

NORTH WEST EMPLOYERS

**GUIDANCE NOTES
FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES
WORKING TOWARDS ACHIEVING**

***THE NORTH WEST CHARTER
ON
ELECTED MEMBER
DEVELOPMENT***

Amended May 2004

NORTH WEST CHARTER

on

Elected Member Development

Municipal Journal and North West Employers

We believe that at the heart of any Local Authority dedicated to meeting the needs of its community will be a commitment to the development of its elected members. Members will be supported and assisted in playing their vital role in modernising local government.

Signing up to the principles of the Charter commits the local authority to work towards expressing their commitment in practice by implementing the 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 involves 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.

Signed by Chief Executive: _____

Signed by Leader: _____

Signed by Chair of
Employers' Organisation _____

REGIONAL MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

During 1999 the Employers' Organisation agreed a regional strategy on member development. The strategy was crafted by the regional task group which was made up of 7 elected members who contributed not only their expertise but their energy and enthusiasm. The three elements of the regional strategy are:

***gaining commitment
regional provision
involving members***

The concept of a charter was borne out of a desire to encourage commitment to member development and to reward those authorities who have demonstrated that commitment. The North West Charter on Member Development will provide tangible evidence of a local authority's commitment to long-term investment in the development of its elected members.

The ethos of the Charter is built around the third element of the regional strategy "involving members" in their own development. One of the ways of doing this is having a Member Development Group made up of members from all the political groups plus the officer responsible for member development. One of the other things that as assessors we hope for, but something which is difficult to measure, is enthusiasm demonstrated by the members and the officer(s). If you have it you're half way there!

The Charter operates at two levels, similar to the Investor in People Award. Firstly local authorities sign a declaration to show their commitment to the principles of the Charter, secondly, following external assessment, local authorities are awarded the Charter to show they have demonstrated their commitment in practice and have all the required elements in place.

We are particularly pleased that Municipal Journal share our interest in member development and they are supporting the initiative by awarding a special merit prize at our celebration event.

These guidance notes have been prepared to help local authorities working towards the Charter understand the process. They will give an indication of the evidence which would support an application for a Charter.

Each local authority will have its own approach to developing members, with some having a long tradition of providing excellent development opportunities, and others just starting.

However, irrespective of the starting point, local authorities can still sign up by giving their commitment to the principles contained within the Charter. There is no time limit between declaration and assessment. Whilst some authorities may be ready now, others may need time to put the elements in place. The intention of the Charter was to encourage the development of a learning culture, not a quick fix, and therefore Charters will be awarded annually. In addition to the guidance notes, information and advice is available from North West Employers and you can call Liz McQue on 0161 834 9362, e-mail lizm@nweo.org.uk or Ruth Ashworth on 0161 214 7113, e-mail rutha@nweo.org.uk.

The Process

Stage 1 - Declaration

Local authorities need to sign the declaration of commitment to the principles included in the Charter; the Leader and the Chief Executive must sign this declaration. This is an important first step as it is intended to promote a healthy discussion on the authority's needs and intention in terms of member development. When you return your signed declaration, it will be signed by the Chair of the Employers' Organisation and returned to you, framed, ready for display.

If you are interested in signing up the principles of the Charter then you need to contact Ann-Marie Anderson on 0161 214 7101 or Ruth Ashworth on 0161 214 7113.

Stage 2 - Working towards the Charter

Each local authority will have different things in place and this stage will be an opportunity to assess the existing situation against the standards. These guidance notes are intended to offer some information on what evidence will be required.

When your authority has decided that it wishes to begin working towards the Charter please ring Ruth Ashworth and arrange to discuss your progress towards the Charter. This discussion can take place over the telephone but it is more usual to arrange a face to face meeting. If at all possible elected members should be involved in the meeting.

When you feel you have everything in place all you need to do is contact North West Employers and a pre-assessment visit (a meeting involving officers and members) and a formal verification visit will be organised. Local authorities usually compile a portfolio of evidence (two copies of these will be needed at least 3 weeks before the visit). An elected member from the regional member development task group and an officer from North West Employers will undertake this. The visit will be in part to check that the authority meets the standards, but also an opportunity to discover different approaches which can be shared as good practice.

Some local authorities already have a tradition of member development and may have all the elements in place for an early verification visit, but for others it may take a longer time to develop a culture, which supports member development. As always, help, advice and information can be obtained from North West Employers.

Stage 3 - Awarding the Charter

Authorities who have reached the standards of the Charter and demonstrated their commitment to member development have cause to celebrate their achievement. Each year a celebration event will be held where all those local authorities who have achieved the standards will be invited to receive their Charter. Additionally, a special merit prize will be awarded by the Municipal Journal who will also provide press coverage of the event.

Immediately after the Celebration Event we put together a newsletter which is sent out to all Elected Members in the North West. This newsletter celebrates the achievements of the authorities who were successful and promotes good practice within member development in the North West. Authorities will be asked to produce an article for this newsletter approx 1 page of A4.

Stage 4 - Re-assessment

Once awarded, the Charter will have a lifespan of three years, after which, local authorities will be asked to submit details of how they have sustained and further developed their commitment to member development.

Guidance notes on evidence to support an application for the North West Charter.

The following pages provide details of types of evidence which could be provided for each of the six elements.

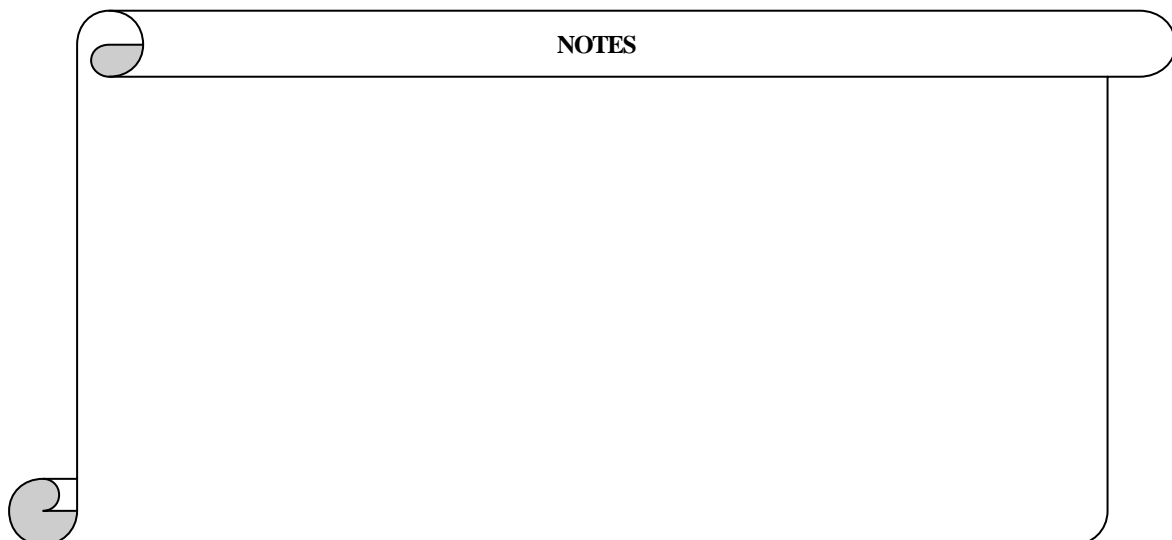
Having a statement of intent

What could be offered as evidence?

- A signed "declaration of commitment" to the principles of the North West Charter.
- A written statement which has been circulated to all elected members publicly expressing the local authority's commitment to developing its elected members.

Examples of this might be: copies of minutes of meetings where the decision to sign the Charter was made; copy of the "declaration of commitment" circulated to all members; a statement made by the Leader and Chief Executive circulated to all members; articles in newsletters to members, emails to all members.

- A clear indication from a sample of members interviewed that they "have seen a statement of intent, and feel there is a real commitment to the development of elected members".



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Ensuring that all elected members are made aware of training and development opportunities

What could be offered as evidence?

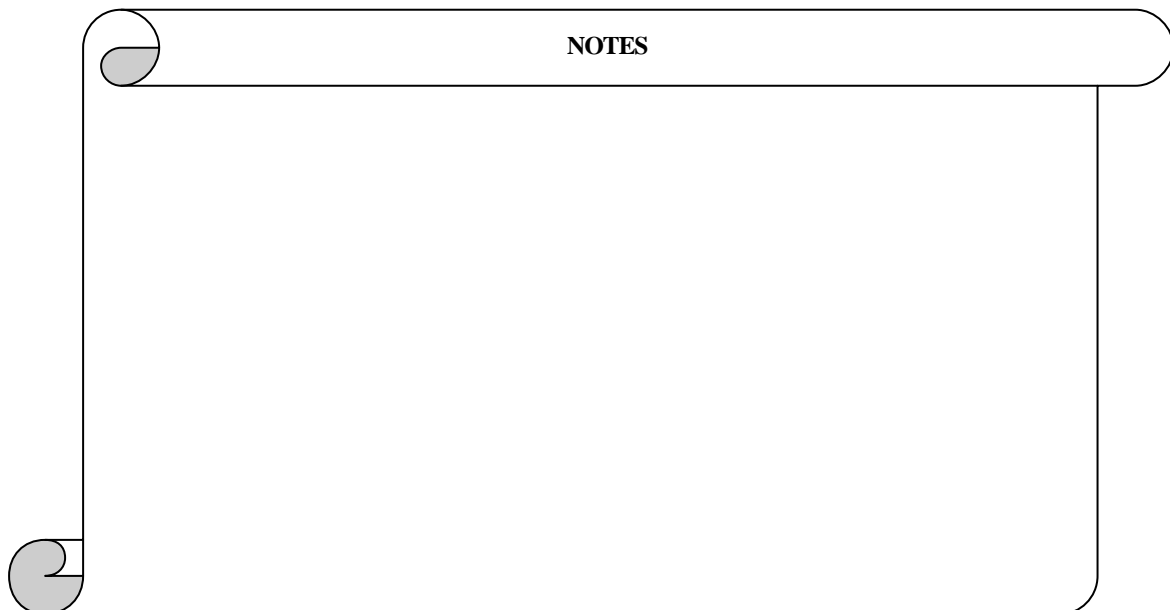
- Reference to training and development opportunities during new members' induction process.
- Examples of newsletters giving details of development opportunities available within the local authority.
- Training and development appears as an agenda item through the political groups.
- A process which gives members access to information about opportunities for development outside the local authority.
- Information displayed in members' room or library.
- Information on development opportunities displayed on an intranet.
- Information about development opportunities circulated on e-mail or by post.
- Existence of an all party member training group.
- A cabinet member with responsibility for member development who is part of the member training group or who has a direct line of communication with the member training group.

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Having a process to identify individual development needs which involves members

What could be offered as evidence?

- Completed questionnaires which have been circulated to all members giving them the opportunity to identify what their development needs are.
- The provision of one to one personal development interviews aimed at helping members identify their development needs and how these might be best met.
- Examples of information given to members to help them identify their individual learning styles (individually or as part of workshop).
- A mechanism which involves members in analysing the information gathered from a training needs analysis exercise, eg training and development group
- The nomination of a lead member who is responsible for members' training and development.
- Session plans and summaries from group TNA sessions.
- Examples of completed personal development plans for members.
- Training Programme for a development needs analysis workshop for members.

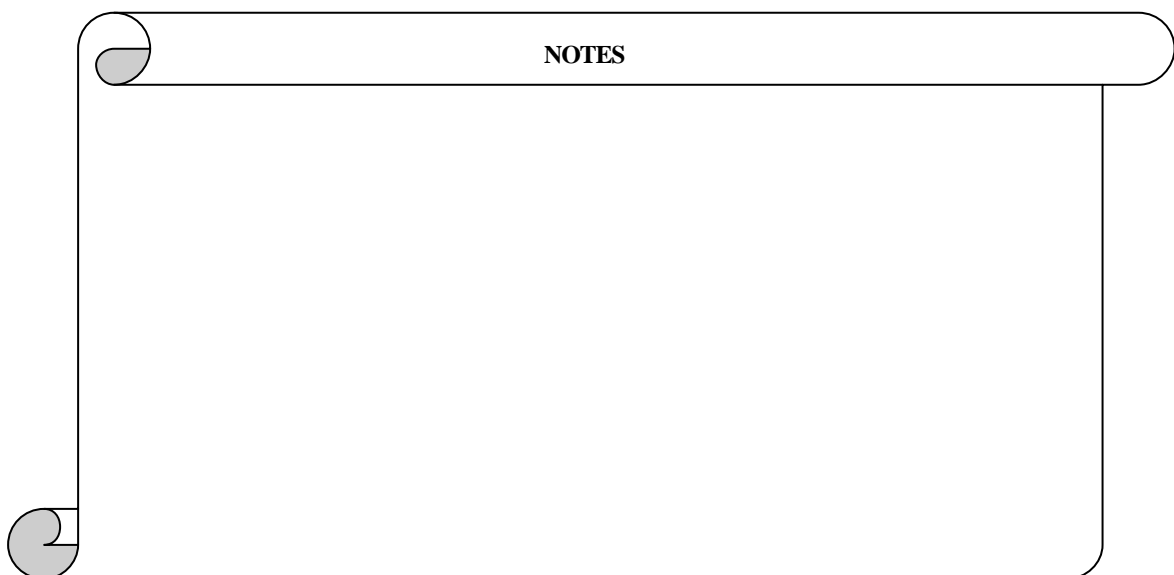


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Having a strategy to meet the training and development needs of elected members

What could be offered as evidence?

- A strategy which sets clear direction, and covers identification of needs, resources to be made available, approaches to delivery, evaluation process, and success criteria (preferably which has been formally accepted through a committee or executive forum) and which can be shown to contribute to the local authority achieving its aims and objectives.
- Records of discussions which clearly articulate the direction and key elements of the authority's approach to member development.
- A process to review the strategy, at least annually, which involves elected members.
- Examples of development opportunities which demonstrate that the strategy is more than a list of courses eg, open learning materials, shadowing opportunities, mentoring schemes, etc.
- A process or criteria to determine priorities.
- A link between member development and the corporate aims and objectives of the authority.



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Having an officer allocated to assist members and groups in identifying needs and providing information on resources

What could be offered as evidence?

- Any written reference which informs members which officer they can contact for information.
- Contact details for the officer are made available to new members.
- Details of the available resources in the members' room, newsletter etc.
- That the named officer can advise members on different approaches to identifying their development needs, and can provide information on internal and external training events.

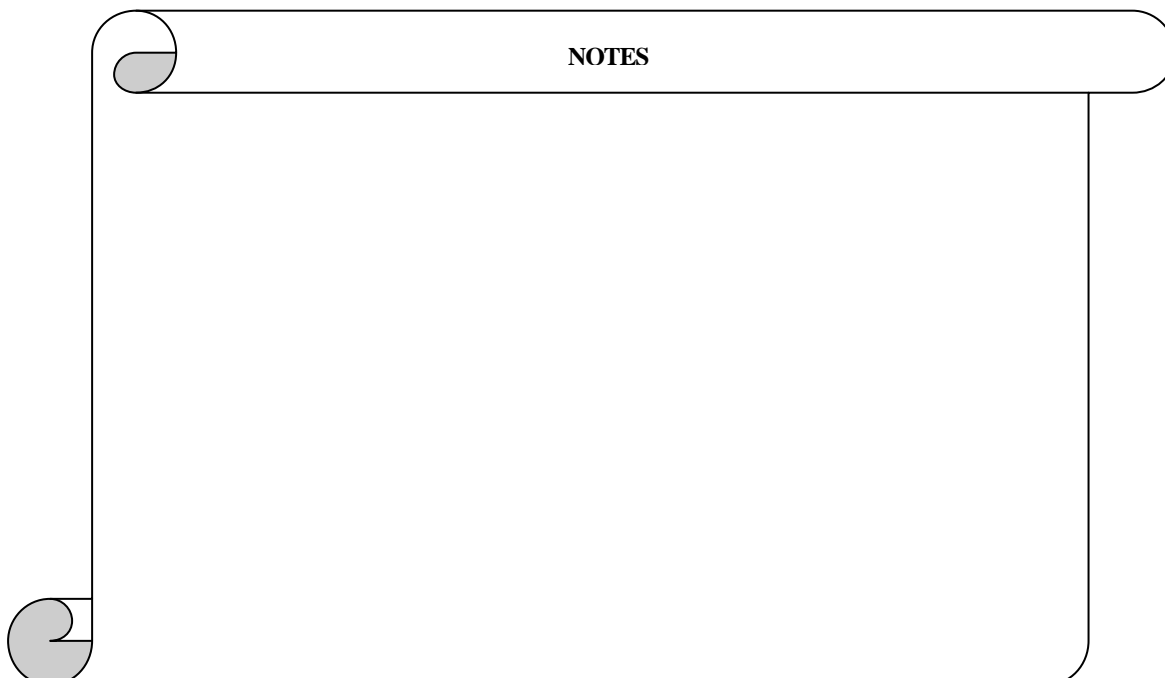
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Implementing the strategy locally

What could be offered as evidence?

- Outcomes of a training needs analysis exercise.
- Individual development plans for members.
- Schedule of development events.
- Individual record for each member detailing training and development activities.
- Evaluation and review of events in terms of effectiveness.
- A process to review and update development needs of members.
- Evidence of evaluating the development offered and the impact it has had which has involved members in reviewing the strategy and its implementation.



NOTES

About the Assessment Visit

- Each visit will include one elected member from the North West Employers Regional Development Committee or Executive Board plus an officer from North West Employers.
- The visit will be arranged in advance and will last for approximately one day. An officer of North West Employers will liaise with the relevant officer from the authority to make the arrangements.
- A room and refreshments will need to be made available for the assessment team.
- During the visit the assessment team will want to speak to:
 - The Leader (or Deputy)
 - The Chief Executive
 - Leader of an opposition group
 - Chair or portfolio holder
 - Chair or Member of Training Group
 - A newly Elected Member
 - Several randomly picked Elected Members
 - The officer responsible for member training
- The interviews will take around 20-25 minutes
- At the end of the visit the assessment team will give the authority brief feedback on how the visit went. If it was felt that some elements of the evidence were incomplete then the authority would be advised of that.
- If it was felt that the evidence was complete then the assessment team would produce a report for the Regional Development Committee which usually meets twice a year around April and September.
- The Regional Development Committee can:
 - (a) Award the Charter
 - (b) Defer awarding until missing elements are in place
- Authorities can be assessed at any time during the year and after the Regional Development Committee meeting will be told formally that they have been awarded the Charter. However, Celebration Events are only held once a year.

Questions that could be asked at verification visits...

- How have you made all elected members aware of the authority's commitment to training and development?
- How are new elected members informed about this commitment to their development?
- How often is information circulated to members?
- How are new members informed about training and development opportunities?
- How do members know that they can get help to identify their development needs?
- Is the development planning an ongoing process, is it part of course reviews, open learning material or just once a year?
- How are members involved in assessing the outcomes of the training needs analysis and deciding priorities?
- How was the strategy formulated?
- How were members involved in developing the strategy?
- How has the strategy been communicated to members?
- What has been improved since the strategy has been developed?
- How often do individuals or groups approach the officer for advice?
- Is the officer involved in the discussions about members' training and development needs?
- What resources have been made available to implement the strategy?
- Who has responsibility for implementing the strategy?
- Do you have role descriptions for elected members?