

**Subject:** Member Development - Update  
**Date of Meeting:** 1 July 2008  
**Report of:** Director of Strategy & Governance  
**Contact Officer:** Name: *Caroline Banfield* Tel: 29-1126  
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**Wards Affected:** All

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To inform Governance Committee of the Council's forthcoming application for accreditation under the South East Employers' Charter for Member Development ("the charter").

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the charter assessment arrangements that have been put in place for 25 September 2008 and the work that needs to be completed between now and then to ready us for that process.
- 2.2 That the Committee supports the Member Development Working Group in encouraging members to identify their learning needs, to participate in development activities that address those needs and to provide feedback to the working group on how those activities could be improved on an ongoing basis.
- 2.3 That the Committee identifies any new areas that it would like to see included in the 2008/09 member development programme.

#### 3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The member development working group (Councillors Ken Norman, Gill Mitchell, David Watkins and Georgia Wrighton) is responsible for leading on and promoting member learning.
- 3.2 Since June 2006, the group has been working towards the charter, which is a best practice framework for Member learning and the promotion of citizenship.

The charter standards, and the work that the group has already overseen towards those standards is set out at Appendix One.

- 3.3 The group has consulted and informed all members regarding its work via group meetings, previous reports to Policy and Resources committee and regular member development newsletters. Previous committee reports are listed as background documents to this report and are available from the Member Support Manager on request.
- 3.4 The Head of Improvement at South East Employers, Mark Palmer, met with the Member Development Working Group at the end of February 2008 to review the group's progress towards the charter. Following that meeting, arrangements were put in place for the council to be assessed in August and September 2008.
- 3.5 The assessment process comprises two stages. In August, the Member Development Manager will send the team of assessors a portfolio of evidence containing documents that demonstrate how each of the charter's standards have been met. The assessors, a Learning and Development Consultant from South East Employers and an elected member and officer from an authority that has already gained charter status, will review the portfolio and, provided no significant gaps are found, will then ask us to complete the second stage of the process.
- 3.6 The second stage will take place on 25 September 2008 and involves the assessors conducting 45-minute interviews with a selection of Members and Officers as set out in Appendix Two. As well as interviewing those with direct responsibility for member development, the assessors conduct a group interview with up to ten non-executive members who have been chosen to reflect the gender, age and experience mix of the wider member group.
- 3.7 The assessors will be looking for interviewees to give practical examples of member development events they have attended, how these have improved individual and council performance, and how member development links to council priorities. A summary of what each interviewee will need to demonstrate in order for the council to be granted charter status is set out at Appendix Three.
- 3.8 There is remaining work that needs to be completed before August and Governance committee is asked to note and endorse the following improvement actions that the working group has identified:
  - 3.8.1 Learning with and from our partner organisations:

Plans are underway for a Health Service Induction to build on the introductory session offered by Tom Scanlon, Director of Public Health, in 2007. This will offer all members a comprehensive look at how the Primary Care Trust and Brighton and Sussex University Health Trust operate. Briefing sessions will be held at our partners' premises and it is provisionally agreed that sessions will be led by the Chief Executives in conjunction with other senior colleagues.

Sussex Police and Sussex Fire & Rescue Service have also agreed to offer inductions for all Members this Summer and Autumn – these will combine practical demonstrations and tours of front line areas as well as presentations to cover strategic and policy issues.

A Pan-Sussex Member development event on shared services and community leadership is already booked for 5 September 2008 and the Member Support Manager is on the project team for that event. The event will offer opportunities for networking between councils and councillors and for learning from best practice that is already happening across Sussex and elsewhere. It is hoped that this will be the first of further joint development events for Sussex members.

### 3.8.2 Identifying corporate and individual learning needs:

Each year, the Member Support Manager works with Directors to identify corporate and directorate-specific priority learning areas with a view to planning the range of briefing sessions and workshops that are delivered in-house by council officers.

At the same time, Members are asked to identify their individual learning needs, either by completing questionnaires and surveys issued by the working group, or by opting to attend personal development planning meetings with the Member Support Manager. The surveys include questions about preferred venues and timeslots for face to face development events, as the working group is aware that these are potential barriers to learning.

Mark Palmer has indicated that a response rate of 60% or above is needed to demonstrate that member development is member-led. In 2007/08, the overall response rate was just over 50%, although this varied considerably within the political groups. It is important that this figure is improved this year and Governance committee is asked to support the working group in that process by encouraging all members to participate.

As soon as the target number of responses is received, the Member Support Manager will issue this year's annual development programme. A reminder of the in-house events offered in 2007/08 is included at Appendix Four. Governance committee is asked to identify any new topics that it would like to see included in the 2008/09 programme.

### 3.8.3 Reviewing development needs associated with the new constitution

A development programme to support members' transition to our new governance arrangements was designed last year and has been rolling throughout 2008. All political groups have been offered political group mentoring, a series of Scrutiny skills workshops run by the Institute of Local Government Studies was offered to all members in March and senior officers have provided numerous briefings to political group meetings and Leaders' group.

Democratic Services have offered advice and support to members regarding the procedural aspects and will be providing a workshop on this on 2 July 2008.

### 3.8.4 Promoting Local Democracy and Citizenship

Local Democracy week is held in October each year, and in 2007, the working group piloted a Children's Question Time. This generated very positive feedback from those involved, and the city's schools and Sixth Form colleges have asked us to provide a bigger event this year.

In addition to the normal Question Time format of panel and audience, Democratic Services and the Youth Advice and Participation Team will offer voluntary sector partners exhibition space so that they can raise awareness of the support available to young people. Panel members will include councillors, those who provide front line children's services, police and health representatives and the Brighton and Hove bus company.

- 3.9 If the work identified above is completed successfully, and if the assessors' requirements are met in September, the council will be awarded charter status for a period of three years, after which a further light touch assessment is needed to check that there is ongoing commitment to the charter and its standards. In the event that any gaps against the standard are identified by the assessors, they will work with the working group in compiling an action plan to address those gaps.
- 3.10 Regular updates on member development will be provided to Governance committee together with a more detailed annual report.

## 4. **CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The Member development working group has cross-party representation and its representatives consult their political group colleagues on a regular basis.

## 5. **FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

### Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications arising out of this report. A budget of £21000 has been identified for 2008/09 Brighton and Hove City Council member development activities and the Pan Sussex event referred to is funded from Sussex Improvement Partnership funds.

Finance officer consulted: Patrick Rice 16 June 2008

### Legal Implications:

- 5.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Lawyer consulted: Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis 6 June 2008

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 There are no equalities implications arising from this report

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report

Crime and Disorder implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management implications:

- 5.6 There are no Risk & Opportunity Management Implications arising from this report.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 There are no corporate or citywide implications arising from this report.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

- (1) Charter standards and summary of work completed against those standards
- (2) Charter assessment schedule: 25 September 2008
- (3) Evidence that the Charter assessment team will look for in all assessment interviews
- (4) Summary of development events run in house in 2007/08

### **Background Documents**

1. Member development annual report to Policy & Resources committee 03/04/08
2. Member development update report to Policy & Resources committee 29/11/07
3. Member development update report to Policy & Resources committee 18/01/07
4. Member development update report to Policy & Resources committee 19/04/06
5. 2007/08 Member development programme (available to Members in the teamroom and from the Member Support Manager on request)

