



Report of the Chief Democratic Services Officer

Member Management Committee

Date: 13 April 2010

Subject: Member Development

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

The Member Development Working Group meets on a regular basis to formulate, progress and monitor Member Development activities. Over the last quarter this has included work on the following projects:

- Preparation for assessment against Charter Plus standards
- Progressing work on new learning and development projects such as induction and equality
- Reviewing attendance and feedback from the 2009-10 events programme.

This report provides Member Management Committee with an update on progress with the above projects and seeks comments on the proposals to introduce four 'learning and development' days per year.

1.0 Purpose of the report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on training and development issues relating to elected Members. Specifically, this report contains the following items:

- An update on progress towards achieving Charter Plus
- Detail of new learning and development initiatives devised by the Working Group
- Proposals to improve attendance and quality of learning events by grouping key training activities into 4 days per municipal year, with dates incorporated in the Council diary.

2.0 Background information

2.1 Member Development is a key component of the Council's Annual Corporate Governance Statement, specifically in relation to the principle of *Developing Skills and Capacity*, where the Council states that it will ensure that those charged with the governance of the Council have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to perform well.

2.2 The Member Development Charter is due for re-assessment in spring 2010. As well as being judged against Charter standards, we have taken the decision (via Member Management Committee and Executive Board) to be assessed under the more stringent 'Charter Plus' criteria.

2.3 The first stage is a pre-assessment, which Local Government Yorkshire and Humber will undertake in April 2010. This visit will include interviews with key Members and officers and an examination of physical evidence. Depending on the nature of any gaps identified, Leeds will have the option of going forward for full assessment or being assessed against Charter standards only.

2.4 As part of the preparation for the Charter pre-assessment and its ongoing work programme, the Member Development Working Group has been reviewing the 2009-10 events and planning activities for the new municipal year.

3.0 Main Issues

Member Development Charter Plus

3.1 A number of 'challenging' criteria have been identified and progress is underway to raise our standards in order to meet them:

- **Member role descriptions** Role descriptions have now been drafted for each role attracting a special responsibility allowance and are awaiting final approval (see the Role Descriptions report to this meeting).
- **Personal development plans (PDPs)** 50% of Members now have a current PDP. However this is the minimum required to reach Charter Plus standards and it is likely that the assessors will propose that this figure is increased to 70% by the time we are fully assessed.
- **Mentoring** Although informal mentoring of new Members takes place within political groups it is recommended that we formalise the process (through training of mentors and reviewing the mentoring process).

- **Positive impact** Charter Plus stipulates that members must be able to describe how learning and development activities have helped them as individuals to carry out their role, and that Members are able to identify what changes and improvements have taken place as a result of their learning. A number of case studies are being put together which illustrate positive impact both on an individual and community level.

Member Development Activities 2010-11

3.2 The Working Group have devised a number of learning projects for 2010-11, and progress with a number of these initiatives is described below.

- **Induction.** A comprehensive programme for new Members (and existing Members where appropriate) is currently being drawn up and will be circulated to all candidates as soon as their details are made available. As in previous years, the programme will include basic events to ensure that Members are equipped with key information to get started, in addition to events tailored to specific roles. This year the programme includes a number of regional events plus sessions on dealing with casework and corporate parenting.
- **Equality and Diversity programme.** The Equality team has worked with the Member Development Group to draw up a wide-ranging learning programme for both new and existing Members. The programme includes visits to sites of religious interest in the city, discussion-based seminars covering topics such as transgender and gender equality, and an informative event on the diversity of Leeds today and in the future. Where practical all events will be delivered by local community representatives.
- **Corporate Parenting.** A programme will be drawn up by Children's Services, in conjunction with the Working Group, on the subject of corporate parenting to be delivered at different levels depending on Members' roles and involvement with young people.

3.3 Following an analysis of attendance and feedback from 2009-10 events, a number of general improvements have been suggested for the new municipal year. These include the following:

- **Scheduled Learning and Development days**

This year it is proposed that a proportion of learning and development is delivered on four days taking place over the course of the municipal year. These four 'Learning and Development' days will be clearly identified in the Council diary, and spaced at regular intervals, allowing Members to plan their attendance in advance. A range of days will be chosen and events will extend into the evening for those who work or are unavailable during the day. The content may cover a specific theme, or offer a mix of events for Members to choose from. Content of the day may also be widened to include IT drop-in sessions, personal development plan reviews and opportunities to try different resources such as e-learning. The proposed dates and content will be discussed at the next Member Development Working Group meeting.

The diarising of learning activities is recognized as good practice in Member Development (Newcastle Council, one of the few authorities to have achieved Charter Plus adopted this practice in 2008).

- **Member involvement in events**

It is proposed that Members have greater involvement in the publicising, delivery and chairing of events. It has been shown that attendance is higher at events which Members have personally endorsed, where Members have invited other Members to attend, and where a Member is involved in the delivery of course content.

- **Increased variety and improved quality of events**

In order to add variety and realism to events it is suggested that, where appropriate, guests and community representatives are invited to learning sessions, events take place at a wider variety of venues and adequate time is allowed for two-way discussion.

In addition officers from the Member Development team will work more closely with presenters to ensure that they are aware of how best to present information and do not rely too heavily on tools such as Powerpoint.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 As the role of Members is complex and demanding, dedicated learning and development strategies which support Members and help them to lead the organisation are essential requirements for any Council.

4.2 Member development is recognised by organisations such as the Audit Commission and Improvement and Development Agency as a key means of building capacity in local government. Good practice is demonstrated by strategic planning on an individual and corporate basis, and can be evidenced by the award of charter marks such as the existing Member Development Charter and Charter Plus.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1 Any funding required to deliver the 2010-11 programme and administration costs for Charter Plus will be met from the existing Member Development budget.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 The Member Management Committee is asked to consider the suggested improvements to the annual programme (in particular Learning and Development days) outlined in section 3.3.

Background Papers

None Used