



# Belfast Member's Academy

A Programme  
For Elected Members  
of  
Belfast City Council



## Overview

There can be no doubt as to the formidable change which Belfast is currently experiencing. Local government reform will result in councils taking on a significant range of functions from government departments and other bodies. In addition, councils will work within a new statutory governance framework and ethical standards regime, will have a new statute-based community planning process, will have available a power of well-being and will be required to adhere to the emerging legislative changes arising out of the Local Government Reorganisation Bill. These reforms, in themselves, will have major implications for the city of Belfast and how the council conducts its business. However, the Investment Programme, which is a response to the changes that the economic downturn has created and an attempt to build on what has been achieved over the past decades, will undoubtedly provide the platform for making best use of the new functions and drive the city forward while ensuring that the council continues to provide for those who live in, work in and visit Belfast.

Members have played a vital role in shaping the Investment Programme and needless to say will be critical in ensuring that it is delivered effectively. Furthermore, through various forums and processes members have made it clear that it is important that the Member Development Framework, an important element of the OD strategy, is effective in ensuring that members have the leadership capacity to deliver for the city.

The Belfast Members Academy is a bespoke programme specifically designed for the elected members of Belfast City Council to build the capacity of our city's current and future leaders and to equip them with the skills required to effectively deliver for the city. It provides space for individual and group learning through a range of approaches and styles within the context of Belfast Council.

The programme has been, for convenience of description, divided into the following four modules, though this can be amended dependent upon cohort - for example, specific emphasis could be given to a learning set for recently elected members, for chairs or vice chairs etc.

- Personal Leadership through Role
- Personal Leadership through Relationships
- Political & Council Leadership
- Community Leadership & The Wider Public Sector

## Aims

- To gain an understanding of an individual's personal leadership style and to consider how this complements various roles of a locally elected representative
- To explore leadership theories & models, and their practical application
- To explore leadership of community, and place through partners
- To ground discussion and focus on real issues facing members in their Council life and role

## Objectives

The programme, delivered over four days, will be supported by 'Action Learning' which is an effective process whereby members will work and learn together, through an Action Learning Set, by tackling real issues and reflecting on their actions. Members will acquire knowledge through actual actions and practice rather than through traditional instruction. The Action Learning will assist members in exploring significant current Council and Community strategic issues and effective leadership practice. The programme will specifically help Members to:

- Use increased self awareness as a basis for delivering outcomes and bringing about change;

- Explore influencing approaches for greater internal and external leadership impact;
- Use personal and corporate communications as a means of building effective relationships and getting the message across;
- Develop leadership strategies within an outcome based framework that meets the challenges of Council and Community, and progresses organisational development;
- Understand how concepts, such as Community Leadership & Neighbourhood working can be used to develop the council's vision for the community;
- Harness the member officer relationship to best effect as part of developing and delivering the council's vision;
- Focus on people and relationships as a strategic issue;
- Consider equality and diversity issues both within the organisation and in the wider community;
- Operate within political structures in such a way as to be inclusive and maximise contributions from councillors as part of leading service delivery through priority setting, and achieving council success;
- Appreciate and build on dynamics of political group working within and across groups;
- Work effectively in partnerships as a means of meeting economic and social goals and to better understand how partnerships can help deliver improved outcomes for communities
- Play a full role in local community leadership including active community engagement, promoting community cohesion and the leadership of place

### **Single or Cross Party Group Approach**

With a single Party Group, delivery can be tailored to the issues, challenges, agendas and ways of working of that Party Group. However, the involvement of members from across a range of Groups allows for sharing of different experience and practice across Groups, and greater cross group understanding.

### **Activities**

The programme will use a range of approaches to learning, such as:

- Direct input
- Q&A
- Facilitated discussion
- Expert Speakers
- Scenarios, etc.

## Modules

### Module 1 – Personal Leadership through your role as a locally elected representative

- *Thoughts on leadership – what does it mean to you? Defining Leadership*
- *Inspirational Leaders – traits, what makes a good leader?*
- *Theories of Leadership*
- *Understanding the Roles of Members - inside and outside Council*
- *Personal Style & Preference – Concepts & Creativity Index*
- *Reflecting on difference in style and it's impact*
- *What does good leadership look like? Personal examples*
- *Leadership through and with others in Belfast - personal examples*

### Outcomes

- *An understanding of the concept of Leadership*
- *An understanding of members role in context*
- *An understanding of our personal style and skills*
- *Ability to apply this learning to improve own leadership through role*
- *Applying an understanding of our own style to make greater impact*

### Module 2 – Personal Leadership through Relationships

- *Understanding how the role of the member links to others*
- *Member - officer relationships*
- *Standards of behaviour and working protocols*
- *Describing and managing Personal networks*
- *Understanding and applying difference in style*
- *Working with others - the behavioural competence framework*
- *Practical solutions - getting things done*

## Outcomes

- *Understanding of the nature of leadership through others*
- *Gaining an understanding of the behavioural competence framework*
- *Understanding and upholding what constitutes appropriate behaviour in relation to standards*
- *Greater awareness of self, personal leadership style and impact on others.*
- *Understanding of how by adapting own behaviour in given circumstances, more favourable outcomes can be achieved.*

## Module 3 – Political & Council Leadership

- *Understanding the Council – Governance Structures, political & managerial*
- *Effective partnership working – focusing on outcomes*
- *Political Leadership Models*
- *The Political group*
- *Building constituency of idea, working with consensus*
- *Understanding Local Government Strategy Process & Finance*
- *Commissioning & Shared Services*
- *Working within & across Party Groups*
- *Effective Performance Management*

## Outcomes

- *Understanding of the nature of leadership within the political /organisational setting.*
- *Ability to apply this understanding to their own political and organisational settings/contexts: specifically*
  - *to understand the Political group*
  - *to manage political alliances*
- *Understanding how own standards of behaviour impact on the wider organisation.*
- *Ability to apply learning from Module 1 to these contexts to improve their performance as strategic leaders.*
- *An awareness of the role of Governance structures within the strategic management of the organisation*

## Module 4 – Community Leadership & the Wider Public Sector

- *Community Leadership*
- *Understanding your ward*
- *Linking the ward to the council*
- *Representation ‘vs’ leadership?*
- *Engagement & Inclusion*
- *Communication*
- *Importance of advocacy*
- *The wider Public Sector and partners*
- *Working with partners – bringing them on board - making use of resources*
- *Strategic thinking – the burning issues*

### Outcomes

- *Understanding connection between Community & Council*
- *Understand Assembly working and how it links to Council & Community*
- *Understanding of the importance of the “Community Leadership” and of local community leadership role (ward and neighbourhood level) in helping to set and communicate a vision for the future*
- *Greater awareness of and ability to work effectively in partnerships.*
- *Appreciation of the different roles involved in community leadership, the potential conflicts with their role as strategic leaders.*
- *Ability to apply learning from this and previous modules to improve their own performance as community leaders*

### Creating a bespoke programme

In reality, a range of elements from each module, together with a number of specific points of focus, will be required to form a bespoke package for each group of members.

This necessitates a series of conversations prior to delivery in each area to ensure member’s get the maximum benefit from their attendance.

Further, the Action Learning Set that follows – often described as day 4 – builds from the personal leadership challenges described and worked on through the modules, combined with the strategic big issues discussion in module 3.