

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Member Development Strategy Review 26th June 2008

Report of Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of the emerging issues from the Corporate Priorities 2008/09 and the CPA report in relation to the Member Development Strategy.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That Council Business Committee consider the main issues that have emerged from the Corporate Priorities 2008/09 and the CPA report, and further priorities for inclusion in the Member Development Strategy.
- (2) That Members identify any project areas that have emerged from the new priorities agreed.

1.0 Introduction

At its meeting on 15th November 2007, the Council Business Committee agreed the Member Development Strategy and resolved :

“That the Strategy be reviewed again in April – May 2008 to ensure that it continues to be adequately aligned to the Council’s Corporate Priorities and that the annual review takes place at that time of year in the future.”

2.0 Review

The 2008/09 Corporate Priorities are set out below :

- *Ensure cost effective services that give good value for money*
- *Provide customer focused, accessible services*
- *Make our district a cleaner and healthier place*
- *Contribute to a safer society*
- *Lead the regeneration of our District*
- *Support sustainable communities and action on climate change*
- *Give local communities more influence and involvement in the way their services are delivered and decisions that affect them are made*

Coupled with these, the areas for improvement highlighted in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) should also be taken into account. These are set out below:

1. *The community strategy does not provide clear direction for framing most local ambitions. The Council should support the LSP in developing a Sustainable Community Strategy which contains a clear vision, fewer high level priorities and is underpinned by outcome focused targets.*
2. *There are a number of issues hampering political leadership and in order to address these the Council should:*
 - *ensure clarity around political direction is communicated internally and externally; and*
 - *support portfolio holders in embracing their new roles by responding to identified development needs and reviewing portfolios in order to streamline decision making, aligning portfolios, services and Performance Review Teams.*
3. *Progress in relation to equality and diversity has been slow and there is an inconsistent approach to engaging with local communities. The Council should:*
 - *provide leadership to the equalities and diversity agenda ensuring it is prioritised; and*
 - *strengthen mechanisms for community engagement in order to ensure a consistent approach in relation to all the Council's business.*
4. *Performance management arrangements are not effective in relation to all key partnerships. The Council should strengthen these arrangements to ensure progress and the impact of all partnership activity can be performance managed.*

There are four main issues relating to Member Development that have emerged from these two documents that need to be addressed and reflected in the Member Development Strategy.

(i) Political Leadership

The CPA report stated that the Council needs provide more support for Portfolio Holders in terms of identifying their development and training requirements. This has been undertaken on an informal basis largely and support was offered to Cabinet Members after the elections last May. To increase this support, Members could consider this as a project area highlighted in the Member Development Strategy and request Cabinet to identify how this support could be achieved. As part of this process, the two Cabinet Members who resigned from Cabinet in the last year could be offered exit interviews to ascertain the level of support they received and how this could be improved upon.

(ii) Equality and Diversity/Accessible Services

The Corporate Plan identifies achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government in its priorities. Members need to consider how Member Development can assist the Council is achieving Level 2 of the Standard. The CPA report highlighted that this is a weakness for Lancaster City Council which obviously needs to be addressed. Specific

training on Equality is currently mandatory for certain Committees but it was not identified as a priority in the one to one interview process which informed the Member Development Strategy. However it may be that more general awareness of the current emerging issues should be encouraged amongst all Members and ways to achieve this should be investigated.

(iii) Community Engagement/Local Communities having more influence and involvement in service delivery and decision making

With regard to Community Engagement, this was highlighted in the CPA report and has been included in the Corporate Plan as involving the community in, and having more influence in, the decision making process. These issues are being addressed in the Democratic Renewal process that is underway. Members need to consider how they see the role of Member Development in this area and if they wish to include this as a priority in the Strategy.

(iv) Action on Climate Change

Training opportunities have been offered on Climate Change, but it was not identified as a priority in the Member Development Strategy 2007/08. Members need to consider whether they wish to include this as a priority in the Member Development Strategy or if this is being addressed in other ways, for example the existence of the Climate Change Cabinet Liaison Group provides an opportunity for support to the Cabinet Member with specific responsibility for this area and also serves to develop the knowledge base of those on the Liaison Group.

Should Members want to ensure that no opportunities are missed, it would be possible to include in the Strategy a general provision that the Council should seek to take advantage of any opportunities which may arise to widen Members' knowledge and understanding of issues related to specific priority actions included in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Other Issues

At the meeting of the Business Committee on 24th April 2008, Members agreed a process to review the one to one interviews. A section on these reviews could be included in the Strategy to set out this process and encourage Members who have not had a one to one to book an interview.

A general update of the Strategy could also be undertaken to acknowledge that this review has taken place and any other changes that may have taken place since it was written.

A reference to statutory training for Members on Regulatory Committees could also be included in the Strategy making allowance for training that arises throughout the year and cannot be planned for.

**CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

None arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All financial expenditure must be contained within existing budgets and consideration is being given elsewhere on the agenda to a system of agreeing expenditure in line with set criteria based on this strategy.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and had no comments.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Deputy Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Member Development Strategy

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