

# **COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

## **Member Development Charter Level 1**

**16 January 2014**

### **Report of Chief Officer (Governance)**

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To inform the Committee that the Council's Member Development Charter Level 1 has been successfully reviewed and to report the recommendations of the North West Employers Organisation (NWEO) for further improvement.

**This report is public**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- (1) That the Committee notes that the Council's Member Development Charter Level 1 has been successfully retained following a review by NWEO.**
- (2) That consideration is given to the recommendations made by the NWEO assessor and the approaches suggested in this report.**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Member Development Charter is an award which recognises local authorities that demonstrate a strong commitment to member development. The Charter helps to build elected member capacity by improving skills, knowledge and experience. It was developed by Local Government Improvement and Development (formerly the IDeA) and the nine regional employers organisations and is administered in this region by the North West Employers Organisation (NWEO).
- 1.2 NWEO awarded Level One Charter accreditation to Lancaster City Council in 2008. In 2012, the Council's Charter status was due for review and over the last 18 months, officers and Councillors have been gathering evidence to submit to NWEO in support of retaining the accreditation. On 6 September 2013 Councillor Alan Dean of Liverpool City Council and Sharon Senior, of NWEO visited Lancaster Town Hall to conduct interviews with the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of Council Business Committee, several randomly selected Members, the Chief Executive and the officers in Democratic Services with responsibility for delivering Member Development. The purpose of the visit was to verify the information submitted by the Council in support of its application to retain the Charter.

- 1.3 The NWEO Regional Development Committee met on 25 September 2013 and endorsed the assessor's recommendation to award Level One Charter accreditation to the Council again. However, the Committee felt that whilst the specific criteria of the Charter Standard were met it also wanted to highlight a number of areas for continuous improvement. The Council has been asked to work towards improving these areas over the next 12 months when NWEO assessors will review the situation again.

## **2.0 Assessors' Recommendations**

- 2.1 The areas for development are set out in the assessor's recommendations below:

- (a) To agree a forward plan with the Chairman of Council Business Committee to inform the future developments
- (b) To establish an evaluation framework to ensure that the evaluation of Member Development is reported into Council Business Committee
- (c) To share an analysis of all training needs resulting from PDPs with Council Business Committee to help formulate the yearly plan
- (d) To encourage Members to challenge current provision, particularly where needs are carried forward and have not been developed
- (e) To develop a plan to increase the participation in the Personal Development Plan (PDP) process year on year and to engage a wider number of Members in the process
- (f) To introduce member development as an agenda item at Cabinet or political group meetings to ensure Member Development is discussed at a strategic level
- (g) To consider ways in which Members could be involved in developing the future strategy and leading on current practice; such as a Member Development Working Group that focuses solely on Member Development and reports to Council Business Committee
- (h) Develop the role of Champion to include a remit for driving forward Member Development.

## **3.0 Meeting with NWEO and Way Forward**

- 3.1 On 28 October, Sharon Senior, the NWEO Development Advisor who undertook the assessment visit, and Kelli Pickford, NWEO Director, Learning and Improvement, met with the Chairman of Council Business Committee, the Chief Executive and the Democratic Services Manager to discuss the assessors' recommendations and how these might be taken forward. The emphasis was clearly on increasing Councillors' involvement in planning, challenging and delivering their own training. The assessors will be expecting a Member-led approach to be firmly embedded at Lancaster City Council over the next 12 months.
- 3.2 During the meeting, various suggestions were discussed to address the recommendations. These have been further considered since the meeting

and suggestions are set out below for the Committee to consider.

- (a) For the Senior Democratic Support Officer to liaise with the Chairman of Council Business Committee in agreeing a plan to inform future plans for Member Development (this relates to (a) above.)
- (b) For Member Development to be a standing item at future meetings of Council Business Committee, reporting on:
  - evaluations of training;
  - analysis of training needs based on PDP results;
  - formulation of a yearly training plan;
  - development of the Member Development Strategy

and all other aspects of Member Development to ensure that Councillors on this Committee are fully involved in the process and feel they have a forum to challenge current provision. (This relates to (b) to (e) and (g) above.)

- (c) For the Democratic Services Manager to request that political group leaders and administrators consider assessors' recommendation (f) about including Member Development as a topic for group meetings and feed back any comments or suggestions.
- (d) Recommendation (h) would be a decision for full council and the Democratic Services Manager could draft a report requesting that the role of Member Development Champion be considered in the light of the Charter review comments.

#### 4.0 Options Analysis including Risk Assessment

	<b>Option 1:</b> To address all or some of the recommendations in the report	<b>Option 2:</b> Not to address the recommendations in the report
Advantages	Fits with the good practice required for maintaining the Charter Level 1 and would provide a clear Member steer on the Member Development processes and procedures and the breadth and range of training on offer (within budgetary constraints).	None identified except savings of officer and Member time spent working together to continuously improve the Member Development offer.
Disadvantages	Some of the recommendations have a cost. The example given in (g), of setting up a new Working Group would not be feasible given that the Council is currently looking at cost cutting measures. However, there are other ways of tackling that issue which would be cost neutral.	Would not improve the Member Development offer at Lancaster City Council in the ways suggested.  If continuous improvement is not in evidence, the standard of Member Development would fall below that required for Charter Level 1 Status.

Risks	Lack of Member engagement or willingness to challenge current provision; participate in the training needs analysis/PDP process or appoint a Champion.	Reputational – possibly losing Charter Level 1 status.
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#### 4.0 Conclusion

The Committee is asked to note the content of this report; to discuss the suggestions set out in paragraph 3 of this report and make decisions on how best to address the NWEO assessor's recommendations.

<b>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b> (including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)	
<b>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b> Charter status is optional and not a legal requirement.	
<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</b> Member development training activities are managed by Democratic Services and either provided "in-house" or met from within the annual member training budget allocated by Council (£4,100 in 2014/15, subject to approval as part of the budget process).	
<b>OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</b> <b>Human Resources:</b> None <b>Information Services:</b> None <b>Property:</b> None <b>Open Spaces:</b> None	
<b>SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS</b> The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.	
<b>MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS</b> The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.	
<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b> None	<b>Contact Officer:</b> Debbie Chambers <b>Telephone:</b> 01524 582057 <b>E-mail:</b> dchambers@lancaster.gov.uk