

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

COMMITMENT TO THE NORTH WEST CHARTER FOR ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT 10th August 2006

Report of Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To note the progress made towards the Charter for elected Member development and the work still to be done.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee notes the report.

1. Introduction and background

Back in 2002, Mark Cullinan and Councillor Ian Barker, on behalf of the authority, signed up to the North West Charter for elected Member development, which sets out a commitment to the support and development of elected Members in their roles. By signing up to the Charter, the Council has committed to work towards the development of its elected Members by implementing the following six key points of the Charter:

- Having a Statement of Intent.
- Ensuring that all Members are made aware of training and development opportunities.
- Having a process to identify individual development needs which involved Members.
- Having an officer allocated to assist Members and groups in identifying needs and providing information on resources.
- Having a strategy to meet the training and development needs of elected Members.
- Implementing the strategy locally.

The North West Employers Organisation has produced some guidance notes for authorities who are working towards achieving the Charter. A copy of the guidance notes are attached at Appendix A. Pages 3–13 of the guidance notes set out the process for working towards the Charter and the types of evidence needed to demonstrate that the Council meets the six key points of the Charter.

2. Progress towards the Charter

In terms of progress towards the Charter, the Council has already started working towards some of the key points of the Charter, as set out below:

Signing the Charter

The Charter was signed by Mark Cullinan and Councillor Ian Barker in 2002 and copies of the Charter will shortly be on display in Morecambe and Lancaster Town Hall receptions.

Champions for Member Development

The Council Business Committee, as an all party Member group, will act as champions for the work of Member development and the Chairman of the Council Business Committee will be the lead Member with responsibility for Member development.

Dedicated officer and budgetary support for Members

The budget for Member and officer training is held by Nigel Parish, Learning and Development Officer. In view of the progress being made towards the Charter, officers have been identified in Democratic Services to work in conjunction with Nigel Parish for Members' training. In addition, the work and support by officers in Member Services will supplement the work toward the Charter.

One to one interviews

During the last six months, approximately 32 Members have had one to one interviews with Nigel Parrish and James Doble to discuss their future development and support needs. Work will need to continue to promote the take up of the one to one interviews to other Members and in particular new Members. The outcome of the interviews have informed the Training and Development Programme and each of the 32 Members now own a plan setting out their identified learning and development needs and support will be given Members to help them meet their needs to assist them in their roles and to review existing plans. The interviews also gave a valuable insight into the requirements of new Members and the need for an induction programme, tailored to meet the needs of newly elected Members.

Elected Member Training and Development Programme

The outcome of the one to one interviews have informed a comprehensive Elected Member Training and Development Programme which aims to specifically address Member development and support. The first edition of the Training and Development Programme for May 2006 to May 2007 was recently circulated to Members. The Training and Development Programme will be updated from time to time to reflect the changing needs of Members. Work will continue to promote, develop and update the Training and Development Programme to offer mentoring, shadowing and a library of learning resources.

Councillors Newsletter

The first edition of the Councillors newsletter was recently published which launched the first edition of the Training and Development Programme. This online newsletter aims to keep Members updated on the progress in Member development and of work towards the Charter. It is suggested that future editions of the newsletter could include features on forthcoming training opportunities, feedback from training events held, updates on Member development and articles from Members.

Dedicated Members area on the intranet

This area is currently being developed and will contain a copy of the Training and Development Programme and other useful information that Members require access to. Members will be asked to suggest what types of information and links they would find useful in this dedicated area.

3. Future work towards the Charter

Despite good progress being made towards elected Member development, there is still a great deal of work to still be done before the Council can put itself for assessment to be awarded the North West Charter.

It is suggested that this work include:

Members Induction Programme

In order to build on the Training and Development Programme and the outcome of the one to one interviews, a comprehensive Members' Induction Programme should be developed that is tailored to meet the needs of newly elected Members for the election in May 2007. It is suggested that this should include pre-induction information i.e. dates for their diaries, an induction day to meet key officers and tour of Town Hall, a Members' handbook which will include all the basic information Members need to know in their first few weeks as a councillor and a follow up programme of statutory committee and skill based training and a tour of the district and key buildings and developments.

Member Development Strategy

There is a requirement that in order to meet the Charter a Member Development Strategy to meet the training and development needs of elected Members should be developed and implemented. The Strategy should set out clear direction, the resources to be made available and the links between Member development and the corporate aims and objectives of the authority. The Council will also need a process to review the Strategy.

Monitoring of training and evaluations

It is suggested that the attendance, feedback and evaluations of Member training events be monitored.

Member Development Surgeries

It is suggested that Democratic Services formalise and host dedicated 'Member development surgeries' prior to Council meetings. These surgeries could be another method of providing support to Members by being available for advice, assistance or to book on training events or simple things like returning mail delivery bags etc.

Alongside this, work will need to continue to improve and develop the good work already done and build on that. Please note, this is not a definitive list and these work areas and priorities might change or others may be added.

Members might wish to consider whether they would find it beneficial to visit other local authorities who have already achieved the Charter. Locally, these authorities are Carlisle, Preston, South Ribble, Lancashire, Blackpool, Fylde and the Lake District National Park Authority.

4. Conclusion

It is recognised that if the Council is awarded the North West Charter, it will in turn raise the overall profile of Lancaster within the North West and demonstrate to current and potential councillors, the commitment to elected members here in Lancaster.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The work of Member development supports the corporate priority – to continue to improve the Council.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

There are no direct implications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The budget for Member and officer training and development is held by the Learning and Development Officer and will be used towards the work of Member training and development.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

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

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None directly arising from this report.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NWEO Guidance notes.

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