NORTH WEST EMPLOYERS' CHARTER RENEWAL

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Summary and Recommendation: That the Panel considers the options for charter renewal set out in para 4 and make a decision on what level of accreditation to target in 2009.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Following the Council's success in achieving accreditation to the NWEO Charter in 2006, we need to consider how the long term future of member training and development at the Council is to take shape.

1.2 This report invites the Panel to consider the options for the medium and long term future and how our strategy should be amended to reflect any changes in our aspirations.

1.3 The remainder of this report assumes that the status quo in local government structures in the county will remain in place for the foreseeable future, following the DCLG announcement on the Cumbria unitary bid at the end of July.

2. CHARTER RENEWAL

2.1 The NWEO Charter accreditation will fall for renewal in September 2009. This will require at least that the Council can demonstrate that it continues to be committed to member training and development and meet the six principles, which are:

1 Having a statement of intent
2 Ensuring all members are made aware of training and development opportunities
3 Having a process to identify individual development needs which involves members
4 Having an officer allocated to assist members and groups in identifying needs and providing information on resources
5 Having a strategy to meet the training and development needs of elected members

6   Implementing the strategy locally

2.2   In addition to renewal, some authorities have expressed an interest in having a review process which is more stretching and recognises how they have moved on since original accreditation. As a result NWEO have introduced an exemplar standard to complement the existing standard.

2.3   There will therefore be a choice in 2009 of renewing our original accreditation (Level 1) or assessment at Level 2, the exemplar level.

3.   LEVEL 2 ASSESSMENT

3.1   Level 2 assessment requires an update on the six principles used in the original charter assessment, plus evidence of the impact of member development on the work of the local authority; **and** evidence of excellence in one or more areas of member development; **and** evidence that the authority is committed to continuous improvement in member development. These are explained in more detail below.

3.2   **Impact of Member Development on the work of the authority –** requires evidence that the Council's investment in member development has had a direct impact on the work of the authority in a discrete area, for example overview and scrutiny, planning, licensing, community leadership. The authority would need to show that member development has made an actual difference in one of these areas and would have to demonstrate an audit trail back to the member development interventions chosen, using at least 2 sources of evidence, e.g. Audit Commission reports, customer satisfaction surveys, improved performance indicators.

3.3   **Evidence of Excellence in Member Development –** requires evidence of excellence in practice in one or more of the following:

(a) Development opportunities that support members in their community leadership role such as

- Designing bespoke learning and development activities to support community leadership
- Developing activities based on a needs analysis members, or of the community or both
- Providing a programme of different types of development opportunity and evaluating them
- Devising member development activities that support community initiatives and includes partners.

(b) Innovative approaches to learning e.g. open learning; permanent mentoring; shadowing; etc. Examples:

- Job Shadowing Scheme in place for over a year and a significant number of members have used it
- Mentoring Scheme in place for over a year and a significant number of members have used it
- Action Learning Sets have been in use for over a year
- A process to transfer knowledge and learning is in place
- Groups of Members have used 360° feedback techniques to help plan their personal development activities

(c) Learning and development has improved members' use of information technology, such as:

- Majority of members have and use IT equipment, e.g. laptop or desktop
- Members use e-mail as a major means of communication
- Members are able to develop their own web pages
- Members input into their own intranet
- Members have ECDL or MOUS qualification
- Members produce newsletters for their residents

(d) Member development practice has been integrated into the organisational development strategy, e.g. developing member-officer relationships, succession planning, or having a strategy which demonstrates how member and officer communications can be reviewed and improved.

(e) Member development activity has promoted and supported partnership working e.g. taking a leading role in forming or enhancing external partnership working.

3.4 **Commitment to Continuous Improvement –** being able to demonstrate:

- Progress on Continuous Improvement Issues identified at Stage 1
- Review processes for Member development e.g. Panel reviews strategy and agrees new priorities
- Ability to articulate clearly where the authority wants to improve practices in future.

4. ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

4.1   It is recommended that the Panel should make a decision at an early stage (i.e. by this summer) on whether we should:

Aim to renew our Level 1 accreditation in 2009 – which may involve a significant amount of work, not just a standstill, as we will need to demonstrate that we have sustained a commitment to member training and development over a long period of 2-3 years.

Aim to achieve Level 2 in 2009. As can be seen from the outline above, Level 2 accreditation will require a great deal of time and commitment from Members and officers if we are to stand any reasonable chance of success, and will need to start very soon.

Key questions which members will need to address in reaching a decision on whether we should aim for Level 2 include the following:

(1) Is there sufficient interest and commitment, in terms of both breadth and depth, among members, particularly among leading Members, in trying for an enhanced level of accreditation?

(2) Are the basics of Member training and development (annual PDP's; reasonable attendance at training events; regular reviews of strategy; training and development as a regular feature of group meetings; member contributions to newsletters etc) sufficiently embedded in the organisation for a higher level of accreditation to be a reasonable aspiration?

(3) Is there sufficient interest and openness among members in general to new and innovative approaches to learning – e.g. shadowing or mentoring schemes, action learning sets, 360° feedback techniques, and community based approaches to learning?

(4) Is our technological infrastructure sufficiently robust, reliable and trustworthy to ensure the issues set out in 3.3 (c) above can be addressed confidently?

(5) Is the current level of resources for member training (staff support and budget) likely to be at least maintained at current levels for the next 2 years, if not enhanced? If current levels are maintained are they sufficient to provide the support needed in preparation for a Level 2 assessment?

(6) Is our track record in building member development practice into organisational development and/or our use of partnership working strong enough to make an impact in a Level 2 assessment?

5   CONCLUSIONS

5.1   The Panel are asked to consider the issues raised in para 4 above and form a view as to the level of accreditation we should target in 2009. It cannot be emphasised too strongly that a Level 2 accreditation attempt will require a programme of work starting in September 2007 to give a 2 year run in to assessment in September 2009.

List of Appendices - None

List of Background Documents: None
List of Consultees: None

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed . This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	None
Impact on Sustainability	None
Impact on Rural Proofing	None
Health and Safety Implications	None
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	None
Children and Young Persons Implications	None
Human Rights Act Implications	None