

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

13TH JULY 2006

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

COUNCIL DECISION

Corporate – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Coleman

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR MEMBERS

1. Summary

The purpose of this report is to detail progress of the current Member Learning and Development Strategy and detail future options for Member Learning and Development.

2. Recommendations

- I. It is recommended that the Authority signs up for the North East Charter for Elected Member Development.
- II. It is recommended that the next steps for implementation are approved.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

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 is felt that it is timely prior to Elections in 2007 to review and refresh this Strategy.

4. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (paragraph 8) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (paragraph 10 of the code of conduct).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held, whilst the matter is being considered; not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (paragraph 12 of the Code).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc.; whether or not they are a member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting, and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room during consideration of the relevant item.

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to detail progress of the current Member Learning and Development Strategy and detail future options for Member Learning and Development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. It is recommended that the Authority signs up for the North East Charter for Elected Member Development.
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DETAIL

1. The purpose of our Learning and Development Strategy is to “provide elected and co-opted members with Learning and Development opportunities which will 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 can fulfil their responsibilities to the local community, provide clear leadership, effective scrutiny of Council functions and respond to changing demands.
2. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is 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 can meet future challenges. Stockton has made good progress in implementing Learning and Development support for Members and this report goes on to discuss this progress in detail.
3. In accordance with the Learning and Development Strategy for Members 2002, we have achieved:-
 - i) A comprehensive Induction Programme which covers the basic areas of knowledge necessary for newly elected Councillors.
 - ii) the opportunity for all elected members to undertake Personal Development Plans (PDP) which values and recognises the skills, knowledge and experience they bring with them; identifies current learning and development needs; and offers a variety of ways to meet these needs. 50% of elected members currently have a PDP
 - iii) A nominated officer working to support the Member Development activities of the Council with an annual budget of £13,500.
 - iv) mandatory training for members on quasi judicial committees

- v) The provision of effective learning and development opportunities based upon identified needs and delivered, where possible, to a member's preferred learning style.

4. Since the development of this Strategy in 2002, the IDeA and Regions have developed a Charter based on 'The Accreditation Good Practice Guidelines for Member Learning and Development.' The guidelines are represented in the NE Charter which consists of 5 criteria and covering 25 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.

5. A sub-group consisting of the Member Champion, NEREO, CMT, Officers from the Democratic Services Unit and Training and Organisational Development have met and undertaken a desk top analysis of Stockton's position against the criteria for Charter Status. Whilst we are well on the way to achieving status, there is still room for improvement. Main themes emerging from this analysis for improvement are as follows:-

Criteria 1: Raise awareness with all members re Policy and Strategy for Member Development and associated resources. Examples include an Investors in People award that covers elected members, elected members can confirm that strategies and action described by the top political and managerial leadership takes place

Criteria 2: Review of Member Learning and Development Strategy in consultation with Members Advisory Panel, CMT and Cabinet including consultation on the further development of PDP's for Members Examples include all party involvement in agreeing, monitoring and evaluating elected member training and development strategy, the Learning and Development Strategy identifies priority development needs and makes stated and clear links with council's aims and objectives and members roles

Criteria 3: Establishment of planned tailored Learning and Development resources linked to organisational priorities, member roles and personal development requirements that are monitored and reviewed. Examples include Individual development plans that clearly indicate what is expected from training and development activities, and examples of a range of ways members can learn, and training on offer, that responds to individual member needs and learning styles including E- learning materials

Criteria 4: The evaluation and sharing of learning that demonstrates the benefits in terms of cost and performance and promotes improvements to Learning and Development activities. Examples include evaluation reports outlining results from elected member training and development, and case studies of sharing learning with others internally, externally and in the wider local government family

Criteria 5: Consideration/review of work life balance issues in terms of how we conduct business and how we actively encourage citizenship. Examples include minutes of meetings showing that the council regularly reviews the number of meetings and is mindful of work life balance recognising that elected members are often involved in external meetings and activities in other community roles and prospective councillor events materials, role descriptions and recruitment packs

6. There are five key stages in working towards the North East Charter for Elected Member Development, these are:-

i) Stage 1 – Signing up to the Charter and Action Plan

We are required to sign up to the charter to demonstrate our commitment to improving performance, through the development of our elected members. At the point of signing up, we must specify a target date by which we will aim to achieve the Charter. We have already completed a self-assessment against the Charter criteria which would be used to Action Plan. The Action Plan would then be sent to NEREO.

ii) Stage 2 – Improving the development of Elected Members

We would work towards achieving the Charter and meeting the requirements of the Action Plan.

iii) Stage 3 – Assessment

When we consider that everything is in place to demonstrate that we have achieved the Charter we would inform NEREO who would make a judgement as to whether the authority is ready for assessment. An on-site assessment would be carried out by two assessors. A report would be sent to the Council following the assessment visit outlining good practice, areas for improvement and whether it has achieved Charter Status.

iv) Stage 4 – Awarding the Charter

When we have been assessed and achieved the Charter, we would receive our certificate/award at an annual celebration event.

v) Stage 5 – Re-assessment

Once awarded, the Charter has a life span of three years after which we would be required to submit details of how we have sustained the standard.

7. In order to gain accreditation, under the North East Charter we would incur costs of £850, which equates 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 is estimated at 18months and would be firmed up on production and approval of the action plan.

8. Should this recommendation be approved then the next steps are as follows:-

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

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs associated with accreditation are £850. Costs associated with the delivery of the action plan will need to be assessed upon approval.

RISK ASSESSMENT

This Learning and Development Strategy is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

This report has been considered by the Standards Committee and the Members Advisory Panel.

Name of Contact Officer: Joanne McGeeney
Principal Development Officer – Member Learning
Telephone No. 01642 526186
Email Address: joanne.mcgeeney@stockton.gov.uk

Background Papers

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Property