

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Environmental Services Portfolio Holder 17 January 2012

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director (Operational Services) / Legal and Democratic Services Manager

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Purpose

1. To update the Portfolio Holder on the Member Development Programme. This is not a key decision, but is a standing item on the Portfolio Holder's meeting agenda.

Recommendation

2. That the Portfolio Holder note the report.

Background

3. Recent key dates for Member Development:
 - (a) 10 August 2010: Environmental Services Portfolio Holder established cross-party Member Development Task and Finish Group;
 - (b) 10 November 2010: signed commitment to achieve Quality Charter Status for Elected Member Development within the next three years;
 - (c) 14 April 2011: Member Development Strategy 2011-2014 adopted by Council;
 - (d) 10 November 2011: Organisational Development Strategy adopted by Cabinet;
 - (e) 15 November 2011: Environmental Services Portfolio Holder agreed Quality Charter Status assessment visit for Tuesday 24 January 2012.

Considerations

4. The Member Charter Status assessment visit will take place one week after the Portfolio Holder's meeting and recent member development work has focussed on this. The Council's portfolio of documentary evidence has been submitted to the assessment team and briefing sessions for those councillors and officers to be interviewed have been held on 12 and 16 January 2012. South East Employers, the organisation which conducts the assessment and awards Charter Status, intends to provide confirmation of the outcome at the end of the assessment visit next week, with a detailed report sent to the authority within a month.
5. The Cambridgeshire Member Development Network (MDN), comprising the lead officers for member development at Cambridgeshire authorities (and one authority from northwest Essex), held its inaugural meeting on 8 December 2011 to agree terms of reference and a charging policy for external training:
 - (a) The MDN will meet quarterly to discuss operational issues, and lead members for member development will be invited to attend any meetings where strategic issues are on the agenda;
 - (b) Information sharing will be through the LGA's Communities of Practice (CoP) website, where a Cambridgeshire Member Development Network CoP has been created. Lead members will be invited to join;
 - (c) All MDN meetings will be hosted at South Cambridgeshire Hall in Cambourne;

- (d) Each participating authority will be charged a proportion of the overall cost of an event, the proportion to be determined by the total cost of the event divided by the number of confirmed attendees from that authority. Authorities will also be charged for non-attendance by any of their councillors who had previously confirmed their attendance;
- (e) Where officers are delivering briefings, or where training is available at no charge to the host authority, each participating authority will be charged a nominal fee to cover the cost of catering, details of this charge to be included in invitations to the event; and
- (f) To reduce administrative costs, authorities will be invoiced quarterly for any costs incurred by their members attending training organised through the MDN.

Speed reading training was organised through the Cambridgeshire MDN on 5 and 6 January 2012, with eighteen members attending from six authorities. East Cambridgeshire District Council's recent Treasury Management training was also opened to Cambridgeshire MDN authorities, and attended by several SCDC members. Further joint events are being planned in response to requests from councillors for training in specific topics.

- 6. The 2012/13 member development programme is scheduled to go to Cabinet on 9 February 2012, by which time the majority of committees and Portfolio Holders will have agreed their schedule of meetings, allowing events to be programmed on the same days to minimise individual journeys to and from the Council offices, and to maximise attendance.
- 7. Progress towards development of an e-learning system was delayed earlier in the year by the retirement of the lead officer, but officers have continued to explore ways to deliver e-learning for those councillors who have indicated a preference for this training method. The Council is subscribed to Learning Pool e-learning and members of the Democratic Services team will be attending training in 2012 to learn how to design custom modules, including e-learning for councillors. The Member Development Task and Finish Group, at its 23 November 2011 meeting, agreed that its members should gauge interest and encourage councillors' commitment to e-learning before any further consideration of an electronic package to administer members' individual personal development programmes.

Implications

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| 8. Financial | It will be recommended to Council that the annual member training budget of £5,080 be increased to £5,300 from 1 April 2012. It is anticipated that more opportunities for training and development will become available through the Cambridgeshire Member Development Network, reducing the overall cost to any one authority to organise and host any event. |
| Legal | None specific. |
| Staffing | Achieving Charter Status involves officer time. The officers involved are the Democratic Services Team Leader and the Member Services Officer, as well as any officers delivering briefings. |
| Risk Management | None specific. |
| Equality and Diversity | The Council's Equality and Diversity Officer has been contacted with regard to ensuring that member training is accessible for all Councillors. |
| Equality Impact | No. |

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| Assessment (EQIA) completed | An EQIA relating specifically to member development is not considered to be necessary, but the EQIA on the timing of meetings is applicable to the timing of training and development events. |
| Climate Change | Introduction of e-learning and scheduling of training events on days when other meetings are scheduled will reduce the number of car journeys. Members who have confirmed that they will attend a course are sent a pre-course self-assessment, which asks if they could car share with other attendees and officers undertake to make car sharing arrangements if possible. |

Consultations

9. Consultation has been undertaken with other authorities which have already achieved Member Development Charter Status and with other authorities working towards accreditation. Consultation has also been undertaken with the Cambridgeshire Member Development Network, which includes Braintree District Council, Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and Peterborough City Council. (There has been no response yet to the invitations sent to Fenland District Council and Uttlesford District Council.)

Consultation with Children and Young People

10. None.

Effect on Strategic Aims

11. Achieving the Member Development Charter will assist the Council in achieving Aim A (iv) "achieving improved customer satisfaction with our services". The Council's new long-term vision, currently out for public consultation, includes an action relating specifically to Member Development: "Invest in employees and members through officer development and the Member Charter" as part of the aim to "listen to and engage with residents, parishes and businesses to ensure we deliver first class services and value for money".

Conclusions / Summary

12. The Council has made great strides in embedding member development and delivering a focussed training programme which meets members' needs.

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

Member Development Strategy 2011-2014
 Charter Status Self-Assessment
 Member Development Updates to Environmental Services Portfolio Holder's meetings

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