comments included within the consultation report indicate.

The following graph indicates how Scrutiny Panel members rated the services provided by the Scrutiny Support Unit overall:-



7.8 Support for neighbourhood and/or area arrangements such as committees and forums.

Tameside Council has a system of area committees known as District Assemblies, which consider, review and monitor all services and activities provided by the Council within the area of the District Assembly. As well as having an allocated budget to spend in accordance with any schemes or policies approved by the Council, District Assemblies also have delegated powers to deal with specific matters relating to the following:-

- Environment
- Services to Young People
- Community Safety
- Local Liaison

Each year, four elected members from each District Assembly are appointed to undertake responsibilities for these areas.

There are eight District Assemblies in Tameside which are supported by 3 Town Managers, their support staff and staff from Democratic Services. Democratic Services Officers provide a range of support services for District Assemblies including producing agendas for the District Assembly meetings and recording decisions, and where appropriate ensuring the agreed action takes place. Democratic Services also administers the Ward monies scheme. The Head of Democratic Services acknowledged that the level of input from Democratic Services varied across District Assemblies due to the requirements of individual District Assemblies and for historical reasons e.g. organising and running the Dukinfield Pensioners Party. However, as a minimum all District Assemblies receive committee administration support.

Community/neighbourhood meetings are organised directly by ward councillors. The Scrutiny Panel was informed by the Assistant Executive Director (District Assemblies) that although requests for assistance for community/neighbourhood meetings, such as photocopying, could be accommodated, there were not the resources to offer meeting accommodation or staff to take a record of these meetings.

7.9 Members' library and information services.

Until the end of October 2007, the Council provided a Local Government Information Service, which was a professionally staffed service for elected members and officers, specialising in materials relating to local government in all its aspects. The Service offered:-

- Active provision of information on demand;
- Literature searches;
- Online searches;
- Loan of published documents;
- Selection of national and local newspapers including back copies;

- Selection of the main local government periodicals and some professional journals, plus the monthly abstracting service – Local Government Abstracts;
- A library of quick reference materials, major documents from central and local government and other organisations concerned with local government;
- TMBC documents including agendas, minutes, the electoral roll and strategy documents

The Head of Democratic Services informed the Scrutiny Panel that following consultation regarding the use of the service with the post holder, prior to her retirement from the authority, it became apparent that some aspects of the service were of a historical nature and were no longer required. In agreeing to accept the post as an efficiency saving, it was acknowledged by members that the historical method of providing these services were no longer required. Consequently, this service was re-evaluated taking into account changes in support requirements of members and technological changes, and the remaining aspects of the service are now provided in alternative ways within Democratic Services. The unfilled post was identified as an efficiency saving within the budget of the Borough Solicitor for 2007/08.

Elected members who took part in consultation acknowledged that this service was underutilised and on the retirement of the post holder, members perceived that this service had ceased to exist. Members feel that the aspects of service still being provided in alternative ways needs to be publicised amongst elected members.

Conclusion

(9) That there needs to be greater clarity about the general “research service” available to elected members.

7.10 Reasonable expenses for councillors on official business including travel, phone calls, accommodation, meals, broadband costs.

The council has a Members Allowance Scheme which is set by the Council on the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel, elected members are entitled to receive a basic allowance (set at £10,946 at the time of this review) which includes the consolidated allowance of £1,593 to cover telephone (including mobile phones) whether supplied by the Council or not and subsistence and travel within Tameside.

In addition, the Scheme provides for the following allowances:-

- travel and subsistence allowance, if attending official business away from the Greater Manchester area;
- hotel accommodation
- broadband costs for all members who participate in the Members ICT Scheme and contract for the supply of Broadband

Members considered the allowances available to members as set out in the Members Allowance Scheme to be adequate.

7.11 Information technology equipment, council-hosted email, ICT advice, intranet.

The Council is undertaking a three-year rolling programme to equip all members who want it with a range of IT equipment. The scheme was established by the Cabinet Deputy, Co-ordination Services in April 2007 and is funded by capital investment of £250k. The purpose of the scheme is to help transform the way Members do business and communicate with other Members, Officer and their Constituents.

All Councillors were invited to join the scheme prior to April 2007. 38 councillors expressed an interest and went into the scheme. During this phase the following equipment and services were provided:-

- 27 Wireless Laptops
- 12 Mobile Phones
- 12 Digital Paper & Paper sets
- 10 Personal Digital Assistants
- 15 Wireless Routers
- A structured training programme with 140 training places covering 23 training courses and 9 topics (section 8)
- Support from a dedicated IT Technician
- Online mobile phone billing system

Before moving into the second year of the scheme, the service took the opportunity to seek feedback from the year 1 cohort. All 38 councillors were invited to give structured feedback. 19 responses were received and showed the following views:-

- 63% were happy with the range and quality of technology available;
- 96% were happy with the level of IT support offered;
- 73% of members on the scheme were happy with the overall training programme (range, quality, convenience, venue);
- 76% were happy with the scheme overall.

All Members not involved in year 1 of the Scheme have been invited to join in year 2. To date there have been expressions of interest received from 8 Members which will bring the total involved in the scheme to 46.

The Scrutiny Panel heard from the Service that it is clear from feedback gathered from the Year 1 group that there is work to do in terms of the range of equipment offered. When asked what equipment members would like to see added to the range available, it was clear the main area of frustration is around the mobile phone/personal digital assistant technology.

To that end the service is to trial the Blackberry PDA during March 2008 and if successful would hope to roll these out within phase 2 of the ICT Scheme.

Conclusion

- (10) As many elected members as possible should be using the ICT equipment being made available and making full use of the dedicated support and training.**

Member Portal

The Member Portal has been live for some years and provides tailored information to members' based on wards.

Feedback gathered from the Councillors in Year 1 of the Scheme show that 100% of those who responded are happy with the current functionality and agree that the portal meets their needs. 95% of those surveyed log into the portal as a minimum on a weekly basis with 72% of those logging in "several times a week".

Further statistics around the member portal usage show that 46 of the 57 councillors (81%) have logged into the portal within the last 4 weeks.

A development plan to improve the member portal is in place and will include:-

- The ability to identify and pay the VAT element of personal phone calls (for Councillors with a TMBC mobile phone)
- The ability to track progress of a CRM messages/service request that has come via an individual and passed to a service for a response
- Licensing information for premises pushed to the members portal for their own ward/town
- An Internal Image archive which will have downloadable new/modern local photos
- Corporate diary which will enable members to identify their areas of interest (Committees, District Assemblies etc.) and have the relevant meetings populate their diary which can then be submitted to Member Services.

The Scrutiny Panel heard from the Head of Policy that although ward profile information was currently available in the form of the Quality of Life booklet, from next year, this information would be accessed on-line. Members of the Panel learnt through a demonstration how this information could be found either via the Council's website or other sites such as the Office of National Statistics.

Conclusions

- (11) The continuing expansion of information available through the Members' Portal makes it a very valuable source of information to enable elected members to undertake their role.**

Recommendation

- (5) Given the high usage of the Member Portal and the offer of IT equipment to all Councillors, consideration needs to be given to potential savings that could be made as a result of moving to online distribution of meetings' paper work etc.**

7.12 Casework support, including payment for or free use of surgery location, organisation of and publicity for services, casework management arrangements.

Elected members are entitled to receive funding for two surgeries per week per ward and 9 surgeries per month for wards which are politically split.

The organisation and publication of surgery arrangements is undertaken by Member Service and are provided, where possible in premises suggested by members themselves. Surgeries are publicised in the local media, the council's website/link to councillors and the surgery venues.

During consultation, concerns were raised by members about the suitability of some surgery venues, in particular, with regard to security and confidentiality as some surgeries were held within a public area e.g. in a library.

The Panel heard that there are no formal casework management arrangements for elected members. However, any 'requests for service' reported at surgeries are dealt with by Member Services staff to the extent that officers input these requests into the council's Symology system. Members are then updated personally by the relevant service.

Members have the facility from the Members Portal to access the council's complaints system to record a complaint or view complaints relevant to their ward and follow up on progress.

Conclusion

- (12) Members attending surgeries on their own in otherwise unoccupied buildings have expressed concern about their safety.**

Recommendation

- (6) That an audit of surgery venues takes place to assess their suitability.**

7.13 Learning and development provision for all councillors, access to support to identify learning and development needs, access to training and conference budget.

The provision of learning and development opportunities for elected members in Tameside is addressed in section 8 of this report.

The Council operates a standing list of conferences and is approved annually. Members are required to seek approval from the Council's Aide De Camp, whose responsibility it is to arrange and permit the attendance of Members and Officers at seminars and conferences that are outside the authorised standing list.⁷

7.14 Childcare support and costs.

In accordance with the Members Allowance Scheme, councillors who care for children can claim a carer's allowance of up to £5.45 per hour, subject to a maximum weekly payment of £40.86, equivalent to seven-and-a-half hours of care per week.

Payment is claimable in respect of children aged 15 or under or in respect of other dependants where there is a medical or social work evidence that care is required. Only one weekly payment is claimable in respect of the household of each Member, except in special circumstances to be judged by the Council's Standards Committee.

The Scrutiny Panel heard that at Manchester City Council, childcare support and costs are fully funded and a Town Hall Crèche is available.

7.15 Access to appropriate legal advice.

Through the Borough Solicitor, appropriate legal advice is available to elected members in relation to performance of duties as a councillor.

8. PROVISION OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ELECTED MEMBERS IN TAMESIDE

8.1 What support with learning and development should councillors have?⁸

Section 4 of the Parliamentary report addresses what support with learning and development councillors should have. The report suggests that:

“Good provision for councillors to develop the skills and knowledge they need is essential, and the current practice of the best councils should be more widely available. To support this there should be a minimum level of training entitlement defined for each councillor. All councils should ensure councillors have access to

⁷ <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/constitution/part3b/11>

⁸ Parliamentary Inquiry – The Role of Councillors

regional and national opportunities, including conferences, seminars, and a wide range of learning and development approaches”.

“Learning and development has a vital role to play to help councillors from different backgrounds represent their communities effectively. Support for councillors, and learning and development opportunities should make it possible for councillors to stand for election for one term (four years) only and become effective quickly. The role of the government in funding capacity building is vital, and should be maintained through the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. This should focus on developing the roles of all members, and not just those in a leadership position”.

8.2 Views of the Executive Leader, Tameside MBC

In his response to the work of the Councillors Commission, referred to at 7.5, the Executive Leader expresses his views on how councillors and prospective councillors be best supported to develop the skills needed to do their job. His views are set out below.

- (i) “Measured training and measured outputs resulting from it are essential. First there is a wide range of skills required against the range of work available. A balance has to be struck between councillors’ perceived ability and reality in the positions they may want to hold or their personal aspirations”.
- (ii) “Councils could have “open days” where interested people could put in the position of a councillor for a taste of the job”.
- (iii) “Tameside Council operates training seminars (outside the Council Offices, so as not to make the activities too formal). The District Assemblies can send members of the public who form part of the Assembly to the training sessions where they have an equal change of learning about the Council and work related activities. This may yield prospective candidates from the interest that is generated, who are knowledgeable and have mixed with officers and councillors”.
- (iv) “With regard to prospective councillors, their presence as councillors being at the decision of the electorate, in as much as the responsibility of training lies with the associated political parties, as does their selection. Subsequently councils could provide training packs to political parties to enable their candidates, if successfully elected councillors to have a head start. Outside this, schools could be involved in developing interest with related training which would help individuals, and consequently to participate in the political scene”.
- (v) “Not every one aspires or is able to carry out lead functions, but everyone has a skill (dormant or active) or skills which, if they are aimed in the right direction, can give substantial support to the process of the Council. This requires the political leadership to be observant, to maintain close contact with members so as to be aware of potential skills, interest, abilities and aspirations”.

- (vi) "Tameside Council has engaged Manchester Business School to assess the needs of individual councillors' training requirements. This will then be the basis for individual training programmes to be established".

9. REVIEW FINDINGS - LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

9.1 North West Charter for Member Development

9.1.1 The North West Charter for Elected Member Development was launched in 2000 as part of the regional strategy to raise the profile of Elected Member Development.

9.1.2 Tameside MBC was one of the first Council's to be awarded the Charter for Elected Member Development in 2000. In 2004, the Council was awarded the Charter for a second time and is soon to be reassessed during 2008.

9.2 Organisational Development⁹

9.2.1 Along with the cabinet deputy responsible for member development (Co-ordination Services), the Organisational Development Team produces a calendar of training that can be accessed by all elected members. This includes training on specific strategic issues as well as workshops on personal skills needed by councillors. The team is also responsible for evaluating the data that is collected from the sessions.

9.2.2 Each year, elected members take part in individual discussions with members of the Organisational Development Team to determine their training needs; the programme of development is then designed from this analysis. From these discussions, the team also targets development for individual councillors.

9.2.3 Examples of training sessions have been obtained from Member Training Records 2006/07 and show training subjects and level of member attendance. During this period, elected Members had the opportunity to attend training sessions on the following subjects.:-

Subject	Member Attendance (No. out of 57)
Getting Your Point Across (2 sessions)	9
Health and Safety for Members	9
Looked After Children	6
Finance	2
Waste & Recycling	9
Parks & Open Spaces	13
Risk Management	23
Local Government Bill	28
14 - 19 Strategy	20
Corporate Governance	23

⁹ Source: <http://intranet2.tameside.gov.uk/training/memberdev.htm>

- 9.2.4 If requested, the team also provides one to one coaching with councillors on a variety of topics from IT to public speaking.
- 9.2.5 The team supports the running of the elected member learning panel. This group of councillors meet once every six weeks to discuss the learning needs of elected members.
- 9.2.6 Each year, the team produce an end of year report to evaluate the previous years training.

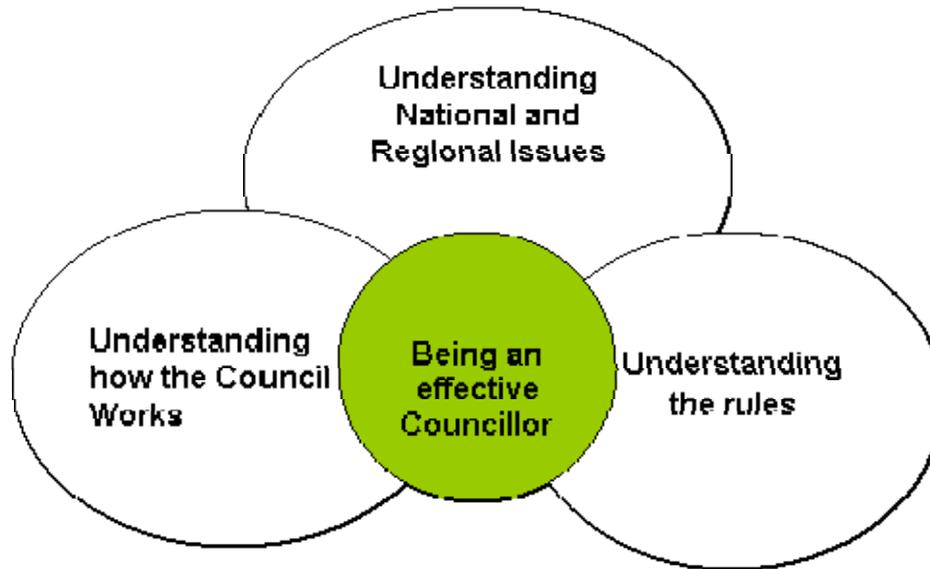
9.3 Research of the Manchester Business School¹⁰

- 9.3.1 During 2007, the Manchester Business School was commissioned in order to assess members development needs in Tameside.
- 9.3.2 A variety of methodologies were used to gather a comprehensive picture of members development needs including:-
- A needs analysis questionnaire developed and distributed by the Council and sent to all elected members.
 - Evaluation and research of the findings from the questionnaire
 - Semi structured interviews
 - A focus group with newly elected members.
- 9.3.3 A report outlining the findings the research undertaken with 75% of elected members by the Manchester Business School was published in October 2007. The report outlined the key issues which arose and emerging themes in the following areas:-
- Contextualisation and localisation (e.g. the need to understand the political climate and context at different levels)
 - Timing, delivery, venue and audience
 - Delivery Mechanisms which elected members would prefer
 - General areas for development
 - Specific areas for development
 - Induction for Newly Elected Members
- 9.3.4 The report suggests a model for development, based around competencies that are needed to be an effective councillor. It is recommended by Organisational Development that this be the structure for the development programme in the future (diagram 1).
- 9.3.5 The model proposes that development is offered based around the competencies that are needed to be an effective councillor.

¹⁰ Source: : Manchester Business School – Research Identifying Elected Member Needs – October 2007

Model for Development

Diagram 1



Conclusion

- (13) That the introduction of a Member Development Group to help further inform and assist the Cabinet Deputy (Co-ordination Services) on training for elected members whilst she retains overall responsibility be welcomed.

Recommendations

- (7) That personal training programmes be developed to meet the individual needs of all elected members.
- (8) That the Council should provide to bonafide prospective candidates for election, information on the realities of being a councillor in Tameside.

9.4 Information, Communication. Technology

9.4.1 'Using ICT' was one of the top priorities identified as a training need by elected members on discussions which took place with the Organisational Development Team.

9.4.2 As a result of the feedback, a programme of IT training was offered to all elected members to help them in their role.

9.4.3 The training that was offered was held in two locations within Tameside at varying times to ensure that the training was accessible to all councillors. However, a

review of the IT training venues across the Borough was to take place so that in the future training could be provided across the Borough.

9.4.4 ICT training opportunities were currently delivered in sessions of 2 hours and included the following topics:-

- Internet and Email
- Using a Laptop
- Using Microsoft Word – Introduction/Advanced
- Using Excel – Introduction/Advanced
- Using Powerpoint – Introduction/Advanced
- Using the Members Portal

9.4.5 Feedback gathered from trainers showed that of the 140 training places available, 35 were used (25% of those available). There was 97% satisfaction with the courses attended (this is 97% of members who attended a course).

9.4.6 Feedback from member consultation undertaken by the ICT Service, showed that the levels of satisfaction with training were lower than would have been aimed for and therefore the training programme is currently being reviewed.

9.4.7 Take up of the training courses to date has been poor and there is a concern that best value for money and best use of the equipment is not being achieved if members do not engage in the training programme.

9.4.8 The Scrutiny Panel was informed that further consultation with elected members is to be carried out in order to determine how members would like training to be delivered for the next phase of the ICT Scheme. Suggestions include a choice of structured programme, drop in sessions and one to one's together with holding a Members ICT Awareness session.

Conclusions

- (14) The effective use of ICT is still considered by many elected members as a challenge although they acknowledge the advantages that would result if they had a better understanding.**
- (15) Elected members' training for ICT is fundamental to their successfully using the equipment that the Council makes available and should be tailored to their individual requirements and abilities.**

Recommendation

- (9) That individualised ICT training sessions be introduced to meet the needs of all elected members and that training include effective use of the Members' Portal.**

10. NEW MEMBER INDUCTION

- 10.1 During the course of the review, Scrutiny Panel members and members who took part in the consultation raised concern about the delivery, and content of the new member induction programme held for new members in 2007.
- 10.2 The Head of Democratic Services informed the Scrutiny Panel that members who were newly elected in 2007 received the following information which formed their induction:-
- Councillors Guide 2007-08, published by the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government (I&DeA). The Guide provides information on being a councillor; civic life; community leadership and useful contact numbers.
 - Members were also provided with a number of fact sheets providing information on the following:-
 - Checklist for getting started
 - Support Services and Facilities for Elected Members
 - Political Structures
 - Frontline Councillors
 - The Corporate Plan
 - Partnerships
 - Representing your constituents
 - Members' Finance: Payments and Deductions
- 10.3 The Head of Democratic Services reported that all new members elected in 2007 had undertaken a personal session with Member Services to discuss the range of services available to them. Each of the new members elected in 2007 was also given the opportunity to attend a number of North West Employers Organisation induction training sessions. The two new members who took up this opportunity found the sessions they attended helpful.
- 10.4 Elected members consulted, particularly those elected during 2007, reported that when newly elected, they felt overwhelmed by the amount of information received, including paperwork received as their induction. They felt that a more formal constructed programme would be appropriate.
- 10.5 During consultation with other local authorities the Scrutiny Panel received an example of a new member induction programme from Bolton MBC where the induction takes place over a three week period. The Scrutiny Panel felt that this programme was an example of good practice, as was the practice of sending the programme to candidates prior to the election. This gave potential councillors prior notification of what will be required of them in the first few weeks of being elected. A copy of Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council's Induction Programme is appended to this report as **Appendix 3**.

10.6 Although members felt that the written information/fact sheets sent to them as part of their induction programme are important, they felt that further information around operating within the Council would be of more use to them. Members suggested that the introduction of a trained mentor scheme of both officers and elected members would be helpful to newly elected members not only for information but as a source of support. Further suggestions for inclusion in future inductions and information packs included:-

- Tour/Map of the Building
- Useful contact numbers – Internal and External
- Meet Senior Officers/Departmental Officers/ Town Managers
- Meet Member Services officers and receive clear information on the level/depth of service provided
- An introduction to District Assemblies – Terms of Reference
- Training Opportunities
- Information on the IT Scheme and depth of support available
- Trained Mentor Scheme of both officer and elected members

10.7 With regard to the timing of the induction, members felt that this needed to take place immediately after the election and also felt that it was important that the programme be available to any councillor elected in a by-election.

Conclusion

(16) It was the clear perception of councillors elected in May 2007, that they had received little or no formal induction and that this was considered to be an essential requirement for all new councillors.

Recommendations

(10) That consideration be given to adopting aspects of the comprehensive induction programme provided for new councillors as detailed in Appendix 3 to this report, as an example of good practice.

(11) That an induction also be provided for councillors elected at by-elections at other times of the year.

(12) That an evaluation of the induction programme for new councillors be undertaken in November of each year to receive feedback and ascertain whether the induction had met new members requirements.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the level of administrative/secretarial support currently provided by Member Services should continue and be appropriately developed; and that the service explores new ways to publicise the extent of the support available to elected members, especially new elected members.**
- (2) That greater publicity be given to the accommodation available to elected members both in the council offices and in the community, and any proposed future changes should take into account the future needs of elected members.**
- (3) That a designated officer or elected member be identified to discuss in confidence the particular needs of elected members and offer guidance and advice.**
- (4) That the feasibility of providing a vending machine for hot drinks for a trial period be considered.**
- (5) Given the high usage of the Member Portal and the offer of IT equipment to all Councillors, consideration needs to be given to potential savings that could be made as a result of moving to online distribution of meetings' paper work etc.**
- (6) That an audit of surgery venues takes place to assess their suitability.**
- (7) That personal training programmes be developed to meet the individual needs of all elected members.**
- (8) That the Council should provide to bonafide prospective candidates for election, information on the realities of being a councillor in Tameside.**
- (9) That individualised ICT training sessions be introduced to meet the needs of all elected members and that training include effective use of the Members' Portal.**
- (10) That consideration be given to adopting aspects of the comprehensive induction programme provided for new councillors as detailed in Appendix 3 to this report, as an example of good practice.**
- (11) That an induction also be provided for councillors elected at by-elections at other times of the year.**
- (12) That an evaluation of the induction programme for new councillors be undertaken in November of each year to receive feedback and ascertain whether the induction had met new members requirements.**

12. BOROUGH TREASURER'S OBSERVATIONS

The cost of providing learning and development for elected members is funded from within the budget for democratic processes and any additional costs as a result of this report should be managed within this budget. Vending Machines should be self financing, savings should accrue if there is a reduction in printing and stationery.

13. BOROUGH SOLICITOR'S OBSERVATIONS

It is important that the report is read in conjunction with the Parliamentary Inquiry report to understand the national context.

Improved support is vital, not just to enhance the effectiveness of councillors, but also to tackle the pressures on their time. It is important to remember that elected members freely give up their time on a voluntary basis and it is important that the Council fully supports them in their role so they can make a difference to the community that they represent.

Whilst the Council clearly meets all the requirements on the checklist of support services which all councils should provide, as a minimum, it is important that this remains under constant review because councillors have changing and evolving roles. Consequently there is a need for the Council to monitor and review whether what is provided properly supports the contemporary roles of councillors. Member support needs to respond to the greater expectations on councillors in their community orientated role. Support for the various roles that councillors play is vitally important, and needs to be embedded in an authority's culture, and not simply left to a few designated employees.

Page 5, 6.2.1:the Parliamentary Inquiry report states *that 'support needs to be rethought and redesigned to encompass the increasing demands and expectations on councillors in the community-orientated role and that improved support is also vital to enable councillors to make better use of their time, and if necessary to combine the role with work and other commitments'*. This statement is endorsed and being used to help determine arrangements for future member support. Democratic Services are using the opportunity that a natural loss of staff through promotion and retirement have provided to review the whole arrangements for member service provision including the physical environment to ensure that it is 'fit for purpose' . It is intended that consultation on the facilities provided should start in the autumn.

It is also important to note that Councillors are now (although this should always have been the case) included in disability discrimination legislation and are entitled to receive support on the same terms as employees. This legal right of which the Council is aware and is considering how best it can improve the support and adjustments it can make to deliver this positive duty.

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RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR ELECTED MEMBERS IN TAMESIDE

OCTOBER 2007

AIM OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW

To review the support, learning and development for elected members in Tameside and benchmark it against the good practice recommended by the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry (LGIU and STEER) and good practice elsewhere.

OBJECTIVES

- A.** To ascertain what level of support, learning and development is currently provided to elected members;
- B.** To ascertain whether there are any proposed changes planned for the provision identified by Objective 1 above;
- C.** To benchmark current and proposed provision against the good practice recommended by the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry;
- D.** To seek examples of good practice in operation elsewhere;
- E.** To make recommendations for changes to provision where it is considered necessary.

VALUE FOR MONEY / USE OF RESOURCES

The review will consider whether provision of support, learning and development for elected members in Tameside makes the best use of resources available.

EQUALITIES ISSUES

Consideration will be given to whether provision of support, learning and development for elected members in Tameside meets recommendations in relation to equalities good practice contained in the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry.

TIMESCALE April 2008

DETAILED ACTION PLAN (in broadly chronological order)

Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
(1) Consultation with elected members to discuss current provision and requirements of support, learning and development in order to fulfil their role, now and in the future (through Scrutiny Panel meetings and discussion groups with other frontline members, and the Executive Leader of the Council)	A,E	Scrutiny Panel Meetings – Cycle 4 November/December 2007	Scrutiny Panel/Alison Davies	Completed on schedule
(2) Meet with the Head of Democratic Services to discuss the current provision of support for elected members (including provision for newly elected members) and any proposed future changes.	A,B,C,E	Scrutiny Panel November 2007	Scrutiny Panel/	Completed on schedule

Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
(3) Meet with the Head of District Assemblies to discuss support for elected members relating to local Ward services and information and any proposed future changes	A,B,C,E	Scrutiny Panel November 2007	Scrutiny Panel/	Completed on schedule
(4) Review the support for scrutiny panel members provided by the Scrutiny Support Unit – (to be undertaken through the fourth annual member consultation questionnaire)	A,B,C,E	December 2007	Scrutiny Support Unit	Completed on schedule
(5) Meet the Head of Organisation Development & Training to discuss learning and development opportunities for elected members in Tameside and any proposed future changes	A,B,C,E	Scrutiny Panel January 2008	Scrutiny Panel	Completed on schedule
(6) Meet with the Service Unit Manager, Information & Communication Technology (ICT) (Technical & Development) to discuss the provision of ICT equipment and support for elected members	A,B,C,E	Scrutiny Panel February 2008	Scrutiny Panel	Completed on schedule
(7) To meet with the Head of Policy to discuss the availability of Ward and Council information to elected members (e.g Quality of Life)	A,B,C,E	Scrutiny Panel February 2008	Scrutiny Panel	Completed on schedule
(8) To seek any good practice available from other local authorities	D	By March 2008	Scrutiny Panel/Alison Davies	Completed on schedule
(9) Draft report finalised by Scrutiny Panel	All	March 2008	Scrutiny Panel/Alison Davies	Completed February 2008

Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
(10) Observations of Borough Treasurer		March 2008	Scrutiny Panel	Completed 6 th March 2008
(11) Observations of Borough Solicitor		March 2008	Scrutiny Panel	Completed 27 th June 2008
(12) Report presented to full Council		July 2008	Councillor M Smith (Chair)	Completed 22 nd July 2008

Scrutiny Support Unit

Consultation with Scrutiny Panel Members

Consultation Report

Introduction

This is the fourth customer survey carried out by the Scrutiny Support Unit with Scrutiny Panel Members, including co-opted and Advisory Group members. We have changed the format of the questionnaire to reflect the continued development of Scrutiny in Tameside; however, we have retained key questions to measure progress over time.

Methodology

The survey was mailed to Panel Members with a pre-paid envelope. Additional copies distributed at Scrutiny Panel meetings. Members were given around three weeks to respond. Forty-four questionnaires were distributed in total. A total of 32 forms of 44 were returned (last time 24 of 39 questionnaires were returned).

Survey Contents

The questionnaire covered the following areas:

- Importance of being a Scrutiny Panel Member
- Understanding Scrutiny and the role of Scrutiny Panel Members
- Value added to services under review and contribution of Scrutiny Panel Members
- Involvement
- Services provided by the Scrutiny Support Unit and overall performance of the Unit

Findings

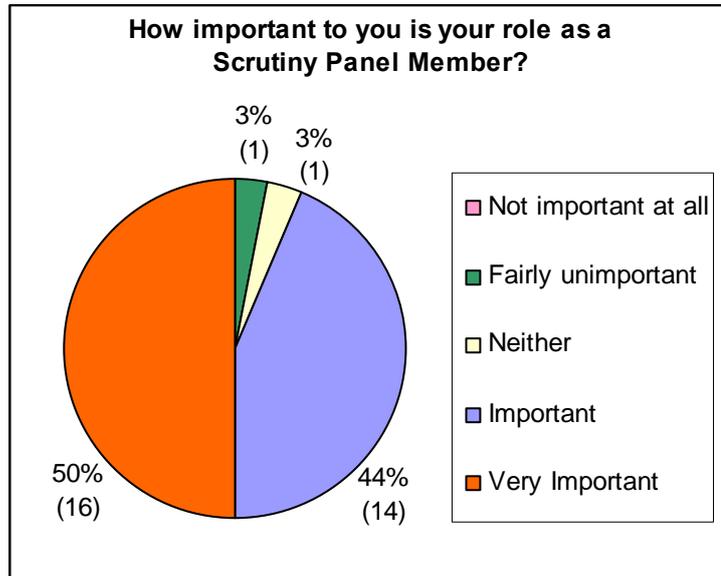
Being part of Scrutiny is important to Panel Members

Almost all Panel Members (94%) reported that Scrutiny was 'important' or very 'important' to them.

This is a slight decline from 2005 (96% said that it was either 'important' or 'very important'), although it is important to note that these are small numbers.

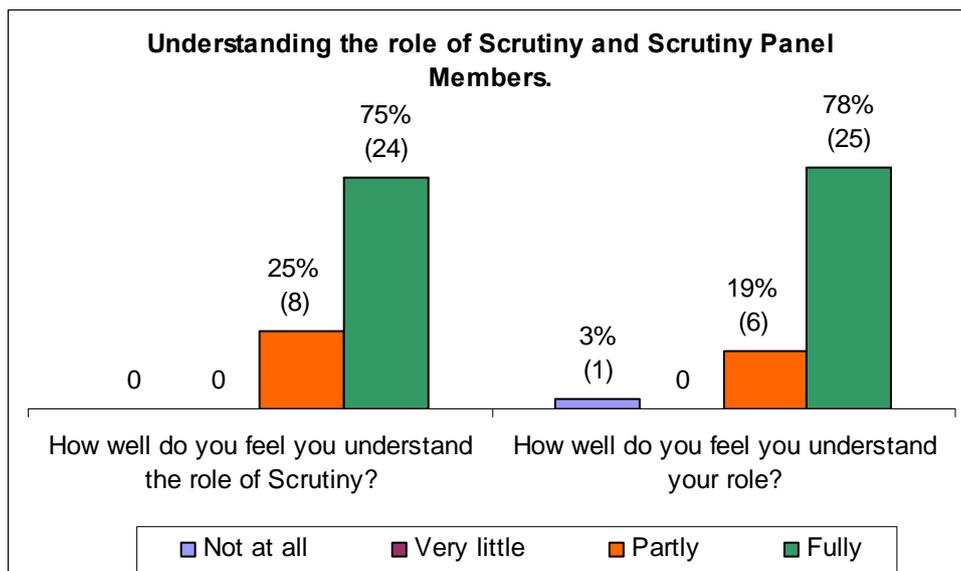
Comments indicate that some Members find this role particularly rewarding:

"Very positive experience. Worthwhile / rewarding".



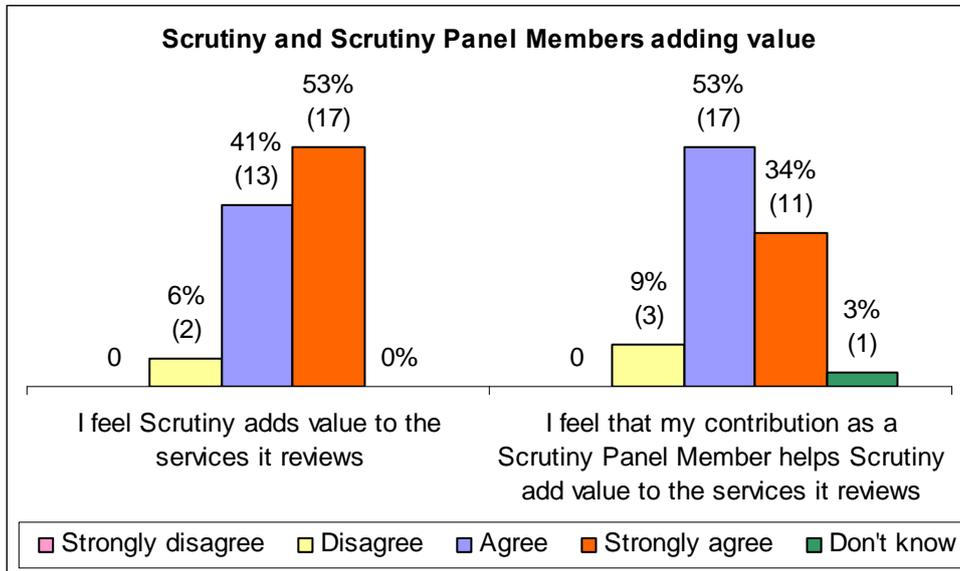
Panel Members understand Scrutiny and their role

Around three-quarters of respondents reported that they had a full understanding of Scrutiny (75%) and of their role as a Scrutiny Panel Member (78%). This question has changed slightly since 2005, therefore direct comparison between years is not possible.



Panel Members feel that Scrutiny adds value

The great majority of Panel Members agree or strongly agree that Scrutiny adds value (94%, 30 of 32). A slightly smaller majority believe that they add value as Panel Members (88%, 28 out of 32, agree or strongly agree).



A greater proportion of Panel Members feel that Scrutiny makes a difference than in 2005 (75% compared to 94% in 2007). However, Panel Members appear to have a slightly less positive view of their own contribution than before. In 2005 92% felt they 'helped make a difference as a Scrutiny Panel Member' compared to 88% in 2007 who feel that they add value.

Some comments indicated how Scrutiny may be able to add further value by addressing processes and review procedures:

"I would like to see all recommendations instigated with more enthusiasm than at present moment also, Call-in procedure should be simplified".

However, one comment indicated that some Members may still be concerned with the principal of Scrutiny in general:

“I am not fully convinced by the Cabinet style of local government which needs scrutiny. I would prefer the former committee style. Danger of scrutiny is bolting stable door after horse...”

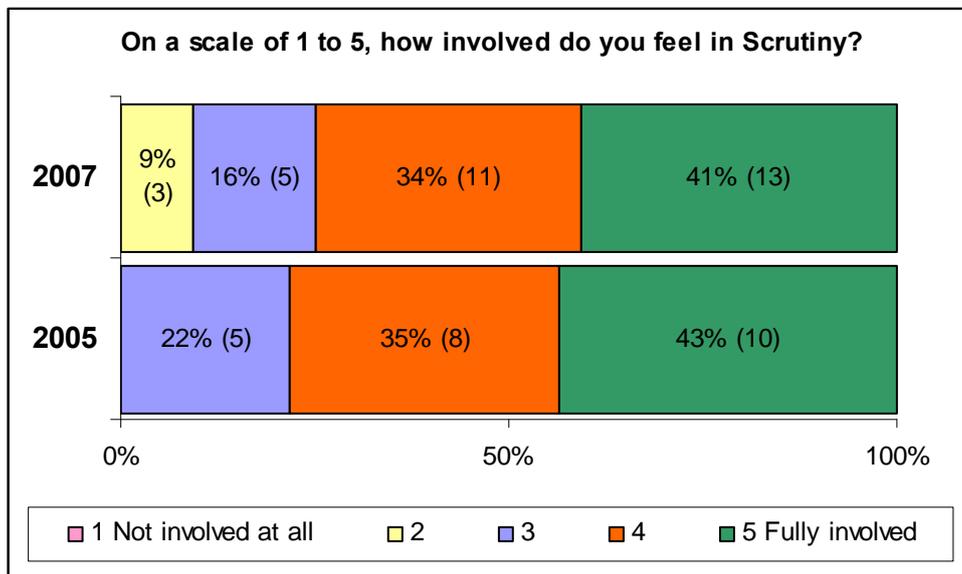
Other comments indicate that respondents believe that fully informed Members and adequate research is key to effective Scrutiny:

“Scrutiny is viable when the member has a good understanding of the council and what is expected as a member of scrutiny. Officers giving evidence will not necessarily tell you what you want to know. Scrutiny is not only to rubber stamp.”
“Members should be encouraged to see the benefit of sourcing some additional research for themselves to add strength to their contributions”.

Members still feel very involved in Scrutiny

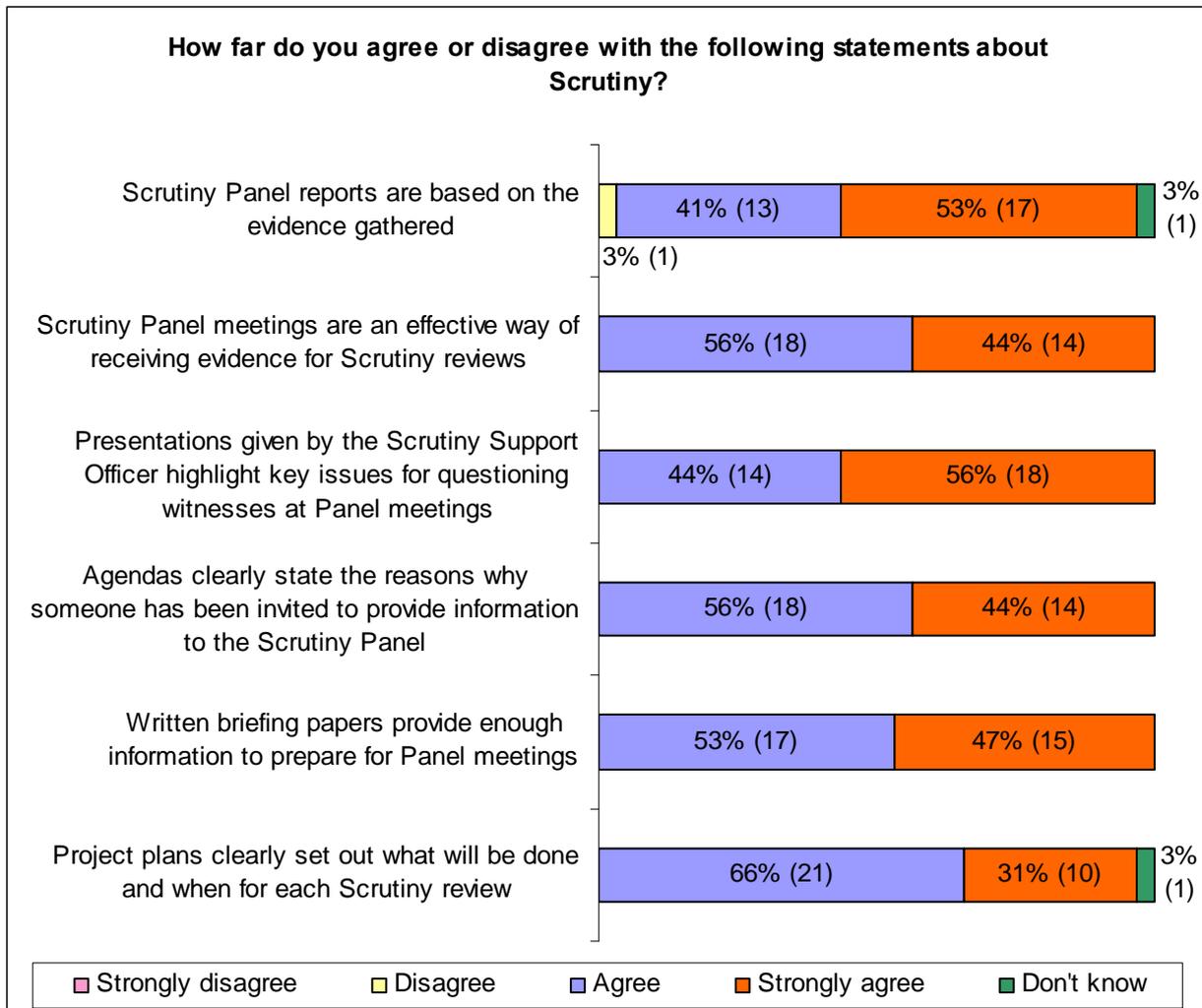
Three-quarters of members appear to feel very involved in Scrutiny (75%, or 24 out of 32 chose level 4 or 5).

However, although the *total number* feeling more involved has increased since 2005, as a proportion of Panel Members those reporting higher levels of involvement has fallen slightly. Although the numbers participating in the survey may be too small for this to be significant, the Unit would aim to ensure members chose at least level 4. This year, 3 Panel Members judged their sense of involvement to be level 2.



The Scrutiny Support Unit is providing appropriate and effective support

Feedback from Panel Members indicates that the aims of the Scrutiny Support Unit are being achieved and that the mechanisms put in place by the Unit are meeting the needs of Panel Members. The aim for future years would be to increase the proportion of members giving these elements maximum marks. This question has



been asked slightly differently from 2005 and so comparison is not possible.

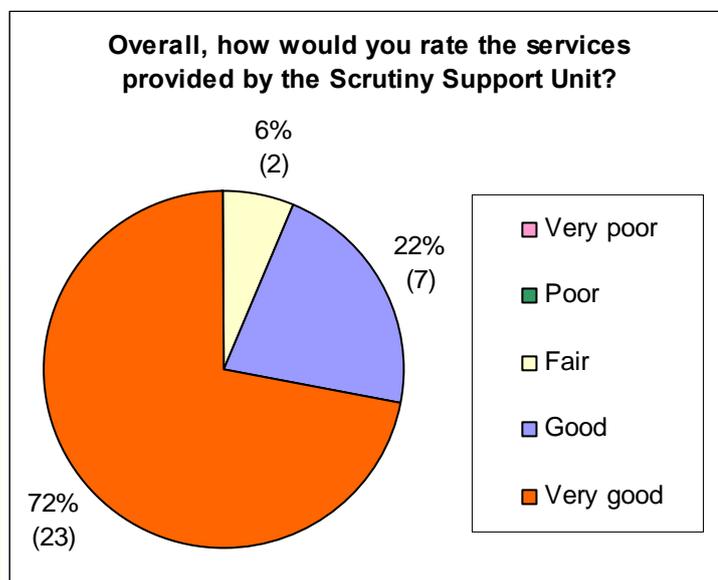
Panel Members were positive about the service provided by the Scrutiny Support Unit which reflects anecdotal evidence received by the Unit, as the following comments indicate:

“The Scrutiny back-up team works very hard and sets out the subject matters very clearly”.

“...officers very helpful...”

“...Serviced by excellent team...”

“A scrutiny panel relies heavily on its lead officer and support staff. We are fortunate in



The following is a record of all remaining comments and suggestions:

“For benefit of Gaynor - digital pen and paper in interests of efficiency”.

“It’s a tragedy that Diana Paver is leaving and questions should be raised in the House of Commons to determine exactly why!!”

“Good Panel to be on, have good call-ins, chaired well, officers very helpful”

Conclusions

To conclude, the majority of Panel Members continue to be positive about their role and about the support provided by the Unit. Any slight decline in certain areas from previous years may be due to the number of new Panel Members with lower levels of understanding and awareness.

Members’ level of engagement is indicated in suggestions for further improvements to Scrutiny as well as direct feedback about how Scrutiny operates at Tameside and about the Support Unit.

The Scrutiny Support Unit continually works to address Panel Member needs and can use the results of this survey and anecdotal evidence to further improve the support provided to Scrutiny Panels.

Members Induction

2007



Forward by 3 Council Leaders

Congratulations on being elected to Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council.

During the coming days and weeks you will be bombarded from all sides with information, some from your Groups and some from the Council's officers. The aim of this handbook is to provide you with some basic information which will help you get through this very busy period.

The handbook cannot cover every eventuality, however, it provides you with a list of tasks which will need to be accomplished during your first few weeks on the Council, such as completing bank details, CRB checks etc. to setting out a list of contact details of the Council's officers who will act as a first point of contact should you have any queries. The handbook also contains details about events which will form part of the induction process. Please make every effort to attend these sessions as they will be invaluable in giving you an insight into how the Council works and operates. If for any reason you cannot attend, please let the contact officer know in good time as it might be possible to reschedule.

It is important that you complete all sessions and sign off each section of the handbook as it will form an integral part of your Personal Development Process. The document will be countersigned and validated by your Group Training Champion.

Once again, congratulations on your election and enjoy being a Councillor on one of the best performing Councils in the Country. You will find it busy, challenging but hopefully, very rewarding.

Cliff Morris, Leader of the Council

Alan Rushton, Leader Conservative Group

Barbara Ronson, Leader Liberal Democrat Group

Day 1 – Friday 4th May, 2007

Timetable of Events

9.00 am onwards

Arrive at Town Hall for swearing in and brief discussion of practical issues with Sean Harriss, Chief Executive, in his office, 2nd floor, Town Hall, Bolton.

10.00 am onwards and 2.00 pm onwards

Meeting with Alan R Eastwood, Director of Legal and Democratic Services, Des Grogan Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services and John Addison Scrutiny Support Manager to :-

- Receive list of contacts/useful number
- Explain Members Allowance Scheme and complete necessary bank details/mandates
- Have photograph taken for Bolton Smart Card/Know Your Councillor Leaflet
- Have a tour of the Town Hall/Group Rooms/Members Secretariat
- Receive COTAGS, Group Room keys, Car Park Pass
- Discuss Ward Surgery Arrangements
- Discuss whether to join Local Government Pension Scheme
- Explain IT facilities and sign up to Council's E-Mail and Internet Policy

1. Useful Contacts

Set out below is guidance and information on dealing with some of the day to day practical issues you will face as a newly elected Councillor. In your first few months as a Councillor you will be provided with much information and advice and you will be dealing with many new issues.

Each political Group has an allocated support officer who can help guide you through your first few months as a first contact point for queries you may have about how to deal with practical issues (how to deal with your issues politically will be done through your party group mechanisms). Below are the contact details for the Member Support Officers :

- **John Addison, Scrutiny Support Manager** Ext 1035
- **Andrew Jennings, Executive Support Manager** Ext 1033
- **Nick Aspey, Member Support Officer (Labour Group)** Ext 6844
- James Dearling, Member Support Officer (Conservative Group) Ext 1236
- Sabeena Domun, Member Support Officer (Liberal Democrat Group) Ext 1145

The Members' Secretaries also provide a secretarial and message service for all Members, their contact details are:

- **Lorraine Bercini** Ext 1094
- **Claire Atkinson** Ext 1098

The Council's intranet provides an Internal Directory of contact phone numbers and job titles for officers, and contact phone numbers and wards details for Members. On the intranet a full Directory of the Chief and Senior Officers is also available to Members.

For your information, a diagram of the Executive Management Team structure is attached.

2. Your Allowances

All Councillors are paid an allowance for undertaking their duties; this is known as the basic allowance. Currently the basic allowance is £8,567, paid in 12 equal monthly instalments. In addition to a basic allowance there is a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) which is paid to Members who undertake specific duties, e.g., Executive Members, Committee Chairs, and Group Leaders. The amount of SRA varies depending on the post it applies to and is also paid in 12 monthly instalments.

Travelling allowances by car can be claimed for all journeys made on Council business and are based on the engine capacity of the vehicle.

Subsistence allowances can be claimed for council duties. The type of duty and period covered should be specified clearly when making the claim.

Members will also receive a contribution to telephone costs (£150 per annum – paid in 12 monthly instalments of £12.50). You should let John Addison, have your next telephone account for record purposes. The account will then be returned to you for payment.

So that we can pay your allowances directly into your bank account you will need to provide us with certain details. It would help considerably if you could complete the mandates and return them to John Addison, (Room 109), at your earliest convenience.

A copy of the current Members' Allowance Scheme is attached.

3. Smart Cards/Know Your Councillor/Business Cards

Each elected member is provided with a Bolton Smart card. This card has a photograph of the Member and enable them to gain access to certain of the Council's leisure and library facilities and gives discounts at certain retails outlets in the town. Further details will be provided. The Council also produce a Know Your Councillor leaflet for distribution to the public.

A personalised business card service is available. Members wishing to avail themselves of this service should contact Claire Atkinson on extension 1098.

4. Getting to the Town Hall - Car Park and Bus Passes, COTAGS, Group Rooms

Elected Members have access to the basement level of the Octagon Car Park, (deck 1a) admission to which is gained via a swipe card issued shortly after the election. Admittance to this part of the car park is via a separate entrance on Coronation Street. The use of the car park is only for designated users in connection with Council business.

Alternatively you may choose to be provided with a bus pass to carry out your official duties. Bus passes can be obtained via Democratic Services (Extension 1039). If you wish to have a bus pass please supply a passport size photograph of yourself to John Addison, in Room 109, for onward transmission to the Passenger Transport Authority. Bus passes are issued subject to certain conditions imposed by this authority:

- Any Member issued with a bus pass loses entitlement to a pass for the Members' Car Park.
- If you have a bus pass you are not entitled to claim mileage or other travelling allowances in respect of attendance at meetings or undertaking official business within the operating area of Greater Manchester Buses Limited.

Bolton Town Hall, although being readily accessible to the public is nevertheless protected by an internal security system known as Cotag. This card access system restricts admittance to the working parts of the building to those who have a legitimate reason for being there. You will receive your Cotag access card shortly after induction and a demonstration will be given as to how it works. You will also be issued with a Bolton Smart ID Card. If you are doing business at Bolton Town Hall then you should always have your Cotag with you.

Bolton Town Hall's One Stop Shop is open to the public between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm weekdays.

Please find attached maps of the Town Hall.

Each political group on the Council has its own room where Members can have access to a PC, make telephone calls, etc. These rooms are kept locked at all times. Each Member is issued with a key to their specific group room. Replacement keys are available from Members Secretariat (extension 1098) should you lose yours.

You will have an individual pigeon hole in your Group Room. The purpose of this is twofold. Firstly, it allows an internal method for you to collect any post which is addressed to you during the day and, secondly, it allows the Members Secretariat to ensure that any mail remaining in the pigeon holes at the end of the day is forwarded using the normal mailing system.

A second set of individual pigeon holes is provided to collate normal mail prior to despatch. These are sited in the Democratic Services, Room 108. Mail from these pigeon holes is currently despatched to Members three times a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday), though to cut postage costs Members can collect this mail in person.

If you should have any specific postal requirements then you should contact any of the Members' Secretaries (contact details above) or John Addison, (extension 1035).

If you are going on holiday please advise Members' Secretariat who will be able to take any messages on your behalf whilst you are absent.

You should also advise Democratic Services (extension 1039) who will make arrangements to stop any mail during your holiday or make any alternative arrangements for its collection.

5. Ward Surgeries

The Council will pay for the hire of a room for you to hold a monthly ward surgery. Once you have decided on the place, date, and time of your surgery, please contact Members Secretariat (extension 1039), who will make the necessary arrangements. Any Member wishing to hold additional surgeries can do so but this will be on a fee paying basis (NOTE: many Members hold ward surgeries with other ward Members - in such cases it will be possible to hold more than one paid for surgery each month). Please note that you should take care if you intend to hold ward surgeries by yourself. Information is available from John Addison on risk avoidance should you intend to do this.

Please do not hesitate to contact any of the officers detailed on page if you need help in resolving any queries arising from your surgeries.

You will also find the Council's A-Z of Services booklet invaluable in identifying points of contact.

6. Pension Fund

Membership of the Greater Manchester Pension Fund is open to Members under seventy years of age. Membership is not automatic. If you wish to join please contact John Addison.

7. IT Equipment

The Council is committed to e-enabling as much of its business as possible. To aid this, each elected Member is provided with a PC package at home. Apart from Word package, the PC has e-mail and Internet facilities. This equipment remains the property of the council and will be recovered in the event that you cease to be a Member of Bolton Council.

Appropriate training will be provided to Members on request. Training days have been set aside for new Members' IT training as part of the induction programme for new Members.

Fujitsu provides IT services to the Council. To report any service requests or faults with your PC package you should contact John Addison (extension 1035).

8. Council website

On the council's website you are provided with a webpage. Your contact details, party, ward, external affiliations, interests, and role within the council's structure can

be placed on this page. However, in accordance with Local Government legislation, the promotion of political views is not permitted. To update the content of this webpage, in the first instance please contact John Addison, (extension 1035). In addition, you will be able to access the council's intranet Members' Information System (allowing searching of minutes, consultation of diary dates, etc.).

9. Diary of Meetings

In order to regulate its business, the Council produces an annual diary of meetings. Your diary for 2007/2008 Municipal Year will be provided. You should note that not all meetings are included in the diary and there are a number of meetings changed or added as the year progresses. Staff in Democratic Services will inform you of changes you need to be aware of. Also, invitations to individual meetings will be sent to you in the form of an agenda.

Invitations to meetings on which you are a member will normally be sent to you at least five working days in advance.

By the end of Friday, 4th May, 2007, you should have

- Met the Chief Executive and made the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.
- Met with Senior Officers of the Department of Legal and Democratic Services.
- Received a list of contacts/useful numbers.
- Received a copy of the Members Allowance Scheme and signed the necessary banking mandates.
- Had your photograph taken for your Bolton Smart Card.
- Had a tour of Bolton Town Hall, know where your Group Rooms are and have met colleagues in Members Secretariat.
- Received your COTAG, Group Room Key and Car Park Pass.
- Arranged/discussed ward surgery requirements.
- Received details about joining the Local Government Pension Scheme.
- Received details about IT facilities and have signed up to the Council's E-Mail and Internet Policy.

Signed.....Councillor

Signed.....Group Training
Champion







Standards and Probity

(a) Declarations of Interest

On becoming an elected member you swore an oath to be bound by the Code of Conduct for Members. This Code requires you to declare whether you have certain specific interests. A copy of the Code of Conduct is attached.

You should complete the declaration form electronically by accessing the link on the Council's website and please be aware that the forms are available for public inspection. It is your duty as an elected member to ensure that your record is kept up to date at all times.

Should you have any queries please contact any officer within the Democratic Services Section who will be happy to advise.

(b) Declaring Gifts and Hospitality

During your duties as an elected member, you may be offered gifts and/or hospitality. You should declare these to John Addison, Members Services Manager, again via the link on the Council's website. This Register is open to public inspection.

Part 3 of the attached Code of Conduct contains further details.

(c) Criminal Records Bureau Checks

It is now a requirement that all elected members are subject to a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. This was introduced primarily because Members may come into contact with children as part of their duties and people working with children are required to complete a CRB check.

A disclosure application form (together with guidance notes) is enclosed. Please note that when completing the disclosure you should not complete sections E and F, the remainder of the form should be completed along the lines indicated in the attached example (further advice on completing the form is available from Robert Landon (extension. 1032).

Once you have completed the form you should return it in person to either Robert Landon or John Addison (for completion of Section X). When returning the form you will need to bring certain items of information such as your passport, driving licence, and birth certificate (all 3 please).

The Member Development Programme

Each year a programme of Member Development is put together to provide Members with the opportunity to participate in a variety of training and development opportunities. There has been a Member Development Programme since 2002 when it was developed in recognition of the changing roles of elected Members arising from the Government's Modernisation agenda.

We will begin shortly to finalise the 2007/2008 programme which has been the subject of discussions with Councillors.

A copy of the Elected Member Training and Development Matrix is attached. Also attached is a list of Council Policy Documents which can be viewed on the Council's Intranet.

Week 2

Week Commencing Monday 14th May, 2007

Schedule

Meet The Directors

Monday 14th May, 2007, Venues to be Confirmed

12 Noon	Keith Davies, Director of Development and Regeneration
1.00pm	David Winstanley, Assistant Chief Executive
2.00pm	John Rutherford, Director of Adult Services
3.00pm	Margaret Asquith, Director of Children's Services

Tuesday 15th May, 2007, Venues to be Confirmed

12 Noon	Alan Eastwood, Director of Legal and Democratic Services
1.00pm	Malcolm Cox, Director of Environmental Services
2.00pm	Steve Arnfield, Director of Corporate Resources

Week 3

Week commencing Monday 21st May, 2007.

Schedule

To be arranged
w/c 21st May

- IT Drop In Sessions

May (12.00 pm – 2.00 pm)

Fairness and Equality

May (12.00 pm – 2.00 pm)

Information Management

May (12.00 pm – 2.00 pm)

Standards

By the end of Wednesday, 9th May, 2007,
You Should:-

- Have received a copy of the National Code of Conduct for Members and Officers.
- Have received a Criminal Records Bureau application for completion.
- Be aware of the requirement to complete a Declaration of Interests/Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality and where to access forms to do this.
- Be aware of the Council's commitment to the development of its elected members and how to access development opportunities.

Signed.....
Councillor

Signed.....
Group Training Champion



By the end of May, 2007, You Should Have:-

Attended briefings with Directors in relation to the big issues facing their Departments.

Been invited to attend a drop in session to discuss your IT requirements.

Attended briefing sessions aimed at introducing you to:-

Fairness and Equality Issues.

Information Management.

Standards.

Signed.....

Councillor

Signed.....

Group Training Champion

Executive Management Team

Sean Harriss
Chief Executive
Ext 1001

David Winstanley
Assistant Chief
Executive
Ext 1200

Margaret Asquith
Director of Children's
Services
Ext 2010

Malcolm Cox
Director of
Environmental
Services
Ext 6714

Steve Arnfield
Director of
Corporate
Resources (Deputy
Chief Executive)
Ext 1502

John Rutherford
Director of Adult
Services
Ext 7201

Alan Eastwood
Director of Legal &
Democratic
Services
Ext 1101

Keith Davies
Director of
Development &
Regeneration
Ext 4002