

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting13th July 2006

1. Title of Item/Report

Learning and Development Strategy for Members

2. Record of the Decision

Members considered a report that detailed the progress of the current Member Learning and Development Strategy and future options for Member Learning and Development.

Members noted that the purpose of the Council's Learning and Development Strategy was to "provide elected and co-opted members with Learning and Development opportunities which would enable them to fulfil their multi-faceted role effectively." The aim being therefore to build on the skills and knowledge of Elected Members to ensure that they could fulfil their responsibilities to the local community, provide clear leadership, effective scrutiny of Council functions and respond to changing demands.

Members noted that the Council was committed to supporting the ongoing development of all elected members, in order to enable them to perform effectively in their current role, and to develop, so that they could meet future challenges. Stockton had made good progress in implementing Learning and Development support for Members.

In accordance with the Learning and Development Strategy for Members 2002, the following achievements had been made:-

- A comprehensive Induction Programme which covered the basic areas of knowledge necessary for newly elected Councillors.
- the opportunity for all elected members to undertake Personal Development Plans (PDP) which valued and recognised the skills, knowledge and experience they brought with them; identified current learning and development needs; and offered a variety of ways to meet these needs. 50% of elected members currently had a PDP
- A nominated officer working to support the Member Development

activities of the Council with an annual budget of £13,500.

- mandatory training for members on quasi judicial committees
- The provision of effective learning and development opportunities based upon identified needs and delivered, where possible, to a member's preferred learning style.

Since the development of this Strategy in 2002, the IDeA and Regions had developed a Charter, based on 'The Accreditation Good Practice Guidelines for Member Learning and Development.' The guidelines were represented in the NE Charter which consisted of 5 criteria.:-

Criteria 1: Being fully committed to developing Elected Members in order to achieve the council's aims and objectives.

Criteria 2: Adopting a member led strategic approach to Elected Member development.

Criteria 3: Having a member learning and development plan in place that clearly identifies the difference development activities will make.

Criteria 4: Seeing that learning and development is effective in building capacity.

Criteria 5: Addressing wider development matters to promote work-life balance and citizenship.

A sub-group consisting of the Member Champion, NEREO, CMT, Officers from the Democratic Services Unit and Training and Organisational Development had met and undertaken a desk top analysis of Stockton's position against the criteria for Charter Status. Whilst the Council was well on the way to achieving status, there was still room for improvement. Members noted the main themes for improvement under each criterion.

It was explained that there are five key stages in working towards the North East Charter for Elected Member Development, these are:-

- Stage 1 – Signing up to the Charter and Action Plan
- Stage 2 – Improving the development of Elected Members
- Stage 3 – Assessment
- Stage 4 – Awarding the Charter
- Stage 5 – Re-assessment

In order to gain accreditation, under the Charter the Council would incur

costs of £850, which equated to all associated external support and assessment fees. Costs associated with delivery of the aforementioned action plan would need to be assessed upon approval. The timescale for achieving accreditation was estimated at 18months and would be firmed up on production and approval of the action plan.

Members noted that should the recommendation be approved, then the next steps were as follows:-

- Development of action plan to achieve accredited status in consultation with Member Champion, CMT, Map, Standards Committee, Cabinet and Council
- Delivery of action plan
- Assessment
- Accreditation
- On-going review and evaluation in preparation for re-assessment

RECOMMENDED to Council that:-

1. the Authority signs up to the North East Charter for Elected Member Development.
2. the next steps for implementation, as detailed above, be noted and approved

3. Reasons for the Decision

The current Learning and Development Strategy for Members was approved by Cabinet in August 2002. Following examination of Best Practice and discussions with other Authorities in the Region it was felt timely, prior to Elections in 2007, to review and refresh this Strategy.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Not Applicable

Proper Officer
21 July 2006