

REPORT OF ADMINISTRATION & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

SUBJECT: WALES CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT: ADVANCED CHARTER CRITERIA

Purpose of report

To ask Members to adopt the draft criteria for the Advanced Level of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development and to develop an Action Plan to work towards the Advanced Level.

Introduction

Following on from the Authority's achievement in gaining the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development earlier this year, officers from the three Welsh National Park Authorities (NPAs) have been working with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to develop Park specific criteria for the next (Advanced) level. Members will also be aware that the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Housing referred to such a course of action in her Strategic Grant Letter for this year:

"In addition to work jointly and with the WLGA to agree the criteria for the application of the Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development – and to take this process forward towards adoption of the Charter, reporting progress by March 2011."

Current situation

The draft criteria as agreed by officers are attached for Members' consideration. The Advanced award builds on the good practice embedded within the framework of the Basic Charter, and lays the foundations for the Excellence Award in future years. As Members will see from the document, much work will be needed to embed and further develop the arrangements already in place for the first level of the Charter, and to develop the following areas, which are identified for the Advanced Level:

- The development of role descriptions for Members who represent the Authority on outside bodies;
- A review of the Authority's timetable of meetings, to enable Members to participate fully in the business of the Authority;
- A review of the Authority's Scheme of Delegation, Terms of Reference, Standing Orders, Planning Protocol, Code of Conduct and Member/Officer protocol;

- The evaluation of development programmes to inform the following year's induction and continuing development programme, and
- The adoption and development of a mentor scheme.

The Member Development Strategy Working Group considered this matter at its meeting held on the 15th September 2010. Members of the Working Group welcomed the progress that had been made to date in relation to Member development as they considered the process to be beneficial to Members' development, as well as being of benefit to the Authority. The Working Group resolved, therefore, that the criteria be adopted and that an Action Plan for delivery of the Advanced Charter be developed.

Options

It is of paramount importance that the Authority is regarded as being efficient, effective and transparent in its business. The Member Development Strategy has been developed to ensure that Members receive the necessary support to demonstrate a high standard of governance, in addition to being given the tools to meet any challenges presented to them in the future. It has been recognised by both the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the WLGA that experienced Members need continuing development to understand the changing agenda and to refresh the skills and knowledge required for their changing roles, whilst new Members need to understand what is expected of them and are presented with opportunities to build their knowledge and skills base.

In addition to this, and as mentioned previously, the Authority's Strategic Grant Letter requires the three Welsh NPAs to work together towards the Advanced Level of the Charter. Colleagues in Snowdonia and the Brecon Beacons are taking/have taken a similar report to their Members on this matter.

Financial considerations

The financial resources for training events will be met from the Member Development budget heading.

Risk considerations

The Authority has developed a strong ethos of Member development, which has been endorsed by the award of the Basic Charter earlier this year; working towards the Advanced Level will build on the good work carried out to date and help demonstrate that the Authority works to a high standard of governance. In addition, the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Housing requires all three Welsh National Park Authorities to work towards the Advanced Level of the Charter.

Compliance

The proposal complies with the Authority's current (as at the time of writing) Corporate Objective 6: To demonstrate that the Authority operates to a high standard of governance.

Human Rights/Equality issues

The Authority will be able to demonstrate that it works to a high standard of governance and that it is efficient, effective and transparent in its business.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

No implications, although specific modules in the induction and continuing development programme are targeted at improving Members' knowledge of biodiversity, sustainability, climate change, etc.

Welsh Language statement

No implications.

Conclusion

The adoption of the draft criteria for the Advanced Level of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development will enable the Authority to build upon the good practice which already exists and to maintain a high standard of governance in its business. It will also mean that the Authority has reached another of the targets set in the 2010/11 Strategic Grant Letter as laid out by the Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Housing.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Members adopt the draft criteria for the Advanced Level of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development and tasks the Member Development Strategy Working Group with developing an Action Plan to work towards the Advanced Level.

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Consultees: Member Development Strategy Working Group

Background documents:

Draft criteria for the Advanced Level of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development

Papers relating to the Member Development Strategy Working Group: 15th September 2010

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