



NILGA Local Planning Leadership Programme for Councillors 2023-24

What is this programme about?

The NILGA Local Planning Leadership Programme provides a unique training and development experience for councillors in Northern Ireland involved in council planning committees to help them address the challenges of their role.

Since 2015, councils have responsibility for the following key planning functions:

- Local plan-making (Local Development Plan – LDP) – sometimes referred to as ‘forward planning’.
- Development management (excluding regionally significant applications)
- Planning enforcement

Councillors that sit on planning committees will be tasked with assessing the different benefits and impacts of planning applications, weighing up these considerations against regional policy and the policies published in your published local development plan (LDP). It is vital you therefore have a sound understanding of the planning system. The Programme is based on a tested and highly accessible model, which helps councillors in this regard.

The delivery of this programme will be interactive and interesting for Councillors allowing them to learn from case studies, ask questions regularly and to undertake role play in workshops. Delivery will include:

- *Short presentations using PowerPoint.*
- *Discussions*
- *Case studies and benchmarking practice in other jurisdictions.*
- *Workshops with role play.*
- *Question/answer sessions.*
- *Mock appeal.*
- *Handouts in paper form.*
- *Summary notes of discussions at each session and suggestions for further training.*
- *Optional study trip.*

The programme therefore enhances councillors’ strategic leadership and decision-making skills, making them more effective decision makers in their planning committee role, place shaping activities and overall competence in local development planning.

How will this programme benefit me?

The programme will improve your understanding of the plan making system and role in the process as civic leaders. It will enable you to participate effectively and take the lead in making robust and defensible decisions about the future of your council area.

You will have the chance to increase your understanding about what Council's priorities for statutory plan making could and should be. Participation will help in your role to ensure Council effectively manages the planning process and does not breach any statutory requirements or fail to get the plan through to adoption in a timely manner.

The programme will make the linkages, both statutory and practical, between community planning and the statutory local development planning being carried out by Councils and your strategic leadership role as a councillor. Further linkages with planning activities carried out by the Department for infrastructure and by Department for Communities at regional and local level will also be explained. As a result, councillors and their councils will be better enabled to demonstrate 'joined up' good governance and the delivery of planning and related activities in a holistic way.

Regarding development management, the programme will improve your understanding of the development management system, enhancing your strategic leadership decision-making capacity for the delivery of Council's planning objectives as set out in its policies, its emerging Local Development Plan and in regional guidance. Councillors will also have improved understanding of the enforcement process and when enforcement action is desirable.

The programme is also designed to help you reduce Council's vulnerability on appeal in the interests of minimising the possibility of award of costs at appeal, as well as Council's vulnerability in relation to maladministration of their planning powers.

The programme is deliberately ambitious in its aim to help to safeguard Council's reputation as responsible decision maker across a range of interrelated areas of local government.

The impact and success of the training will be monitored at an individual level through returned course evaluation forms and improved understanding demonstrated in workshops.

Finally, Councillors who successfully complete the entire course to a satisfactory standard will be credited with an Institution of Leadership and Management (ILM) Endorsed Award.

Programme of workshops

Date	Time	Venue	Module
Friday 17 th November 2023	2 – 4.30pm	In – Person tbc	Module 1: Understanding Plan Making and Role of Councillors Understanding the LDP process from draft stage to adoption.

15 th December 2023	2-4.30pm	Online /Digital	Module 2: How the Local Development Plan is Linked to Community Planning and Regeneration Activities
26 th January 2024	2-4.30pm	Online / Digital	Module 3: Understanding Development Management: The Planning Process and the Role of the Councillors Understanding Planning Conditions and Planning Agreements and the Role of the Planning Committee The Statutory Enforcement Process and the Role of the Planning committee
23 rd February 2024	2-4.30pm	Online / Digital	Module 4: Understanding the Statutory Appeal System
29 th March 2024	2-4.30pm	Online / Digital	Module 5: Maladministration charges to the Ombudsman and the Judicial Review of Planning
tba April 2024	Study Trip to the Republic of Ireland		Study Trip

What commitment will the programme entail from me?

You will be expected to attend five, two-hour and a half hour workshops over 5 months, beginning in November 2023. The programme also includes a study trip to the Republic of Ireland, which is optional.

At each workshop you will receive a workbook assessment sheet with some case studies and questions related to the workshop content. To achieve the ILM accreditation, you will be required to submit at least three of these workbook assessment sheets, completed to the required standard, by a date agreed with the course co-ordinator at the final workshop.

What other participants have gained?

NILGA believes this programme brings major benefits for all participants. And previous participants agree, here is a testimonial from a councillor who participated in previous programmes:

'My first venture into representative politics was during the Local Government elections in 2001, when to my surprise and delight, I was elected to Fermanagh District Council. Since then, I have remained as a representative in local politics and now sit on the re-formed Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

Politics forms a large part of my working week, however when not engaged in the political arena, I am involved in the construction industry working in property as a quantity surveyor/project manager/property developer. Construction is a very fulfilling profession and I have been privileged to work on many projects over the years that have challenged and developed me on a personal level. The skills and core competencies developed through this

work have better equipped me for my role as a councillor, and I have developed an interest and expertise in related matters such as planning and land use.

NILGA as well as being the voice of Local Government also provide support and training modules for councillors. The recently developed ILM (Endorsed Award) NILGA Local Planning Leadership Programme has proved to be an excellent platform to enhance and widen the knowledge and skill base of participants. The interactive nature of the course allowed learning by instruction, participation and sharing of experiences by all of those involved. The content was pitched at the right level and covered the complete range of subject matter that councillors need to have knowledge of and be competent in. It highlighted the serious nature of the work and how it related to Community Planning.

I found that through participation in the course my own appreciation of and competence in the area of planning and related subject matter has greatly increased. For those wanting to broaden their horizons in planning it is a must do activity. I would recommend it to anyone as I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

Looking forward the course has helped me to be more confident not only in planning matters but as a councillor in general, allowing me to better fulfil the role for my community.'

Cllr Robert Irvine

(Fermanagh and Omagh District Council)

NILGA amongst many other things, provides training support for councillors. I attended the ILM accredited NILGA Local Planning and Leadership Programme, which was excellent. Having previously had some knowledge of planning, this programme certainly enhanced and widened my knowledge of the subject. One of the modules was with a Planning Commissioner from the Planning Appeals Commission. I found this module to be extremely informative and overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the entire course and can wholeheartedly recommend the course to any councillor, especially those elected for the first time, if they are on the planning committee.

Cllr Thomas Gordon

(Mid and East Antrim Council)

For more information

The NILGA Local Planning Leadership Programme 2023-24, detailed prospectus is available on the NILGA Website. All interested parties can contact Fiona Douglas (f.douglas@nilga.org) to discuss further.