



Corporate Management Team

Report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services

Member Development

Summary

1. This report seeks approval to sign up to the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) / Local Government Yorkshire and Humber (LGYH) Member Development Charter, and to implement the necessary changes to achieve charter status and improve Member Development at the Council.

Background

2. Member development is the term used for training and development opportunities, activities and programmes offered to elected members by councils. It has been highlighted through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) as an area that requires improvement at York. Member development is also an increasing priority at a national level, with new legislation likely to be introduced in the 2008/9 parliamentary session.

Member development as a priority for Local Government

3. The Councillors Commission was set up by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to seek ways of encouraging suitably able, qualified and representative people to be candidates to serve as councillors and make recommendations for their retention and development in office.
4. In the Commission's Report December 2007, it states:
'The range of skills required by councillors is perhaps broader than it used to be, covering both a very astute strategic sense and sound political judgement to decision making, especially for executive councillors, as well as more local sensitivities and softer communication skills too. It should be the aspiration that a wide range of such skills should be developed in all councillors but at the very least, we should be looking for a balance across the council membership as a whole and across wards and divisions too.'

5. The report makes recommendations that:
'The IDeA / Local Government Association (LGA) should develop a Charter regarding minimum standards of member support which local authorities should agree to provide.'

'As part of the support Charter, there should be an expectation on councillors that they take up appropriate training and development opportunities offered to them by their local authority.'

'Councils should support councillors to develop their skills by offering a flexible and time-sensitive induction programme, which utilises a range of learning methods; an option for 'refresher' and 'ongoing' training for all councillors; personal development plans regarding development needs and opportunities; opportunities to be partnered with mentors within and/or outside one's own council; self and peer review schemes leading to tailored support packages for councillors; training in approaches to community development.'

6. In its response to the report, central Government agreed to carry forward all of the above recommendations to the Community Empowerment, Housing and Economic Regeneration (CEHER) Bill, which will be introduced during the 2008/9 parliamentary session.

Member development as a priority for York

7. York's Corporate Assessment report (June 2008) states that 'ensuring that councillors are trained and equipped to carry out their roles by improving attendance at training programmes' is an area that requires particular focus.
8. As a response to the CPA, the above area of focus was included as part of the single improvement plan. On 30 June 2008, Executive approved the areas for improvement set out in the single improvement plan and the associated projected plans outlined in the 'Corporate Assessment response and action planning report'. The Director of Neighbourhood Services took on the lead for this area of the single improvement plan.

The IDeA / LGYH Member Development Charter

9. Member development is also recognised as good practice by the IDeA and 'essential if local government is to thrive and prosper'. Member development charters which hold to a common set of principles have therefore been set up in all regions. The charter in Yorkshire and Humber is jointly awarded by the IDeA and LGYH. Councils that are signed up to the charter must provide an action plan based on:
 - being fully committed to developing elected members in order to achieve the council's aims and objectives
 - adopting a member-led strategic approach to elected member development

- having a member learning and development plan in place that clearly identifies the difference development activities will make
- seeing that learning and development is effective in building capacity
- addressing wider development matters to promote work-life balance and citizenship

When a council can demonstrate it has achieved charter standard, an onsite assessment would be carried out by a small, trained team of elected members and/or officers. Providing the council meets the standard it is then awarded charter status. The cost for assessment is covered by funding from the North Yorkshire Improvement Partnership (NYIP).

10. 182 councils in England have signed up for and made a formal commitment to the Member Development Charter, with 81 of these being awarded charter status.
11. Feedback from other councils in Yorkshire who have developed schemes in line with the Charter have concluded that as a result members have gained greater confidence in their community leadership role, better understanding of finance and performance management issues, improved presentation skills, greater empathy and understanding, the ability to better manage a demanding workloads and greater ability to deal with the public.

Current member development activities at City of York Council

12. Member development is led by Democratic Services, by the Senior Member Support Officer, although this is only part of the post holders current role. Most other authorities have a dedicated officer whose full role is to oversee member development. The current budget for member development is £10,000 p.a. for all Members. The breakdown of how the budget is spent differs year upon year. In the last year, additional funding has been granted from the NYIP for mentoring and IT development for members but there is currently no funding available from these sources from 2009 onwards.
13. The last specific programme of member development activities ran from May to October 2007. This included 20 group training sessions on a range of subjects. Nine were delivered by officers and external training organisations were brought in to deliver the other eleven. Since then, activities have been organised on an ad-hoc basis. Another specific programme is intended for 2009.
14. Training sessions delivered either by external sources or officers were attended by about 12 people on average. This is adequate but could be improved, and works out at an average of about £70 per participant for training sessions delivered by external sources.

15. Members are also able to enroll for the European Computer Drivers License (ECDL), with 8 Members enrolling in the last year. There is also the opportunity for Members to attend relevant external courses, which range from £50 for a Community Empowerment event to £2,445 for all 4 modules of the IdeA Leadership Academy¹.
16. About 15 training and development books and CDs are also available for loan. There has not been much take up in the use of these but they provide an alternative learning resource for those unable to attend training sessions in person.
17. Approximately one and a half days of mentoring each for 5 members was provided last year. This was covered by funding from the NYIP.
18. Development appraisal (or Personal Development Plan) interviews, where members training needs are identified and analysed to deliver suitable training opportunities, are currently offered primarily to newly elected Councillors and returning Councillors taking on new roles. They are conducted by Eleanor Haywood from the North East Employers Association. Sixteen Members took up the opportunity to have development appraisals, costing £1,560.
19. While there are a range of member development opportunities available, the current programme would not meet the IDeA / LGYH Member Development Charter criteria in a number of areas. These include having a strategy led by Members; a structured process for regularly assessing elected member development needs at the individual and council wide levels; and systems in place that effectively evaluate the benefits from member development and identify areas for improvement.
20. It is therefore recommended that a strategic and evaluative Member-led scheme is developed to build and extend the skills and knowledge of members, encourage increased attendance and provide activities that are tailored to the needs of the individual and the council as a whole.

The way forward

21. The proposed Member Development Scheme would go live after the Annual Meeting in 2009. It would continue to be led by Democratic Services; and would be based on an annual programme of development appraisals for all members. An all-party Member Development Working Group would decide training and development activities for the year ahead which were appropriate to the training needs highlighted through the development appraisals. At the end of each event and through development appraisals, feedback would be given to inform the plan for the year ahead. Annex 1 shows how the scheme would operate.

¹ See paragraph 37 for more details. 1 Member attended in the previous financial year.

Member Development Working Group

22. The Member Development Working Group would be set up to make decisions about the Member Development Strategy and each year's Member Development Programme. The group would be made up of one Member from each of the main three political parties and supported by Democratic Services.

Development Appraisals

23. Development appraisals are an essential part of member development as they facilitate training to be tailored to the needs and preferred learning methods of individual Members and the council as a whole. An example development appraisal form can be found in annex 2.

Development appraisals would be conducted with all Members on a confidential basis. These would either be carried out by the Deputy Chief Executive or by an external consultant such as Eleanor Haywood from North East Regional Employers Association. Development appraisals would include competency development gap analysis against the IDeA's 'Skill framework for elected members' (Annex 3) to identify Member individual training and development needs and would be used to determine the year's Member Development Programme. All Members would be encouraged to have development appraisals, and the Member Development Group would monitor take-up.

24. An additional option, as well as the development appraisals, would be for Executive and Shadow Executive Members to be given 360-degree feedback performance appraisals. All Executive Members would be 'rated' by the leader, the Chief Executive, all their Executive colleagues and five other people they work with (including local public service board partners, directors and heads of service from services in their portfolios). The Executive Members would then receive an individual report of the collated feedback. With the exception of comments from the leader, comments would not be attributed to individuals in the feedback to Members. This is regarded as good practice by the IDeA. It is probably beyond the means of the current budget but is worth considering for the future.

Members Development Annual Programme

25. The programme would be informed by development appraisals, Member feedback and linked to the Corporate Plan so that it contributes towards corporate aims and objectives. It would be decided by the Member Development Working Group.

The programme would include a range of training and development activities and take into account work / life balance issues through using e-learning or distance learning methods and repeated training activities in the evenings where appropriate. Each training and development activity

would have a stated purpose and objectives that focus on measured results. Specific training for specific committees would be provided. Members would receive an annual plan of training and development events and also a monthly email reminding them what events are happening in the month ahead.

26. Members would be required to complete a minimum number of training and development activities each calendar year. It is suggested that non-Executive Members should attend a minimum of 8 training and development activities each year and Executive and Shadow Executive Members should attend 12. This would include pre-council seminars and other development opportunities such as shadowing officers. The amount would be agreed, on the basis of the annual programme decided, and monitored by the Member Development Working Group.

Possible activities

While training activities would be based upon feedback from development appraisals, a possible training programme could include:

27. Training sessions delivered by officers – already available. Training sessions from officers on subjects such as 'Community and Corporate Strategies' and 'Effective Partnership Working' or specific skills training. Sessions could also be recorded or videoed to provide alternative learning methods through CDs, DVDs or mp3 and video downloads.
28. An internal e-learning solution on the intranet - The sessions could alternatively be delivered through developing an e-learning solution on the intranet. This has worked well at other councils for training which is common to both officers and members, such as health and safety training.
29. Training sessions delivered by external sources in-house – already available. Training sessions on subjects such as 'Engaging Communities' or 'An Introduction to Planning Law', or specific skills training, from specialist training organisations or through Local Government Yorkshire and Humber.
30. ECDL – already available.
31. Modern Councillor e-learning Courses – About 30 minute e-learning courses on 13 topics including 'Community Leadership', 'Risk Management', 'Equality & Diversity' and 'Chairing Meetings'. A license available for all local authorities in Yorkshire and Humber has been purchased by LGYH.
32. Familiarisation Sessions – The opportunity for Members to meet staff within relevant divisions of the Council and find out about their work. This could include job shadowing.

33. Internal mentoring – Members are currently able to sign up to the internal mentoring programme, with one member signing up to be a mentor. This could be extended to encourage mentoring within political parties.
34. IDeA Councillor Workbooks - Distance learning material for councillors on 16 topics including 'Supporting Constituents with Complex Issues', 'Member and Officer Relations', 'Local Area Agreements' and 'Media & Communications' for Councillors. Aimed particularly at new councillors, these should take 2-3hours each to complete in a single session or in a series of short periods.
35. Public Sector Modernisation Postgraduate Certificate / Diploma / Masters at the University of Huddersfield - designed to meet the needs of managers, practitioners and councillors in the rapidly changing local governance sector. It is designed to be flexible and fit into the busy lifestyles of part-time students with work and family responsibilities. The course offers a flexible progression of awards to allow students to choose the appropriate level. Modules include Public Sector Modernisation, Communication, Community and Leadership, Managing Performance and Accountability, Applied Research Project (exploring the impact of modernisation on your workplace through a piece of applied research) and an academic dissertation. Elected members from Kirklees, Calderdale and Leeds have completed the qualifications and given positive feedback.
36. External mentoring – through the IDeA and Local Government Yorkshire and Humber.
37. IDeA Leadership Academy – already available. provided by AHA (Andrew Holder Associates) Consultancy and Warwick Business School for leaders of councils; leaders of political groups; cabinet and scrutiny committee Members; scrutiny chairs; and opposition spokespeople. Only one Councillor from each Council is allowed to attend each programme. The modules look at personal, political, strategic and community leadership and aim to develop participants' leadership style, give them confidence and create a support network among peers in other councils and parties.
38. Local networking events – Attend networking events organised by Local Government Yorkshire and Humber.
39. Induction training for new Members – A suitable induction programme would need to be decided ahead of elections in 2011.

Evaluation and Feedback

40. As already occurs for formal training activities, end of event questionnaires for each development activity would be carried out to assess the effectiveness of the training given and taken into account when planning future programmes. End of year personal reflection and feedback would be included as part of each development appraisal to inform the next year's member development programme. Feedback on courses Members

have attended would be reported back annually to Council. The training sessions which Members have attended would also be included on their attendance page on the Council website.

Consultation

41. Consultation has been undertaken with party leaders and key officers in drafting this policy. Excellent CPA and beacon authorities, Local Government Yorkshire and Humber and the IDeA have also been consulted to identify good practice.

Options

42. The options for Members to consider are whether to:

- a) Approve sign up to the IDeA / LGYH Member Development Charter and begin implementation of the outlined Members Development Scheme (paragraphs 21-40). The specific programme of activities would be decided upon by the cross-party Member Development Working Group based upon Personal Development Plans and corporate objectives. It is intended that the existing budget would be sufficient to cover any changes required to meet the Charter, although this would be reviewed by the Member Development Working Group.

Or

- b) Continue providing Member development as it is (see paragraph 12-18) and not sign up to the IDeA / LGYH Member Development Charter.

Analysis

43. Advantages of option a) over option b)

- Ensures elected Members are fully equipped and supported to carry out their roles and responsibilities successfully.
- Enables Members to extend their skills and knowledge, to serve their communities and help build capacity within the team.
- The Corporate Assessment report states that 'ensuring that councillors are trained and equipped to carry out their roles by improving attendance at training programmes' is an area that requires particular focus.
- The Member development charter criteria are recognised as good practice. 182 councils are currently signed up to the IDeA charter.
- Supports corporate values of encouraging improvement in everything we do, supporting and developing people and providing strong leadership.

- A Member led strategy would potentially deliver a more relevant programme and encourage greater attendance at training and development events.
- Development appraisals made available to all Members would ensure training was suited to specific needs and learning styles. The programme would be shaped by a range of Members rather than just those with less experience and would encourage continual development. Since the training activities would be a direct result of what Members asked for in many cases, there would be greater incentive and obligation to attend.
- Effectively evaluating the benefits from member development and identifying areas for improvement would ensure that activities provide good value for money and successfully build capacity.

44. Costs of option a)

- Foreseeable financial costs could include the increased cost of development appraisals for all members if these were delivered externally. Development activities could be more expensive, but they could also be less expensive depending on the programme the Member Development Steering Group decided upon.
- Staff time in delivering training, and possibly in delivering development appraisals if delivered internally.
- Member time in attending training activities. However, this time should equip Members to carry out their roles and responsibilities more effectively.

Corporate Priorities

45. The Member Development Scheme supports the following corporate priorities, directional statements and values:

- The council will provide strong leadership for the city using partnerships to shape and deliver the Community Strategy for the city.
- Encouraging improvement in everything we do
- Supporting and developing people
- Providing strong leadership
- To ensure all those who live and work in York have the education and skill that will enable them to play an active part in society and contribute to the life of the city. (York Without Walls)

Enhanced training and development will also contribute to better implementation of other corporate priorities.

Implications

- 46. **Financial:** See paragraph 44.
- 47. **Human Resources:** Any additional staff duties would be covered by existing job posts and descriptions.
- 48. **Equalities:** Signing up to the charter would encourage the delivery of 'equality of opportunity and access to learning and development'.
- 49. **Legal:** None
- 50. **Crime and Disorder:** None
- 51. **Information Technology (IT):** If an intranet e-learning solution was required, this would need to be developed.
- 52. **Property:** None
- 53. **Other:** None

Risk Management

- 54. In compliance with the Council's risk management strategy, there are no risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the following recommendations:

- 55. To sign up to the IDeA Member Development Charter.
- 56. To implement the outlined Member Development Scheme. (Paragraphs 21-40)
- 57. To delegate responsibility to decide a Member Development Programme, appropriate training and development activities and budget to the Member Development Working Group.

Contact Details

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Report Approved **Date**

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Specialist Implications Officer(s)

None

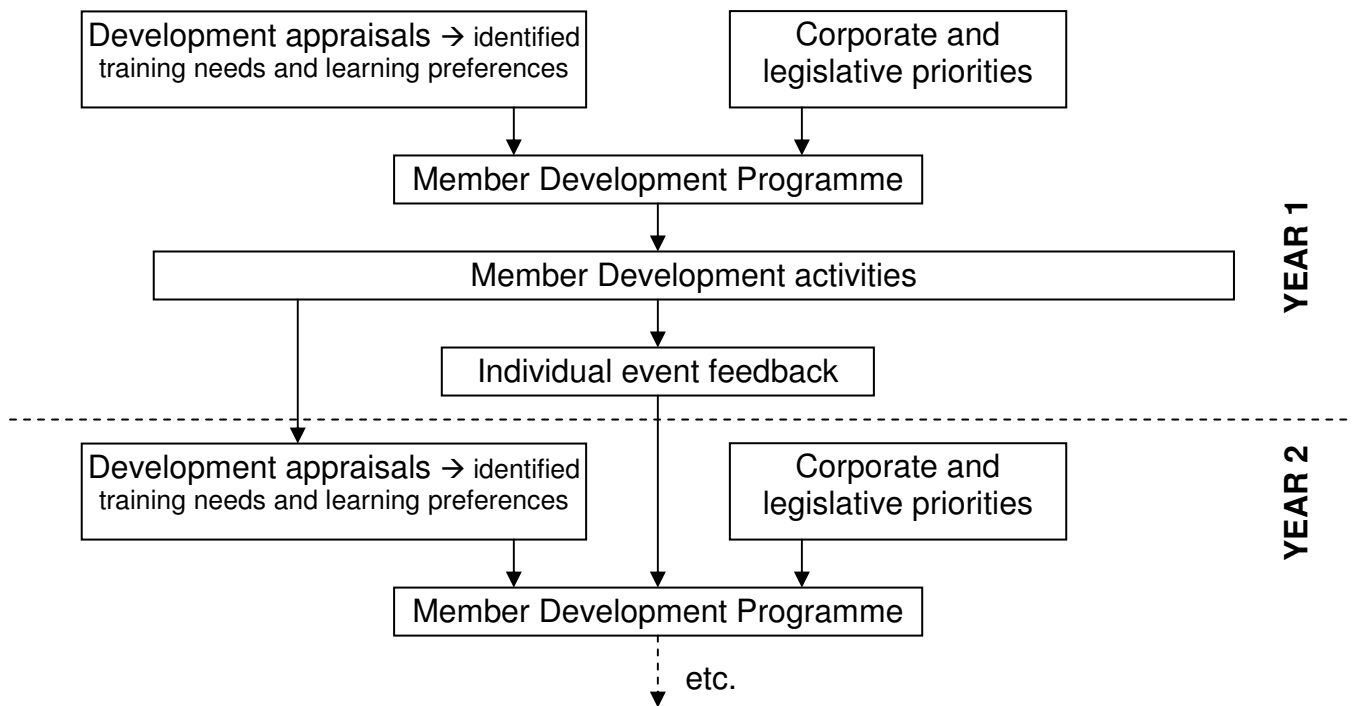
Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Annex 1 – The proposed Member Development Scheme



Annex 2 – Development Appraisal

Development Appraisal

Name:	Ward:
Executive Responsibility:	Chair:
Committees:	Other representations:
Outside representations:	
Taking stock	
1. In carrying out my roles and responsibilities as a councillor I have the strengths of:	
2. The areas where I would most like to develop my performance are:	
3. I prefer to learn by: (learning method, time, location)	

4. The development activities I have found most beneficial in the last year are:

Looking forward

5. My priorities over the next 12 months are:

6. The changes/challenges I am facing over the next 12 months are:

7. I need/want to develop the following knowledge, skills attitudes, behaviour to help me meet those challenges and priorities:

Committed activities

8. Development activities which are already committed (inside or outside the Council)

Dates

Development objective	To be met by: (training course, guided reading, open learning package, structured experience, mentoring etc)	These people / resources can help me:	When I want to achieve it by:	I will know whether I've achieved it through: