STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DITRICT COUNCIL

Report to Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel

27 March 2017

TITLE:	**Community Leadership Scheme**
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	**Councillor Mike Bowen – Portfolio Holder for Communities**
CONTACT OFFICER:	**Linden Vernon – Senior Officer Governance and Member Services**
WARDS INVOLVED:	**Non Specific**

Appendices Attached – None

1. **Reason for the Report:**

    1.1 The report provides an update regarding a range of activities to improve the Council's support for councillors.

2. **Recommendation**

    2.1 That the Panel notes the development of the Community Leadership Scheme.

3. **Executive Summary**

    3.1 The Community Leadership Scheme was approved following the publication of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee report "Councillors on the Front-line". This noted the changing role of elected members, becoming increasingly community-based with councillors spending more time out and about supporting their constituents, and working with external organisations.

    3.2 This report provides an update on the Scheme which comprises a package of measures - existing, new and enhanced - which deliver improved support for councillors in their wards. These include:

    - Improved IT resources
    - Parish and town council liaison
    - Community engagement support

- Multi-agency response
- The Councillors' Community Initiative Fund
- Improved demographic information
- Case management development
- Dedicated officer support
- Alliance Management Team input

4. **How this report links to Corporate Priorities**

4.1 The report supports the corporate aim of 'Providing quality services in partnership with communities'.

5. **Options and Analysis**

5.1 That the Committee identifies additional or amended measures for inclusion in the Community Leadership Scheme.

6. **Implications**

6.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

Effective support for the front-line role of councillors will assist communities to improve or maintain community safety.
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6.2 Workforce

Revised job descriptions have been developed as part of the review of Democratic and Community Services.

6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment

Councillors able to exercise their community leadership role have significant opportunities to tackle discrimination and/or to enhance relationships between different groups of people in their community described as having 'protected characteristics'. The Scheme may help the Council to meet its duties under the Equality Act.

6.4 Financial Considerations

The costs of the on-going development of the Scheme are intended to be met from the existing service budget.

6.5 Legal

The report takes into account various relevant legislation, including the Local Government Act 2000 and the Localism Act 2011.

6.6 Sustainability

No specific implications from the report but there is potential for councillors to support the efforts of local communities to tackle the issue.

6.7   Internal and External Consultation

The views of councillors will directly influence the delivery of the Scheme.

6.8   Risk Assessment

There is no 'one size fits all' approach to the roll-out of the Scheme. Councillors vary in their interests and capacity and wards vary in relation to needs and capacity for self-help. Flexibility in the delivery of the Scheme is required with a tailored approach being adopted for individual councillors.

Mark Trillo
Executive Director (People) and Monitoring Officer

Web Links and Background Papers	**Contact details**
[Communities and Local Government Select Committee report "Councillors on the Front-line"](#)	Linden Vernon Senior Officer Governance and Member Support Email: linden.vernon@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk Tel: 01538 395613
[Councillor Commission – Interim Report](#)	

7.   **Background and Detail**

7.1   In January 2013 the Communities and Local Government Select Committee published its report "Councillors on the Front-line".   The overarching conclusions of the Select Committee were summed up by the following extract from their report:-

'The role of councillors is changing and becoming increasingly community-based. In future, councillors will be expected to spend more time out and about supporting their constituents, working with external organisations (such as GPs, schools, police, local businesses and voluntary organisations) and ensuring communities make the most of all the opportunities available to them'.

7.2   The Local Government Research Unit, in partnership with The Municipal Journal has subsequently launched a Councillor Commission, supported by the Chair of the Communities and Local Government

Select Committee, to conduct an independent review of the role and work of councillors. Its interim report identifies a number of headline findings. These include a public perception that councillors can easily 'fix' problems and concerns regarding the level of resource/support available to councillors to be effective in their role.

7.3   In response to the Select Committee report a package of measures, known as the Community Leadership Scheme, was approved to be introduced following the local elections in May 2015. This report provides an update on the development of the Scheme and sets out further activities to improve support for elected members.

7.4   The roll-out of the scheme has been phased to take into account the service review of the Democratic and Community Services team which led to a re-alignment of duties and revised job roles for officers within the service. Key elements of the scheme are set out as follows:

    7.4.1   *Improved IT resources* - The national census of councillors conducted in 2013 underlined the need for good online resources to be made available to elected members. Following the May 2015 elections tablet computers were issued to all councillors providing access to the latest Mircosoft Office software including Outlook, Word and Excel. More recently the "Modern.Gov app" has been installed to provide improved access to view committee meeting reports.

    7.4.2   *Parish and Town Council liaison* - The Parish Assembly continues to meet to ensure close liaison with towns and parishes in the District and to address any local issues of concern. Standing items for discussion currently include updates from the County Council and the development of the Council's Local Plan. Parish councillors have recently provided positive comments with regards to the usefulness of the Parish Assembly which is evidenced by good attendance levels at meetings.

    7.4.3   *Community Engagement* - Officers can support members with community engagement activities. This could include arranging a public meeting to discuss an issue of concern. For example, in 2016/17 staff have supported Cllr. Shaw in Werrington to develop a service at the Library for local residents living with Dementia and groundwork completed which will help the Werrington Community Volunteers Group with future funding applications.

    7.4.4   *Multi-agency response* – Ward issues that members address are likely to require the involvement of other agencies. For example, in Werrington the North Staffs Carers voluntary organisation and the local G.P. were engaged by staff to develop the dementia scheme. The more frequently occurring concerns like envirocrime and antisocial behaviour often

requires a multi-agency or multi-service response and staff can assist councillors with the coordination of this response. For example, staff liaised with Staffordshire Police and arranged for Community Payback workers to clean up in Mobberly Woods following reports of ASB.

7.4.5 *Councillors' Community Initiative Fund (CCIF)* – In 2016/17 148 applications were received. The total budget of £28,000 has been committed. CCIF will be available again for 2017/18 (post county election) with Democratic and Community Service staff able to provide greater support where needed to members in identifying suitable projects and link with their ward work.

7.4.6 *Improved demographic information* - The introduction of a new information dashboard for councillors is planned to be accessible via the Council's Intranet. This will provide access to a wide range of nationally and locally produced datasets for the District using information produced by organisations such as the Office for National Statistics and Staffordshire Observatory. This will include information such as census data, economic statistics and health profiles.

To enable meaningful interpretation of this information, councillors will be able to compare details for Staffordshire Moorlands with national/regional averages and over time. In addition it will also be possible to "drill down" to access data on a ward by ward basis.

This information will be supplemented further by detailed information captured by the Council's individual service areas. Initially this will focus on environmental issues such as reports of fly-tipping, graffiti, dog fouling and littering etc. The Council's mapping system will be developed further to enable councillors to view this information on a street level basis.

7.4.7 *Case management* - The further development of Council systems, such as Outlook and the new Customer Portal, to improve case management facilities for councillors to ensure that all enquiries are efficiently recorded, tracked and addressed. From this it will be possible to identify enquiry themes which could then be used to inform future Overview and Scrutiny work programmes or individual projects for service teams.

7.4.8 *Dedicated officer support* - A member of the Democratic and Community Services team has now been allocated to each councillor who will be responsible for reviewing ward data, assisting with casework and helping to address specific issues by liaising with others areas of the Authority. Councillors will be contacted shortly by their allocated member of the team.

7.4.9 *Alliance Management Team input* - The Executive Director and Monitoring Officer continues to have oversight of the operation of the Community Leadership Scheme with other members of the Authority's Alliance Management Team supporting the Scheme.

7.5 As the Community Leadership Scheme continues to be developed it will be essential to measure whether it is successful in meeting the expectations of councillors. In order to assess the above key elements a councillor satisfaction survey will be used to identify the overall usefulness of the Scheme and to determine future improvements.