

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW PANEL 2 – 4 SEPTEMBER 2007

OPERATIONAL MANAGERS MEETING – 5 SEPTEMBER 2007

EXECUTIVE BOARD – 17 SEPTEMBER 2007

MEMBER TRAINING PANEL – 26 SEPTEMBER 2007

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 27 SEPTEMBER 2007

CABINET – 9 OCTOBER 2007

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER (CABINET)

(Author: Stephen McGrath, Principal Committee Officer)

ALL MEMBERS MATTER PROGRAMME FOR BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Summary: The last Comprehensive Performance Assessment asked Breckland Council to review the Training, Development and Support provided to its Elected Members. The Local Government Information Unit has undertaken a review of Member Support and produced a report identifying possible areas for improvement. Officers have analysed the report and produced a draft action plan to deliver the improvements for Members' consideration.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In March 2004, the Comprehensive Performance Assessment report found that:
- “Councillor training and support is inadequate. Some Councillors feel excluded from the Council’s activities and as a result do not represent the Council positively.”
- 1.2 During the autumn of 2005, Breckland Council agreed to commission an independent review of the Council’s support for ward councillors. The review was based on the Local Government Information Unit’s “All Members Matter” programme. The package aimed to assist Members in their role as a ward representative and community champion by focussing on the representative role and clarifying the support those councillors need to perform effectively. In particular, the approach was to identify barriers to effective performance and seek an all-party consensus on priority areas where extra or different support is required.
- 1.3 The methodology used to compile the report involved a distinct number of phases:-
- Preliminary meetings with leading councillors and Democratic Services officers
 - Questionnaires to all Councillors
 - Presentation of findings to a senior member focus group of Councillors
 - Presentation of findings to all Councillors
 - Final report with recommendations.
- 1.4 A copy of the final report from the Local Government Information Unit is shown in Appendix 2.

2. KEY DECISION

2.1 This is not a key decision.

3. COUNCIL PRIORITIES

3.1 The matter raised in this report falls within the following Council priorities:

- A safe and healthy environment
- A well planned place to live which encourages vibrant communities
- A prosperous place to live and work

3.2 By improving the support to Elected Members, this will enable them to fulfil their Ward Councillor role better.

4. MEMBER SUPPORT AT BRECKLAND COUNCIL

4.1 It is proposed that the final report from the Local Government Information Unit on “All Members Matter” be used to improve the provision of support to our Elected Members.

4.2 The report concludes that:

“Breckland Council has worked hard to anticipate the changing needs of elected members and offers a comprehensive programme of training and development as well as general support at a number of levels.”

4.3 The reports identified the following as possible areas for improvement:

- Introduce automatic ‘triggers’ to ensure that ward councillors are given advance notice and are consulted on issues that affect their wards
- Develop more regular communication between non-executive councillors and officers
- Improving support for members in their external representative role
- Developing a ‘level playing field’ for members representing rural and urban wards by reviewing member allowances
- Training and development programmes should be designed around Personal Development Plans for councillors
- Training and development programmes for officers
- Reviewing political group arrangements to support the role of the non-executive councillor
- Making members and employers aware of the rights for time off for Public Duties
- Provide induction training that describes the new democratic landscape in which members will have to work.

4.4 The report in Appendix 1 (Section 2) identifies in detail how these issues can be improved at Breckland Council. These areas have been incorporated into the Action Plan in Appendix 2. Some of these issues can be implemented immediately whereas other areas will require further investigation.

5. OPTIONS AVAILABLE

5.1 The options are:

- (i) To agree the action plan.
- (ii) To not agree and adopt the action plan

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

6.1 Member Support has been identified as an area for improvement in the last Comprehensive Performance Assessment, The Local Government Information Unit has identified a number of areas for improvement, as detailed in the report. By implementing these recommendations, it will help Members to fulfil their role as ward representatives and community champions better.

6.2 It is not appropriate to take no action.

7. RECOMMENDATION

7.1 To agree and adopt the Action Plan.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Local Government Information Unit – Final Report on “All Members Matter Programme for Breckland Council”

Appendix 2 – Action Plan

This report has taken account of the need for compliance with the Council’s Equal Opportunities Policy and the requirements of Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998. This report raises no matters to which attention specifically needs to be drawn under the legislation.

A Report on the Findings from the

All Members Matter

Programme for

Breckland District Council

Facilitated by: Alan Waters
of the Local Government Information Unit



Final Report

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Introduction

During the autumn of 2005 Breckland District Council agreed to commission an independent review of the council's support for ward councillors in their representative role. The review was based on the Local Government Information Unit's (LGIU) 'All Members Matter' package designed by the LGIU. The package aims to assist councillors in their role as a ward representative and community champion by focussing on the representative role and clarifying the support those councillors need to perform effectively. In particular, the approach is to identify barriers to effective performance and seek an all-party consensus on priority areas where extra or different support is required.

Section one of the report describes the feedback from members to the questionnaire and their views about how things can be improved.

Section two makes recommendations based on the responses from the questionnaire and the discussions arising from presentations to members of the questionnaire findings.

Methodology

The methodology for this report involved a number of distinct phases:

- ❖ Preliminary meetings with leading councillors and democratic services officers
- ❖ Questionnaires to all councillors
- ❖ Presentation of findings to a senior member focus group of councillors
- ❖ Presentation of findings to all councillors
- ❖ Final report, with recommendations

Appendix A sets out fully the methodology used to carry out the review.

Section One - Feedback from Councillors

1.1 Information flow to councillors

Members accessed information in a variety of ways. Generally there were high levels of satisfaction among members of the ruling group but opposition councillors were less satisfied and felt more marginalised. The following issues were flagged up by members:

- ❖ While there was an opportunity for all councillors to attend the meetings of the Cabinet, opposition councillors felt that there was a need for more opportunity to debate issues that come to Cabinet and that there should be clear, concise and informative summaries of 'key decisions' following Cabinet meetings.
- ❖ Overview and Scrutiny. Some members raised the questions about ease of access. (There are plans to upgrade the I.T. system).
- ❖ Members had a very clear view about what should be improved at ward level. There was a strong sentiment in favour of a dedicated officer support to ensure that members got an automatic notification (well in advance) of ward based developments/action reports affecting their 'patches'
- ❖ While members received details of up-coming planning applications there were some suggestions around communication, for example, that planning decisions should be posted within 24 hours of being determined and planning drawings to be put on line.

1.2 Contributing to policy development

There were high levels of engagement by members who were part of the ruling group, who had a number of different avenues through which they influenced policy development and the executive. This included using the more informal arrangements of the political group and individual discussions with portfolio holders. Scrutiny reports and recommendations were most often quoted as a tangible way in which council policy could be influenced. There was also a sense that the influence of ward based issues (and by implication the backbench role) on executive and policy development could be enhanced. Perhaps, predictably, opposition members were less positive and saw their opportunity to influence policy development specifically through Scrutiny (the leader of the main opposition group is chair of O&S), attendance at meetings of the Executive and full council.

An acknowledgement of the importance of overview & scrutiny was reflected in the recommendations councillors made about strengthening the role in relation to the executive. While there were some negative comments, there were mostly positive remarks about the work of the 'Task and Finish' Scrutiny Panels. Particular stress was laid on developing the policy and pre-policy role of 'Overview & Scrutiny'.

1.3 Contribution to the budget process

Predictably, the way members were able to contribute to the budget process depended on their roles within the council. Senior members were engaged through the 'Star Chamber'. Scrutiny, group meetings and full council were the most common ways in which other members felt they contributed to the budget process. The council has a 6-year rolling budget programme and quarterly performance clinics. Political Group meetings seemed to be the main forum within which budget issues were discussed. In the focus group discussions it was felt that scrutiny should have a greater involvement during the course of the budget cycle and be involved much earlier in the process. There was a strongly held view that more accessible financial information designed to help councillors make informed decisions about the budget was essential. There was also a sense that there needed to be more discussion prior to Council – an additional General Purposes Committee, was one suggestion. More cross party working and regular officer briefings were seen as further positive steps that could be taken to enhance members' involvement in shaping the budget.

1.4 Support for role as Ward Councillor

This related to question 11 on the AMM survey. Responses scored very highly across most categories; in particular ICT, 'home office' equipment, casework and communicating with constituents. The lowest levels of support were identified as surgeries and clerical support. In the case of surgeries these were not perceived as being practical in sparse rural wards but there was a request from one member that they have support for quarterly surgeries.

It also emerged during discussions that members representing rural wards (compared to colleagues in more 'urban' parts of Breckland) spend a considerable part of their allowances on car mileage in following up case work, attendance at Parish Council meetings etc.

In terms of what could be improved there were a variety of suggestions; the most important related to getting feedback on issues raised on behalf of constituents and a directory with officer contact information. It is still the case that a number of members will go directly to an officer rather than go through the call centre. Another suggestion that there should be 'ward pages' in council publications like 'Breckland Voice' is currently being considered by the council.

While ICT is seen as a valuable investment and as a way to support members, there is still a preference among some members for documents in a 'hard copy' format.

Members reported a mixed experience in relation to their external **representative role**. Some outside bodies were better serviced than others. It was felt that there should be a greater consistency of support by officers and engagement by members. The council should provide information about the outside bodies councillors are asked to join and councillors, in their turn, to report back on a regular basis to the council.

1.5 Support for other bodies.

Members were involved in a number of different roles – as elected members of Parish and Town councils, as magistrates and as members of the County Council. The level of satisfaction was generally positive. The point was made by a number of members about how to better connect the different tiers of government in terms of the flows of information between them.

1.6 Learning and Development needs for councillors

The council is seen as responsive to members' needs in this area. There was an acknowledgement that a comprehensive programme of learning and development opportunities has been put in place by the authority. In the opinion of several members that they should be proactive in saying what they want, it was felt that L&D needed to be 'related to the needs of council business.' Training related to the revised Code of Conduct was high on the priority list of a number of members. One member, in particular, was concerned that she was unable to attend any training sessions 'because they were held 'during office hours'. This links to a more general point about meeting the personalised training needs of individual councillors and not least in terms of convenient times at which members can access training opportunities.

1.7 Key priorities for councillors

The final section of the questionnaire asked councillors to describe three changes that would most effectively enhance their ward role.

- Enhance the support for councillors in dealing with ward issues
- 'Provision of ward specific information'

- 'Building the right relationships with other local government bodies – parishes, town councils etc'
- 'Expenses for mileage and postage'
- 'Skills training – media'
- 'Updates for legal and planning issues'
- 'Time Management Skills'

Section 2 – Recommendations

Introduction

The focus of the 'All Members Matter' programme is around strengthening the role of the councillor in their frontline role. Breckland District Council has worked hard to anticipate the changing needs of elected members and offers a comprehensive programme of training and development as well as general support at a number of levels. The questionnaire responses and the focus group discussions with members did throw up some specific issues which form the basis of recommendations for the council to consider. Within the recommendations, examples of good practice, where appropriate, have been included for further investigation.

Finally, in anticipation of the significant changes likely to take place in local government in the period covered by the electoral cycle of the new council, some possible areas for induction training to help members understand the new local government landscape have been listed in the recommendations.

2.1 Introduce automatic 'triggers' to ensure that ward councillors are given advance notice and are consulted on issues that affect their wards

This is accepted practice in a number of councils, for example, Gateshead, where the protocol sets out that ward councillors must not only be consulted on executive decisions that affect their ward but that the results of the consultation should be considered by the executive.

More broadly, a number of councils have mechanisms in place to provide, in advance, information to ward councillors regarding **any developments** likely to impact upon wards. A number of authorities have initiated ward information, such as Gateshead and Tower Hamlets, or neighbourhood information, such as Southampton, to assist councillors with their local representative work. Others, including Swindon, Braintree and Norwich all produce regular and frequent councillors' bulletins giving information on a variety of issues.

2.2. Develop more regular communication between non-executive councillors and officers

This anticipates the enhanced role for members in 'neighbourhood' governance. It could include regular communication e.g. councillors' newsletters, information on consultation activities, service-specific information, updated telephone directories. There should also be regular briefings (face to face and written) and contact opportunities with officers for non-executive councillors. A range of good practice examples designed to develop good working relationships and understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of councillors and officers has been developed by a diverse range of authorities including Brent, Blackpool, Worcestershire and Liverpool.

2.3. Improving support for members in their external representative role

The Directory of Membership of outside bodies should have a single paragraph summary of the role of each outside organisation on which members sit.

2.4 Developing a 'level playing field' for members representing rural and urban wards by reviewing member allowances.

Given the size of some of the rural wards it was clear that many members were financially disadvantaged compared to colleagues who represented wards in places like Dereham, Thetford and Swaffham.

While a number of members felt that it would be inappropriate to hold ward surgeries in very sparse rural wards, there were members who felt that the council should be prepared to support them if they wished to hold surgeries and funding should be made available for this purpose.

2.5 Training and development programmes should be designed around Personal Development Plans for councillors.

This is the approach which has been agreed by the local authority.

2.6 Training and development programmes for officers

It may be worth exploring the idea that training and development programmes be designed for officers regarding all councillor roles

2.7 Reviewing political group arrangements to support the role of the non-executive councillor

Responses to the questionnaire demonstrated that for many non-executive councillors the political group provides a forum in which to exchange information and influence policy direction.

The political groups on the council may wish to test their current practice against the following objectives.

- ❖ The political group enables non-executive councillors to be well informed about group policy and the procedures for developing policies within group, and have an effective dialogue with individual councillors to allow input into its decisions.
- ❖ Clear opportunities to receive regular briefings from senior officers are available to all groups and a wide range of councillors within those groups
- ❖ A flow of information within group.
- ❖ Councillors have appropriate support knowledge and skills to participate in group decision making.
- ❖ Consideration of employing political group assistants. These are an invaluable resource to all councillors and not least in their ward role. I have attached an example of a standard job description for political assistants for Norwich City Council (this is what the job description would look like for the Conservative Group political assistant).

2.8 Making members and employers aware of the rights for time off for Public Duties

This was an issue for one member in particular, who was finding difficulty in getting time off for council duties from their employer. The council should be proactive in providing members with advice and support in enabling them to have the time to carry out their duties as elected members. Appendix C outlines the current regulations.

2.9 Provide induction training that describes the new democratic landscape in which members will have to work.

These are changes likely to come into effect in the next 4 years:

- Passing of the Local Government and Public Involvement Health Bill
- Statutory Local Area Agreements are in place, with a single pot of money rising to £5billion per year by 2010
- Major new guidance on commissioning in the NHS and on service provision in local government will be issued
- The streamlined Best Value regime is in place, covering commissioning and involving local people
- New Unitary Authorities have been created and the first Public Service Trust (PCT/council merger) is operating
- New 'innovative two-tier models to be developed within existing legislation.
- Possibility of further extensive structural reform of local government in the next Parliament.
- Local plans for Mayors or strong council leaders are in place
- Local authority scrutiny committees have oversight of all local government services, PCTs, and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.
- Councillors can raise Community Calls for Action on local government or police issues.
- Local authorities will have established Local Involvement Networks facilitate citizen involvement in local health care.
- Duties on public sector organisations to actively promote race, disability and gender equality.

Methodology

The review was conducted in four stages

Preliminary meetings

A number of meetings were conducted in mid 2006 with Democratic Services officers to tailor the AMM questionnaire to Breckland District Council specifications. A presentation was given to senior councillors outlining the different stages of the programme.

Survey of Councillors

Questionnaires were circulated to all councillors of the council both in the form of hardcopy and electronically. Out of 53 councillors there were 25 returns: a response rate of 43%

Responses came from a cross section of councillors:

- Length of council service ranged from 3 years – 24 years
- Just under half of the respondents were coming to the end of their first term the remainder had served two terms or more
- Four of the respondents were 'Triple hatters' sitting as County, District and Town or Parish Councillors.
- 10 respondents were also Parish or Town Councillors
- Half the respondents held relatively senior or senior positions on the council
- Twenty one respondents sat a regulatory or scrutiny committee
- Over 60% of the sample were on one or more outside bodies
- Outside of council duties all councillors had a wide range of responsibilities

As many councillors gave comments in completing the questionnaire a strict statistical analysis was not undertaken. The questionnaire was invaluable in identifying key areas of concern. The recommendations in the report broadly reflect the views of the majority of members. Where this isn't the case this is qualified in the commentary.

Presentation to Councillors

A presentation of the findings of the questionnaire took place in late January 2007. The presentation was structured to highlight the member responses that explored solutions or suggested improvements in the areas explored by the questionnaire. The first of which was to Cabinet members and senior opposition councillors. Separate discussions took place with Member Support Officers followed by a further two sessions open to all members of the council

These were positive sessions. Not only did it allow for a more detailed discussion of findings from the questionnaire survey, but helped to tease out a number of new issues. The information gathered from the presentations is reflected in this report.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Post No. **CCPAL1**

Post Title: **Conservative Group Political Assistant**

Grade: **SCP 26-28**

Date Grade Fixed:

JOB PURPOSE:

Responsible for providing high level executive and support for the Conservative Councillors and Conservative Group Meetings.

Responsible for undertaking research and briefing all councillors of the Conservative Group.

SUPERVISION

The post holder prioritises their work under the general direction of the Conservative Group.

The Head of Regulatory and Democratic Services manage the post holder.

ACTIVITIES

The job will include some of the following activities. The post-holder will need to be flexible about the tasks they carry out.

1. **Makes arrangements for the Group and associated meetings, including away days.**
2. **Prepares and circulates Group agendas, minutes and other Group information.**

3. Takes follow up actions as directed by the Group e.g. letters on behalf of the Group.
4. Liases with Council officers and conducts research on the development of Group policy.
5. Monitors Council, Executive and Committee reports, minutes, press releases and other Council documents.
6. Attends meetings of Council, Executive, Committees etc. as required
7. Monitors reports produced by other local government and related organisations and disseminate information to Group councillors as appropriate.
8. Helps Group Councillors prepare for meetings
9. Undertakes research for Council motions and questions.
10. Undertakes research and provides information and prepares reports for the Group.
11. Undertakes research and liaison with the Group in preparation for the Council budget
12. Deals with correspondence, filing and the development of a research library.
13. Helps Group Councillors solve individual problems of constituents
14. Communicates on behalf of the Group with other Groups and officers of the Council.
15. Ensures effective communications between the Group Councillors, the Political Assistant and Group volunteers
16. Ensures all Group Councillors receive training needs and other necessary Councillor support
17. Helps publicise Group Councillor surgeries and other Group activities
18. Ensures the web pages of the Councillors on the Council website are kept up to date.

JOB DESCRIPTION

POST: SNR. DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER **POST NO:**

GRADE: P01 (with opportunity for progression to P02)

SERVICE AREA: EXECUTIVE AND SCRUTINY

SECTION: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

RESPONSIBLE TO: EXECUTIVE MANAGER / SCRUTINY MANAGER

PRIMARY JOB FUNCTION

To ensure that the Council's democratic functions are carried out efficiently and effectively and to support and provide advice to Council, Executive, committees etc, and other bodies as appropriate.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- To support democratic and other bodies with planning, research and information, data analysis, co-ordinating information, organising agendas and speakers, compile and write papers, minute decisions and monitor action on committee decisions.
- To deal with correspondence and enquiries and draft written replies as appropriate.
- To communicate and publicise the work of democratic and other bodies and provide a pro-active service to engage individuals.
- To provide advice to Members and officers concerning the Council's constitution and procedures.
- To ensure close liaison between the Executive, Scrutiny, Areas and other teams within the department and provide a pro-active and flexible service together with carrying out duties across the division as necessary.
- To keep abreast of new legislation and good practice affecting the work of the team.
- To establish, develop and maintain effective working relationships and communications with officers, members, external agencies and individuals.

- To develop and use new technology to improve the democratic process and service delivery.
- To ensure that relevant information is available on the Council's IT system within agreed deadlines.
- To ensure services provided are of high quality and comply with statutory as well as internal deadlines and relevant indicators are used to measure performance.
- To attend evening meetings as required, occasionally at short notice.
- To make sure all duties are provided in accordance with the Council's policies and commitment to:
 - customer care standards
 - health and safety
 - equal opportunities in employment and service delivery
 - relevant performance indicators
- To carry out any other reasonable task which falls within the scope of the job and may be directed by senior management.

ADDITIONAL:

- To use and assist others in the use of information technology systems to carry out duties in the most efficient and effective manner.
- To achieve service outcomes and outputs, and personal appraisal targets, as agreed with the line manager.
- To undertake training and constructively take part in meetings, supervision, seminars and other events designed to improve communication and assist with the effective development of the post and post holder.
- The post holder is expected to be committed to the Council's core values of public service, quality, equality and empowerment and to demonstrate this commitment in the way they carry out their duties.
- Ensure all the services within the area(s) of responsibility are provided in accordance with the Council's commitment to high quality service provision to users.
- Ensure that duties are undertaken with due regard and compliance with the Data Protection Act and other legislation.

- Carry out duties and responsibilities in accordance with the Council's Health and Safety Policy and relevant Health and Safety legislation.
- At all times carrying out responsibilities/duties within the framework of the Council's Dignity for all Policy. (Equal Opportunities Policy).

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

JOB DESCRIPTION

DIRECTORATE	:	BOROUGH
POST TITLE SERVICES MANAGER	:	MEMBER & COMMITTEE SUPPORT
POST REFERENCE	:	10/617
SALARY	:	£26,928 - £29.010 PER ANNUM
RESPONSIBLE TO	:	HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE FOR	:	MEMBER SERVICES (1.5 FTE) COMMITTEE SERVICES (2.5 FTE) O & S SERVICES (2 FTE)

1. JOB PURPOSE

To lead a Team responsible for the provision of a range of services to support elected Members in their democratic role.

To ensure an efficient and effective meetings support service to Members, Officers and the Council's stakeholders.

2. SUPERVISION AND GUIDANCE

- Manage and monitor the work of the team of Officers providing Members' Services, Committee Services and Overview & Scrutiny Services.
- Work largely on own initiative, consulting with the Head of Democratic Services and/or other colleagues, on non-routine, complex or sensitive issues and matters affecting the general procedures and services provided.

3. RANGE OF DECISION MAKING

- The postholder will have responsibilities for:
- Day to day administrative decisions relating to Members and Civic, Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Services.
- Such other matters as are from time-to-time allocated to the postholder.

2. KEY TASKS – GENERAL

- To act as prime point of contact for the Head of Democratic Services, and other Lead Officers and Members, for Committee, O&S and Members' Support Services.
- To exercise a general overview and management (but not generally direct supervision) of the Committee, O&S and Members' Support Services Officers.
- With the Members' Services Officer, to drive the Member Development agenda and assist Members to achieve their maximum potential during their period of Office on the Council.
- To help roll-out electronic delivery of services and achieve the Government's E.gov targets for local authorities.
- To develop and apply improved performance monitoring and reporting processes for the Team.
- To attend and service the specific meetings allocated to the postholder: such duties to include:
 - a) Editing agenda items in consultation with Service / Lead Officers, ensuring items comply with relevant statute, the Council's Constitution, Standing Orders, approved Policy, Terms of Reference, house style, etc. and that they are sufficiently informative for Members' needs.
 - b) Arranging agenda / briefing meetings with Chairs / Lead / Service Officers.
 - c) Preparing and finalising agenda papers and preparing supporting documents for issue; arranging distribution before deadline.
 - d) Taking an accurate and comprehensive record of proceedings at meetings.

- e) Advising the Committee Chair on procedures and Standing Orders / Constitutional matters and drafting recommendations as required to assist in decision-making.
 - f) Producing draft minutes / notes and action sheets and agreeing the final record, in consultation with the relevant Officers and Committee Chair. Processing minutes / notes for issue.
 - g) Taking action on minutes / notes as necessary. Monitoring progress of reports back and initiating action as necessary.
 - h) Undertaking all other related administrative work.
- To attend and assist, when required, in the servicing of meetings of the full Council.
 - To initiate and prepare reports for submission and presentation to Committee as necessary.
 - To liaise with elected Members, other Council Service Teams. Other statutory authorities and with various agencies in the community as required.
 - To contribute to the corporate project work of the Council.
 - To represent the Council on “Neighbouring authority” and other professional networks within the West Midlands Region and wider local government community.
 - To assist in the development of computer-based and other office systems.
 - To assist in the administration of the Council’s initiative to develop community involvement via “Neighbourhood Groups” and the developing “Localisation” Agenda, including attendance at evening meetings as support officer in accordance with the Council’s current scheme.
 - To monitor budgets and assist in budget review processes relevant to the work area.
 - To assist in the ongoing development of the Council’s decision-making processes (Leader and Executive Committee, plus four Overview and Scrutiny Committees).
 - To undertake occasional research and other projects as required and to prepare necessary papers.

- To comply with the standards and procedures of the Directorate and from time to time to assist with other areas of the work of the Directorate, particularly Electoral Services.

3. KEY TASKS – ALL STAFF

- To ensure efficiency, effectiveness and equality in service delivery.
- To operate within the frameworks set by Statute, the Council's Constitution, Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, etc.
- To exercise proper integrity in respect of confidential matters and personal information obtained during the execution of the duties of this post.
- To undertake such other reasonable duties as may be requested.
- To reflect the Council's core values and objectives in undertaking the duties of this post.
- To understand and comply with the legal requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), and any other relevant regulations as detailed in the Council's general and departmental Safety Policy Statement.
- To carry out duties and responsibilities required under the Data Protection Act 1998; in particular, to take all reasonable care that no unauthorised loss or disclosure of personal data occurs.
- The duties and responsibilities outlined above are intended to be an indication of the scope and nature of the post and are subject to review from time to time.

APPENDIX B

Thanet District Council Job Description Form	
Division / Department: Democratic Services	
Location: Thanet - Council Offices, Margate	
Job Title: Democratic Services Manager	
Reports to: Head of Improvement and Performance	
Level/Grade: Subject to Job Evaluation	Type of Position: Full-time Part-time Contractor Placement

Mission Statement:

“We will use all our energy and available resources to make Thanet somewhere that is economically successful, visually attractive, vibrant and stimulating, and a safe place in which to live and work. We will seek to provide high quality public services that meet the needs of all residents.”

Job Purpose:

- To deliver effective and efficient Member, Scrutiny, Corporate Management Team, Cabinet, Committee Services, full Council, Electoral Registration, Elections and Referendums, Council Constitutional issues, Corporate Forward Plan and Corporate Freedom of Information and Data Protection compliance, ensuring the continuous improvement of the service.

- To assist the Council's nominated Monitoring Officer and act as Deputy Monitoring Officer in relation to statutory functions under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government Act 2000.

Principal Duties:

The Authority has four main aims to help us achieve our vision, which will be achieved by focusing the efforts of all Council staff, Members and partners on the following core ideals.

S.ervice **T**.eamwork **E**.conomics **P**.ride

Service

The Service is outward looking and customer focused.

- To deliver elections, referendums and polls in order to fulfil the statutory duties of the Returning Officer, in accordance with existing legislation, incorporating and planning the preparation of the project plan, as well as defining and determining the method of its execution

- To assist the Council's nominated Monitoring Officer and act as Deputy Monitoring Officer in relation to the statutory functions under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government Act 2000

- To manage and deliver the Committee and Scrutiny functions ensuring that agendas, minutes and action lists are prepared and published on time, that all meetings are well planned, organised and conducted in accordance with the statutory requirements and the Constitution, to a high level of quality

Teamwork

To be effective we work with internal and external partners. We are team players.

- Approval and management of agendas and reports to Cabinet, Council, Corporate Management Team and Extended Corporate Management Team by quality checking all reports to ensure they contain all required information, in particular corporate implications, recommendations, and liaison with report authors to ensure compliance with corporate standards.
- To advise and support the work of elected Members to enable a cohesive Officer and Member delivery of services and that the Standards required by the Code of Conduct are upheld. Act as lead advisor to the Council and Cabinet on matters of procedure in relation to the Constitution to ensure accountability and transparency in the decision-making process.
- To work with Communications and Corporate Projects teams to ensure understanding of Member issues and promote further Member engagement.
- To conduct training needs analysis for Member Development ensuring the delivery of identified training needs.

Economics

We constantly review and improve efficiency in the interest of consumers.

- To deliver the statutory requirements for the preparation and maintenance of the Register of Electors in order to fulfil the duties of the Electoral Registration Officer to develop the project plan as well as ensuring its successful execution.
- To contribute to review of procedures and practices to assist with the implementation of changes ensuring continuous service improvements. Monitor receipt of new government or external policy, legislation, guidance, development and review of the Council's constitution.
- To provide corporate advice and guidance to the Council in relation to the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act. To determine the corporate responses to FOI requests which, due to their complexity, have been referred to the Democratic Services Manager rather than the relevant service department.
- Manage the Democratic Services function including business planning, performance management and reporting, budget monitoring, information and systems, to ensure its effective operation and the best use of resources.

Pride

We deliver a service that the District is proud of, and compare favourably with others.

- Lead and develop the staff within Democratic Services to ensure a competent and motivated team, capable of maintaining a strong professional presence with officers and elected Members.
- To promote community engagement through acting as Parish Liaison Officer, encouraging voter turnout and organising Local Democracy events. The objective of which is to increase public awareness and change behaviour and attitudes to ensure community participation in the democratic process.
- To undertake such other duties appropriate to the grade and character of work as may be reasonably required by the Council, Chief Executive, Strategic Director or Head of Improvement and Performance.

Role Specific Accountabilities

- To devise and implement innovative strategies for increasing public engagement in the local democratic process in collaboration with other senior managers within Improvement and Performance
- To manage and take responsibility for the statutory appeals process of the Council in accordance with current law and codes of practice

Management Responsibility

- All Democratic Services staff
- Approximately 40 casual/temporary employees at busy canvass and election periods.

Special Conditions

- Work in compliance with the codes of conduct, regulations and policies of the Council and its commitment to equal opportunities.
- During certain times, in particular at election/registration times, longer hours and possible weekend working is required.
- This post has been designated as a politically restricted post
- Attendance at evening meetings.

Required Knowledge & Experience for Person Spec:

Essential

- Educated to degree level or equivalent with membership of the Association of Electoral Administrators
- Proven ability to manage a democratic service delivering to specified standards
- Ability to promote teamwork, resolve conflict and motivate staff and Members, train large numbers of staff during elections and elected Members
- Ability to effectively plan for elections requiring the post holder to manage and co-ordinate internal and external relationships, services and resources

operating on an extended timescale of over one year

- Successful track record in developing and implementing significant corporate Democratic Services projects including effective consultation with Members, staff and unions
- Project Management and Risk Management skills
- Able to communicate effectively with residents, Members officers and the media

Desirable

- Management qualification
- Legal training/qualification to undertake work associated with the Monitoring Officer role
- Evidence of CPD

SKILLS & ABILITIES

Essential

- Strategic thinker
- Ability to influence and persuade
- Leadership
- Project management
- Coaching and mentoring
- Information management
- Budget management
- Performance management
- Presentation

Personal Attributes

- Passionate and driven to succeed
- Outcome focussed
- Fair, even-handed and non-judgemental
- Concise and a clear thinker
- Strong commitment to equal opportunities

- Enjoys working with others to achieve goals

Special Requirements

- The post holder is required to have a car available for business use and have a valid driving licence

JOB PROFILE

DIRECTORATE Corporate Development

JOB TITLE: Senior Democratic Services Officer

POST NUMBER: Z04143

GRADE: Band 6

RESPONSIBLE TO: Democratic Services Manager

KEY LIAISON WITH: Elected Members
Officers
Members of the Public

JOB PURPOSE: To work as a member of the Democratic Services in providing support for the Democratic and Ethical Governance.

JOB PROFILE LAST REVIEWED: 21 November 2006

Key Corporate Accountabilities

- To work with colleagues to achieve service plan objectives/targets.
- To participate in Employee Development Scheme/Appraisals and contribute to the identification of your own and team development needs
- To actively promote the Council's Equal Opportunity Policy and Diversity Strategy and observe the standard of conduct which prevents discrimination taking place.
- To maintain awareness of and commitment to the Council's Equal Opportunity Policies in relation to both employment and service delivery.
- To ensure full compliance with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, the Council's Health and Safety Policy and all locally agreed safe methods of work.
- At the discretion of the Head of Service, such other activities as may from time to time may be agreed consistent with the nature of the job described above

Key Service Related Accountabilities

- To provide administrative support to designated committees, panels, task-groups and other bodies, which may include Cabinet and Council including, but is not limited to,

the preparation of agendas, reports, minutes, and other administrative tasks in liaison with other Democratic Services Officers and the Democratic Services Manager.

To organise and attend meetings associated with the post and as required by the Democratic Services Manager. Most meetings take place in the evening.

To assist the Democratic Services Manager and other Democratic Services Officers to maintain the work plans of the Council, Cabinet, overview and scrutiny, committees and other designated bodies.

To maintain an awareness of the work-related issues and responsibilities of other Democratic Services Officers in order to provide cover for, or deputise in other areas within the Democratic Services section as required by the Democratic Services Manager or the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

Liaison with Members, officers, government departments, organisations, the public and other stakeholders.

To have an understanding of information technology systems (Microsoft systems) in order to assist the section and the Council in its commitment to use e-government and communication.

To attend training in areas which will be to the benefit of the section and the Council as a whole.

Note: This is a politically restricted post.

APPENDIX C

Time off for Public Duties

Below is the section of the Employee Rights Act 1996 which specifically relates to time off for public duties. Further more detailed information can be found by going to the www.direct.gov.uk site, typing in 'Time off for Public Duties'.

Employment Rights Act 1996

1996 Chapter 18 - *continued*

PART VI TIME OFF WORK

Public duties

Right to time off for public duties.

50. - (1) An employer shall permit an employee of his who is a justice of the peace to take time off during the employee's working hours for the purpose of performing any of the duties of his office.

(2) An employer shall permit an employee of his who is a member of-

- (a) a local authority,
- (b) a statutory tribunal,
- (c) a police authority,
- (d) a board of prison visitors or a prison visiting committee,
- (e) a relevant health body,
- (f) a relevant education body, or
- (g) the Environment Agency or the Scottish Environment Protection Agency,

to take time off during the employee's working hours for the purposes specified in subsection (3).

(3) The purposes referred to in subsection (2) are-

- (a) attendance at a meeting of the body or any of its committees or sub-committees, and
- (b) the doing of any other thing approved by the body, or anything of a class so approved, for the purpose of the

discharge of the functions of the body or of any of its committees or sub-committees.

(4) The amount of time off which an employee is to be permitted to take under this section, and the occasions on which and any conditions subject to which time off may be so taken, are those that are reasonable in all the circumstances having regard, in particular, to-

(a) how much time off is required for the performance of the duties of the office or as a member of the body in question, and how much time off is required for the performance of the particular duty,

(b) how much time off the employee has already been permitted under this section or sections 168 and 170 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (time off for trade union duties and activities), and

(c) the circumstances of the employer's business and the effect of the employee's absence on the running of that business.

(5) In subsection (2)(a) "a local authority" means-

(a) a local authority within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972,

(b) a council constituted under section 2 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994,

(c) the Common Council of the City of London,

(d) a National Park authority, or

(e) the Broads Authority.

(6) The reference in subsection (2) to a member of a police authority is to a person appointed as such a member under Schedule 2 to the Police Act 1996.

(7) In subsection (2)(d)-

(a) "a board of prison visitors" means a board of visitors appointed under section 6(2) of the Prison Act 1952, and

(b) "a prison visiting committee" means a visiting committee appointed under section 19(3) of the Prisons (Scotland) Act 1989 or constituted by virtue of rules made under section 39 (as read with section 8(1)) of that Act.

(8) In subsection (2)(e) "a relevant health body" means-

(a) a National Health Service trust established under Part I of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 or the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978,

(b) a Health Authority established under section 8 of the National Health Service Act 1977 or a Special Health Authority established under section 11 of that Act, or

(c) a Health Board constituted under section 2 of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978.

(9) In subsection (2)(f) "a relevant education body" means-

(a) a managing or governing body of an educational establishment maintained by a local education authority,

(b) a governing body of a grant-maintained school, further education corporation or higher education corporation,

(c) a school council appointed under section 125(1) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973,

(d) a school board within the meaning of section 1(1) of the School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988,

(e) a board of management of a self-governing school within the meaning of section 135(1) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980,

(f) a board of management of a college of further education within the meaning of section 36(1) of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992,

(g) a governing body of a central institution within the meaning of section 135(1) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, or

(h) a governing body of a designated institution within the meaning of Part II of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992.

(10) The Secretary of State may by order-

(a) modify the provisions of subsections (1) and (2) and (5) to (9) by adding any office or body, removing any office or body or altering the description of any office or body, or

(b) modify the provisions of subsection (3).

(11) For the purposes of this section the working hours of an employee shall be taken to be any time when, in accordance with his contract of employment, the employee is required to be at work

All Members Matter Programme for Breckland District Council

Action Plan – 27 July 2007

Aim	Proposed Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resource Implications	Action to Date
Introduce automatic 'triggers' to ensure that Ward Councillors are given advance notice and are consulted on issues that affect their wards.	The possibility of using Modern.Gov to provide the software for this to be done electronically is being investigated. If this is successful Service Managers will still need to enter the information.	Annalisa Graziano	Autumn 2007	Officer Time	
Develop more regular communication between Non-Executive Councillors and Officers.	Contact councils highlighted in report to see if the areas of best practice in those authorities can be implemented at Breckland Council.	Sian Hall	May 2008	Unknown	
Improving support for Members in their external representative role.	Provide Members with information about the Outside Bodies they serve on and also ask them to report back on key issues arising through Modern.Gov.	Sian Hall	Autumn 2007	Officer Time	
Developing a 'level playing field' for Members representing rural and urban wards by reviewing member allowances.	Members Allowance Panel to review allowances for Members in rural areas.	Ian Vargeson	2007/08	Unknown	
Training and development programmes should be designed around Personal Development Plans for councillors.	Future development and training needs for Members will be agreed with them on an individual basis as part of their Personal Development Plans.	Stephen McGrath	Autumn 2007	Officer Time	
Training and development programmes for officers.	These should incorporate training for officers on the roles of Councillors, possibly through the Corporate Induction Programme.	Colin Fleet	Continuous	Officer Time	

All Members Matter Programme for Breckland District Council

Action Plan – 27 July 2007

Aim	Proposed Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resource Implications	Action to Date
Reviewing political group arrangements to support the role of the Non-Executive Councillor.	Review political group arrangements.	Leader of each group/Trevor Holden	2007/08	Member and Officer Time	
Making Members and Employers aware of the rights for time off for Public Duties.	Write to Members and their Employers to point out these rights.	Ian Vargeson	Autumn 2007	Officer Time	
Provide induction training that describes the new democratic landscape in which members will have to work.	This training will be provided throughout the four year term of office for the Elected Members.	Stephen McGrath	2007/10	Officer Time and Financial Costs will be met from within the existing Member Training budgets	
Planning Applications to be posted within 24 hours of being determined and planning drawings to be put on-line.	Matter to be referred to Development Services Manager for consideration.	Phil Daines	Unknown	Unknown	
More discussion on budget – possibly through an extra General Purposes Committee meeting – and also more cross party working and regular officer briefings with Non-Executive Members.	Matter to be referred to Chief Accountant for consideration.	Mark Finch	Unknown	Unknown	
Ward Surgeries	Some Members require help on setting up and holding Ward Surgeries.	Stephen McGrath	2007/2008	Officer Time	

All Members Matter Programme for Breckland District Council

Action Plan – 27 July 2007

Aim	Proposed Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Resource Implications	Action to Date
Provide Ward Pages in Breckland Voice.	Matter to be referred to Mary Palmer for consideration.	Mary Palmer	Unknown	Unknown	
Improve information flows through three tiers of Government.	Look at possible ways to do this.	Sian Hall	May 2008	Officer Time	
More Updates on Legal and Planning Issues for all Members.	Matter to be referred to Head of Legal Services, Environmental Planning Manager and Development Services Manager for consideration.	Mike Horn/Phil Daines/Andrea Long	Unknown	Unknown	
Consider employing Political Assistants	Look at feasibility of doing this.	Ian Vargeson	May 2008	Officer Time	