Subject:	Members' Portal – update
Date:	18 November 2016
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Town Solicitor
Contact Officer:	Sarah Williams, Programme Manager

Is this report restricted?		**Yes**	☐	**No**	X
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?		**Yes**	X	**No**	☐

1.0	**Purpose of report or summary of main issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on the development of the Members' Portal.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to: • Note the contents of this report.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	Background Following consultation with the Party Group Leaders and the Elected Member Development Working Group, a facilitated 'discovery workshop' was held in June to explore how technology could be best used to improve communication between Members and the wider council organisation.

3.2	Key Issues
	During the workshop, Members highlighted key issues relating to how communication could be improved within the council with specific suggestions. These have been analysed, grouped and prioritised by the Members' Portal project team in consultation with officers from relevant departments. The actions have been grouped under the following headings:
	1. Making it easier to find out who is the best person to contact
	2. Making it easier to find important information
	3. Prioritising the information flow to Members
	4. Making it easier to deal with and resolve issues raised by constituents
	5. Other suggestions
3.3	The detailed action plan is due to be reviewed by Members at the next Elected Member Development Working Group on 21 November 2016.
3.4	Content
	Based on these suggestions, the proposed content of the Members' Portal is therefore:
	Immediate (aim for Jan 17)
	• **Directory** of <u>key</u> internal and external contacts – internal contacts will have photos and any relevant description tags e.g. bonfires, dogs, derelict buildings
	• **Alert** function for:
	o significant LIF project issues
	o briefings for Members on emerging situations
	o reminders of upcoming Member training sessions
	o recently approved council policies
	o recent awards won by council
	• Existing "**Members' meeting calendar**" e.g. training events, non-committee meetings
	• New **calendar** showing the event and RSVP details for **council-organised events to which all Members have been invited**
	• Open **consultations:** council's own; NI Executive; others which the council has been consulted
	• Member **training** material
	• A list of key council **policies**
	• Area Working Group **area profiles**
	• Frequent Member **queries** (if required for any remaining queries not addressed by portal)

	These actions can be taken forward by the project team immediately.
	Medium-term (date to be agreed)
	Up-to-date information about council grants ie grants currently open, remaining size of fund, how to apply, tracking progress of applications, total grants received by organisations, grants awarded by District Electoral Areas (DEA)
	Some recommended actions to take this forward have been identified and will be fed into the planned corporate review of grants. However, in the interim, this information will be provided in liaison with Development Department Business Support, Central Grants Unit, Good Relations, and Corporate Finance.
3.5	Design
	Following agreement on the content, Internal Communications will design the look-and-feel of the website.
3.6	Additional actions
	Some additional actions to address issues raised by Members, which can also be taken forward by the project team immediately, are:
	Development of a 'contacting Members protocol'(e.g. using preferred method of communication, more mobile-to-mobile calls to enable easier callback, email subject heading convention)
	Ensuring new members of staff in key teams include their team in their email name so that Members don't miss important emails e.g. Sam Jones (CX Business Support)
3.7	Other issues
	Other issues raised by Members outside the scope of the Members' Portal project which have been highlighted to the Corporate Management Team for further consideration:
	• Enhance external website to be able to search for events/classes/programmes by location
	• Ability to analyse council-related information by DEA e.g. participants on programmes
	• Progress on outcomes from organisations receiving significant funding from the council
	• Address issue of size of committee report packs e.g. by re-introducing two-page limit
	• Consideration of role of central support team for Members
	• Consideration of how any new corporate approach to customer relationship management could be used to help Members manage constituents' queries e.g. tracking outcomes of queries, generating reply letters, use of 'live chat' chatbot on website

3.8	<u>Next steps</u> • Provide a detailed update to the Elected Member Development Working Group on 21 November 2016 • Project Team to take forward immediate and medium-term actions to aim for a pilot for Members in January 2017
3.9	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> Maintenance: Most information is currently being updated manually. Some development work by Digital Services and also agreed resources throughout the council will be required to update and maintain the content of the Members' Portal.
3.10	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> None
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
4.1	None