

Governance Committee
22 June 2020
Part I
Member Development Working Group: Phase 2 – Role of Councillor and updates on Phase 1 - Removing barriers to stand for election
Report by Director of Law and Assurance

Summary

The Member Development Working Group has completed phase 2 of its work. It has considered the role of a councillor and has also considered the support available to members to enable them to fulfil their role, thereby removing barriers to standing for election.

The Working Group has prepared a new member job description and a series of documents entitled 'Fulfilling the Member Role' which it proposes can form the basis of information to be made available on the 'Be a Councillor' resources issued by the County Council ahead of the 2021 elections.

Recommendations

- (1) That the draft job description in Appendix A and amendments to specific job descriptions in paragraph 2.2 be approved;
- (2) That the 'Fulfilling the Member Role' document in Appendix C and supporting documents in Appendices D to F be approved.

Proposal

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 The Working Group has met during 2019 to review the member role and to identify ways of removing barriers to standing for election. It has also continued to deliver phase 1, encouraging people to stand for election.
- 1.2 The Working Group comprises Cllr Duncton (Chairman), Cllr O'Kelly, Cllr Sparkes, Cllr Sudan and Cllr Wickremaratchi.
- 1.3 The Working Group reported to the Member Development Group on 2 February 2020, which supported the working group's recommendations.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The Working Group proposes some amendments to the member job descriptions that previously existed as part of the Constitution. The main change proposed is to adopt a new general job description. It does not seek to make any fundamental change to the member role, but tries to make

description clearer and shorter. The proposed new job description is attached at Appendix A. Appendix B shows the current job description, for comparison.

- 2.2 The Working Group surveyed members with special responsibility allowances to check their views about the job descriptions for other roles. The Group was satisfied that these remained fit for purpose, simply recommending two minor changes:
- On the job description for Cabinet Members, paragraph 14, to clarify that advisers and senior advisers to cabinet member should only be appointed by the Leader 'when applicable'.
 - On the job description for non-Executive Committee Chairmen, paragraph 4 on liaison with internal stakeholders should be amended to include 'liaison with external partners where appropriate'. This was raised by the Chairman of the Regulation, Audit and Accounts Committee, who liaises with external audit on a regular basis.
- 2.3 The Working Group recommends that the new job descriptions be endorsed for submission to the Governance Committee and that these then be included in 'be a councillor' resources. It was also emphasised that Democratic Services should ensure that members are shown the job descriptions when new members are considering taking on or starting new roles, at any point in the four-year council cycle.
- 2.4 The other area of work during phase 2 has been to consider ways of removing barriers, or perceived barriers, to standing for election. This has led to the production of a draft 'Fulfilling the Member Role' document which is attached at appendix C. This seeks to set out the range of support currently available to members, but makes it more explicit. Draft policies have been prepared on parental leave and other special leave. The Working Group believes that publishing these documents in 'be a councillor' resources will be beneficial in showing that a good range of support is available.
- 2.5 The Working Group recommends that the 'Fulfilling the Member Role' and its supporting documents be endorsed for submission to the Governance Committee.
- 2.6 The Working Group also considered outstanding actions from phase 1. Most of these are now complete or underway.
- 2.7 The Working Group will now commence phase 3 of the project, to review the information and events provided to candidates as well as developing the member induction programme.

3. Resources

- 3.1 Most of the material in the 'Fulfilling the Member Role' document simply makes existing provisions more explicit, so it is expected that this may lead to a small increase in member allowances, but this is likely to be modest and should be managed within existing resources.

Factors taken into account

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The Working Group consulted holders of Special Responsibility Allowances on their job descriptions. Comments largely agreed that the existing wording was accurate, aside from the comments mentioned in paragraph 2.2 above.
- 4.2 The Working Group has asked the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to consider whether people taking parental leave should continue to receive any sort of special responsibility allowance. The Working Group’s initial view was that they should not, but it wanted to seek the view of the IRP.

5. Risk Implications and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Elected members do not reflect the communities they represent	The ‘be a councillor’ work, together with the documents proposed for approval, should help more people to feel able to stand for election, giving more likelihood that the membership will reflect the communities that they represent.

6. Other Options Considered

- 6.1 The County Council is not obliged to have a member job description or publish documents that help members to fulfil their role. It is felt, however, that having these documents available can only help more people to consider the role and take an informed decision about whether they stand for election.

7. Equality Duty

- 7.1 Removing barriers to election should enable people with protected characteristics to stand for election. This includes explicitly supporting people with disabilities through providing reasonable adjustments.

8. Social Value

- 8.1 Not applicable.

9. Crime and Disorder Act Implications

- 9.1 Not applicable.

10. Human Rights Implications

- 10.1 Not applicable.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Revised Member Job Description

Appendix B – Current Job Description

Appendix C – Fulfilling the Member Role

Appendix D – Meeting Arrangements

Appendix E – Draft Parental Leave Policy

Appendix F – Draft Special Leave Policy

Background Papers

None.