



South West Charter for Elected Member Development

Name of Council:	Bristol City Council
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Description

- Self-assessment undertaken 2007 and action plan produced.
- The cross party Councillor Development Reference Group, Group Leaders and the Chief Executive agreed to work towards achieving the Charter in August 2008. Achievement of the Charter was one of the Chief Executives performance objectives (October 2008).
- Regular reports were provided to Party Group Leaders and the Chief Executive on progress of the action plan. The Charter was a standing item on the agenda for the Councillor Development Reference Group
- The Councillor Development Reference Group took ownership of the Councillor Development Policy and agreed to annually review it.
- Bristol City Council worked in partnership with Operation Black vote to run the BME Councillor Shadowing Scheme.
- One to ones were held with councillors Summer/Autumn 2008 and this provided the information to produce the Councillor Development Programme 2009/2010.
- The Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive began ward visits September 2008 – a commitment to visit all 35 wards in the city to hear about local issues and enhance member/officer relations.
- Bristol City Council worked in partnership with BANES, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset to host joint councillor development activities. The Western Improvement Partnership (Councillor Development) made a submission to the prestigious MJ Awards 2009 in recognition of this partnership working and was specially commended.
- Work began on the portfolio January 2009. This provided the opportunity for a thorough health check against nationally recognised good practice guidelines. The Councillor Development Officer led on this and a range of staff were involved in it's production.
- The Charter was awarded April 2009.

Benefits

For the Council

- The robust external assessment of the charter has helped us further embed the importance of councillor development within the organisation. All those interviewed throughout the assessment felt challenged by the assessment team but able to clearly demonstrate the vital role that councillor development plays in delivering corporate aims and objectives.
- Putting the portfolio together enabled us to review what we did and make improvements to processes and procedures.
- Charter status has supported the Council in terms of CAA and sent out a strong message that the Council is serious about developing its councillors - ultimately helping to improve service delivery and achievement of corporate aims and objectives.

For the Councillors

- The Councillor Development Reference Group took a strong lead on the Charter. This has definitely enhanced the role of the group and increased the weight that they bring in terms of steer and a councillor led approach. This has been especially beneficial when planning the New Councillor Induction Programme 2009 and aligning the 'essentials' against corporate priorities.
- The detailed assessment report identified for improvement and these have been widely shared with councillors. This clearly shows that whilst we meet Charter standards, it's not a case of resting on our laurels so momentum is kept and councillors are keen to be part of the improvement journey.
- There was perhaps a feeling of complacency prior to the achieving Charter status - councillor development had been happening in Bristol for such a long time. The Charter has significantly changed the way in which councillor's view their development i.e. they can see that there are national standards to meet and huge benefits to be gained from effective councillor development. This has been reflected in attendance figures and feedback gained throughout the new councillor induction and refresher programme 2009.

For the Local Community

- Working towards the Charter and assessing against the national guidelines has helped to ensure that comprehensive induction and ongoing development is available for all councillors. This ensures that they are equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills to lead and serve their communities better.
- Charter status has supported us in challenging the norm in terms of work life balance for councillors. It has influenced our culture in that we are looking at ways to encourage people to stand for election by promoting effective work life balance ethics and principles i.e. we can attract those who wouldn't otherwise have considered standing.
- Achieving the Charter has reinforced the need for ongoing councillor development so that councillors are up to date with the latest policies, laws and issues that affect residents of the City i.e. planning, licensing etc.

Photo's and Quotes



"It is recognised that the top performing councils deliver better outcomes through strong leadership, the ability to build capacity and importantly with effective member/officer relations. Achieving the Charter has provided us with an opportunity to measure ourselves against nationally recognised good practice guidelines and serves to strengthen our commitment to continuously invest and develop our councillors".
Jan Ormondroyd, Chief Executive



"The role of a councillor is increasingly diverse, challenging and demanding. It is essential that where possible, councillors are given the best support to help them fulfil this sometimes complex role. I am more than happy that our comprehensive councillor-led development programme provides this support and achieving the Charter confirms this. I urge all Bristol City Councillors to take full advantage of any development opportunities available to them."
Cllr Barbara Janke, Leader of the Council



"Since achieving the Charter, engagement on development activities has definitely increased. Producing the portfolio is challenging and the assessment tough but councillors are proud to receive recognition for their commitment to their own development. The Charter has given councillor development some extra 'oomph' and I'm delighted to see the new energy that members of the Councillor Development Reference Group in particular are bringing to meetings".
Rachel Boast, Councillor Development Officer

Contact information:

Cllr Steve Comer
Chair of the Councillor Development Reference Group
Email: steve.comer@bristol.gov.uk

Rachel Boast
Councillor Development Officer
Email: rachel.boast@bristol.gov.uk
Tel: 0117 92 22097