
NORTH EAST CHARTER FOR ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor John Williams, Leader of the Council

Responsible Director – Paul Wildsmith, Director of Corporate Services

Purpose of Report

1. To advise Members of the North East Charter for Elected Member Development and to recommend the Council makes a commitment to the Charter.

Background

2. Within the Region, the North East Regional Employers Organisation (NEREO), in partnership with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), have revised and re-launched a North East Charter for Elected Member development.
3. The Charter, which is based on the successful model developed by the North West Employers Organisation and which will be managed by NEREO, recognises a Council's investment in Member development, encourages and acknowledges good practice in Member development and innovation and promotes debate within each Council of the development and training needs of its Members.
4. A number of authorities in the region have already been successful in obtaining the Charter or are currently working towards it.
5. Members of the Resources Scrutiny Committee have received a presentation on the Charter and have suggested that Council makes a commitment to the Charter.

Information

6. There are five key stages in working towards the North East Charter :-

(a) Stage 1 - Signing up to the Charter and an Action Plan

The Leaders of all the political parties of the Council (and the Independent Member), together with the Chief Executive will be required to sign up to the Charter to demonstrate the Council's commitment to improving performance, throughout the development of its Elected Members. At the point of signing up, the Council must specify a target date by which it will aim to achieve the Charter. An Action Plan will also need to be developed.

(b) Stage 2 - Improving the development of Elected Members

Officers and Members will work towards achieving the Charter and meeting the requirements of the Action Plan

(c) Stage 3 - Assessment

The Authority will have a full day external assessment by a Member Peer/Officer. An on-site assessment will be carried out by two assessors and written feedback will be given to the Council. A report will be sent to the Council following the assessment visit outlining good practice, areas for improvement and whether the Council has achieved Charter Status.

(d) Stage 4 - Awarding the Charter

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

(e) Stage 5 - Re-Assessment after 3 years

Once awarded, the Charter has a life span of three years after which the Council will be required to submit details of how it has sustained the standard.

Member Training Group

7. Should Members wish to support the NEREO initiative, it is suggested that the Resources Scrutiny Committee establish a Member Training Group, comprising three Labour Members, one Conservative Member and one Liberal Democratic Member to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate Member development strategies.

Financial Implications

8. In order to gain accreditation under the North East Charter the Council would incur costs of £850 which equates to all associated external support and assessment fees, however the Improvement Partnership has agreed to meet this cost. In addition, the Improvement Partnership have also agreed to meet the costs of an external body being appointed to undertake Members' Performance Development Reviews in 2007.

Outcome of Consultation

9. Consultation has taken place with the Leaders of each of the Political Groups on the Council and also with the Independent Member, and all are in favour of committing to this Charter.

Legal Implications

10. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

11. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

12. The issues contained within this report are required to be considered by Council.

Conclusion

13. This report suggests that the Council should make a commitment to the North East Charter for Elected Member Development and it is suggested that Council agrees to this proposal.

Recommendation

14. Council are requested to :-
 - (a) That the Council makes a commitment to the North East Charter for Elected Member Development and that the Leaders of all Political Groups and the Independent Member formally sign the Charter at this meeting.
 - (b) That an external body e.g. NEREO be appointed to undertake Members' Performance Development Reviews in 2007.

Reason

15. The recommendation is supported by the following reason :-

To demonstrate the Council's commitment to the vital role Elected Members have in local governance.

Paul Wildsmith
Director of Corporate Services

Background Paper

North East Charter for Elected Member Development

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