



Member Development Group

Monday, 28 February 2022

East Midlands Councillor Development Charter

Report of the Service Manager – Corporate Services

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. In 2020, East Midlands Councils relaunched the Councillor Development Charter. Assessment against the Charter criteria has been delayed as a result of different priorities, for both Councillors and Officers, during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.2. This report provides information against the Councillor Development Charter Self Assessment Document. The aim is to provide context for a discussion about the future direction of the Member Development Group at Rushcliffe and not as a precursor to submitting the Self Assessment to qualify for Charter status.
- 1.3. Charter Plus status is also available but has been excluded for the purposes of this exercise as it builds upon the principles of Charter status.
- 1.4. A copy of the Self Assessment Document is provided at Appendix One.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Member Development Group:

- a) Discusses the findings of the Officer Self Assessment and makes any additional observations
- b) Decides what, if any, action it wishes to take as a result of these discussions.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. It is important that the Member Development Group takes the opportunity to reflect on Councillor Development and identifies if it can improve the development offer by learning from other authorities or bodies such as East Midlands Councils.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. According to East Midlands Councils, the Councillor Development Charter exists to:

- “Encourage councils to develop (or build on) an effective strategy or approach to councillor development.
- Recognise those councils that have developed an effective approach.
- Encourage councils to continue that development and share their experiences and learning.
- Support the continuous professional development for councillors.

The emphasis is on ensuring that all councillors are appropriately developed and supported so that they can be effective in their roles. Many councils are already doing great work - the Charter is a chance for this to be recognised”.

4.2. East Midlands Councils have identified the following benefits of the organisation holding Charter status on Councillors:

- “The quality of councillor development is improved.
- New councillors are better prepared for their roles and responsibilities.
- Councillor progression is better enabled.
- Helps ensure councillors can operate at their most knowledgeable, skilled and effective.
- Increases councillors' competence and confidence.
- Helps councillors navigate the ever more complex and demanding role and local government landscape.
- Self-care and reflection for councillors through development and growth”.

4.3. The Charter Self Assessment Document is included for information at Appendix One. It contains three criterion and eleven sub-sections. An officer assessment of where the Council is against each of these sub-sections has been provided below to act as a springboard for discussion. A number of reflective questions have also been provided at paragraph 4.4 (after the tables).

Criterion 1 - a clear commitment to councillor development and support		
Elements	Requirements for Charter	Evidence
1.1 Political and managerial leadership is committed to the development of councillors	<p>Clear commitment from the top political and managerial leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-party councillor development group that meets regularly • Clear councillor development strategy which is embedded into practice and regularly reviewed • Named councillor/s and officer/s responsible for councillor development 	<p>Member Development Group meets at least annually and is politically proportionate</p> <p>A Councillor Learning and Development Policy was approved at Council July 2021; will be reviewed on a three-year cycle</p> <p>Portfolio Holder for Finance and Customer Access has responsibility for Member Development Service Manager – Corporate Services has responsibility for Member Development</p>

Criterion 1 - a clear commitment to councillor development and support		
Elements	Requirements for Charter	Evidence
1.2 The council actively promotes democratic participation, publicises the role of councillors as community leaders, and proactively engages with underrepresented groups.	The council holds a range of activities and events to encourage people to become councillors	<p>Actions undertaken prior to 2019 elections included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of a 'Be a Councillor Guide' • Events for prospective Borough, Town and Parish Councillors <p>Intention to repeat these activities in 2022 as well as a coordinated social media campaign including video materials.</p>
1.3 The council is committed to ensuring equal access to learning and development for all councillors	<p>Statistical analysis of cultural and personal circumstances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing of councillor development takes account of cultural and personal circumstances • All councillors have equal access to development • The development programme includes a range of delivery methods to meet different learning styles • Councillors are regularly updated on councillor development activities 	<p>In terms of face-to-face training, early evenings suit our Councillors better in general, but e-learning is available at all times. Requests for training at other times would be considered</p> <p>All councillors are invited to the majority of training sessions. Some sessions are specifically targeted at committee members (such as treasury management training for members of the Governance Scrutiny Group) – others could attend if they requested it.</p> <p>Variety of different delivery methods Training is delivered by officers and external training providers using a variety of different formats. Virtual training sessions and e-learning have also been introduced in recent years. Councillors also have access to external training provided by East Midlands Councils / other Councils / the LGA for example</p> <p>An annual training programme is published and events (internal and external) are publicised via direct email and in the weekly Councillors' newsletter</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to existing and/or necessary new learning continues in challenging times or disruption to business as usual. 	<p>All face-to-face councillor development was put on hold during the pandemic; initially at councillor request to allow them to allow them to focus on meeting the needs of the community – virtual training opportunities were provided later in the pandemic and e-learning was available throughout</p>
1.4 The council has designated resource and	Appropriate and adequate officer resources are in place to support councillor development	Councillor Learning and Development supported by the Democratic Services Team. A Councillors' training budget is

Criterion 1 - a clear commitment to councillor development and support		
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budget for councillor development which is adequate to meet priority development needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget is explicit and clearly identified and monitored Budget reports 	<p>identified each year and monitoring takes place internally on a monthly basis. Spend against the Councillors' training budget has been reported to Member Development Group previously, within the context of reports concerning the proposed training programme for the year, but this is not done on a regular basis.</p> <p>Does the Group feel that this should be taking place?</p>

Criterion 2 - a strategic approach to councillor development		
Elements	Requirements for Charter	Evidence
2.1 The council has councillor development strategy in place	<p>The strategy is developed and monitored by the cross-party councillor development group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy identifies priority development needs and makes stated and clear links with council's corporate/strategic objectives as well as risk management processes for challenging times or disruption to business as usual The strategy is regularly reviewed (at least once every three years) by the cross-party councillor development group The strategy includes an induction process that is evaluated after each election 	<p>The Council adopted a new Learning and Development Policy in July 2021. This is the third Policy the Council has adopted. It is reviewed every three years (the last review was delayed by 15 months due to Covid-19) by the cross-party Member Development Group and approved at Council. The Policy contains links to the comprehensive induction programme the Council runs after each Borough Council election.</p> <p>It does not link to the Council's Corporate objectives.</p> <p>Does the Group feel that this should be taking place?</p>
2.2 The council has a structured process for regularly assessing councillors' individual learning and development needs based on focused objectives	<p>A process exists to identify individual development needs in the form of a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) or Personal Development Plans (PDP) and is working effectively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The council is able to quickly to assess any new and different needs in challenging times or disruption to business as usual and be able to offer any new learning and development needed 	<p>There is no structured process for identifying individual learning needs</p> <p>Does the Group feel that this should be taking place?</p>
2.3 The various councillor roles are clearly defined and outline how	<p>Councillors demonstrate an understanding of the skills and knowledge required in their ward and council wide roles</p>	

Criterion 2 - a strategic approach to councillor development		
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they contribute to the achievement of community, political and council objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillor role descriptions exist and are maintained for all key roles including the ward councillor Councillors are clear about what the council is trying to achieve and the key role they play in this as councillors 	<p>There are role descriptions for Scrutiny Chairmen / Vice Chairmen and Cabinet positions. Not all roles on committees are defined and the role of a ward councillor is also not defined</p> <p>As well as presentations from the Chief Executive during the induction programme, Councillors are involved in the development of the corporate strategy every four years and annual budget workshops</p>
2.4 The council has a structured process for assessing current and future leadership and executive team development needs	<p>Structured process to assess current and future leadership development needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This takes into account corporate risk management planning for any challenging times or disruption to business as usual A development plan is in place that supports the top political and management teams in learning about each other and working effectively together Leadership development is used to support future succession planning 	<p>As far as officers are aware, there is no structured process to assess current and future leadership development needs</p> <p>Whilst the top political and management teams do hold occasional away days to foster effective working relationships, these are not regular or part of a development plan.</p> <p>Does the Group feel that this should be taking place?</p>
2.5 There is a corporate councillor learning and development plan in place	<p>The plan links to council's corporate objectives and the development of councillors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan includes individuals, committees and political leadership needs 	<p>There is an approved Councillor Learning and Development Policy and a training plan is published annually. This does not link to the Council's corporate objectives</p> <p>Does the Group feel that this should be taking place?</p>

Criterion 3 - Learning and development is effective in building skills and knowledge		
Element	Requirements for Charter	Evidence
3.1 Investment in learning and development is regularly evaluated and improvements implemented	<p>Evaluation strategy is in place to analyse the cost and benefits of councillor development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation and improvement processes take into account corporate risk management and reviews taken during/after any times of in challenging times or disruption to business as usual Political and managerial leadership display a good understanding of both the costs and benefits of development activities 	<p>Individual training events are evaluated (in the form of a short SurveyMonkey questionnaire) but there is no evaluation strategy to analyse the cost / benefit of councillor development</p> <p>Does the Group feel that this should be taking place?</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors can describe why they did certain activities, what they learnt and what difference it has made to them carrying out their various roles • Continuous improvement in the approach to developing councillors is identified and implemented 	
<p>3.2 Learning is shared with other councillors and, where appropriate, with officers and stakeholders to encourage capacity building and a culture of learning across the council and externally</p>	<p>Knowledge and learning are shared with councillors’ peers, officers and others as with other councils and organisations and particularly in challenging times or disruption to business as usual</p>	<p>As far as officers are aware, there is no formal or informal sharing of learning from training.</p> <p>Does the Group feel that this should be taking place?</p>

4.4. The Group are asked to consider in discussing this item:

- Is the officer’s assessment against the criteria listed above correct and would members of the Group like to add anything?
- What areas of deficiency exist and does the Group believe that action should be taken to rectify this situation?
- What actions are necessary to continually improve the Councillor Learning and Development offering at Rushcliffe Borough Council?
- Who is responsible for these actions and when should they be achieved by?

<p>For more information contact:</p>	<p>Charlotte Caven-Atack Service Manager - Corporate Services Tel: 0115 9148278 ccaven-atack@rushcliffe.gov.uk</p>
<p>Background papers available for Inspection:</p>	
<p>List of appendices:</p>	<p>Appendix One – the East Midlands Councils Councillor Development Charter</p>