

## APPENDIX A

# Draft Member Development Strategy 2010-11

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is a complex, democratically accountable organisation, which secures and provides a wide variety of public services for and on behalf of, the residents of the Borough.
- 1.2 Councillors have a critical part to play to help deliver the aims of the Council. In addition, Councillors are involved in a range of other initiatives to help achieve positive outcomes for our residents.
- 1.3 Within this context, our Councillors are representatives, servants, champions and leaders of their local community. They make decisions, champion change, challenge and scrutinise proposed actions, communicate Council plans and take up issues raised with them by constituents. The role is a demanding one. Strong and effective leadership is a key to effective, accountable and responsive local government and the more successful the Council is, the higher the expectations of our local community.
- 1.4 There are 48 elected members, 3 representing each of the Borough's 16 electoral wards. In May 2010, 35 Labour councillors and 13 Liberal Democrat councillors were elected, of whom 19 were elected for the first time.
- 1.5 The Council has an Executive of eight and has an overview and three scrutiny committees, four area committees plus a number of regulatory and quasi-judicial committees. This structure provides a range of opportunities for leadership and other roles. Many of these roles are demanding and require specific skills. Finding opportunities for less experienced Councillors to develop the skills that will equip them for a future leadership role is an integral part of the Strategy.
- 1.6 The Council was recognised as a high performing 4-star council by the Audit Commission in 2008 and continues to strive to improve services for the benefit of local residents.
- 1.7 Remaining a high performing Authority means that learning and development cannot be left to chance. It should be an integral part of the planning processes so that areas of priority need can be anticipated and addressed. A planned approach to needs assessment and identification, within the context of a sound Member Development Strategy, will help ensure that Councillors are equipped to help the Council define and implement sound policies and drive service performance, whether as an executive or non-executive Member.
- 1.8 In October 2010, the Council made a commitment to achieve London Member Development Charter (LMDC) status. The Charter aims to promote Member

development so that councils can be better served and to recognise achievement in this area.

1.9 The Charter sets out five principles designed to help councils build their elected member capacity. These are that there is:

- a commitment to Member development;
- a strategic approach to Member development;
- a Member learning and development plan in place;
- evidence that learning and development is effective in delivering capacity;
- evidence that elected Member development promotes work life balance and citizenship.

1.10 The Council is fully committed to providing the resources and support to enable all Councillors to be fully effective and to providing access to learning and development opportunities appropriate to their needs, role and experience.

1.11 The LMDC has been used as a framework to help shape this Strategy.

## **2. The Strategy**

2.1 Developing, implementing and sustaining a strategic approach to Member Development in order to ensure that all Councillors are always adequately equipped to carry out their role as effectively as possible is the overarching purpose of the Strategy.

2.2 In order to do this, the Head of Democratic Services (HDS) has identified a number of strategic priorities for the period 2010-11, including:

- (i) Developing the leadership capabilities of Councillors to ensure continuity and clarity of direction for the community and the organisation;
- (ii) Putting in place a programme encouraging participation and a greater diversity of prospective candidates in future elections, outlining how the Council functions, the role of Councillors;
- (iii) Ensuring that Members understand the range of services the Council provides, key service priorities and national and local drivers for change; and that they know which officer to contact about particular issues.
- (iv) Implementing a training plan which:
  - is based on a set of core requirements applicable to all Members, requirements tailored to Councillors undertaking specific roles and also addressing requirements identified by Councillors themselves (based both on a regular audit of Councillors' requirements as well as requirements identified on an ad hoc basis);
  - ensures equality of access to learning and development opportunities;
  - includes a regular process of monitoring and review in order to ensure the effectiveness of the investment made in learning and development;

- is based on agreed priorities and budget allocation and ensures that best use is made of available resources.

### **3. Implementation**

- 3.1 To ensure the implementation of this Strategy, the HDS will discuss progress regularly with the Leaders and the Whips to ensure that training and development is appropriate, relevant and addresses both individual and Council needs and priorities.
- 3.2 A budget of around £20,000 is allocated for learning and development for Councillors. The budget is managed by the HDS. In future, the HDS will agree annually any overriding priorities for the coming year with the Whips and will determine the budget required to meet those priorities.

### **4. Commitment**

- 4.1 The effectiveness of the Strategy is dependent on a commitment from all Councillors to allocate time each year to reviewing their learning and development needs and to take an active part in the events that have been organised on their behalf.
- 4.2 If a Councillor is unable to attend an event that has been booked for them then sufficient notice must be given whenever possible in order to avoid cancellation costs.
- 4.3 Wherever possible learning should be shared with colleagues.

### **5. Equality of opportunity**

- 5.1 Councillors have many competing demands on their time; many have full-time day jobs or family commitments that may make it difficult to find time for their own development. The Council is committed to looking for creative ways of enabling councillors to take part in development activities at times that are convenient to them.

## **Our Policy Statement**

### **6. Introduction**

- 6.1 This Policy Statement sets out the Council's broad approach to Member education, training and development. It supports the above Strategy and sets out how it will be implemented.
- 6.2 The Council recognises that, whilst many Members will already have served one or more terms and be knowledgeable and experienced, all Members have ongoing development needs. For example:

- as new Members gaining core skills or familiarising themselves with specific service areas;
- as a Member promoted or soon to be promoted to a position of responsibility requiring additional skills or knowledge;
- as a more experienced Member looking to refresh knowledge, skills or ways of working;
- all Members, requiring a briefing on key issues, such as the financial settlement, or significant changes to the standards regime, the Constitution or other key procedures;
- all Members, to help them keep abreast of local and national drivers for change, especially in local policies and service delivery.

6.3 Our Policy endeavours to tackle these and all the other varied development needs that Members may have, underpinned by an acceptance that a skilled and knowledgeable body of Members, with each realising their full potential, is a key element in ensuring that Islington remains a high-performing Council.

6.4 The operation of the Policy will be overseen by the HDS, in consultation with the Whips, who will report annually to the Standards Committee. The results of the annual Members' Survey will feed into the policy which will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

## **7. Training Plan**

7.1 London borough elections take place every four years and the Council's training plan is therefore planned on a four year basis, starting with a full Member Induction Programme and building on this throughout the following four years as Members develop and change roles and as legislative and other changes occur.

7.2 Within this four year planning cycle, however, the training plan itself will be flexibly modified on an ongoing basis to incorporate events and modules, both internal and externally provided, which address newly identified development needs.

## **8. Explaining the Councillor role**

8.1 Prior to local elections, the Council will organise events for prospective candidates, providing these potential councillors with information to help them decide whether they might want to stand for election.

## **9. New Member induction**

9.1 The Council will provide an extensive Induction Programme, made up of training sessions, written guidance and ward walks with one of the Council's most senior officers. It will start immediately following the Borough elections every four years, for newly elected or re-elected Members and will continue by way of additional briefings and training relevant to their particular role.

9.2 The Induction materials will be revised and republished every four years and constitute the written guidance which will be made available to all Members of the Council.

9.3 The Induction material will provide Members with a sound foundation of knowledge on the Council's powers and duties; the delivery of its services; the Members' Code of Conduct; local government finance, the inspection regime and other requirements/constraints; the Council's organisational structure and principal service areas; and who to go to for ongoing support and advice.

## **10. Ongoing training**

10.1 The Council will provide ongoing core skills training for Members on the basis both of needs identified by Members themselves and new opportunities identified by officers. These skills cover, for example, chairing meetings, media awareness, public speaking and presentation skills, dealing with casework/paperwork, IT skills and other, more 'political', skills (some of which may be more appropriately addressed within party groups).

10.2 A significant part of a Councillor's time is spend serving constituents and dealing with matters raised by them. Whilst some matters can simply be referred to officers, others require the Councillor to act as advocate for the constituent and to monitor or chase-up any delay in resolution of an issue. This involves significant organisational, mediation and negotiation skills and an ability to distinguish the priority casework items. The Council recognises that dealing efficiently and effectively with casework does not come naturally to all and any skills deficit must be addressed, whether through training, mentoring, shadowing or some other means. The Council will ensure that all Members receive training on casework management.

10.3 Both political groups have a buddying system in place to support newly elected councillors or those who are appointed to a new position within the Council. The Council supports both political groups' annual facilitated awayday. In addition the Council seeks to make use of a range of external programmes such as the IDEA Leadership Programme and the fast track programme for young councillors to help members develop their skills and knowledge.

## **11. Statutory and procedural requirements**

11.1 The Council recognises that all Councillors must be conversant with the Council's key Constitutional and procedural requirements, with ethical governance (the Members' Code of Conduct and standards regime), Data Protection, Freedom of Information and so on.

11.2 The Council will seek the support of the Party Whips to organise, as appropriate, events which periodically refresh Members' knowledge and understanding of these areas and at which, in some cases, attendance may be mandatory. There will also be mandatory training as necessary for Members of the Council's Planning Committee and its Sub-Committees and of the Licensing Committee and its sub-committees.

- 11.3 In addition, Members will be offered regular briefings and/or training on the local government finance regime, budgets and financial planning, value for money and use of resources and audit and risk management.

## **12. External training opportunities**

- 12.1 The Council will pay all reasonable travel and accommodation costs, in line with the provisions of the Members' Allowances Scheme, for learning and development events such as conferences and seminars organised externally. Any member who wishes to attend a conference or external event has to complete an internal booking form which outlines why they want to attend, what they will gain and the costs. This must be approved, in advance, by the HDS and their party Whip.

## **13. Alternative learning methods**

- 13.1 The Council recognises that Members have many calls upon their time and it is not always easy for them to attend formal learning and development events. Furthermore different people learn in different ways and may not always respond to conventional delivery styles. In order to address these issues, the Council will seek to provide development opportunities through a variety of methods. Where practical and within budgetary constraints, the intended range will include, presentations, workshops, individual coaching, mentoring, e-learning, on-line resources and self-directed learning.

## **14. Evaluation**

- 14.1 In order to monitor the effectiveness and value for money of any training, Members will be invited to complete a training evaluation form in respect of each education, training and development event attended. Feedback will also be sought annually via the Members' survey.

## **15 Budget**

- 15.1 The Council will seek to ensure, as far as possible, that adequate budgetary provision is available to enable all Members to address development needs.

## **16. Publicity and communication**

- 16.1 Member development opportunities will be advertised widely and as far in advance as possible.

## **17. Contacts and assistance**

- 17.1.1 The delivery of Member training and development is administered by the Council's Democratic Services Section. The principal contact is the Head of Democratic Services.