

Generic development programme for elected members

This action plan will be presented to CMT and members to complement the 'Generic development programme for elected members'.

The purpose of the action plan is to outline the work which will be undertaken to identify the best methods of building members capacity in areas which have not yet been fully progressed such as those areas which members will become responsible for through local government reform.

Council role as Statutory Planning Authority

The transfer of Statutory Planning powers from the Department of Environment to local councils (including Belfast City Council) will be one of the most significant elements of the local government reform programme. At the point of formal transfer, the Council will no longer be a **consultee in the planning process**; but become the **planning authority**

The reform and transfer of the planning system also offers the potential to integrate work in a more positive spatial approach alongside the objectives for Community Planning in the new council area including the potential for the integration with existing and new regeneration functions.

In preparation for the transfer of planning, a focused and evolving programme of activities will be rolled-out within the Council; initially structured around the following modules/themes:

1) Foundation awareness session on the reformed planning system including:

- (i) *New Planning Regime* – impact of the 2011 Planning Act in reforming the planning and defining future role of councils in delivering planning
- (ii) *Planning Policy Framework* - Regional Development Strategy, Planning Policy Statements, B MAP (the hierarchy of Plans)
- (iii) *Managing expectations* ; what planning can and cannot do

2) Governance including

- (i) *Codes of conduct*
- (ii) *Ethical regime* – conflicts of interest
- (iii) *Scrutiny* – open files; role of PAC and Ombudsman; legal challenges; financial consequences; surcharge; role of Auditor

3) Planning and strategic policy development

- (i) Statement of Community Involvement and the Timetable
- (ii) The development of a local strategic plan
- (iii) The development of local planning policies plan
- (iv) Guidance documents
- (v) The significance of involvement /input of Members at this point
- (vi) Interface between planning and regeneration and community planning as key place-shaping enablers for Councils and members

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4) The Planning Process (role of Members in process)

- (i) *Development Planning process* (see 3 above, Members as leaders and opinion interpreters)
- (ii) *Development management process* – what makes a ‘good’ decision
- (iii) *Enforcement* - importance of early action; proportionate response
- (iv) *Community Involvement* – the significance of local community groups; reacting to local concerns/requirements
- (v) Strategic support and provision of relevant and timely information to elected Members

5) Regeneration and Community Planning

Understanding the potential synergies /linkages between planning and wider regeneration and community planning functions of local government.

Regeneration

As part of local government reform, the Department for Social Development’s power of regeneration will transfer to local councils. It is important that the members of Belfast City Council are aware of what this function will mean in terms of their role and what will be required of them to utilise these functions to ensure real, social and economic outcomes for the city.

Members will also need to understand how the function will be required to operate effectively in synergy, under co-location, with the functions of planning and community planning as well as the implications of the transfer on the council’s Town Planning Committee and Building Control.

Members will be made aware of their collective responsibility for comprehensive development schemes such as Royal Exchange and how the council will be required to use its economic development powers to develop such schemes. As part of the ‘Members’ Generic Development Programme’ councillors will be brought through and will learn from specific examples such as , ‘Laganside’ which will assist in ensuring that they have a thorough understanding of what will be required of the council in driving forward regeneration of the city.

Through the ‘Members’ Development Programme’ councillors will be given the opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of the policy framework in which the regeneration powers will be delivered. Members will understand how this policy framework includes the DSD’s Urban Regeneration Policy In addition, members will also gain understanding of relevant DSD programmes which are currently being run and which will be transferred to the council as part of the transfer of functions, such as, the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme.

It is vital that, in understanding their changing role with regard to regeneration, members learn from best practice which exists elsewhere. As part of the ‘Member Development Programme’ members will have the opportunity to undertake best practice visits to councils which have lead the way with regeneration, such as, Cardiff and Edinburgh.

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Community planning

The Council will be responsible for the new duty of community planning to be introduced in 2015. The development programme will evolve as further guidance becomes available from the DoE. Provisionally the programme is likely to include:

- Overview of Community Planning & introduction to the legislation & guidance
- Synergies between community planning, place shaping and local area working
- Governance & partnership structures for Community Planning
- Engaging with stakeholders & communities
- Outcomes & evidence based decision making
- Models of leadership for Council-led community planning.
- Developing and monitoring progress of the Community Plan

Understanding Scrutiny

The Member Development Programme will be developed over coming months to ensure that members are given the opportunity to:

- To explore and understand what is meant by scrutiny
- To identify how scrutiny fits in with local government reform and our external relations
- To explore the various roles within a scrutiny system and identify the skill sets required
- To be able to monitor and manage performance
- To shape the role of scrutiny within the decision making process
- To shape the role of scrutiny with external partners

Governance changes

Over the coming months, through Party Briefings, members will consider the council's political management and operational governance arrangements in light of the evolving role of the council and its elected members and to take account of the emerging drivers for change.

Members will consider the evolving roles undertaken by the council and councillors in terms of:

- delivering key statutory and discretionary functions and services within the city;
- acting as civic leader and working in partnership for the betterment of the city and its citizens;
- investing in the city and its infrastructure; and
- working at an area level to address identified local priorities and to improve the wellbeing and quality of lives of citizens across the city.

Members will explore the advantages and disadvantages of a number of models which complement the common trend of introducing a tiered form of governance based around a strategic tier and a

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thematic/portfolio tier supported by area/local committees with increased levels of delegation from full Council to committee and committee to officers.

The 'Members Generic Development Programme' will assist members in exploring the future role of the council and its members through a review of its political management and operational governance arrangements.

Specifically the programme will assist members in considering the following important issues which need further development in order to inform the review process:

- Defining the roles and responsibilities of the various tiers of governance.
- The number, size and proportionality of any Committees put in place.
- The degree and nature of delegated decisions introduced.
- Frequency of meetings and associated decision making processes.
- Relationship and interface between the tiers of internal governance put in place.
- Relationship between internal Committees and any external governance arrangements which may be put in place e.g. community/area committees.
- Members' remuneration and allowance schemes aligned to any new political

Organisational Development

Our vision is for a modern, effective and efficient, fit for purpose Council improving quality of life for all who live in, work in or visit Belfast. An organisation with excellent political and managerial leadership, serving and promoting a world class city and delivering excellent, value for money services through a skilled, adaptable and motivated workforce.

We deliver at a city level, a neighbourhood level and individual level and in order to ensure sustained organisation performance at city, neighbourhood and individual level we need to be highly competent in terms of both city leadership and service delivery and use our resources (assets, money, and people) in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Our Organisation Development (OD) strategy is the first step in developing a planned and systematic approach to enabling sustained organisation improvement through the involvement of our people – our (OD) Strategy and associated programme of work will be one of the key strategic plans for the council.

The OD strategy:

- Identifies four key areas of organisation development in Belfast City Council given our strategic context and drivers for change both internally and externally. The priority areas for OD work are
 1. Organisation
 2. Leadership
 3. Management
 4. Skills
- Identifies the priorities actions within each of those areas of OD work



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- Sets out proposals for its effective implementation, i.e. its inclusion in BCC programme management arrangements currently being implemented and the implementation of a detailed, resourced and prioritised action plan aligned to the Council's other strategic priorities such as the Investment Programme.

PCSP

Training was raised as an important issue at a recent workshop for PCSP managers. It was stated that there was a need to consider how best to support both managers and members in building their capacity to develop effective Partnership Plans in consultation with the community, and to deliver against those plans. It was recognised that, although many members had extensive experience and expertise, it was important to try to identify where development needs existed, and to offer support.

The group discussed the potential for drawing on members' own expertise as a resource and it was acknowledged that there was a wealth of experience amongst all of the membership of the partnerships – political, independent and potential designated bodies – and that this could be very valuable in helping to build the capacity of those who were newer to this area of work. It was also noted that a number of PCSPs are already taking forward their own capacity building programmes, however there is also a need for some consistency across all PCSPs.

A scoping exercise is being carried out to identify key areas for development of both members and managers. The 'members' aspect of this scoping exercise will inform the 'Members' Generic Development Programme' and the relevant development activities will be delivered when appropriate.