

Present:	Councillor Geoff Ellis (<i>in the Chair</i>)
Councillors:	Chris Burke, Ronald Hills, Ric Metcalfe, Ralph Toofany, Katie Vause and Loraine Woolley
Independent Person(s):	Chris Elkington and Roger Vine
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor David Jackson and Councillor Hilton Spratt

17. Confirmation of Minutes - 30 July 2013

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2013 be confirmed.

18. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

19. Code of Conduct: Cases Review

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services:

- a) presented a report containing information on recent cases relating to other local authorities' codes of conduct.
- b) highlighted that members should identify any issues raised within the report as being relevant for further consideration with regard to their impact upon members.
- c) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- noted that one of the cases highlighted the potential for members of the public to misunderstand the use of tablet devices within meetings. Consideration should therefore be given to advising the public of the nature of the tablet computers' use.
- criticised the regular use of email-enabled mobile phones within both public and private meetings for purposes other than the relevant meeting.

The Independent Person further noted the potential for elected members to use tablet devices for purposes unrelated to the meeting and the need to be mindful of the relevant risks.

RESOLVED that chairs of committees be reminded of the potential negative public perception regarding the use of tablet computers, and requested to highlight the nature of their use within any meetings attended by members of the public.

20. The Promotion of Citizenship within Schools

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented a report relating to the recent trial of a member-student panel providing an opportunity for dialogue between councillors and pupils at the Lincoln Christ's Hospital School.
- b) summarised the manner in which the panel had been conducted and the positive feedback received.
- c) highlighted the opportunity for the panel format to be used in other schools within Lincoln to improve awareness of the Council's democratic role and functions.
- d) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- noted that the event had been encouraging with positive contributions from the attending students.
- suggested that additional preparatory work should be undertaken in conjunction with schools prior to the panels to ensure pupils are able to take part fully.
- stated that the number of councillors on the panel should be reduced in order to encourage dialogue with students, while efforts should be made to increase the representativeness of the councillors taking part.
- noted that the panel had been stilted in parts with too great a divide between councillors and students. As such, work in smaller groups would possibly be more effective.
- welcomed the introduction of the panel and stressed that the event should be repeated and continued in other schools.
- summarised the manner in which citizenship was taught in schools, noting the limitations upon teachers' time and knowledge of the various subjects covered. The value of doing additional events outside schools and within City Hall was emphasised.
- discussed whether pupils were likely to feel more comfortable taking parts at events either inside or outside their school environment.

The Reserve Independent Person questioned whether feedback had been received from staff at the school.

The Democratic Services Officer advised that the relevant member of staff had provided positive feedback immediately after the event and had expressed an interest in holding further activities in the future.

RESOLVED that officers be requested to proceed with arranging member-student panels in other schools within Lincoln.

21. Encouraging Electoral Engagement

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services:

- a) presented a report regarding the Committee's options for improving levels of electoral engagement within Lincoln.
- b) highlighted the work undertaken to date and requested a steer from members regarding their preferences for further development.

- c) drew members' attention to the Communication Team's proposals for the introduction of ward Twitter accounts, which would allow ward members to engage with residents of their ward, while also potentially acting as a community hub.
- d) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- suggested that individual Twitter accounts would be more suitable for use by elected members than ward accounts, while ward accounts could act as promotional accounts for local events.
- stressed that the principal problem with electoral turnout was not among minority groups, but among the majority who chose not to vote.
- noted that a significant part of the problem with electoral turnout lay at a national level and was beyond the Council's resources to address.
- highlighted the need for members to be properly trained in using social media platforms such as Twitter.
- welcomed the broad thrust of the aims to improve electoral engagement.
- discussed the extent to which political parties sought to engage with voters during election periods.
- considered the benefits of Twitter as a communication service, noting the Leader's weekly webchats using the service.

RESOLVED that:

1. the report be noted.
2. officers be requested to investigate giving councillors individual access to Twitter and appropriate training in this regard.

22. Civic Party Guidance

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services:

- a) presented a report regarding the guidance offered to the Civic Party regarding appropriate behaviour.
- b) noted that the report was provided in response to members' request for information following a relevant code of conduct case at another council.
- c) advised that the Civic Party was closely supported by the Civic Manager and her team in conjunction with the Chief Executive and Town Clerk.
- d) stated that the close support provided by officers to the Civic Party ensured that appropriate training was delivered with the intention of pre-empting any inappropriate behaviour.
- e) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- noted their positive experiences of the support offered while acting as Mayor.
- highlighted the role of political group leaders in ensuring appropriate behaviour by relevant members of the political parties while acting as Mayor.

- emphasised the need to maintain perspective of the large number of Civic Party members whose behaviour had been entirely in keeping with the nature of the office.

The Reserve Independent Person questioned whether all elected members received guidance on the role of the Civic Party.

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services responded that civic guidance was incorporated within the broader member code of conduct training.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

23. Member Development Update

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services:

- a) presented the regular report received by the Committee providing an update on the Council's member development programme.
- b) advised members of the training that had been undertaken during 2012/13 and 2013/14.
- c) noted that the member development programme for 2014/15 was being prepared and invited guidance or suggestions from members for topics which could form part of the programme.
- d) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- discussed the manner in which new members were inducted to the Council.
- stressed that member development went beyond ad hoc training events, noting the need for the Council to develop a 3-5 year programme tailored toward individual members' needs.
- considered the Council's previous member development programmes including the use of personal development plans and external training programmes aimed at members with special responsibilities.
- highlighted the role of political balance in affecting the numbers of councillors who could take part in individual committees, noting the need for committee members involved with licensing and planning to be properly trained and able to substitute for one another where required.
- discussed the role of political parties in supporting new councillors.

RESOLVED that:

1. the report be noted.
2. a report be requested regarding the Council's medium-term development plans for councillors.

24. Paperless Meeting Trial

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented a report summarising the outcome of a trial, during which members of the Committee had received the majority of their committee papers via an electronic tablet device.
- b) advised that the overall reception for the tablet devices appeared to be positive.
- c) noted a number of technical and operational issues members had raised during the trial and advised that the majority did not appear insuperable.
- d) highlighted that any changes to provide tablet devices on an ongoing basis would require the alteration of the Member ICT Policy.
- e) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- noted that the tablet computers had provided a significantly improved agenda-reading experience over a laptop, while also highlighting the versatility of laptops.
- proposed that paperless agendas should be the default position for elected members.
- noted that there was a clash between the City Hall computers operating Microsoft Windows and the tablet devices operating Apple iOS or Android.
- highlighted the difficulty of accessing emails through the Citrix system on an iPad, and requested that future provision be made to enable direct access to emails from tablet devices.
- supported the proposal to allow all councillors to receive a tablet device in exchange for an agreement to cease receiving printed agendas, while noting that members might prefer to buy their own devices for increased flexibility.
- noted frustration with the restrictions placed upon Council devices, highlighting that responsibility for any misuse of devices should rest with the individual councillor in the same manner as Lincolnshire County Council's IT provision to elected members.
- stated that the paperless working trial had been successful, but needed to be extended to more meetings to allow councillors to use the devices effectively.
- stressed the significant environmental and financial savings which could accrue through switching to paperless working.
- discussed minor technical problems, including the difficulty in using the devices while standing to speak at Full Council.

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services responded that she would seek to work with colleagues in IT Services to address members' concerns and progress the requested changes.

RESOLVED that:

1. officers be requested to improve the accessibility of the Council's tablet devices including direct access to emails and the extension of the screen lock time to 15 minutes.
2. the Executive be requested to revise the Elected Members ICT Policy to accommodate the following proposals:

- i. that all councillors willing to cease receiving printed committee papers be offered the use of tablet device in lieu of the printed papers.
- ii. that, in order to ensure parity with other elected members, any councillors in receipt of a tablet device pre-dating the paperless working trial be given the opportunity to request either a laptop or a computer allowance with effect from the date of any change made to the policy.

25. Local Democracy Week Update

The Assistant Director of Legal and Corporate Support Services:

- a) presented a report regarding the Council's involvement with Local Democracy Week.
- b) summarised the progress made previously, noting that a significant number of ideas discussed at the previous meeting were now intended to be promoted as part of Local Democracy Week 2014.
- c) highlighted the Leader's planned Twitter engagement event with local young people, giving people a chance to enter a dialogue with him and each other regarding local democracy and the role of the Council.
- d) noted that members would particularly have the opportunity to contribute towards the development of plans for Local Democracy Week 2014 and invite the Committee's suggestions in this regard.
- e) invited members' questions and comments.

Members:

- discussed making use of members' professional skills to assist with the production of lesson plans.
- stressed the need for the Council to engage with young people in a creative manner.

RESOLVED that:

1. the report be noted.
2. regular updates be requested regarding progress in this area.

26. Work Programme Update

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented the current Ethics and Engagement Committee work programme for consideration by members.
- b) advised that the report requested regarding the long-term aspects of member development would be addressed as part of the scheduled report regarding succession planning.
- c) invited members' questions and comments.

RESOLVED that the work programme be approved.