

REPORT OF: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
TO: POLICY COUNCIL  
ON: 29<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, 2007

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**MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT: SIGNING UP TO THE NORTH  
WESTERN LOCAL AUTHORITIES' EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATION CHARTER  
FOR ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT**

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**1. Purpose of the report**

To request approval to the Council re-signing its declaration of commitment to elected Member training and development and seeking accreditation under the North Western Local Authorities' Employers' Organisation's (NWEO) Charter for Elected Member Development for 2008.

**2. Background Information**

As a high performing Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is committed to investing in the development of its elected Members that meet local needs, provides value for money and improves the quality of life for everyone working and living within the Borough.

In recent years the Member Development and Training Programme has been co-ordinated by the Democratic Services Section. It is delivered from the Induction of new Members in May to the end of March (with a recess in August) on a rolling six month basis.

For events held "in house" a monthly dedicated "training" date is scheduled in the Council's annual year planner of meetings. Additional dates are also identified throughout the year that avoid other Council /Committee meeting dates to maximise the opportunity for all Members to attend "corporate" events.

Like all Authorities, the Council is subject to national, regional and local influences in the form of "new" legislation, guidance, changes to policy and procedures and community issues and concerns. In addition to proposed developments for the identification of individual Member training and development needs and styles, all Member training and development activities also aim to assist the Council in delivering its strategic corporate objectives.

Members also attend external conferences/seminars and training programmes and a range of events are also organised to meet both Members' corporate and individual training needs.

### **3. North Western Local Authorities' Employers' Organisation - Charter**

The North Western Local Authorities' Employers' Organisation's (NWEO) Charter for Elected Member Development was launched in 2000 as part of the regional strategy to raise the profile of Elected Member Development. NWEO believes that at the heart of any local authority dedicated to meeting the needs of its community will be a commitment to the development of its Members. Over the years, as demonstrated by the high level of training opportunities provided, the Council has been and continues to be committed to the development of all our Members.

Achievement of the Charter involves two stages:

- The first is for the Authority to declare its commitment to the 6 key principles of the Charter;
- The second is the Authority demonstrating, through an independent external assessment process, that it has met the Charter principles and has all the required elements in place.

The Council has previously declared its commitment to those Charter principles.

Although there is no time limit between declaration and the assessment, given the

Council's previous and continued work, commitment to and development of Member

Development and Training, it is suggested that the Council should re-sign its declaration of commitment and actively seek Charter status in 2008.

The 6 key Charter principles are:

- Having a statement of intent.
- Ensuring that all Members are made aware of training and development opportunities
- Having a process to identify individual development needs which involves Members
- Having an officer allocated to assist Members and Groups in identifying needs and providing information on resources
- Having a strategy to meet the training and development needs of elected members
- Implementing the strategy locally.

Authorities can be assessed at any time during the year. However Celebration events where Charter status is awarded are held once a year in November.

### **4. Member Engagement Working Group- Training and Development**

The Member Engagement Working Group was formed in August 2005 and has representation from the three main political parties on the Council. Members currently on the Group are Councillor Jean Rigby (Chair) and Councillors Connor, Hardman, Hollern and Shorrock.

Under its terms of reference and in accordance with the Council Constitution, the Group acts in an advisory capacity to support the Leader... and as part of its remit is tasked with *directing the provision of Member development and training to ensure elected members receive training which meets their needs as decision makers and ward councillors.*

The Group met on 5<sup>th</sup> November when Ruth Ashworth of NWEO attended to provide an overview of the NWEO Elected Member Development Charter and the criteria the Council has to fulfill to work towards Charter accreditation.

Following the presentation and consideration of the Council's current position on the evidence for meeting the criteria, the Group has recommended:

- That the Council seeks accreditation under the NWEO Charter for Elected Member Development and leads the process for obtaining the Charter in 2008 with regular six weekly meetings being held;
- That the Council's declaration of Commitment/Statement of Intent to the 6 key NWEO Charter principles be re-signed at the Policy Council meeting;
- That the existing and future evidence in relation to meeting the Charter's key principles, the draft Member Development and Training Strategy and the Member Development and Training Framework submitted at the Group's meeting, be accepted as a starting point for the process;
- That the Group aims to produce Personal Development Plans for all Members of the Council with one to one interviews between Members and appropriate Democratic Services and Corporate Workforce Development Officers being held in the near future;
- That arrangements be made with NWEO for a pre-assessment visit to be made to the Authority in Spring 2008 and for final assessment in September 2008.

## **5. Recommendations**

5.1 That the report outlining the work and the proposals of the Member Engagement Working Group be approved.

5.2 That agreement be given to the Leader and the Chief Executive re-signing the Council's declaration of Commitment/Statement of Intent to the 6 key principles of the North Western Local Authorities' Employers' Organisation's Charter for Elected Member Development.

**Councillor Colin Rigby, Leader of the Council**  
**Graham Burgess, Chief Executive**

Contact officer: Diane Hill tel 01254 585757 [diane.hill@blackburn.gov.uk](mailto:diane.hill@blackburn.gov.uk)  
Background Papers: North Western Local Authorities' Employers'  
Organisation <http://www.nweo.org.uk/>

