

COUNCILLOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

LEAD OFFICER: Tim Capper

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Summary: Presents proposals for a package of assistance with developing individual training needs profiles for all Members.

Recommendation: That the Panel considers Option 1 and Option 2 and if either is favoured, a bid is made to the Executive for funding from the contingency provision in the current year.

Resource Implications £2,500 to £6,500 depending on option chosen

LA 21 Implications: None

Rural Implications: None

Crime & Disorder Act Implications: None

Key Decision Status

- **Financial:** No
- **Ward:** No

Other Ward Implications: None

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council is committed to achieving accreditation to the North West Employers' Organisation Member Development Charter. Accreditation is one of the key objectives in the Legal and Democratic Services service plan for 2005/2006, and will be an important component in improving our performance in preparation for the next round of CPA starting in 2007. This will mean work starting soon to achieve accreditation within the necessary timescale.
- 1.2 This Panel has responsibility for all matters relating to member training and development and will be the main member forum responsible for overseeing and driving forward the work required to achieve charter accreditation.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This Panel has previously done some initial work on preparing for a programme of individual training and development profiles for all Members, based on a self-assessment process. This work was never completed, partly due to the capacity constraints of completing the whole programme in-house without any external assistance.
- 2.2 Discussions have therefore been held with a number of training and development providers, with a view to commissioning external assistance with the initial work of producing a needs-based training and development profile for each individual Member. These profiles will be the cornerstone on which a fully structured corporate programme of member training and development will be based.

3. NWEO PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The North West Employers' Organisation (NWEO) has considerable experience of working with local authorities in this region on employment, training and development and has recent experience of assisting other authorities in the County in preparing corporate member training and development programmes.
- 3.2 NWEO have submitted proposals (two alternative options) for assisting us in undertaking the basic work in producing individual development plans for all Members. Both options involve a one-to-one personal development interview, or meeting, between the individual member and a facilitator, each meeting lasting for 1-2 hours. The facilitator would be either a NWEO representative; or a Council member; or an officer (see options 1 and 2.)
- 3.3 The purpose of the development meeting is to identify the needs of the individual member on three levels:
 1. Organisational needs – basic skills and areas of knowledge required by all Councillors to carry out their duties effectively. Examples are basic computer skills; dealing with constituents; knowledge of the code of conduct and the code of corporate governance; knowledge of the Council's current key priorities.
 2. Common needs – skills and areas of knowledge required by certain Members for particular areas of Council work. Examples are interviewing skills for Personnel Panel members; knowledge of planning policy and development control for Planning Panel members.
 3. Individual needs – personal skills and competencies required to enhance the Member's ability to carry out the role of a Councillor effectively, and help a Member fulfil his/her aspirations to further his or her local government career. Individual needs are particularly important in the context of succession planning.
- 3.4 The personal development interview is structured around an outline personal development plan (PDP) which is written up and completed as the interview progresses. The outline personal development plan will be common for all Members, but its format and content will need to be thought through carefully and agreed by the Council (this Panel) in advance, so that the issues which we regard as priorities are highlighted, and the format is one which most Members will feel comfortable with. Examples of the content in PDP's used in other authorities are: Training undertaken (within authority or in employment or voluntary context); preferred approaches to learning; 5 key strengths; 5 key development needs; 12 month action plan; longer term action plan; criteria for measuring success.
- 3.5 **Option 1** involves NWEO conducting all PDP interviews with Members, analysing the results and drafting a corporate training and development plan based on the results. This option has the advantage of an external organisation handling all the work up to the final draft of the corporate training and development programme. It will ensure consistency of approach, since one or at most two people will be responsible for conducting all the PDP interviews.
- 3.6 There would however be two disadvantages of option 1, which are firstly cost: based on an estimate of 30 members participating it is estimated that option 1 would cost approximately £6,500. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, it would close out almost all involvement of members of this panel, and of officers, from the process of drawing up personal development plans.
- 3.7 **Option 2** would give each member a choice of facilitator for their PDP interview; a NWEO facilitator (as in option 1); or a member or officer of the Council. Both would require a commitment to a full day's training seminar in the facilitating role which would be provided by NWEO. It is suggested that members of this Panel would be a natural first choice to take on the

role of facilitator, if members are able to give the time commitment required, both for the training and for the one-to-one interviews themselves.

- 3.8 Option 2 has the disadvantage of involving a greater time commitment for both members and officers of the Council, but this could also be seen as an advantage, as a greater level of involvement in the process would demonstrate a commitment by members and employees to ensuring the success of the project. It would have the advantages of flexibility, meaning that a Member who felt uncomfortable discussing personal development issues with, for example, another Copeland member would have the option to choose an officer or a NWEO facilitator as an alternative. It is possible that, as a further option, NWEO may also be able to bring in as facilitators members of other local authorities from other parts of the region. It would also be cheaper, since it is envisaged that this option would require a lesser level of involvement by NWEO, and therefore a lower cost – for example if a total of 8 members opted for NWEO facilitators rather than a fellow member or an officer, the cost would be approximately £2,500.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 The Panel is asked to consider both options. For either, it will be necessary to make a bid to the Executive for funding from contingencies in the current year.

List of Appendices: Nil

List of Background Documents:

List of Consultees:

Head of Legal & Democratic Services; Head of Finance & Business Development; Human Resources Manager; Portfolio Holder, Resources & Local Democracy