



The EERA Charter for Elected Member Development

The EERA Charter has been developed in partnership with the IDeA and is based on the North West Employers' Charter. Building on the experience of their well established and successful regional Member Development Charter which all councils in that region have made a commitment to.

The Charter – what is it and why do we need it?

Any local authority dedicated to meeting the needs of its community must be committed to developing its elected members. The evolving modernisation agenda has placed increasing emphasis on an authority's need to rethink their approach to member support and development. The impact is such that a majority of local authorities across the South East now have some form of support programme in place – however, the approach, levels of commitment, effectiveness and progress varies considerably.

The EERA Charter, therefore, has a number of objectives:

1. Being fully committed to developing Elected Members in order to achieve the council's aims and objectives.
2. Adopting a member led strategic approach to Elected Member development.
3. Having a member learning and development plan in place that clearly identifies the difference development activities will make.
4. Seeing that learning and development is effective in building capacity.
5. Addressing wider development matters to promote work-life balance and citizenship.

How does the Charter work?

There are five key stages in working towards the EERA Charter on Elected Member Development.

Stage 1: Signing up to the Charter and an Action Plan.

Local authorities who want to participate are required to sign up to the charter to demonstrate their commitment to improving performance, through the development of their Elected Members. At the point of signing up, a local authority must specify a target date by which they will aim to achieve the Charter. The authority will then undertake a self assessment against the Charter criteria and based on the self assessment will develop an Action Plan. The Action Plan will be sent to South East Employers.

Stage 2: Improving the development of Elected Members

A local authority will work towards achieving the Charter and meeting the requirements of the Action Plan.

Stage 3: Assessment

When a local authority considers it has everything in place to demonstrate it has achieved the Charter they will inform South East Employers who will make a judgement whether the authority is ready for assessment. An on-site assessment will be carried out by a (small) trained team of Elected Members/Officers of South East Employers. A report will be sent to the Council following the assessment visit outlining good practice areas for improvement and whether it has achieved Charter status.

Stage 4: Awarding the Charter

When your authority has been assessed and achieved the Charter, they will receive their certificate/award at an annual celebration event.

Stage 5: Re-assessment

Once awarded, the Charter has a life span of three years after which a local authority will be required to submit details of how it has sustained the standard. This will be judged by a trained team of Elected Members and Officers undertaking a desk top review.

Charter Milestones/Standards**Commitment to Member development**

- Top political and managerial leadership commitment to development of Elected Members.
- Policy statement.
- Equality of opportunity and access to learning and development.
- Budget.
- Officer resource support.
- Dissemination of learning.

Strategic approach to Member development

- Member led strategy.
- Linkage to council corporate plan.
- Member roles clearly set out.
- Process for identification of needs at individual and council wide level.
- Structured and timely approach to promoting development opportunities.
- Appropriately learn with external partners.
- Strategy for induction.
- Addresses political leadership and team development.
- Mechanisms for evaluation and informing future plans identified.

Member learning and development plan in place

- Addresses development priorities.
- Identify what development activities should achieve.
- Sets out how, when, where and who is responsible.
- Takes account of access to development opportunities.

- Linkage between individual plans and the council's corporate and other plans.
- Representative elected Members consulted.

Learning and development is effective in building capacity

- Members learn and develop effectively.
- Learning is shared with other elected Members and where appropriate with officers and stakeholders.
- Investment in learning and development is evaluated in terms of benefits and impact.
- Identifies (and implements) improvements to learning and development activities.

Elected Member development promotes work life balance and citizenship

- Assists those with family responsibilities.
- Reviews how council business is conducted to allow for equality of access to key political decision making mechanisms.
- Holds events for the community to encourage people to become community leaders.

Support and Assistance

Ongoing support will be provided as soon as you commit to the Charter.

- Following commitment you will receive a 'certificate' demonstrating your commitment to meeting the Charter standards.
- An in-authority workshop will be organised to explain to the Elected Members and officers the process of moving towards Charter status.
- Self assessment materials and a Charter commitment pack will be provided to each authority.
- Assessment will be undertaken in the authority where it is seen as ready by the authority and by South East Employers.
- A number of Elected Members from the IDEA Peer Clearing House have been trained as "Peer Assessors"
- A detailed report will be provided to the council outlining good practice and areas for improvement and whether it has achieved Charter status.
- A regional annual celebration event will be organised. A national celebration event is also being considered.
- Total cost **£1500** per authority plus expenses.

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