

# Leadership Capacity Development for Councillors in Kirklees



# About Kirklees Council

In Kirklees, there are 69 councillors in 23 wards. No party has had overall control since 1999. Following elections in May 2006, there has been a Conservative minority administration. The political make up is 22 Labour, 20 Conservative, 18 Liberal Democrat, 4 Green, 3 British National Party and 2 Independent councillors.

## Achievements and recognition

### Recognition

**Kirklees is a 'Four Star' authority – and the only council in the country to receive a four star rating for 'Capacity and Performance Management'. Cabinet members believe one reason for this achievement is the excellent Councillor Development programme and Kirklees' councillors' commitment to it.**

In 2007, Kirklees Council has been cited as an exemplar of excellence:

- *Representing the Future: the report of the Councillors Commission* (DCLG)
- *The Councillors Commission: helping councils meet the challenge* (IDeA)
- *Role of Councillors: Report of an Inquiry* (LGIU)
- *Learning Pool* website



### Achievements

- Councillor Development Strategy in place since 2005
- Performance Development Reviews for Councillors
- Development of a Councillor Development Framework and comprehensive induction programme
- Second authority, in the region, to achieve the Charter for Member Development in 2006 (in the shortest timescale of any authority in the country)
- Development of a Post Graduate Qualification for Councillors
- Finalists in the MJ Councillor Development Achievement Award 2007
- Runners up in the APSE Annual Service Awards for 'Best Elected Member Development Initiative, 2007'

While we are proud of all our achievements relating to councillor development, we will focus here on our **most innovative activities relating to enhancing leadership capacity.**

## Why we are a 4 Star authority

In 2007, the Audit Commission's Corporate Performance Assessment report said:

***"The Council is performing strongly. Effective leadership, reliable systems and strong partnerships are delivering good outcomes for local people.***

*The degree to which the Council achieves political consensus around ambitions and priorities is impressive. Medium and long term aims for the area transcend party politics and have been sustained over several minority administrations.*

***Community leadership is excellent. Councillors provide effective leadership in their wards and through Area Committees. Cabinet members are good community champions for their portfolio areas.***

***There is strong leadership around very challenging ambitions for community cohesion, green living, young people and a strong economy... Political and managerial leadership is strong, visible and inspiring. An inclusive style based on respect and mutual support is modelled by councillors and senior management... Staff have confidence in the leadership, feel valued and are committed to doing a good job. The Council has the capacity to deliver its ambitions... Councillor development is excellent.***

***Training and development for councillors is excellent. Personal Development Reviews generate individual training plans. These include specialist input from partners and from Huddersfield University. Councillors can obtain a Post Graduate Certificate in Public Sector Modernisation. A portfolio of Member Profiles defines the responsibilities, skills and knowledge needed for every councillor role to help target training. As a result councillors are skilled and well suited to their roles."***

Audit Commission, Corporate Assessment Report 2007



Leader of the Council -  
Cllr Robert Light  
at CPA celebration event.

# Leadership of the Council

In 2007, the Leader of the Council commissioned a 360° feedback performance appraisal process for all Cabinet members based on the process our Executive Management Group had commissioned for themselves.

Cllr Andrew Palfreeman, Cabinet Lead for Councillor Development says:

*"We believe that we are one of the first Cabinets in the country to undertake such an exercise. We realise the value of personal development throughout the organisation and saw no reason why this should not include the political leadership."*

## The 360° Appraisal Process

The Councillor Development Officer produced a briefing paper which summed up the process thus:

*"The purpose of this exercise is to enable you to see how you are perceived by your peers and other stakeholders, as well as enabling you to make an assessment of yourself. The process will give you feedback on how others perceive you. This is helpful in identifying and recognising your strengths and your areas for development. Where strengths are identified, there will be the opportunity to share those with Cabinet colleagues who have identified those areas for development."*

The consultants chosen for this project were *Norman Broadbent Associates* and *The Learning Curve*. One of the strengths of The Learning Curve's web-based application is its ability to allow 'raters' to rate multiple 'clients' by listing all the names of people to be rated all on one survey form (as opposed to them filling in 9 questionnaires). This saved time for everyone completing the survey and ensured a higher response rate.

The statements used in the Kirklees survey were drawn up by the Chief Executive, the Leader, the Cabinet Lead for Councillor Development, the Councillor Development Officer and Head of Organisational Development. The information used to produce the statements was a combination of the *role profile of a Cabinet member* and the *competencies of a Strategic Manager* (based on the competencies used in the officers' performance appraisal process in Kirklees).

All Cabinet members were 'rated' by the Leader, the Chief Executive, all their Cabinet colleagues and 5 other key people they work with. It was recommended those should include a mix of LPSB partners and Directors/Heads of Service from the services in their portfolios.

In September 2007, all Cabinet members received individual feedback, in person, from the consultant and an individual report of the collated feedback. With the exception of comments from the Leader, comments were not attributed to individuals in the feedback to individuals.

During the feedback discussion, the Cabinet members completed an individual 'workbook', resulting in a development action plan. The information in the plan was then used in a discussion with the Councillor Development Officer who was responsible for providing ways of taking these actions forward. Actions included:

- IDeA Leadership Academy (offered to three Cabinet members)
- Individual coaching (offered to three Cabinet members)
- One-to-ones with key officer on the relevant topics
- Training for carrying out performance appraisals (Two Cabinet members)

After these discussions, the Leader and Cabinet Lead for Councillor Development met with each Cabinet member to have a Performance Review discussion. This included both a discussion about the 360° feedback (strengths and areas for development) and a discussion about the performance management of their portfolio.

## Reflection on the process

*"Although some Cabinet members had their reservations, all agreed that the experience and the feedback was a valuable aid to creating an even closer leadership team."* Cllr Andrew Palfreeman, Cabinet Lead for Councillor Development

*"When I was first approached to take part in the 360° appraisal, I agreed with a slight reluctance: this was 'alien territory' I was being asked to participate in. However, having had the appraisal, I would be only too happy to go through the process again in the future. As a result of the feedback from this process, I now have more confidence in my abilities to lead from the front and encourage others within my service to look at different ways of working, improving life for adults and vulnerable residents in Kirklees."* Cllr Margaret Bates, Cabinet Lead for Health and Adult Services



*Cllr Margaret Bates with Cabinet colleagues at CPA celebration event.*

# Leadership Capacity Development in Kirklees

In 2007, Kirklees Councillors have been involved in Leadership Capacity development in a variety of ways:

- 3 councillors on IDeA Leadership Academy 2007 (including 1 on the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Councillors' Programme)
- 2 councillors awaiting places on the IDeA Leadership Academy programme 2008
- 5 councillors on Post Graduate Certificate in Public Sector Modernisation (Includes modules on Leadership & Community and Performance Management & Accountability)
- 7 councillors graduated with PGCert, 2007
- 2 councillors enrolled on Diploma/Masters programme at the University of Huddersfield, 2008 - both working towards becoming IDeA peers for Councillor Development, Scrutiny and Health Inequalities
- Short course programme planned with the University of Huddersfield (to include Masterclasses on 'Leadership' and 'Community Leadership and Community Issues')
- Personal Development Reviews/succession planning
- Advanced Chairing and Facilitation Skills sessions developed in Kirklees and made available to all councillors across the Yorkshire and Humber region
- A range of councillors involved in activities supported by the West Yorkshire Capacity Building programme including workshops on Health Inequalities, Climate Change, Sustainability Appraisals and Community Cohesion.

The Audit Commission's report recognises that:

***"The Council is performing strongly in this area. Political and managerial leadership is good. People management and workforce planning are highly effective. Councillor and staff development is excellent. Scrutiny achieves real impact... Leadership is strong, visible and inspiring... The Leader has a high profile locally and regionally and is able to gain the support and confidence of public and private sector partners."***

Commitment from the Leader and Cabinet to Councillor Development means that there are regular Councillors' Forum sessions led by Cabinet, the Chief Executive and Heads of Service. These forum sessions give opposition members and backbench councillors the opportunity to influence partnership working and our work nationally, regionally and sub-regionally by 'listening, debating and capturing a Kirklees' view'. Sessions have been held on a range of topics including *Leeds City Region, Sub-Regional transport plan, Schools for the Future*. These are well attended, lively sessions which promote a healthy debate and foster good cross-party relationships.

These sessions were recognised by the Audit Commission thus:

***"Internally, the Leader manages the political balance well, building space for debate and modelling willingness to compromise. The Leader and the chief executive hold regular events and meetings with staff and councillors... Formal and informal all-party meetings support cross party consensus and diffuse potential conflicts."***

# How have communities benefited from councillors' leadership development?

## Leadership of the Council

With regard to the overall leadership of the Council:

*"The political leadership of the Council has benefited from the 360° process which has enabled Cabinet members to build on their strengths and recognise any weaknesses that require further development."* Cllr Andrew Palfreeman, Cabinet Lead for Councillor Development

This approach has led to positive feedback from external assessors:

*"The Council is performing strongly. Effective leadership, reliable systems and strong partnerships are delivering good outcomes for local people."*  
Audit Commission, Corporate Assessment Report 2007

It has been acknowledged by the Audit Commission that *"Relations between officers and councillors are constructive and characterised by mutual respect and a common purpose. Cabinet members are proactive and work closely with directors to achieve priorities and support and lead staff. There is appropriate challenge within clear boundaries,"* and that, *"Governance arrangements are sound. The Standards Committee is effective. The ethical framework is clear and well understood. Decision-making is transparent, timely and supported by an effective Forward Plan."*

## Community Leadership

With regard to Community Leadership, it has been recognised, through the corporate assessment, that Kirklees councillors provide strong and effective leadership within their communities:

*"Councillors provide strong and effective leadership within their communities. They have a firm focus on bringing local people together and making things happen. The leadership of the Council emphasises the importance of passion for places. Area Committees engage residents in the specification and delivery of projects via local community action plans. These are especially important and effective in rural areas giving local people good opportunities to influence their environments."*

*"This excellent understanding of the importance of place and the strength of local identities is changing approaches to delivering the ambitions. Local people shape priorities and delivery plans. There are numerous examples of priorities and action plans changing because of their input... The Council feeds back what changed so that local people know their views make a difference."*  
Audit Commission, Corporate Assessment Report, 2007

# Summary

In Kirklees, we recognise that leadership is multi-faceted, incorporating: community leadership, Area Committees, Scrutiny, leadership of the council, leadership regionally and nationally. Through the Personal Development Review system, the Kirklees' Councillor Development Officer offers opportunities for all councillors to undertake activities to develop and enhance their leadership skills. From *Advanced Chairing and Facilitation Skills* training through to the IDeA's Leadership Academy, Post Graduate Qualifications, and 360° appraisals (for Cabinet members), there truly is *something for everyone*.

