

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

DECISION

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: WEDNESDAY, 23 MARCH 2011
title: NORTH WEST MEMBER CHARTER
submitted by: HEAD OF HR
principal author: MICHELLE SMITH

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To ask Members to recommend sign up to the North West Member Development Charter.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions:

- Council's Ambitions: The knowledge and skills of our Members underpin all aspects of their role as key decision-makers and leaders for the Council and the community. It is important that Members have a broad range of knowledge and skills, can use them effectively in all areas of their work and as a consequence contribute to achievement of the Council's ambitions.
- Community Objectives: Development of Members ensures that they have the requisite skills to support the residents of the borough.
- Corporate Priorities: See above.
- Other considerations: None.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In 1999 the North West Employers' Organisation (NWEO) agreed a regional strategy on Member Development. The strategy was developed by a regional task group, which was made up of seven Elected Members. The regional strategy has three elements:

- Gaining commitment.
- Regional provision.
- Involving Members.

2.2 The concept of a charter was born out of a desire to encourage commitment to Member Development and reward those authorities that had demonstrated that commitment. The North West Charter for Member Development provides tangible evidence of a local authority's commitment to long-term investment in the development of its Elected Members.

2.3 The Charter operates at two levels. Firstly, local authorities sign a declaration to show their commitment to the principles of the Charter; secondly, following an external assessment, local authorities are awarded the Charter to show they have demonstrated their commitment in practice and have all the required elements in place.

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2.4 The Charter has six elements against which an authority is assessed:

- Having a statement of intent.
- Ensuring that all Elected Members are made aware of training and development opportunities.
- Having a process to identify individual development needs which involves Members.
- Having a strategy to meet the training and development needs of Elected Members.
- Having an Officer allocated to assist Members and groups in identifying needs and providing information on resources.
- Implementing the strategy locally.

A more detailed outline of these elements is outlined at Appendix 1.

3. ISSUES

- 3.1 The Council originally signed up to the Charter in March 2000, but has made limited progress towards formal accreditation since that date.
- 3.2 However, over the last 12 – 18 months we have worked hard to generally revitalise Member Development across the Council as evidenced by the increased involvement in training that is reported to this Committee each cycle in the Training Report.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive and myself have recently met with representatives of North West Employers' Organisation (NWEO), to re-visit the Charter process and to re-consider our position regarding commitment to the Charter. We are currently one of only three authorities in the North West who have not signed up to the Charter.
- 3.4 NWEO are very keen for all authorities to sign up to the Charter to show a dedicated commitment to providing development support for Elected Members. In addition, they believe that the actual process of working through the six key points of the Charter is a useful organisational development exercise and can reap its own benefits without necessarily seeking formal accreditation.
- 3.5 Given that a new Council is to be elected in May, now may be the time to re-commit to working towards the Charter and put in place some processes and procedures which will support the role of new and existing Elected Members over the next four years and beyond.
- 3.6 If Members agree to re-commit I would recommend that Personnel Committee take on responsibility for the Charter and that its members take on the role of 'Member Champions' to encourage engagement with the process and promote the importance of Member Development to colleagues. In addition, it would be useful to create a small working group of 2/3 members of this committee, plus myself and Olwen Heap - Administration Officer, to move the Charter forward and monitor progress.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
 - Resources: No financial implications.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal: None.

- Political: There are no political implications.
- Reputation: Achievement of the award will enhance our reputation as a good employer, and demonstrate that our Elected Members are adequately and appropriately skilled to meet the needs of their communities.

5. **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Receive the report.

Personnel Committee sign up to the North West Member Development Charter on behalf of the Council.

5.2 A small group of representatives from Personnel Committee meet with the Head of HR and Administration Officer, to progress the Charter.

MICHELLE SMITH
HEAD OF HR

For further information please ask for Michelle Smith, extension 4402.