

## **Member Development Steering Group**

**14 October 2009**

Report of the Head of Civic Legal and Democratic Services

### **Local Democracy Week Event – A Councillor? Who, Me?**

#### **Summary**

This report informs Members of the forthcoming event ‘A Councillor? Who, Me?’, one of three Local Democracy initiatives being run in conjunction with the National ‘Local Democracy Week’ theme. It explains how these initiatives actively contribute to one of the themes required to achieve iDEA Member Charter Status, that being actively encouraging citizenship.

#### **Background**

##### **A Councillor? Who, Me? Event**

1. At the last meeting in June 2009, the Steering Group supported the proposal to hold an event to encourage members of the community to become involved in local democracy. The event being ‘A Councillor? Who, Me?’ would help promote citizenship and community leadership which is one of the actions in the Member Development Charter Implementation Plan.
2. A course facilitator has been organised who delivered training events in the past for City of York Council and successfully run similar events with other Local Authorities including Hull City Council.
3. The seminar is aimed encouraging residents from all walks of life who may wish to consider becoming a councillor in the future to learn more about the role and remit of the Council and it’s elected members. The seminar will identify some of the barriers faced by prospective councillors and make suggestions as to what steps the Council could take to make the role of a Councillor more ‘user friendly’.
4. The programme may include discussion of the following and will be tailored to City of York Council:
  - What is “The Council”
  - What is the role of a Councillor?

- What skills do Councillors require?
- What are the Council's/Councillor's priorities?
- Could you make a difference?

The session will include an opportunity for delegates to hear first hand from current City of York councillors what it's like to be a councillor and what a typical day involves.

5. Marketing and Communications have produced a poster advertising the event which has been displayed on 50 First York service buses and handled a poster and leaflet campaign which has distributed to Council Receptions, Libraries, larger York businesses and medical surgeries.
6. The cost of advertising has been met by the Electoral Administrator who has a delivery service budget set aside specifically for promoting engagement. Other costs are being met by the Democratic Services budget.
7. The event will be held in the Mansion House on 26 October 7pm to 9.30pm.
8. Other events include the official launch of York's 'Youth Council' in the Council Chamber. After the formal business of the launch has taken place, Youth Council Members will take part in a number of activities including a House of Commons debate. Finally, arrangements are underway for a local GCSE student to become 'A Councillors Apprentice' during Local Democracy Week. This would involve shadowing the Executive Member for Children and Young People to enable the student to gain an insight into the role of an elected member.

## **Consultation**

9. Other relevant departments have been consulted on their approach to the events taking place, resulting in the Chair of Member Development Steering Group being asked to corporately present these initiatives.

## **Options**

- 10 To note the report and to add any comments with regard to the running or marketing of the 'A Councillor Who Me?' event.

## **Analysis**

- 11 The event reported above is being presented as part of an extended Local Democracy Week and will contribute towards evidencing the Council's commitment to actively encourage citizenship whilst publicising the role of elected members as community leaders. This and the other events mentioned in this report are aimed at promoting local democracy and encouraging under represented groups to take up office.

## **Corporate Strategy 2009/12**

12 The 'A Councillor? Who, Me? Event fits with the Council's ambitions in its refreshed Corporate Strategy to make York an inclusive City, making sure that all citizens, regardless of race, age, disability, sexual orientation, faith or gender feel included in York.

### **Implications**

13 This report is only directly concerned with the implications arising from the 'A Councillor, Who Me?' event.

- **Financial** – Any financial costs associated with the event will be met by Electoral Services and Democratic Services.
- **Human Resources (HR)** – Any HR issues arising from the event relate to trainers and staff support for the event. These arrangements are now in place.
- **Equalities** – This event is aimed at widening the involvement of under represented groups in local decision making and opening up future potential opportunities for all citizens to become leaders of their communities.
- **Legal** – There are no legal implications associated with this report.
- **Crime and Disorder** – There are no crime and disorder implications associated with this report.
- **Information Technology** – There are no Information Technology implications associated with this report.
- **Property** – There are no Property implications associated with this report.

### **Risk Management**

14 This and the other initiatives outlined will prove invaluable in demonstrating the Council's commitment to achieving Charter Status in Member Development. If the Council were not promoting such initiatives there is a risk that insufficient evidence would be available to demonstrate the Council's and Members commitment to promoting citizenship and community leadership.

### **Recommendation**

15 That Member of the Steering Group note the contents of the report.

## Contact Details

**Author:**

Laura Bootland  
Democracy Officer

**Chief Officer Responsible for the report:**

Quentin Baker  
Head of Civic Democratic and Legal Services

Dawn Steel  
Democratic Services Manager

**Report Approved**

**Date**

## Specialist Implications Officer(s)

**Wards Affected:**

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

**Background Papers:**

None.

**Annexes:**

Annexe A – ‘A Councillor? Who, Me?’ Leaflet.