

Review of the Personal Development Review (PDR) Process

Summary

1. This report sets out the beginnings of a review of Personal Development Reviews, which are offered to all Councillors on an annual basis.

Background

2. Personal Development Reviews are one of the four key strategic elements of the Member Training & Development Policy which states:
 - A personal development review (PDR) for all Councillors to identify individual needs in a safe and confidential environment with a trained consultant. A confident Councillor will naturally be more effective in taking forward the Council's improvement agenda and ensuring the delivery of strategic aims and priorities
 - An annual PDR review to check how the outcomes from the PDR have progressed and a review of individual development or training needs as a result of changes in roles, lifestyle or working practices
 - An annual review by the Member Development Steering Group relating to the personal development review process. Such a review will look at outcomes from the process and actual reviews undertaken and identify any key themes which need to be fed into the Annual Core Training & Development Programme.
3. During this municipal year 23 Councillors have had a PDR; in the previous municipal year 16 Councillors took up the offer of a PDR.

Background to Review of PDR Process

4. At a previous meeting of the Steering Group Members requested that a review of the Personal Development Review process be undertaken. The

Steering Group has expressed dissatisfaction with the current PDR process.

5. When a Councillor undertakes a PDR, they initially meet with an independent consultant to discuss their individual training and development needs. The consultant then collates this information and forwards it on to the individual Councillor for their sign off. The completed and agreed PDR is then returned to Democratic Services so that any training and development needs can be picked up.
6. During this current municipal year only 8 of the 23 PDR forms were returned to the consultant and subsequently Democratic Services. In effect this means that 15 PDRs were undertaken where there are no known outcomes or identified development needs.
7. However, some (although by no means all) of the unreturned forms were for newly elected Councillors where it was difficult to identify development needs; especially for those where PDRs were undertaken in June 2011, shortly after the election. Further PDRs were offered in October and November 2011 and there are also unreturned forms from those as well.
8. PDRs are relatively expensive and it seems that from the volume of non-returned forms they are not necessarily providing good value for money.

Potential Ways Forward

9. Keep the present PDR system - The Steering Group may like to give consideration to keeping the present system. A reminder to Councillors of the purpose of the PDR interview and the importance of using that hour as effectively as possible to determine future development needs may be useful and this is something that Democratic Services can easily undertake, working with this Steering Group.
10. In addition to this, whilst the onus is on the individual Councillor to return their completed PDR form, Democratic Services can send out reminders to those Councillors who have had PDRs. This can be done retrospectively, for those Councillors who have not yet returned their forms for this municipal year. It may also be possible to find out why forms have not been returned by discussing this with individual Councillors. If Members chose to keep the current system then it may be wise to consider what would be the best time of year to hold PDRs.
11. The current provider has suggested that PDRs give the greatest benefit when seen as a two way process. He suggested it would be sensible to

concentrate on the quality of the PDR rather than on the amount undertaken. If some Councillors find them beneficial then that it is a positive thing and should be welcomed

12. Using an alternative provider – there is the possibility of keeping the same system but looking for a different provider of PDRs. Alternatively the service could be provided in-house and undertaken by a senior officer of the Council. However, this may lose the independence and impartiality that we have now.
13. What do other Local Authorities do – A quick look across some of the other Local Authorities within the region led to the following results:

Scarborough - PDRs are optional, the interview is with either an officer or another Member to discuss training needs. Alternatively an on-line questionnaire can be completed

Ryedale – In consultation with Local Government Yorkshire & Humber we have taken a broad view of this and conduct an annual assessment of learning and development needs by survey, with the option of requesting a confidential but informal one to one as a follow up, this is in-house and undertaken by the Democratic Services Manager.

Selby – No PDR provision at the moment

Consultation

14. Members were given the opportunity to respond to a recent survey on training & development needs. Some identified the PDR as a positive and useful tool for them whilst others were not so keen. Verbally, several Members have also made Democratic Services aware that they do not find the current PDR provision of use.

Options

15. Members have the following options:

Option 1 – continue with the same service as we have now but embed it much more strongly and concentrate on quality rather than quantity

Option 2 – identify and move to a different system

Option 3 – Ask Democratic Services to undertake more research into alternative possibilities, whilst retaining the current system for the municipal year 2012/13.

Analysis

16. Much of the analysis of the options is contained within the body of this report. Continuing with the same system as we use at present would, certainly for the time being, be the easiest option. However, as indicated above PDRs can be costly so it is important that all those undertaken are returned completed to both the consultant and Democratic Services in order that any training and development needs can be clearly identified and addressed. Work could be undertaken to attempt to embed the ethos behind PDRs much more strongly with Councillors with the focus being on quality rather than quantity. In addition to this choosing the best time of the year to hold PDRs needs to be considered.
17. Moving to a different system could potentially be resource intensive. In the first instance identifying and putting any alternative system in place would take time. Secondly, if it was suggested that senior officers provide PDRs for Members then work loads may need to be altered to accommodate this.

Council Plan

18. Having well informed and trained Members will help the Council deliver its key priorities set out within the Council Plan 2011-15.

Implications

19. **Financial** – currently the Member Development budget covers the cost of PDRs; however if an alternative system were to be chosen then costs for this would need to be identified. Any costs for any new system would need to be met from current budgets.
20. **Human Resources** – dependent on which system is chosen there may be resource issues in relation to officer time.
21. There are no other known implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

Risk Management

22. The Council were awarded Charter Status for Member Development in September 2012. In order to keep this status when we are reassessed we will need to be able to demonstrate that the Council has a structured process for regularly assessing elected Member development needs at both an individual and Council wide level; this would include the provision of PDRs.

23. There is a significant risk that Charter Status would be lost if we abandon a PDR process altogether. It is, therefore, very important that we either retain the system we have now or replace it with something equally as robust and demonstrable when it comes to being reassessed.

Recommendations

24. Members are asked to consider approving **Option 3** and inviting officers to undertake further research. In addition to this the Steering Group are asked for their own suggestions.

Reason: in order to identify a suitable PDR process.

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**Report
Approved**



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Specialist Implications Officer(s) None

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

None

Annexes

None