

Charter Implementation Group – 25 August 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the **Charter Implementation Group** held on **25 August 2009** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D Merrick

Cllr C I Black
Cllr T G Cutmore

Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill
Cllr Mrs C A Weston

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Mr D J Cottis
Mrs L Walker

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn and Mr M R Drage.

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Fowler - Head of Information and Customer Services
M Power - Committee Administrator

6 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT POLICY STATEMENT/CHARTER FOR ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

Members reviewed the draft Member Development Policy Statement and Charter for Elected Member Development Action Plan. The following points arose during discussion:-

- South Essex Employers, in conjunction with the IDeA, co-ordinates Member Charter accreditation for Councils across the country. The accreditation process would be unaffected by any future changes in the organisation of East of England Regional Assembly (EERA).
- In response to a suggestion that training courses for Review Committee Members should be made mandatory (as is the case for Members of the Development Control, Licensing and Appeals Committees), it was noted that Council practice was to define mandatory training for Members of Regulatory Committees only. The Charter Implementation Group (CIG) could make recommendations in respect of compulsory training to the Standards Committee. It was confirmed that training organised for Members of the Review Committee would continue to be marked as 'highly recommended' in the learning and development booklet.

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- Information containing a role description and outline of duties should be designed and made available in advance to every prospective candidate standing for election to the Council. It was important that this information was succinct and used plain English. This would provide prospective Members with information about the extent of the role of Councillor and what is expected of them. This would be added to Item 5.3 of the Action Plan as it may assist in the process of encouraging members of the public to become effective Community Leaders.
- The words 'and Ward Member duties' should be deleted from the second sentence in point 2.1 of the Member Development Policy Document.

Action Plan

- Items 1.3/3.4 It was stressed that the e-learning facility offered to Members via the 'Modern Councillor' was not intended to replace the traditional 'classroom' method of training but would provide an additional way for Members to access suitable training.
- Item 1.4 The funding from Improvement East for peer mentoring of the Leader, Deputy Leader and 2 Portfolio Holders was a 'one-off' amount that was evidence that the Council sought funding from sources other than the Council's own Member training budget. In response to a comment that other Members may consider that mentoring could be useful for them, it was noted that the annual self-assessment questionnaire sent to Members should be used to identify any specific training needs that Members felt they had. The CIG, in conjunction with the Standards Committee, would review individual training needs and prioritise any individual Member requests (keeping within the constraints of the budget).
- Item 1.6 It was recognised that the system of feeding back information from Outside Body meetings and activities could benefit from being improved. The CIG would be discussing the matter in detail at its December meeting as part of its efforts to determine additional methods by which Members' learning could be disseminated. One suggestion was that time be set aside on the agenda for each Full Council meeting for Members to provide verbal or written reports to apprise other Members of Outside Body activity. This would keep Members involved and informed and also provide an opportunity for discussion. It would also acquaint the general public with an idea of the wider work undertaken by Councillors in addition to their attendance at Council meetings.
- Item 2.3 The wording should be amended to read 'Each Committee and Sub-Committee has its own terms of reference'.
- Item 2.5 Action (1) should be moved to the evidence section as it has been completed and Action (3) should be amended by deleting the words

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‘in September’.

- Item 2.9 Comments contained within the end of event questionnaires are actioned by officers as appropriate and provided Members with the opportunity to comment immediately following the training. A recent example of this was the decision to stop using a particular venue because feedback from Members was that it had unsuitable disabled access.
- Item 3.4 The wording in Action (1) should be amended to read ‘Integrate use of Calderdale Council compact disks (CDs) in Chairmanship and Success with Scrutiny into the development programme’.
- Item 5.2 All public Council and Committee Agendas and Minutes from 1 January 2000 onwards are available online on the Council’s Committee Management Information System (CMIS). In addition, extracts from the Council’s Minute Books are available for each calendar year from 1973 to 1999 inclusive. These records are fully searchable. This should be included as evidence for this factor.
- Item 5.2 In order to encourage more members of the public to attend the Council’s Area Committees it was felt that attention needed to be focused on how better to promote the Committees. The Committee dates were currently advertised in Rochford District Matters but it was hoped that increased advertising would make more people aware that they could attend meetings to speak, ask questions and meet local Councillors. This could also aid the aim of encouraging people to become community leaders. One suggestion was that advertisements could be placed in local shops and on notice boards. It was anticipated that the recent introduction of Highways Localism on the Area Committee agendas would encourage more people to come. The Council’s Leader stated that he would be happy to welcome Area Committee Chairmen to an Executive meeting to discuss ways of encouraging more residents to attend meetings.
- Item 5.3 Some local meetings in Hockley had seen interest expressed by young people in becoming involved in local democracy, which was an example of how events could be instrumental in encouraging interest from youth groups. It was thought that linkages with the Parish/Town Councils should be encouraged as this was often a learning ground for community activity.
- Item 5.3 It was requested that the rules governing CRB checks for Members visiting schools were ascertained.

The Group agreed that, subject to incorporation of the amendments identified above for the Member Development Policy Document item 2.1 and for Action Plan items 2.3, 2.5, 3.4 and 5.2, the draft Member Development Policy Statement (incorporating the Member Development Policy Document) and the

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Charter for Elected Member Development Action Plan be submitted to South East Employers. (HICS)

8 PHASE 2 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Members reviewed the indicative list of learning and development opportunities to be offered to Members in Phase 2 of the Programme (October to November 2009). The Members' tour of the District to look at planning sites and the course on 'Planning Development Management' would be offered; attendance at either of these would count towards Members' mandatory training requirements for Phase 2.

Funding had been made available from the Improvement East Regional Partnership for certain training. It was requested that the precise detail of any IDeA courses selected be ascertained.

The Group agreed that:-

- Of the list of courses available from the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), the following would be most beneficial at this time:-
 - Communications: raising your profile as a local community leader
 - Community leadership at the local level: engagement and partnerships
 - The effective ward councillor
- Of the other options detailed in the report, the following courses should be included in Phase 2 of the programme:-
 - Estimates and Local Government Finance: this had been identified as high priority by Members in the self-assessment questionnaires.
 - Introduction to Social Media so that Members are aware of the regulations and implications of engaging with the public via social networking sites and blogs.
- Phase 3 of the Programme should include:-
 - A course in Personal Skills (managing time and paperwork), delivered by an independent trainer.
 - A course on Community Safety, delivered by the Council's Community Safety team. (HICS)

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The meeting closed at 8.47 pm.

Chairman

Date

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