

PROTOCOL ON FOREIGN AND OTHER VISITS BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Due to its location and scale of service responsibilities the City Council currently attracts several requests for visits each year from representatives of local governments and related organisations world-wide. The former Policy and Resources Committee agreed a strategy for International Visits in June 1997. The strategy provides a structured approach to ensure maximum benefit is obtained and that requests for visits that do not support agreed priorities can be refused. The procedures are detailed below. Separate arrangements apply to the Lord Mayor's Office.

Visitors to Westminster

The relevance of all requests is assessed by the Director of Communications and Strategy in accordance with the International Visits and Exchange strategy agreed by the Policy and Resources Committee on 30 June 1997. The current aims of engaging in international exchanges are:

- 1) To encourage exchange between countries with inward investment potential
- 2) To maximise external funding opportunities through trans-national partnership.
- 3) To maintain Westminster's competitive edge and assist professional exchange.
- 4) To develop commercial arrangements in support of the strategy.

Visits will usually take the following form:

- (i) Brief meetings/discussions of up to a maximum of two hours (possibly involving site visits), negotiated between the Members/officers concerned.
- (ii) Half day presentations/seminars, often against an agreed fee
- (iii) Longer-term visits or traineeships (normally between 1-2 months) for foreign local government employees, which are sanctioned by the relevant Chief Officer prior to acceptance.

Visits from Westminster

In addition to dedicating time to the above aims, Members and officers are occasionally invited abroad at the invitation of foreign governments and other bodies. These invitations normally fall into three discrete categories:-

- (a) where there is no cost involved to the Council as the host country or other organisation is funding the visit (other than the 'time' cost for the officer's absence from work).
- (b) where there is a cost to the Council that can be met from within the estimates for the Department for whom the officer concerned works.
- (c) where there is a cost to the Council requiring supplementary funding arrangements because it cannot be contained within approved estimates.

Criteria for accepting invitations

Invitations may be extended by a host country on the basis of our expertise or as a vehicle for exchange and mutual benefit. In addition, Members may occasionally need to travel abroad in progressing particular corporate goals.

Examples of circumstances in which acceptance should be considered are where:-

- The offer is made by a suitable organisation in a professional capacity only.
- The Invitee, the City Council and its residents are likely to benefit from the exchange of experience and additional knowledge gained from the visit.
- As an Ambassador for the City Council and its achievements, the Invitee is promoting the goals and aims outlined above.

Procedure

Overseas visits by Members and officers are subject to endorsement in the following way. Please note that this procedure only refers to Members travelling as representatives of the City Council and not in their private or professional capacity.

Members:

Category (A) Insofar as there is a 'time' cost only: Approval to be obtained from the Leader of the relevant Political Group and the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the Strategic Director of Finance and Performance to be informed prior to departure.

Category (B) Insofar as there is a cost to the Council, albeit containable within existing estimates, there should be a 'financial check' and, therefore approval to be obtained by means of a formal report by any relevant Chief Officer and the Chief Executive and the Strategic Director of Finance and Performance to the Leader of the Council. Approval by this means must be obtained prior to departure.

Category (C) - Insofar as there is a cost to the Council that will require supplementary funding (even though this may be within the £10,000 contingency drawdown powers available to the Strategic Director of Finance and Performance), the following should

apply:- Approval to be obtained by means of a formal report by any relevant Chief Officer and the Chief Executive and the Strategic Director of Finance and Performance to the Leader, the relevant Cabinet Member and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources. Approval must be obtained prior to departure.

Officers

Category (A) - Where there is a 'time' cost only: Approval *to be obtained from* the relevant Chief Officer (in discussion with the?) and both the Leader and the Leader of the Opposition to be advised prior to departure.

Category (B) - Where there is a cost to the Council, which will be met from existing budgets: Approval to be obtained by means of a report by the relevant Chief Officer and the Chief Executive and Strategic Director of Finance and Performance to the Leader of the Council. Approval by this means must be obtained prior to departure.

Category (C) - Where there is a cost to the Council that will require supplementary funding (even though this may be within the £10,000 contingency drawdown powers available to the Chief Executive and the Strategic Director of Finance and Performance), the following should apply: Approval to be obtained by means of a report by any relevant Chief Officer and the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Performance to the Leader of the Council, the relevant Cabinet Member and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources. Approval must be obtained prior to departure.

Category (D) - The Strategic Director of Resources can approve visits where the following three criteria are met:

1. the purpose is to visit the European Commission or to European Union agencies or institutions in Europe or to undertake joint work within Europe with existing or potential partners
2. the cost to the Council will be met from existing budgets

The Chief Executive should be kept informed of any foreign visits planned by Members or officers of the City Council under these procedures and may require that they be treated as for category (C), if, for any reason, he deems it appropriate.

Progress reports of both incoming and outgoing visits will be circulated, where necessary, to the Leader and/or Cabinet.