



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Member Development Steering Group - Update
<b>Date:</b>	Friday, 18 February, 2011
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (Ext. 6314) Jill Minne, Head of Human Resources (ext. 3220)
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Julie Lilley, Democratic Services Officer (ext. 6321) Lisa Rogan, Senior HR Advisor (ext. 3251)

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 24 September, 2010, agreed that a Member Development Steering Group be established comprising one Member from each of the Party Groups supported by officers from the Democratic Services and HR Sections.
1.2	The purpose of the Steering Group is to oversee the development and implementation of an integrated revised Member Development Strategy

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	The Steering Group met in December and January and have progressed the following:
2.2	<u>Member Development Charter</u>
2.2.1	The Member Development Charter, a framework currently being used by over 200 Local Authorities in England, has been identified as the most effective tool to develop the Council's revised Member Development Strategy. The Steering Group has agreed that the Council should adopt the 'Charter Framework'.
2.2.2	The Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) in conjunction with the South East Employers Organisation (SEE) will be piloting the Member Development Charter in Northern Ireland. SEE is one of nine regional employers' organisations which represent the interests of Local Authorities and public sector bodies in England.

2.2.3	NILGA will support up to four Councils or clusters of Councils to help them achieve charter status and will subsidise 75% of the normal £3,000 costs, resulting in a one of charge of £750. NILGA has invited Councils to submit a bid to be considered for one of the four pilots. The Steering Group has recommended that the Council declare its interest in being chosen as one of the pilots. If successful, the Council will undergo an assessment in liaison with NILGA and the SEE at an appropriate time with a view to achieving charter accreditation.
2.2.4	Furthermore, NILGA would like the chosen Council or clusters to share their learning and experience with other Councils and to agree to champion the Charter Framework by having a number of Members and officers trained as assessors. Although the Steering Group agreed in principle, it was keen to ensure that any time and resource commitment is measured to ensure that significant resources are not required.
2.3	<u>Advice NI Benefits Training</u>
2.3.1	The Member Development Steering Group oversaw the delivery of four sessions of training held by Advice NI to raise the awareness of Members on the relevant issues associated with the Welfare Benefits system.
2.3.2	The training focused on two discrete but complementary areas. The first two sessions dealt with benefits and tax credits for older people, people of working age and children, with the last two sessions concentrating on the changes arising from the Government Welfare Reform Programme and how this will impact on vulnerable groups. Advice NI also produced a comprehensive Benefits Manual designed specifically for Members as a tool to assist them when dealing with their constituents' benefits queries.
2.3.3	The Steering Group commented on how useful and worthwhile the sessions were and agreed that further relevant training from Advice NI should form part of the revised Member Induction Programme to be delivered at the commencement of the new Council term.
2.4	The Steering Group has also agreed to progress the following development activities:
2.5	<u>Women Leaders Programme</u>
2.5.1	The Council has developed a three day Women Leaders Programme for our female elected Members and senior officers. The programme, developed as part of the Council's gender action plan, is aimed at addressing the under-representation of female Members and senior female officers. Three programmes have been delivered to date.
2.5.2	The programme is aimed at increasing participants' leadership skills but also to facilitate joint Member–officer development.
2.5.3	The Steering Group agreed that a further Women Leaders Programme be delivered, prior to the Local Government Elections in May, for our newer female Members who haven't had an opportunity to attend a programme and for our experienced Members who were previously unable to attend.

2.6	<u>Growing A Shared City Project</u>
2.6.1	The Council's Good Relations Unit has been successful in securing additional funding from the PEACE III Programme, under the theme which aims to build the key institutional capacities required for a shared society. The project, which will run until June 2012, is a learning and development programme which will explore the policy and capacity required in the Council and its partner agencies, to effect change in Belfast's divided society.
2.6.2	The project plan includes a series of actions to enhance understanding of the role of diversity in the social, economic and political life of the city. Through collaboration and engagement it aims to demonstrate strong civic leadership which recognises the links between progress and harnessing different perspectives.
2.6.3	The Member Development Steering Group has agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee the holding of a series of workshops, at a cost not exceeding £6,750 funded through Peace III, on topics which will promote the sustained involvement of elected Members in cross-party dialogue on planning and prioritising for a shared city.
2.7	<u>Best Practice Visits</u>
2.7.1	As a means of providing further development and support, especially to newer Members, the Steering Group agreed that there would be merit in Members undertaking a number of best practice visits to high performing Councils. This would provide Members with opportunities to liaise directly with other Members and officers who have been involved in guiding their Local Authority to address key issues.
2.7.2	Dublin, Edinburgh and Glasgow City Councils have been identified as suitable for best practice visits. The purpose of these visits would be to increase Members' knowledge in key areas such: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local area working</li> <li>• Regeneration</li> <li>• Organisation improvement and efficiency</li> <li>• City investment and city marketing</li> <li>• Improving community confidence and supporting communities</li> <li>• Health inequalities</li> <li>• Environmental management and meeting the challenges of the waste plan.</li> </ul>
2.7.3	The Steering Group agreed in principle to the participation of Members on such best practice visits. However, it was decided that they should not take place until after the start of the new Council term.
2.8	<u>Future Work Programme</u>
2.8.1	The Steering Group has agreed to hold two further meetings before the Local Government Elections in May. The main purpose of these meetings will be to agree on the content and delivery of the revised Members Induction Programme which will be rolled out in the months following the elections.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<u>Financial</u> Application fee for Member Development Charter - £750 Advice NI Training and associated booklets - £3,300 Growing a Shared City Workshops (100% funded) - £6,750 Delivery of Women Leaders Programme - £10,000
3.2	<u>Human Resources</u> The Democratic Services Section and Human Resources Service will jointly co-ordinate the actions recommended by the Member Development Steering Group.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality Implications</b>
	N/A

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	The Committee is asked to agree to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the Council making a submission to NILGA to be considered as one of the four pilots for the Member Development Charter;</li> <li>2. the delivery of a Women Leaders Programme in the current Council term; and</li> <li>3. the holding of a series of workshops for Members to advance the objectives of Growing a Shared City project.</li> </ol>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Officers responsible: Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager Jill Minne, Head of Human Resources May 2011	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
NILGA – Northern Ireland local Government Association SEE – South East Employers	