

Civic Pride
great leaders
great places



Politics is the lifeblood of local government...

...it's what connects councils to their communities.

At their best politicians know and understand their communities intimately, create aspirations out of local desires, draw compelling pictures of the future and bring people together to achieve great things.

The Leadership Centre for Local Government has designed the new Civic Pride initiative to encourage confident, capable and visionary local leadership.

Five programmes that promote and support local politicians at each stage of their political lives will help to reinvigorate local democracy and encourage more people to get involved, creating a greater sense of civic pride in our communities.

Attracting local talent

All political groups say it is increasingly difficult to get people, even existing members and supporters, to stand as local council candidates. Willing candidates of working age are especially hard to find.

Being a councillor is not only a crucial role but also an exciting one. Not many people realise this. The work of the Leadership Centre will redress this oversight. There are already some very successful public campaigns to encourage people to take on civic roles, such as becoming magistrates or joining the Territorial Army - so we know it can be done.

The *Attracting local talent* programme will work with local party groups and councils to promote and profile the role of councillor in their area.

The programme

This project will involve research on current methods of recruitment and selection, the scope for local discretion and current ways of identifying potential councillors from existing members and supporters.

It will include a high profile targeted local media campaign to promote the role of councillor with an outline of the opportunities and obligations of the role.

There is a need for a clearer definition of the councillor role and an understanding of the time non-executive councillors need to commit once elected.

We will also create a set of advice and guidance for all political groups on widening their local recruitment and selection techniques.

A local 'executive search' with each political group will identify people who may be willing to become candidates.

Selections will remain the prerogative of local parties but this project should widen the range of people who make themselves available.

Stage two developing the talent you've got

Next generation

Bringing on tomorrow's leaders, making sure talented councillors have got the right skills to take on leadership, is an important part of reinvigorating the local political scene.

With all of the main political parties seeking vigorous political leadership from local government, it is vital that leading councillors are able to seize the opportunity being offered to ensure local government plays its full part in the country's governance. This programme is designed to develop and support future cabinet members and leaders and is uniquely focused on the politics of leadership in local government.

The programme

This is a high level programme that will cover policy and strategy, community leadership, political management and personal skill development and is aimed at committed councillors who have already demonstrated flair or a potential for leadership at a local level and have the capacity to develop politically.

We believe such people will show a proven commitment to the ideals of local government, an ability to mediate fairly and constructively between people with conflicting needs, have developed partnerships between the council and external partners and organisations and will be a recognised "voice" for all sections of the community.

The Leadership Centre is offering each of the four LGA political groups the opportunity to nominate 20 councillors to take this programme. Given the current profile of councillors we would particularly welcome nominations in respect of female, young, black and minority ethnic councillors. Ideally those nominated will have been on the IDeA Leadership Academy, 'Fast-track' programme or other equivalent councillor development programmes.

The programme will last for 18 months and unlike the IDeA Leadership Academy programme, participants will only be involved with councillors from their own political party for the duration of the course.

Stage three getting into power, what now?

Managing political change

Elections mean that control of councils inevitably changes hands from time to time – the recent local elections of 2006 bear strong testimony to this. Losing a by-election can mean that a council becomes a hung authority overnight.

Politicians with little experience of power can suddenly find themselves leading the council. Councillors and political groups are offered no help to manage this political transition.

This programme is the first to address this crucial period. The Leadership Centre will offer political groups in authorities where change is likely and where groups would most benefit from external support, the services of a top political facilitator to work with them before, and if successful, after the election to help them prepare for change and be ready from day one.

The programme

Each local participating group will be entitled to up to five days of external support. Two of these days will take place prior to the elections.

Before the election, the external facilitator spends half a day talking to leading members of the local group and assessing where they are in terms of being prepared for change. The external facilitator will be selected following discussion with the relevant LGA group and the local political group.

The external facilitator provides a whole day or two half-day workshops to help the group think about what a change of control would mean and work through a checklist of issues to consider with them. These sessions will help groups to refine their priorities and think about issues such as what their policies would mean for the council's budget and the way that the council currently operates.

The final half-day of the two days involves supporting the local group to produce a plan of action for the first few weeks after the election - in the event that political change occurs.

The remaining three days are immediately available to groups successful in the election to assist them in implementing their action plan. If the local political group still feels it requires additional external support on the completion of this programme, it can approach the Leadership Centre, via the authority, for further support.

Stage four getting the group dynamics right

Cabinet development centres

The skills and experience of cabinet members are critical to the continuing success and improvement of local councils. Development centres are well established for staff in the public and private sectors, but until now have not been used to help politicians.

The Leadership Centre has developed the Cabinet development centre as a unique programme for helping cabinet members assess their individual strengths and weaknesses, look at areas for their own development and also to understand more about the way they work together as a team.

It has been tested with five authorities, Westminster, Bracknell Forest, Kingston-upon-Thames, Hampshire and West Wiltshire, and was well received by all of them.

The programme

The development centre takes one and a half days, and involves a series of individual and team exercises that reflect different aspects of senior politicians' roles. The exercises are run by occupational psychologists and experienced political observers, and the purpose is to give participants personal and confidential feedback on their style and performance. Members are also able to give each other feedback and there is opportunity for learning about how they can be more cohesive and effective as a team.

Stage five confident in control, leading the community

Leadership of place

Increasing attention is now been given to the leadership of place role for councillors. Sir Michael Lyons refers to 'place shaping' as the core strategic role of an authority:

acting as primus inter pares among a range of public sector providers; community leadership at a more local level and actively bringing local people into local decision-making.

The programme

The Leadership Centre has outlined the key challenges in its publication 'The politics of place' (available at www.localleadership.gov.uk). We have also launched a programme of events and development opportunities that will help councillors and officers, at both the community and strategic level, define their understanding of place in order to get the best from their role.

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