



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Member Development Strategy
Date:	24 September 2010
Reporting Officers:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314) Jill Minne, Head of HR (ext 3220)
Contact Officers:	Gareth Quinn, Senior Democratic Services Officer (ext 6316) Lisa Rogan, Senior HR Advisor (ext 3251)

Relevant Background Information

The Council is at vital stage in its planning process - setting the rate, agreeing a capital programme for five years and a new three year corporate plan.

New aspirations and strategic direction will emerge through the work to develop the corporate plan for 2011 and beyond. In the context of discussions about the new corporate plan, Members have outlined the need to manage change within the organisation and evolve new ways of working with communities, partners and central government and its agencies. Members' leadership of these is vital and capacity will be needed across a number of areas, including for example:

- Pursuing high performance to ensure that productivity is high and the value of public services is optimised.
- Exploring ways to build community capacity and engage local people in a dialogue about how delivery systems can change while protecting social outcomes.
- Seeking efficiency savings while protecting valuable services to residents.
- Building relationships and trust with partners to have challenging conversations about how resources might be moved around.

The political leadership role required by elected Members is becoming increasingly complex and challenging at a time when building the Council's collaborative leadership capacity will be key to us taking a leading role in delivering an ambitious agenda for the city.

In addition, the local government elections are expected to take place in May 2011 and experience has shown that there is usually a significant turnover in Members at the elections resulting in a loss of knowledge, skills and experience.

It is therefore timely to consider the support that Members receive through effective training, development and induction.

Key Issues

It is proposed therefore to:

- Revise the Council's current Member Development Plan (which was agreed by the former Policy and Resources (Members) Sub-Committee in May 2007) and
- Provide immediate training and development support to newer Members of the Council.

Revision of Member Development Framework

Benchmarking work with high performing local authorities has highlighted the following as being key elements of successful elected Member development:

- There is a need for cross party steering group to oversee the development and implementation of a Member Development Strategy.
- The Member Development Charter (see Appendix 1) should be used to develop the Strategy.
- Members' roles and responsibilities should be clearly set out and communicated.
- Structured induction and personal development planning processes should be in place.
- There should be an allocated Member development budget.
- Development activities should be facilitated internally in the main with some use of external expertise.

Many of these elements are contained within our current Member Development Plan and consequently it is proposed that a Member/Officer Steering Group is established to review this and oversee the development and implementation of an integrated, revised Member Development Strategy. It is proposed that the group should comprise one Member from each of the Party Groupings and staff from the Democratic Services and Human Resources Sections. The Steering Group would also be assisted in its deliberations by Chief Officers and/or Senior Managers as required.

Provision of Induction support for newer Members

Since the last government elections 13 new Members have joined the Council. These newer Members are expected to become involved in a range of complicated and crucial decisions including the rate setting process, the affordability limits for the capital programme and the development of the new corporate plan. It is proposed therefore to offer relevant support to these new Members through a programme of training sessions relating to finance; rate setting; planning for the future and performance management delivered between October and December 2010. Clearly, these sessions will also be available to any other Member who wishes to attend.

Resource Implications

None. The Steering Group will be serviced by staff during normal working hours.

The training sessions will be provided in-house and therefore no costs will be incurred.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to agree to:

1. The establishment of a Member/Officer Steering Group comprising one Member from each of the Party Groupings;
2. The first meeting of the Steering Group, to establish terms of reference and agree a programme of work, to be held in October, 2010.
3. Training sessions to be provided for newer Members (and any others who wish to attend) between October and December 2010.