

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Environmental Services Portfolio Holder 27 July 2010
AUTHOR/S: Executive Director Corporate Services / Acting Legal & Democratic Services Manager

ACHIEVING MEMBER CHARTER STATUS

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Portfolio Holder on the process for signing-up and then achieving the IDeA Member Training Charter.
2. This is not a key decision, but has been brought to this meeting to allow the Portfolio Holder to consider whether the Council should sign-up to, and/or strive to achieve, the IDeA Member Training Charter.

Recommendations

3. It is **recommended** that the Portfolio Holder:
 - (a) Agree to sign-up to the Member Development Charter, in accordance with the Council's stated aims, but not commit any extra funding to the project at this time.
 - (b) Ask for regular updates on Member Development and then consider whether to allocate extra resources to achieving Charter status.

Background

4. The 11th Council action for 2010/11 is: "We will sign up to the Member Development Charter to enable Members to develop skills to meet new challenges for local government."
5. The budget for Seminars and Courses for 2010/11 is £5,080. Following training courses on planning and employment there is approximately £1,000 left in the budget.

Considerations

6. There is no cost to signing up to the Member Development Charter and in the East of England 31 Councils have signed-up to the Charter, but only 10 have achieved Charter Status.
7. If the Council signs up to the Charter it would be expected to strive to achieve Charter status by first improving its existing procedures and then by being independently assessed. The assessment would be carried out by the South East Employers, who state that for £3,000 it will guide the authority through the assessment process, and carry out the assessment itself. The Council would have three years from signing-up to the Charter, to being assessed. In the past the East of England Regional Assembly has helped to fund the process, but it is currently unclear if the Council would be able

to access these funds, which presumably now reside with the East of England Local Government Association.

8. There are three challenges that need to be addressed if the IDeA Member Training Charter is to be adopted:
 - Budget: There is only £1,000 left in the Member Training Budget for 2010/11. If the Council is to make a serious attempt to achieve member training status, more funding will be required.
 - Resources: Following restructuring throughout the Council it may be difficult to allocate enough officer time towards adopting the charter.
 - Perceived member apathy: despite communication by e-mail and by letter only 16 Councillors returned the recent questionnaire. 27 out of 57 Councillors attended no training courses in 2009/10. This includes those provided in-house.
9. If the Member Training Charter is to be adopted then more funds will have to be vired to the Seminar and Courses budget to
 - Pay £3,000 to the SEE to guide the authority through the process; and to
 - Ensure an adequate budget to instigate the necessary improvements to achieve the Charter.
10. In addition to the extra funding, extra officer time will also have to be allocated to the process to ensure that the Council achieves Charter status.

Options

11. The Portfolio Holder can
 - (a) Decide not to sign-up to the Charter at this time.
 - (b) Agree to sign-up to the Member Development Charter, in accordance with the Council's stated aims, but not commit any extra funding to the project at this time.
 - (c) Agree to sign-up to the Member Development Charter and instruct officers to allocate sufficient funds and resources to strive to achieve Charter Status.

Implications

12. Financial	There is no cost for signing-up to the Charter, but to realistically strive to achieve Charter status the Council will need to pay SEE £3,000 and then allocate sufficient funds to pay for the improvements adopted.
Legal	None
Staffing	Officer time will be required to strive to adopt the Charter
Risk Management	None
Equal Opportunities	There would need to be equality of opportunity for all Member training courses
Climate Change	None

Consultations

13. No consultation has taken place.

Effect on Strategic Aims

14. Signing up to the Member Charter is one of the Council's actions for 2010/11 and comes under Aim A: We Are Committed To Being A Listening Council, Providing First-Class Services Accessible to All.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Regional IDeA Charter Accreditation Guidelines – Attached at Appendix 1.

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