

26 January 2017

Report of	Assistant Chief Executive	Author	Richard Clifford 507832
Title	Member Charter Status		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

This report is about the outcome of the Council's interim assessment for Charter Status and the next steps for Charter Status

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To consider whether to recommend to Cabinet that the Council should commit to seeking re-accreditation for Charter Status for Elected Member Development
- 1.2 To consider the criteria for Charter Plus and consider whether the Council should seek accreditation at this level.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 This report seeks a decision from the Member Development Group about whether to recommit to Charter Status for Elected Member Development, and at what level, in line with the Group's Terms of Reference.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 No alternative options are proposed.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Council was originally award Member Charter status in July 2011 and was successful in being reaccredited in January 2015. Charter Status is awarded for a period of three years with an interim reassessment after 18 months. This was successfully passed in June 2016.
- 4.2 The full reassessment will be due in January 2018. The Council will need to indicate in early 2017 if it wishes to commit to the full reassessment and seek reaccreditation.
- 4.3 At Appendix 1 is the latest framework for Member Charter Status. This sets out the main criteria and then breaks these down into more detailed guidance about what is required to meet each of the criteria.
- 4.4 Since the Council achieved Charter Status in 2015, the criteria against which Charter Status is judged have changed slightly. There are now three key elements of the criteria:-
 - A clear commitment to councillor development;
 - The Council has a strategic approach to councillor development;
 - Learning and development is effective in building capacity.

There is no longer a separate criterion on “Supporting Councillors” although some of the requirements remain and are included under the other criteria. The key elements of the Charter remain in that Council has to demonstrate that member development is member led and that structures and processes are in place to deliver development that meets members needs and the Council’s corporate objectives. In addition strategies must be in place to evaluate the benefits development brings, both individually and to the Council as a whole.

4.5 The Charter requirements largely reflect our existing practice. There is a requirement around the evaluation of member training needs that specifies that 60% of Councillor’s complete a Training Needs Analysis or Personal Development Plan over a three year period. As the Group will know we have in the past had some challenges in meeting requirements around evaluation of training need, although this appears a bit more flexible than previously

4.6 If the Group is of the view that the Council should seek reaccreditation it is suggested that the Group should make a recommendation to Cabinet that it endorse the bid. This would help enable the Council to demonstrate the commitment of the political leadership of the Council in line with the requirements of the Charter.

Charter Plus

4.7 There is a higher level of accreditation, known as Charter Plus. There are no additional criteria for Charter Plus, but the Council is required to meet a higher standard and demonstrate further evidence in respect of each criteria. The additional requirements are set out at Appendix 1. In addition it is worth noting that the requirements for Charter and Charter Plus are not prescriptive – it is for each authority to demonstrate how it believes it meets the criteria.

4.8 An assessment for Charter Plus will first of all confirm that the Council has met the requirements of the Charter and then go onto assess whether the Council has met the requirements of Charter Plus. If it fails to meet the requirements for Charter Plus, it would still be awarded Charter Status (provided it met that level) and the assessment report would indicate the areas the Council needed to address to gain charter Plus.

4.9 Looking at the Charter Framework at Appendix 1 the requirements that may be challenging to achieve given the level of resources the Council is able to devote to member development are:-

- Member development budget set by all party councillor development task group;
- All Councillors offered PDPS and 60% of councillors take them up.
- Council has process for individual reviews for Councillors to reflect on strengths and support progression.
- A programme to develop the next generation of leaders is in place as part of the Council’s approach to succession planning.
- Impact assessment of member development at community level

4.10 The Group may wish to consider whether it wishes to seek accreditation at Charter Plus level.

4.11 At the last meeting of the Group, it was suggested that the views of a number of Councillors on the value and benefits of Charter Status be sought. These will reported verbally at the meeting.

5. Strategic Plan References

5.1 There are no direct Strategic Plan references. However the provision of high quality member development would indirectly help support all the priorities in the Strategic Plan.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 The cost of seeking reaccreditation is £2500, which would be due at the time of committing to reaccreditation (ie January 2017) although this can be split over two municipal years. This would be met from the member development budget. The other resource is officer and Councillor time. Seeking Charter Status can be quite resource intensive particularly in the lead up to the assessment and in order to be successful requires a significant input from members.

7. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

7.1 An EQIA for the member development policy has been completed and can be found on the Council's website via the pathway Colchester Borough Council / Policies, Strategy and Performance/ Equality and Diversity/ Equality Impact Assessment/ Corporate Management. It can be accessed via the link below:-

[Councillor Development Policy EQIA](#)

8. Standard References

8.1 There are no particular references to publicity or consultation considerations; or community safety; health and safety or risk management.