



South West Charter for Elected Member Development

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| Name of Council: | South Somerset District Council |
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Description

- Charter Commitment March 2007 – approved by Full Council
- Self Assessment and Action Plan – submitted May 2007 – process led by Portfolio Holder, supported by cross party member development group and member development officer
- May 2007 successful new councillor induction programme agreed with consultation with existing members and workshop consultation with other councils
- Following a full day of assessment which was attended by key officers and councillors Charter status was awarded to SSDC in March 2008
- On going support and advice from SW Councils and the SW Member Support Officer network

Member Development Policy and Strategy agreed by all members
Active cross party Councillor Development Group
Revised Councillor Role descriptions
Revised Personal Development Plans
Approved budget for Councillor Development

Benefits

For the Council

- SSDC was the first council in the SW to obtain Charter status and this is another demonstration of the council's commitment to 'Good Councillors By Design' and to the continued support given to councillors to encourage their role as strong community leaders.
- We now have effective processes and methods of communication in place to enable us to have a robust framework, which enables us to continue to support councillors in responding to the continual challenges, and legislative changes that local government brings.
- Following our Charter Accreditation and feedback we have been able to improve our evaluation of councillor development and the cascading of learning.

For the Councillors

- We continue to offer timely and relevant training and development programmes, which are responsive to the needs of both the individual councillor and groups of councillors regardless of politics.
- We can offer alternative methods of learning for councillors, which take into consideration their preferred learning styles.
- Councillors are more aware of the benefits of participating in both formal learning, which leads to nationally recognised qualifications such as BTEch and other less structured ways of learning.
- Councillors are more able to be proactive in response to their own development needs
- Good networking opportunities are achieved for councillors through shared learning experiences and the sharing of best practice with other local authorities.
- Our active Councillor Development Group ensures that training and development opportunities have the agreement and support of councillors.

For the Local Community

- Councillors are more aware of how to access support when responding to the needs of their constituents.
- Continuing development for councillors ensures that they are better equipped to provide a more valuable service to their community and assists in better, more informed decision making.
- The knowledge that there is continuing support for elected members may encourage more people to come forward and participate in local democracy.

Quotes:

Phil Dolan, Chief Executive - South Somerset District Council

The Charter has been an important milestone. For me the journey is about South Somerset District Council producing some of the most effective, community focussed councillors in the country. The Charter gave us the opportunity to pause, draw breath, check our 'progress map' and fully understand where we were on that journey. Without the Charter process I doubt we could have fully recognised what we had achieved and what still lay ahead. I cannot recommend it highly enough.

Cllr Tim Carroll, Leader - South Somerset District Council

Modern Councillors need to be equipped with a range of skills, knowledge and expertise to operate effectively at a corporate level and get the best for the communities they represent. The

Charter represented an important and invaluable way marker to the existing South Somerset Member Development programme so we could check and validate our approach. I along with the other 59 SSDC Councillors share a sense of pride and achievement that SSDC was the 1st Authority in the SW to receive this award which built on our Beacon award for "Neighbourhood and Community Champions - the role of the Elected member

Cllr Paull Robathan – Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Member Development (at time of Charter Application)

Working towards the Charter for member development gave SSDC a short term goal as part of a long term plan - to ensure all members are fully engaged at all times, and that the democratic process can deliver all of its promises. Without the discipline of the Charter we would have had to reinvent the wheel, and without the high quality support from our own officers and those from South West Employers it would have been an even harder task!

Cllr Martin Wale – Leader of Opposition Group and councillor on Member Development Group

*It's a bit like something to barter
When thinking of members new charter
But it's like a large college
When sharing our knowledge
It's never too late for new data!*

If you want to talk about the challenges and benefits of the Charter programme please get in touch with us:

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