

Report on	Member Conference, Seminar and Training: Annual Allocation
Date of Meeting	Thursday 8 th November 2018
Reporting Officer	P Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
Contact Officer	E Forde, Member Support Officer

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To consider implementation of an arrangement brought forward by the Elected Member Development Working Group to maximise learning opportunities the availability of annual Conference, Seminar & Training allocations per member.
2.0	Background
2.1	The current council policy on Conferences, Seminars and Training facilitates an annual allocation to each elected member, which can be drawn upon for their attendance and participation at same.
2.2	The current allocation is £750 per annum with anything incurred in excess of this being met by the Councillor.
2.3	The Elected Member Development Working Group had previously recommended that a paper/ report be brought to Policy & Resources Committee to explore the scope for the policy being widened to permit allocations being transferred between party members. This was referenced within the Report of the Elected Member Working Group brought to June 2018 Policy & Resources Committee and subsequently discussed at the meeting.
2.4	The overriding purpose of a reallocation would be to maximise opportunities for Members to allow those who have time to avail of training opportunities to do so and then share the learning with their party/council colleagues. This would be in cases where a member has exceeded their allocation, or likely to, in any given financial period (April to March).
2.5	Some members, for varying reasons, are unable to attend and participate in conferences, Seminars and Training during the day. Transfers of allocations permits those members with greater availability to attend such activities, therefore increasing opportunities for knowledge to be shared with party/council colleagues, thus increasing the knowledge base.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	On consideration, it is proposed that the existing policy be amended to permit elected members to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. transfer up to £250 (one third of their allocation) to a party colleague for the purpose of attendance at conferences, seminars and training.

	<p>2. transfer only when the recipient elected member has or is anticipated to exceed their annual allocation; and</p> <p>3. receive up to £500 (i.e. two thirds of their annual allocation) in transfers from party colleagues annually. This will place a ceiling/cap on transfers.</p>
3.2	This approach ensures; (i) elected members are always left with at least two thirds of their annual allocation still affording them with an opportunity to avail of conferences, seminars and training should the need arise and; (ii) avoids unnecessary and excess transfers which would not otherwise be required.
3.3	<p>The current policy does not allow for the transfers of monies between elected members. It is proposed that the policy be amended at Section 5.2.5 and include the following:</p> <p><i>Each Member shall be allocated £750 per annum as a contribution towards conference, seminar and training costs, where training is of specific relevance to the role of a Councillor. This allocation shall not be transferable between financial reporting periods. Members may, however choose to transfer up to £250 to a colleague of their political party within a financial reporting period. A cap shall be placed on the amount that can be received by an elected member in any financial period and be set at £500 (i.e. two thirds of the annual allocation). Transfer requests to another political party colleague shall be notified in writing to the Head of Democratic Services who will undertake an eligibility check for transfer and arrange for the process to be monitored.</i></p>
3.3	Members will be aware that returns are made to the Department for Communities on allowances paid for each financial period, under Part 3 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012. This return includes courses/conferences/visits.
3.4	Democratic Services will maintain a record of expenditure against each member, with any expenditure from transfers being recorded against the recipient and not the member who transferred it. Thus, if a Member receives a transfer for example of £250 from a party colleague the amount will be recorded against them and a note be incorporated to advise that monies have been transferred from the party colleague in line with Council policy.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: Proposals within existing budgetary arrangements
	Human: Not Applicable
	Risk Management: Not Applicable
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: All knowledge gained will benefit Council.
	Rural Needs Implications: not applicable in this instance

5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p>That the committees considers the proposal to facilitate transfers between elected member annual allocations for conferences, seminars and training. Transfers will be subject to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) members being permitted to transfer up to £250 only (one third of their allocation), to a party colleague; (ii) transfers being permitted only when the recipient elected member has or is anticipated to exceed their annual allocation and; (iii) a member receiving up to £500 only (i.e. two thirds of their annual allocation), in transfers annually
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	None