

## Full Council 28<sup>th</sup> July 2021

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>East Midlands Regional Councillor Development Charter</b>	
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### List of Appendices

**Appendix A** – Statement of Commitment

**Appendix B** – Draft Terms of Reference – Member Development Working Group

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

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To ask Council to formally commit to develop the necessary strategy, processes and environment to support effective councillor learning and development by signing a Statement of Commitment and constituting a cross-party Member Development Working Group.

#### **2. Executive Summary**

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2.1 The East Midlands Regional Charter for Councillor Development aims to promote best practice in councillor development. The Charter has an accreditation process which is set against standards. These standards have been developed in conjunction with the Local Government Association and other regions.

2.2 There are three essential criteria to achieving the Charter. These are:

1. There is a clear commitment to councillor development and support.
2. The Council has a strategic approach to councillor development.
3. Learning and development is effective in building councillors' skills and knowledge.

2.3 Within each of these criteria there are elements and requirements to demonstrate that the criteria are being met. These do not dictate what should

be in the Council's strategy, the nature of the content or the delivery mechanisms that should be used. The emphasis is on ensuring that all councillors are appropriately developed and supported so that they can be effective in their roles. Achieving the Councillor Development Charter is a chance for the Council's work to be recognised.

### **3. Recommendations**

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It is recommended that Council:

- (a) authorise the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to sign the Statement of Commitment on behalf of North Northamptonshire Council (attached as Appendix A); and
- (b) constitute a cross-party Member Development Working Group to oversee the work required to achieve the initial accreditation of the Charter and carry out other relevant functions in relation to training and development as set out in the Terms of Reference. (Draft Terms of Reference for the proposed Member Development Working Group are attached as Appendix B).

#### **3.1 Reason for Recommendations**

*The Councillor Development Charter and Charter Plus provide councils with a robust framework, which is flexible to local needs, to ensure effective leadership, equip their members with the support they need, and provide resilience in times of challenge.*

*The Charter has been developed as part of the LGA's co-ordinated approach to sector-led improvement across local government. This aims to help councils continue their own improvement journey, take up support tools and offers and contribute to the improvement of local government as a whole.*

### **4. Report Background**

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- 4.1 The East Midlands Councils Councillor Development Charter and Charter Plus programme has now been running for approximately 15 years. It was updated in 2020 and the relevant framework and supporting information can be accessed on the East Midlands Councils website on the link below:

[https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/write/The\\_Councillor\\_Development\\_Charter\\_and\\_Charter\\_Plus\\_2020.pdf](https://www.emcouncils.gov.uk/write/The_Councillor_Development_Charter_and_Charter_Plus_2020.pdf)

- 4.2 This document includes the guidelines, requirements and examples of evidence along with the purpose, values and benefits in terms of process and strategies, the impact on Councillors and all partners as well as the resource commitments.

## 5. Issues and Choices

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### Benefits of Achieving the Charter

#### 5.1 Cllr James Jamieson, Chair of the LGA comments:

*"more than ever before, councillors' role as political, civic and community leaders requires us to offer visible, responsive and resilient leadership as we advocate on behalf of our residents and help shape places in which people want to live, work and play....if we are to continue to meet the expectations of those we serve, in an ever-changing world, we need to make sure we have the skills and expertise to carry out our duties".*

5.2 The Charter and Charter Plus helps councils to support councillor development and recognises those that have built an effective approach. It is based on the principles of sector-led improvement whereby councils are responsible for their own performance, are locally accountable and have a sense of collective responsibility for the performance of the sector as a whole.

5.3 The process of achieving award of the Charter gives concise and clear guidance and enables the Council to develop its own approach to a national framework. It also enables councillors' development needs to be better understood and supported and demonstrates the value that is placed on councillors carrying out their important and complex roles. It also provides the opportunity to set time aside to reflect on and celebrate good practice that is happening all the time across the Council.

5.4 Working towards award of the Charter is especially important for North Northamptonshire Council because it enables new councillors to be better prepared for their roles and responsibilities and also enables councillor progression through ongoing personal development and growth. It helps to ensure councillors are knowledgeable, skilled and effective in their role and increases both confidence and competence in their increasingly complex and demanding roles in the local government landscape.

5.5 The Councillor Development Charter also has a positive impact on all the Council's partners. It strengthens member-officer relations and helps to ensure effective top team political and managerial leadership. Other benefits of the Charter are that it:

- Encourages robust and accountable decision making
- Helps ensure proactive succession planning
- Helps improve councillor diversity
- Enhances democracy and participation
- Strengthens relationships with residents and partners
- Improves outcomes for communities
- Fosters a culture of learning and support within the council and with partners

## **Stages in Achieving the Charter**

5.6 There are six key stages in achieving the East Midlands Regional Councillor Development Charter:

1. Local authorities that want to participate are required to sign up to the Charter to demonstrate their commitment to achieving the charter standards and improving council performance, through the development of their councillors.
2. The Council will need to develop its own Learning and Development Strategy and an Action Plan to enable it to work towards accreditation of the Charter. It is recognised that each Council will have a variety of learning and development processes. As North Northamptonshire Council is a new Council, it is expected that the Council should have collected enough evidence to begin the accreditation process by May 2023. The Council will then have had two full years to (a) develop, approve and put into practice its Learning and Development Strategy and (b) develop, approve and put into practice a process for annual Councillor Reviews and hold a personal review for each councillor. A target date for Charter accreditation should therefore be set at December 2023.
3. Councils are expected to compile a portfolio to demonstrate their compliance with the standards.
4. When a portfolio of evidence is in place to demonstrate that a Council meets the standards, an on-site assessment by East Midlands Councils will take place. The team will assess the evidence in the portfolio against the standards and conduct a small number of interviews with councillors and officers.
5. When the council has been assessed and has been deemed to have achieved the standards, it will be awarded the Charter. Once the Council has been awarded the Charter, it can use the Councillor Development Charter logo on its stationery, publications and online platforms.
6. Councils are expected to maintain good practice and demonstrate improvement. A re-assessment will therefore take place within a minimum of three years.

## **6. Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **Resources and Financial**

6.1 Most authorities have some form of support programme in place, and this will need to be assessed and developed as the Council builds on its work in the area of member training and development and commences the work required to achieve and retain the Councillor Development Charter. Support is also available from East Midlands Councils. It is anticipated that any costs can be maintained within existing budgets.

6.2 The investment per authority is only paid once the authority has achieved the Charter standard. The cost, which includes all assessment activities as well as ongoing support and advice, is £1,750.00 + VAT. This covers the 3-year period.

6.3 Councils are expected to maintain good practice and demonstrate improvements since achieving the Charter; therefore, reaccreditation will take place within a minimum of three years. Reaccreditation costs are currently £1,000.00 plus VAT and travel expenses (if appropriate) for all assessors.

## **7. Legal**

There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

## **8 Risk**

There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

## **9. Consultation**

Development of the Learning and Development Strategy will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

## **10. Consideration by Scrutiny**

The draft Learning and Development Strategy will be submitted for consideration by the Scrutiny Commission prior to submission to the Council's Executive and final adoption by Full Council.

## **11. Climate Impact**

N/A

## **12. Community Impact**

Learning and development is an important tool for councils, councillors and officers to deliver what our communities need.

## **Background Papers**

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East Midlands Councils Councillor Development Charter Assessment  
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