

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

6th February, 2008

Members Present:- City Council Members

Councillor N. Lee
Councillor A. Williams

Independent Members

M. Farrell
B. Farrer (Chair)
D. Jackson
B. Ray
J. Willetts (Deputy Chair)

Employees Present:- H. Abraham (Head of Democratic Services)
S. Bennett (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
A. Burton (Acting Monitoring Officer)

Apologies:- Councillor K. Mulhall and B. Shakespeare

RECOMMENDATION

31. Proposed Amendment to the Constitution

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Customer and Workforce Services and the Director of Finance and Legal Services which proposed a change to the Constitution in relation to the approval of foreign travel by employees where the direct cost to the City Council is less than £100.

Part 5.6 of the City Council Constitution contains the Protocol for the approval of foreign travel and conference approval for Councillors and employees. The purpose of the Protocol is to ensure that there is clarity and transparency in the process for authorising foreign travel by both Councillors and employees, and for authorising Councillors to attend conferences (including seminars or fact finding visits or inspections) in the United Kingdom. The Protocol requires that a report outlining the benefits of attendance is submitted to the appropriate Scrutiny Board within two months of the conference.

For Councillors attending conferences both inside and outside the UK, and for employees attending outside the UK only (or if accompanying a Councillor inside the UK) a form has to be completed (a copy of which was appended to the report) and formally considered by the relevant Cabinet Member or Cabinet. Whilst formal approval is not required for Councillors attending conferences etc where the direct cost to the City Council does not exceed £100, the Protocol requires that approval is gained for **all** cases of foreign travel by employees.

The Cabinet at its meeting on 6th November, 2007, considered a request for the

attendance of an employee in Brussels, where there were no direct costs to the City Council as all costs were being met by the organiser of the event. The Cabinet approved the attendance and requested that the Constitution Working Group consider amending the Constitution to allow authority to be delegated to Directors to give approval for foreign travel by employees, where the costs involved were below a "certain level".

The Constitution Working Group considered this request at its meeting on 27th November, 2007 and, noting that the requirement to submit a report to Scrutiny outlining the benefits of attendance would be retained, agreed to recommend the amendment of the Constitution to allow authority to be delegated to Directors to give approval for foreign travel by employees, where the direct cost to the City Council does not exceed £100.

RECOMMENDATION that the City Council amends the Constitution so that authority is delegated to Directors to approve foreign travel by employees, where the direct cost to the City Council does not exceed £100.

Report to
Standards Committee

6th February, 2008

Report of

Director of Customer and Workforce Services and Director of Finance and Legal Services

Title

Proposed Amendment to the Constitution – Conference Approvals

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report outlines a proposed change to the Constitution in relation to the approval of foreign travel by employees where the direct cost to the City Council is less than £100, following consideration of this matter by the Constitution Working Group.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Standards Committee is requested to recommend that the City Council amends the Constitution so that authority is delegated to Directors to approve foreign travel by employees, where the direct cost to the City Council does not exceed £100.

3. Information/Background

- 3.1 The City Council's Constitution has been operating in its current form since May 2003, and the Standards Committee has approved various amendments during the course of the last four years.
- 3.2 The Monitoring Officer has also made some minor rewording/redrafting amendments in accordance with the authority delegated to her by the Standards Committee.
- 3.3 The Constitution Working Group, which has cross party representation, meets during the Municipal Year to give consideration to any issues that arise in relation to the Constitution.

4. Proposal to be Considered - Approval of Foreign Travel by Employees

- 4.1 Part 5.6 of the City Council's Constitution contains a Protocol for the approval of foreign travel and conference attendance for Councillors and employees. The purpose of the Protocol is to ensure that there is clarity and transparency in the process for authorising foreign travel by both Councillors and employees, and for authorising Councillors to attend conferences, (including seminars or fact-finding visits or inspections) in the U.K.. The Protocol requires that a report outlining the benefits of attendance is submitted to the appropriate Scrutiny Board within two months of the conference.
- 4.2 For Councillors attending conferences both in and outside the U.K., and for employees attending outside the U.K. only, (or if accompanying a Councillor inside the U.K.), a form has to be completed (a copy of which is appended to this report) and formally considered by the relevant Cabinet Member or Cabinet. Whilst formal approval is not required for Councillors attending at conference etc where the direct cost to the City Council does not exceed £100, the Protocol requires that approval is gained for **all** cases of foreign travel by employees.
- 4.3 The Cabinet, at their meeting on 6th November, 2007, considered a request for the attendance of an employee in Brussels, where there were no direct cost to the City Council as all costs were being met by the organiser of the event. The Cabinet approved the attendance and requested that the Constitution Working Group consider amending the Constitution to allow authority to be delegated to Directors to give approval for foreign travel by employees, where the costs involved were below a "certain level".
- 4.4 The Constitution Working Group considered this request at their meeting on 27th November, 2007 and, noting that the requirement to submit a report to Scrutiny outlining the benefits of attendance would be retained, agreed to recommend the amendment of the Constitution to allow authority to be delegated to Directors to give approval for foreign travel by employees, where the direct cost to the City Council does not exceed £100.

5. Other specific implications

	Implications (See below)	No Implications
Best Value		✓
Children and Young People		✓
Climate Change and Sustainability		✓
Comparable Benchmark Data		✓
Corporate Parenting		✓
Coventry Community Plan		✓
Crime and Disorder		✓
Equal Opportunities		✓
Finance		✓
Health and Safety		✓
Human Resources		✓

	Implications (See below)	No Implications
Human Rights Act		✓
Impact on Partner Organisations		✓
Information and Communications Technology		✓
Legal Implications	✓	
Neighbourhood Management		✓
Property Implications		✓
Race Equality Scheme		✓
Risk Management		✓
Trade Union Consultation		✓
Voluntary Sector – The Coventry Compact		✓

5.2 Legal Implications

The City Council's Constitution is written in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000. It is clearly in the Council's interest to ensure that the Constitution complies with the law and is not subject to challenge.

6. Monitoring

- 6.1 A report detailing the benefits of attendance at any conference to which the Protocol applies, regardless of the cost involved, is required to be submitted to the appropriate Scrutiny Board within two months of attendance.
- 6.2 The Constitution is continuously monitored through its regular use and through the Constitution Working Group.

7. Timescale and Expected Outcomes

- 7.1 If the Standards Committee agree the change to the Constitution, it is proposed that it is submitted to the Council meeting for approval.

	Yes	No
Key Decision		✓
Scrutiny Consideration (if yes, which Scrutiny meeting and date)		✓
Council Consideration (if yes, date of Council meeting)	✓ AGM 15 th May, 2008	

List of background papers

Proper officer: Bev Messinger, Director of Customer and Workforce Services

Author:

Suzanne Bennett, Democratic Support (Telephone 02476 833072)

(Any enquiries should be directed to the above)

Other contributors:

Sue Iannantuoni, Acting Head of Human Resources (Telephone 02476 833020)

Kathy Rice, Former Head of Legal Services (Telephone 02476 833189)

Kathryn Sutherland, Finance and Legal Services Directorate (Telephone 02476 832528)

Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper

Location

City Council's Constitution

CH 59

CONFERENCES/SEMINARS**AUTHORITY FOR ATTENDANCE**

THIS FORM TO BE USED FOR COUNCILLORS (FOR ATTENDANCE BOTH IN AND OUTSIDE THE U.K.) AND FOR EMPLOYEES (OUTSIDE THE U.K. ONLY OR, IF ACCOMPANYING A COUNCILLOR, INSIDE THE UK)

1. Title of Conference	
2. Organising Body	
3. Location	
4. Date(s)	
5. Councillor(s) recommended to attend	
6. Employee(s) recommended to attend	
7. Cost per person, including travel, etc (Note: If total cost is less than £100.00, formal Cabinet/Cabinet Member approval is not required) *subject to formal approval during the current review of the constitution.	
8. Is participation at this event as part of a group	YES/NO
9. If so, how many people IN TOTAL will be attending the event as part of that group	Number
10. Is there anyone travelling with the Member, officer or group in relation to whom any of the costs of travel, accommodation or any other expense will be paid for by a Member or officer. If "YES" please state number.	
11. Source of Funding (FIS Code)	
12. What are the reasons for attendance and what benefits to the City Council are expected from attendance	Completed By/Signed: Date:
13. Is this conference part of an overall project involving further visits in the future?	YES/NO
14. Recommendation of Cabinet Member/ Cabinet/Chair of any other City Council Committee	YES/NO
(a) Are you satisfied that there is a genuine reason for attendance and genuine benefit for the Council?	YES/NO

(b) Will Councillor attendance affect the decision-making processes of the Council?	YES/NO
(c) Is attendance recommended?	YES/NO Signed: Date:
15. Cabinet Member's recommendation	YES/NO Signed: Date:
16. Leader's recommendation	YES/NO Signed: Date:
17. Person responsible for booking conference following approval of attendance	Name: Department: Telephone No:

THIS FORM SHOULD NOW BE RETURNED TO THE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER AND WORKFORCE SERVICES (Room 59)

FOR CUSTOMER AND WORKFORCE SERVICES DIRECTORATE'S USE ONLY

Decision	Cabinet Member/Cabinet
APPROVED / NOT APPROVED	Date:

Notification to:	<u>YES/NO</u> <u>DATE</u>
(a) Officer responsible for booking conference	
(b) Councillor attending	
(c) Member of Management Board	
(d) Members' Services	
(e) Committee Officer	

Date report back obtained	
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Date of meeting of Scrutiny to receive report back	
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