

PROVISION OF MEMBERS' SERVICES

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1. Purpose

1.1 To present information about the services currently provided to Members.

2. Summary

2.1 The Council currently provides a range of services to Members in order to assist them in their duties as elected Members representing the people of Milton Keynes.

2.2 These services have not been reviewed since the Council became a Unitary Authority on 1 April 1997.

2.3 No provision for growth in Members' Services has been made in recent Council budgets, which means that any progress on the development of further services, such as IT provision, Members' handbooks/diaries etc will, of necessity, be very limited.

3. Recommendations

3.1 That consideration be given to identifying a package of Members' Services which best meets the needs of Members, and that where growth areas are identified, the Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to make the resources available to enable improvements in services to take place.

4. **Background**

4.1 When the Council became Unitary Authority in 1997, a range of Members' services was provided, supported by a Members' Services Officer. The services currently provided are listed at **Annex A**.

4.2 A survey of Members was carried out during December 1996, with a view to improving the situation when Milton Keynes became a Unitary Authority in April 1997. However, due to the Council's difficult financial situation since 1997, very little of what were identified as improvements have been implemented.

4.2 A summary of the survey's findings is attached at **Annex B**.

4.3 A copy of the 1999/2000 Democratic Representative budget is attached at **Annex C**.

5. **Issues and Choices**

5.1 The Sub-committee has been instructed by the Policy and Resources Committee to review the provision of Members Services, and to recommend appropriate resource provision. The options are to change the list of services provided from the existing budget, or to identify the list of preferred services, so that they can be subsequently costed.

6. **Implications**

6.1 Environmental

Consideration should be given to ways of reducing the amount of paper used in the provision of Members Services.

The health implications of excessive use of mobile telephones may also be need to be considered.

6.2 Equalities

Improved provision of services to Members should be designed to help all Members to participate better in the business of the Council and in particular, to fulfil their representational roles within the community.

6.3 Financial

The 1999/2000 Members' Services budget is £626,820 but the vast majority is committed expenditure over which there is little discretion.

6.4 Legal

None

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

The current available staffing provision is the Members' Services Officer, the Members' Services Assistant, the Leader's Personal Assistant and some hours of the Mayor's Secretary's time.

Enhanced IT provision would mean some rearrangement of the layout of the Group Rooms. Staffing resources would be required not only for the installation of IT, but also for the training of Members once it is installed.

7. **Conclusions**

7.1 Although an increase in the level and type of services provided to Members may be desirable, any enhancement of those services will have significant resourcing implications for the Council

7.2 Therefore, consideration should be given to what are the most important services required by Members and a list of priorities prepared.

Background Papers: Results of 1996 Survey