



Local Government  
Yorkshire and  
Humber



# City of York Council



## Assessment Report

November 2010

## 1. Introduction

City of York Council made a formal and public commitment to the development of its elected members, and to the achievement of Charter status in March 2009. They were formally assessed and achieved the Charter for Member Development on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

***Local Government Yorkshire and Humber (LGYH) and Local Government Improvement & Development (formerly the IDeA) are pleased to announce that City of York Council has been assessed against the national standards developed jointly by the IDeA and Regional Employers' Organisations, and is hereby awarded the Charter for Member Development.***

The assessment team comprised

- Councillor Val Slater, City of Bradford Metropolitan Council
- Mike Leitch, Lead Assessor (Y&H Region)
- Karen Weaver, Workforce & OD Services Manager, LGYH
- Kay Sidebottom, Member Development Officer, Leeds City Council

The charter assessment process for City of York Council involved the following stages:

- Completing a detailed self-assessment of the member development process at City of York Council and compiling a portfolio of evidence
- A pre-assessment site visit by Mike Leitch, Karen Weaver and Kay Sidebottom on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2010 to meet with the officer responsible for Councillor Development and her 'line manager' to discuss in detail the self-assessment document, review the portfolio of evidence, and in general the way that member development was structured and delivered by the Council.. The purpose of this visit being to check the readiness of the authority for formal re-assessment.
- A full day formal assessment visit on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2010 during which the assessment team held 1:1 meetings with the Leader of Council, Chief Executive, Head of Civic and Democratic Services, leaders of opposition groups and a cross-section of elected members. In addition, the team interviewed members of the Member Development Steering Group (as a group).

This report represents the team's findings, based on the interviews that took place and documentary information made available before, during and following the site visits. The commitment to achieving the Member Development Charter is entirely voluntary and the judgements are those made by peers against the Charter criteria.

Finally, the assessment team would like to thank **Amanda Oxley** (Senior Member Support Officer) for her hard work and support before and during the assessment visits, and everyone we interviewed during the assessment process for their openness, hospitality and their continued support of the Charter initiative.

## 2. Executive Summary

City of York Council has a **Member Development Strategy** which identifies priorities in line with corporate values and which seeks to ensure that members are engaged and provided with the opportunity to develop and refresh their skills on a continuous basis. An annual programme describes the ways that development interventions will be organised and delivered, which reflects the individual and corporate development needs identified through Personal Development Reviews and other processes.

A cross-party **Member Development Steering Group (MDSG)** ensures that members themselves are engaged in the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of development activity of their peers. Members of that group also act as member development champions, and play a key role in the development and subsequent review of the Member Development Strategy and delivery programme.

At officer level, the **Head of Civic and Democratic Services** has overall corporate responsibility for member development and ensures that this activity is an integral part of the corporate improvement plan and aligned to the Council's Development Strategy and overall Plan. Day-to-day management of member development activities is undertaken by the **Senior Member Support Officer (SMSO)**, working closely with, and supported by her line manager the **Democratic Services Manager**.

**The Standards Committee** receive reports on Member Development prepared by the **SMSO** and **MDWG**.

The Leader, Chief Executive and an overwhelming majority of elected members strongly support the continuous improvement of councillors and recognise the value of a 'member-led' strategy and a the offer of a flexible, comprehensive programme of councillor development activity. Positive indicators included

- The Leader and Chief Executive conveyed the view that Members had become "more confident, knowledgeable and skilled" as a result of the development activities they had undertaken. This had impacted on the overall performance improvement of the Council
- An effective and enthusiastic member development steering group
- Positive feedback regarding the scope and quality of development opportunities
- A willingness to constantly review and subsequently improve the development options and opportunities available to members
- A comprehensive, concise yet easy to read Member Development Strategy

The assessment team were impressed by the enthusiasm and the extremely positive comments expressed by councillors about their development, and equally by the comments of senior officers who alluded to the impact such training had made on individual and corporate performance.

## Annex A

That said, attention is drawn to the following areas where further improvement could be made. These are set out in some detail later in the report together with a set of recommendations. Areas for improvement are summarised as:

- The identification of individual development needs relies predominantly on a PDR process where 1:1 interviews are undertaken by an external consultant, with the additional option of an interview with the Member Development Officer, and supplemented by a 'learning survey'. Although the number of councillors taking advantage of the offer of a PDR have risen year-on-year, the number for 2010/11 is still less than a third of councillors.
- Whilst there is some evidence to suggest that councillors from the authority engage in and share learning through development activity with peers from other councils and organisations, this is an area that can be developed further. Similarly, more could be done in regard to improving organisational learning by developing existing systems to capture the learning outcomes from/ and measure the impact of those activities.
- The evaluation process used for member development, tends to concentrate on feedback relating mainly to quality of delivery. Although quality is important, more needs to be done to link delivery to impact and how to measure individual improvement and community benefit.
- Whilst the proposed programme for the 2011 induction of new members promises to be comprehensive, more could be done in regard to the support and induction of councillors elected at by-elections.
- The Council offers a range of Buddying/Mentoring opportunities to new councillors (mainly within political groups) – feedback suggests that style, approach and quality is inconsistent and a little ad-hoc.

These points are covered in more detail within the body of the comprehensive feedback report which follows.

**Mike Leitch**  
**Lead Assessor (Yorkshire & Humber Region)**

**Cllr Val Slater**  
**City Council**

**Karen Weaver, Workforce & OD Services Manager**  
**Local Government Yorkshire & Humber**

**Kay Sidebottom**  
**Leeds City Council**

**Date: Final draft agreed by City of York Council on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2010**

### 3. COMPREHENSIVE FEEDBACK REPORT

The following comments aim to provide a comprehensive report of the assessment team's findings, as well as providing recommendations to inform the authority's future plans in relation to member development. Comments and recommendations for improvement are made following a series of 'face-to-face' interviews with officers and elected members, supplemented by a review of documentary evidence. Feedback is set out against a four key stage format relating to accepted member development 'good practice' which covers:

- Planning and Policy
- Implementation and Delivery
- Monitoring and Review
- Evaluation

The report concludes with a set of recommendations for further improvement.

#### **Stage One – Planning and Policy**

##### ***The local authority plans and invests in member development to support continuous improvement and to deliver organisational objectives***

City of York Council has clearly made efforts to strengthen the links between its member development delivery programme, and the authority's overall strategic priorities. The authority has in place a member development strategy outlining its approach and commitment to member development and support, and how this relates to corporate objectives. The formulation of a focused annual training programme based on need identified through a structured process seeks to gain impact whilst providing value for money. Regular monitoring by the authority's Standards Committee should ensure that corporate priorities are considered alongside individual development needs and that the council provides the necessary resources to support the strategy.

Corporate responsibility for councilor development lies with a cross-party Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) which is chaired by an executive member (and deputy leader). This group provide the necessary support and leadership to their peers's as well as working closely with the Senior Member Support Officer to ensure that the programme of member development activity was fit for purpose. During the assessment process, they displayed the level of commitment and enthusiasm needed to demonstrate that member development in City of York Council really was 'member led'.

Meetings of the MDSG were held quarterly and well attended. The SMSO worked closely with the chair of the MDSG regarding the agenda for those meetings, with political group representatives tabling issues identified as priority for them as well as providing feedback regarding member development activity. Member development featured regularly on the agenda for group meetings, and the SMSO met with each group leader on a regular basis to discuss identified needs and requests for support. .

The chief executive and other senior officers were able to describe the role of the MDSWG, and how member development was managed and supported, as well as

defining the link between member development and corporate improvement. Regular reports on member development were received by the Standards Committee who held a monitoring role regarding quality etc. Evidence from the latest report indicated a high level of satisfaction by members. As representatives from Town and Parish councils were members of that committee, they had access to information regarding development opportunities being offered by the council, and which were relevant to them.

Since her appointment in 2009, the chief executive (who has a background in organisational development – including member development) has adopted a 'corporate coaching role' for group leaders to ensure that they were 'on message' with the key challenges facing the authority, as well as the options open to the council to address these. She was also keen to ensure that officers clearly understood the political context in which they worked, as well as working to build and maintain mutual trust and respect between officers and members.

There was evidence to suggest that some political groups conducted their own internal discussion with members regarding individual and collective development needs, and it is assumed that those needs were fed into and considered by the MDSG via their respective members of that body. It was also the case that some groups offered their own development activities via national and other programmes organised by their respective political parties. Members were expected to share the learning from external programmes, conferences etc. However, it was not clear how effectively and consistently this was undertaken.

The authority has clearly recognised the importance of investment in member development, and there was evidence to suggest that sufficient funding had been made available to support both individual and corporate development opportunities. They had also worked (in the more recent past) with other local authorities in the North Yorkshire sub-region to ensure that any funding streams for member development were accessed, as well as encouraging members to take advantage of development activities outside the authority ie offered by other local authorities and partner organisations.

The budget appeared to cover activity, and despite severe financial pressure on all budgets, (and without wishing to pre-empt budget decisions in October 2010) the leader of council indicated that they would be held at the present level for the 2011/2012 financial year.

In regard to officer support, the authority has a dedicated Senior Member Support Officer (SMSO) who works closely with colleagues in Democratic Services. This ensures a direct link between member development and support activities. There was evidence to confirm that councillors were aware of her role as first point of contact regarding member development. The SMSO has her own development plan which is set annually through the council's staff appraisal process. However, she also had other (Democratic and Civic) responsibilities which (in the past) had tended to restrict her involvement in activities outside of York. More recently, this level of engagement had increased, and she now plays a full and active part in sub-regional and regional member development networks.

## **Stage Two – Implementation and Delivery**

### ***The local authority delivers effective and timely interventions to achieve its member development priorities whilst promoting and supporting local democracy and community leadership***

Evidence suggests that member development is commissioned, delivered and evaluated in line with a strategy that has been developed in consultation with the MDSG. This framework includes a delivery programme that incorporates

- Induction
- PDP/PDR Process
- Development Activity
- Promoting and Supporting Local Democracy

#### ***Induction***

Councillors are elected to City of York Council in ‘all out’ elections every four years – the next being in May 2011. Whilst this brings many benefits (including continuity), it also means that the council’s induction programme isn’t ‘tested out’ on a regular basis. Whilst evidence provided by a sample of councillors elected at the last election in May 2007 indicate a high level of satisfaction in their induction, others elected at subsequent by-elections were less positive.

During the past months, the MDSG supported by the SMSO and other officers have been reviewing and developing the induction programme, and producing an induction strategy for elections in May 2011. During that process, they have considered good practice examples from other local authorities, and the Leadership Centre for Local Government as well as existing practice. The agenda for the meeting of the MDSG (held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010) included a review of the document ‘The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Guide to Member Induction.’

The councils approach to induction in 2011 will include the provision of information at the pre-election stage. This will be provided through ‘A Councillor - Who Me?’ sessions which are open to prospective candidates and members of the public. These sessions are designed to provide an insight into the day-to-day roles of elected members and the support and training open to them on election. These events will be promoted in September and December 2010. Prospective candidates will also be contacted by letter providing them with advance notice of the induction programme and associated procedures following successful election. Information will also be provided on the Council’s website.

Although still at the ‘draft stage’, it is likely that the induction programme will include the following sessions:

#### **Election Day**

- Welcome letter to be handed to successful candidates (at the count) inviting them to meet the Chief Executive during the course of that week to declare their acceptance of office

- What happens next? – Quick Start Pack issued to successful candidates – including an invitation to the initial induction event (that will involve meeting the directors). Pack will also include contact information re support and development, a copy of the Councillors Guide (code of conduct and declaration of interest) and a form for members to complete regarding their personal data for setting up payroll and ITT connection etc.

### Week 1

- Briefing on Code of Conduct and signing of their acceptance of office (option of afternoon or evening session)
- Meet the Directors session, headed by Chief Executive, which in addition to hear about services, will also provide an opportunity to hear from experienced councillors on what to expect, and some useful hints for getting through the first few weeks.
- Information about the PDR process
- An introductory session on the decision making process, role of scrutiny etc
- Photocall – photos for councillors web pages etc.

### Week 2

- 1:1 with SMSO to cover a range of information including
  - Support and entitlements
  - Induction and training
  - Accessing meeting info 'on-line'
  - Agree a date for PDR
  - Facilitate photo swipe card issue
  - Discuss IT equipment needs and arrange installation/set up
  - Accessing minutes and reports
  - Introductions to staff working in the Guildhall
  - Councillors Handbook and Zone 47 (internet support site for members)
- Tour of council departments and offices (including visit to new council offices)

### Week 3

- Briefing for new members on 'What to expect at Full Council and Annual Meeting'
- Neighbourhoods Workshops – getting to know your wards, neighbourhood officers and getting to grips with Ward Committees and surgeries

### Week 4

- Training session – essential planning for all members on Planning Committee
- Role of Scrutiny – a session for all councillors on the basic principles of scrutiny and how members can engage in the process

### Week 5

- Training Session – Essential Licensing Training for members on licensing committee
- Interactive workshop – time management



- Personal Development Plans – commence and continue through June/July (initially for new members and members with new roles, then roll-out to established members)

### Week 6

- Workshop – Speaking in the Chamber.
- Workshop – the ethical framework

### Week 7

- An introduction to the 'Weird and Wonderful World of Local Government Finance' (joint session with North Yorkshire County Council)
- Interactive Workshop - Effective working with young people

### Note:

- 1. Sessions are offered at varying times during the day/evening to allow for maximum attendance**
- 2. Sessions are also open to 'established councillors as an opportunity to 'refresh' skills and knowledge**

In addition to the above sessions, consideration is also being given to the provision of

- 'drop -in' induction workshop on ITT so that new members can come in and ask questions, seek guidance on emails, intranet etc
- Dealing with casework and individual complaints/enquiries from residents

In addition to newly elected members, support was also offered to new executive members, or in circumstances where portfolios were changed.

The Council also provide 'buddying support to new members (usually through party arrangements), although comments offered during the assessment process indicated that the quality and effectiveness of such support lacked consistency.

It is customary for the authority to undertake a six-month review with new councillors to provide them with an opportunity to feed back on their development progress and support requirements.

The MDSG and SMSO are currently in the design stages of producing a member handbook which they plan to issue to all councillors after elections in May 2011. In past induction years York produced a paper handbook, which Members were encouraged to keep as a reference document. However, for the 2011 election, they are planning a more robust handbook for all members that will be in the form of a A5 ring-binder format with dividers, containing statistical information about York and its wards, as well as policy, constitutional and member development information .

### ***PDP/PDR Process***

There has been a Personal Development Planning process in place for at least 3 years with all councillors offered the opportunity of a 1:1 Personal Development Review. Undertaken by an independent external consultant, these interviews have used the IDeA Political Skills Framework as a basis on which members can compare their own skills level against a national framework based on a comprehensive review of what a councillor does across a range of activities in their ward and 'town halls'. In 2010 the council also introduced more specific role profiles which were integrated into the PDR process.

These interviews follow a fairly standard, well proven format where discussions provide an opportunity for members to reflect on their achievements during the previous 12 months, as well as identifying present and future challenges together with a two way discussion about development options.

There has been a small year-on-year increase in the number requesting PDR interviews, and it is pleasing to note that many senior councillors (including the Leader, leaders of opposition groups, several executive members and all members of the Member Development Working Group) had supported the process by undertaking PDRs in 2010. That said, there is still room for improvement in terms of engagement, and the MDWG may wish to consider ways to do this ahead of PDRs in 2011.

In the more recent past, the PDR interviews have been held in the Autumn, which the authority recognise as being a little late in the member development planning process. It is understood that there are plans to hold PDRs soon after elections in 2011 – starting with newly inducted councillors.

Feedback indicated that the majority of councillors who had taken the opportunity to be involved in the PDR process had found it useful, not only in terms of identifying development and support needs, but also preferences relating to delivery methodology. The 1:1 interviews were also seen as a useful opportunity to capture other more wider based member concerns which could not be addressed elsewhere.

In addition to PDRs, the development needs of councillors are captured by:

- An annual Member Development Survey – a questionnaire to capture information from those councillors who have not engaged with the PDR process
- Regular discussions involving the SMSO and senior officers – to capture specific portfolio related need, and to ensure that the annual programme was aligned to corporate priorities

### ***Development Activity***

There was clear evidence to suggest that the council 'development offer' to members was 'inclusive' and included a range of delivery methods that met their different learning styles and preferences.

Learning opportunities and activities are part of a core annual training and development programme based on Personal Development Reviews and refreshers in addition to identified organisational and statutory training requirements. Examples include:

- Presentations
- Facilitated discussion
- Pre-Council Briefings/regular updates
- National Leadership Programmes
- Mentoring (internal and external)
- 1:1 IT support
- Skills workshops
- E-learning opportunities
- Shadowing (internal and external to the authority)

Members confirmed that they received timely and regular information regarding development opportunities available to them. Details were presented in the annual programme, and reminders circulated via emails, 'flyers', the intranet, and in hard copy. Information was also circulated to Group offices. Care was taken not to schedule activities on dates that clashed with other corporate events/religious celebrations etc. Where required, additional briefings were organised and details circulated to members.

There were mixed comments relating to the value to councillors of producing an annual programme. Those in favour stated that plenty of advance notice allowed them to plan their diaries around development activity. Those against, thought that receiving the programme so far ahead encouraged them to feel that there was little urgency to book until later, and then some forgot, or mislaid the programme. Perhaps this is an area for the MDSG to review in their annual survey.

Feedback, suggested a high level of satisfaction with the quality and scope of development activity provided by the Council. All elected members were offered development opportunities that included access to staff development programmes (where appropriate), bespoke workshops, external programmes, and activities provided within political groups. 1:1 IT support was also available to members. Places on relevant development activities were offered to Parish and Town Council members, co-opted members of scrutiny commissions etc. and where required, special needs were catered for. Feedback also suggested that councillors welcomed the opportunity to undertake joint training with their peers from other authorities and partner organisations as well as a wider use of members in delivering sessions.

Predictably, it was also noted that more often than not, member's comments seemed to relate to courses and not other wider development opportunities such as meetings, peer mentoring, etc. Although this is not a major area of concern, it does raise the question that if members do not see the opportunity to learn from non-course based activity as learning, then they may not seek to engage in them to address a development need. It is also the case, that the learning from such activities is very rarely captured or recorded.

There is evidence to suggest that there are still some councillors who chose not to engage with the member development process, or only to attend sessions /updates that are mandatory (Planning, Licensing etc) or which are linked to the payment of an additional responsibility allowance. This is common in every local authority and recognises the voluntary nature of member development, and/or a reluctance to admit to a particular development need – which may be seen as a weakness.

Work-life balance issues and caring responsibilities and/or coping with the demands of managing a career often meant that some councillors found it difficult to access development opportunities. Despite the willingness of the council to explore various

options relating to time and place of activities and posting notes, handouts etc on the intranet, some councillors still experienced access problems.

Although attempts by the Council to promote the use of e-learning and other computer based programmes had met with a patchy response by members, feedback suggested that there could be more research undertaken regarding the use of web-based learning which might help those who found difficulty in accessing courses/development activity held during the day or early evening. Suggestions included the wider use of 21<sup>st</sup> century technology such 'podcasts', 'twitter' etc. The recent development of **Zone 47** – a dedicated section of the Council's intranet site is seen as a positive step in this regard.

The Council actively encourages and provides opportunity for members to participate in joint development with a wide range of external partners and other local authorities. Each year places are offered on the Leadership Academy. Other joint development opportunities have (in the past) been made available via the North Yorkshire Improvement Partnership, however these opportunities had been funded by short-term funding from central government, and might not be available in the future. Members representing the authority on external bodies were also encouraged to take advantage of any relevant and suitable development opportunities on offer. Despite this provision, there is scope to develop (and offer) more activities that would provide an opportunity for councillors, officers and members of the public to learn together.

There appeared to be clarity regarding member and officer responsibility relating to member development and support, and members appeared pleased with the level of officer support they received.

### **Stage Three – Monitoring and Review**

#### ***The local authority monitors and reviews the ongoing effectiveness of its member development activity***

There is evidence to suggest that City of York Council undertakes regular reviews of the Member Development Strategy, overall training and budgetary provision. Information from the PDP process goes to inform actions taken and considerations made by the MDSG to improve the 'offer' to members. The Executive were kept up to date on member development by the Chair of the MDSG. Political Groups were kept informed and encouraged to comment via their respective members on the MDSG. As previously stated, the Council's Standards Committee received regular reports from the SMSO and MDSG.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, the authority might also wish to consider other ways to review the activities of those officers /elected members involved in the member development process such as:

- 'benchmarking' against the MDSGs of other authorities who have either achieved or are working towards Charter status. Meeting other member bodies with similar remits would provide an opportunity to compare and contrast practice and process. This is also a useful way of discovering innovative ways to promote and deliver member development and measure the impact of member development activity on both the council and community.

- Commissioning a scrutiny review of member development – an activity used by other authorities to ‘test out’ member development processes and practice where it is felt that a review conducted by other members (not involved in member development) might be easier to accept than one undertaken by officers.

It is stressed that these are measures that the authority might wish to consider in the future, and the award of Charter status is not dependent on the completion of such activities.

### **Stage Four - Evaluation**

***The local authority adopts a robust approach to evaluate the effectiveness of its member development investment, which is fully deployed across all areas of activity and investment***

Measuring the impact of member development processes and activity on individual and collective performance improvement can be the most difficult stage of any development framework. In common with many other authorities, City of York Council relied on levels 1 and 2 of the traditional Kirkpatrick evaluation model to do this. A combination of post-activity questionnaires (happy sheets), member satisfaction surveys, feedback from PDRs and political groups together with the anecdotal comments of officers were used to help the authority evaluate its programme of member development activity ensured the delivery programme was relevant, fit for purpose and value for money, but did not involve impact assessment.

According to the documentation provided for assessment, ‘every training intervention had clear objectives outcomes which linked back to Corporate priorities’, however from the comments made by members during assessment interviews, some of them admitted that they had undergone development without a clear idea of how this might improve performance.

Feedback suggested that members were ‘comfortable’ with the completion of post activity questionnaires, although a number admitted to not fully understanding what subsequent action occurred, or how useful the feedback data was. There were also some who felt rushed at the end of an event as they needed to get away, and consequently completed the questionnaire without much thought. Perhaps the authority may wish to consider offering members the option of completing post activity evaluation ‘on-line’ via the intranet. (perhaps this could be introduced via Zone 47).

Although not a Charter requirement, the council has recently introduced exit interviews with the intention of gaining as much feedback as possible from members. Evidence from elsewhere suggests that ‘exit interviews were considered to be a useful source of information regarding the ‘health’ of an organisation, and could capture issues that might have been resolved through some form of development intervention. Some councillors who wish to stand in future elections might welcome the opportunity to discuss issues, or simply helped to come to terms with the loss of their seat.

The authority’s **Member Training & Development Policy** contains a **Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting Cycle** that sets out when and by whom the various strands associated with member development are evaluated.

## 4. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

As previously mentioned in this report, City of York Council has achieved the required standard to be awarded Charter status, the following comments and recommendations are offered in that context and to provide a degree of future focus for those councillors and officers involved in and/or with responsibility for member development.

### 4.1 Planning and Policy

There was clear evidence to support the view that the MDSG was representative in its membership, effective in the way it conducted its business, and confirmed the view that member development in City of York Council is 'member led.' That said, a number of issues needed to be explored in order to prepare them for the future

Successful assessment against the Charter standard will inevitably lead to greater expectations, and comparison with other authorities. It was therefore important for the MDSG to 'raise their game' and profile, and operate in an even more strategic way.

Each local authority is different in their approach to member development and many have developed programmes and systems that York might wish to think about exploring. Learning from and with other local authorities who have already gained or who are aspiring to gain Charter/Charter Plus status would bring opportunities to learn new approaches.

LGYH are ideally placed to facilitate and support such exchanges of ideas and good practice.

#### ***Recommendation 1***

***That the MDSG establishes contact with, and 'benchmarks' against other local authorities who have achieved or seeking to achieve Charter/Charter plus status***

### 4.2 Implementation and Delivery

Whilst there is clearly a very positive view of the quality and quantity of training being provided by City of York Council, many members and officers referred mainly to 'training courses' rather than a broader range of development. Trying to 'capture' the learning from meetings, and 'on the job' learning can be extremely difficult' but could be something that is referred to during PDR interviews, as could the introduction of some form of self-assessment (pre and post activity).

The introduction of role profiles to PDRs will help, but the authority might wish to incorporate a strategy to engage those councillors who cannot or will not take advantage

of the PDR 'offer' and that identified the reasons behind this. The feedback from such an exercise would inform future decisions around delivery.

### **Recommendation 2**

***That the PDD/PDR and other processes be adapted to include:***

- ***some form of reflection on what and how members learn in other (less structured) situations***
- ***clearer information that explained why the interviews were important, the benefits etc (to stimulate wider engagement)***

Members are actively encouraged to take on external roles, representing the Council on sub-regional and regional bodies. This was viewed as a way of developing skills and knowledge whilst also raising the profile of the authority. Councillors are also provided with the opportunity to learn with and from their peers on external programmes. Although some groups insist on feedback as a condition of attendance at conferences etc, there was little evidence as to how learning from those activities is shared or transferred within the authority, nor recorded (in order to avoid duplication). There appeared to be a lack of consistency regarding:

- How councillors feed back from external events
- How councillors share the learning from sitting on external bodies
- How councillors with formal roles on the LSP/other partnerships feed back
- How that learning is recorded

### **Recommendation 3**

***That the authority adopts some formal mechanism which requires feedback to an appropriate audience, and which identify appropriate recording methodology***

While the proposed induction programme and plans for the 'all-out' election in May 2011 appear to be comprehensive, similar care and support should be provided to councillors elected at by-elections albeit in a scaled down format.

### **Recommendation 4**

***That the authority consider how best to provide suitable support to councillors elected at By-Elections, and develop a suitable induction programme for such situations***

The current practice of providing 'buddies' to newly elected councillors is to be applauded, however the Council could make this more effective if they considered ways to address issues relating to 'matching' and consistency.

### **Recommendation 5**

***That consideration be given to the effectiveness of the current 'buddying' system, and ways to improve it (in preparation for the May 2011 elections).***

### **4.3 Monitoring and Review**

Evidence suggests that there are sufficient and efficient arrangements in place to monitor and review member development.

### **4.4 Evaluation**

There is clear evidence that the authority seeks to measure the impact of its investment in member development activities i.e. member surveys, monitoring of attendance levels, completion of evaluation forms and induction evaluation. However, the evidence presented, suggests that this approach is primarily concerned with measuring the quality of delivery provision as opposed to impact on individual performance or on the community.

#### ***Recommendation 6***

***That the authority consider the development of a more robust and comprehensive outcome focused approach to member development, building evaluation in to every stage of the member development infrastructure as well as delivery activity. This should enable the authority to be clear about outcomes/impact it is seeking to achieve from their investment.***

To achieve this, the authority may wish to consider the following:

- Producing a clear policy statement within the member development framework/strategy documentation that described in detail how evaluation would assist the council in measuring the impact of its investment in member development.
- Having explicit clear roles and responsibilities regarding those bodies and individuals involved in the evaluation process
- Introducing questions in the documentation used for post-activity feedback that encouraged members to rate their performance (using an appropriate scale) pre and post activity, and how undertaking the activity had impacted on their community (ies)
- Engaging in some form of comparative 'benchmarking' activity with other similar sized authorities which might produce data/good practice approaches to evaluation.
- Exploring evaluation 'models' from other sectors

This approach could also improve the quality and consistency of the information being fed into the MDSG, to enable that body to monitor progress against the overall training programme, to inform decision making about emerging priorities, and future plans. Subsequently this could also enable the MDSG to carry out an annual value for money assessment.



**Final Draft Report prepared by Mike Leitch  
on behalf of the LGYH Charter Assessment Team  
and agreed by City of York Council on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2010**