

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Member Development Charter 26th April 2012

Report of Democratic Services Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present options for the retention or otherwise of the Member Development Charter, which the council currently holds at Level One. It is now due for reassessment.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER:

That the Committee considers whether to:

- i. submit an application to retain the Member Development Charter at Level One;
- ii. withdraw from the Member Development Charter.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Member Development Charter is an award which recognises local authorities that demonstrate a strong commitment to member development.
- 1.2 The Charter helps to build elected member capacity by improving skills, knowledge and experience and, together with the underpinning good practice guidelines, was developed by Local Government Improvement and Development (formerly the IDeA) and the nine regional employers organisations.
- 1.3 Administered in this region by the North West Employers Organisation (NWEO), the Charter operates at two levels; Level One is awarded to local authorities with a strong member development function, whilst Level Two conveys advanced recognition.
- 1.4 In 2002, the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council (then Councillor Ian Barker) signed up to the Charter, and the Council Business Committee led a sustained piece of work which led to Level One accreditation in 2008.
- 1.5 The Council is now due to be reassessed for the Charter, and the Committee is invited to consider whether to continue within the scheme.

2 Level One Charter Review

- 2.1 To retain Level One of the charter, the council would need to demonstrate compliance with the following six points:

- i. continued commitment to member development demonstrated at all levels across the council;
 - ii. an established member development strategy to support organisational needs and overall strategy;
 - iii. clarity of subject area and methods of delivery based on member needs assessments;
 - iv. 75% of members having completed a personal development plan;
 - v. Clear communication strategy which supports member development;
 - vi. A method of evaluating learning and development activities and continuous improvement.
- 2.2 Retaining Level One status would require a considerable amount of work from officers and elected members alike. At the present time, officers are concerned by low attendance figures at member briefing sessions, and the number of councillors who are still yet to sign up for a personal development plan.
- 2.3 Whilst this would present a further challenge in terms of retaining the Charter, the council does have a successful blueprint from which to co-ordinate a bid, having achieved Level One in 2008.

3 Level Two of the Charter

- 3.1 Qualification for Level Two status would require a step change from the approach to Level One, and there are concerns that the necessary staff time is not currently available.
- 3.2 Full details on the process for retaining Level One or achieving Level Two are attached at Appendix 1.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 Members are asked to consider whether to reapply for Member Development Charter status. Whilst retaining Level One of the Charter would require a considerable amount of work for members, dedicated officer support will be available from Democratic Support.

Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

	Option 1: Re-apply for Level One of the Charter	Option 2: Do not apply for accreditation
Advantages	<p>Retaining Level One would reaffirm the council's support for elected members, and recognise the important role they play on the council and in local communities.</p> <p>It would also guarantee that minimum standards were in place to ensure that members receive a high quality of support from officers.</p>	No known advantages.
Disadvantages	<p>There will be an impact on officer and members' time in order to prepare a bid for retention of Level One.</p> <p>However, this can be met by the current staffing arrangements in Democratic Support.</p>	<p>Losing the Member Development Charter would have a negative impact on member development and undo the Committee's previous work to attain Level One.</p> <p>Externally verified minimum standards would no longer be in place if accreditation was lost.</p>
Risks	No known risks.	Loss of accreditation.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Legal services have been consulted and have no comments to make.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Option 1 would involve staff time and this would need to be met from the current staffing levels. Any training requirements would need to be met from the agreed Members Training budget allocation of £10,500 for the current financial year.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources:

A bid for Level One retention could be more effectively managed with the current staffing arrangement.

Information Services:

None.

Property:

None.

Open Spaces:

None.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

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

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Contact Officer: Peter Baines

Telephone: 01524 582074

E-mail: pbaines@lancaster.gov.uk