



Report to: Standards Committee, 13th March 2019

Report of: Monitoring Officer

Subject: REPORTING BACK ON OUTSIDE BODIES

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Committee consider the procedure relating to Members reporting on their activities with outside bodies, as set out in this report.

2. Background

2.1 In November 2017, the Committee agree to adopt Guidance for Members on Outside Bodies.

2.2 Reporting back by representatives on outside bodies has been identified as an item for further consideration, with a view to establishing a standard process.

2.3 The range of appointments varies in terms of the demands of the role and the expectations of the Council's representatives. Members can be appointed to roles as company directors, trustees, and as members of a management committee. Roles may require the representative to be a source of information and advice to the bodies concerned, to act as a decision maker, or to be an observer or to act as a link to the Council. Some bodies will have a greater impact on the Council's City Plan others.

2.4 The agreed Guidance advises that Members should report back to their Group Leader or relevant Officer on activities of the body, either periodically or after a particular meeting. However, at present there is no formal mechanism for representatives to report back to all Members on their work on outside bodies.

2.5 There is no one single approach for reporting back - local authorities have different ways of dealing with this. Some examples include:

- Production of an annual written report on the activity of all outside bodies which is available to all Councillors.
- A standing item on each Committee agenda to enable representatives of outside bodies to report back on any significant issues relating to that body which need to be drawn to the attention of the Committee.
- Reporting back through regular briefings issued by representatives to all Councillors.
- Completing a proforma report which is circulated for information to all Councillors. This could be an annual pro-forma or could be completed after each meeting that the representative attends.

- Some authorities categorise the outside bodies to which they appoint, for example according to their impact on the Council's City Plan, and have different reporting requirements depending on the category in which the particular outside body has been placed.

3. Preferred Option

- 3.1 As the Council's appointments process is made at the start of the Municipal Year, it is proposed that representatives complete a proforma report annually. It is suggested that this be done in March or April, as the information will then assist Group Leaders in determining nominations for the forthcoming year. A suggested template for this is attached (**Appendix 1**). Appointees are asked to provide a brief summary of the discussions or decisions taken over the last 12 months and a summary of key issues or decisions anticipated over the next 12 months for each outside body.
- 3.2 Clearly some outside bodies have a more significant impact on the Council's resources and policy priorities than others. Therefore it is likely that some reports will require more detail than others.
- 3.3 Where the Council has more than one representative on a body a single agreed report could be made.
- 3.4 It is suggested that these proforma reports, once completed, be returned to Committee Services and then uploaded onto the Members Website. All Members can then access and view them. A summary of reports received can be provided via the Members' Weekly Information Items bulletin.
- 3.5 This annual process would supplement the current agreed Guidance. Therefore if any significant matters arise during the course of the year, representatives should continue to report back to their Group Leader or relevant Officer, as appropriate.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Reporting back to a particular Committee - Outside bodies are not categorised or aligned to a particular Committee. Furthermore, trustees and directors owe duties in law to the body to which they are appointed. Representatives may be bound by obligations of confidentiality to the outside body which means that some aspects of the body's business may not be appropriate for inclusion in a Committee report.
- 4.2 Annual Report – The Council appoints to over 60 outside bodies, therefore compiling information in the shape of a single annual report is likely to be overly bureaucratic and cumbersome.
- 4.3 Information Briefings – This approach would be similar to the preferred option described above. However, reporting back at a particular time of the year using a proforma, rather than producing ad-hoc briefing papers, will help to establish a consistent approach that all Members can adopt. Completion of an annual proforma will allow the Group Leaders to evaluate the value of appointments and make changes if necessary.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

None.

5.2 Legal and Governance Implications

The Council is not required to have in place arrangements for Members to submit annual reports on their activities as representatives or to require such reports to be completed. However it is considered to be good practice as a mechanism to inform all Members.

5.3 Risk Implications

None.

5.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

Given the community leadership role of local authorities and the increasing need to work in partnership with other bodies, formalising a reporting back process would support this approach.

5.5 Equality Implications

None.

5.6 Human Resources Implications

None.

5.7 Health and Safety Implications

None.

5.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

None.

Ward(s):

All

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Background Papers:

**Worcester City Council Guidance for members on Outside
Bodies**