

Strategic Political Leadership in New Times

**A challenge workshop for leading members to focus their strategic options through their political group, cabinet/executive or council
It will be particularly appropriate where executives/cabinets are changing and also where councils are moving to share management and services.**

What is new?

Three major challenges face the council:

- the budget reductions 2011-14
- the Localism Bill
- other Government's changes e.g. welfare, health

Members need to provide local leadership on all three and get the best results for their place and communities.

What is this challenge workshop?

A challenge workshop enables the leading politicians of a council to consider the three strategic challenges, the realistic options available to them and begin politically shaping a strategy best suited to their authority. The level of officer involvement must reflect the workshop's purpose to maximise the political leadership of the council's strategic options but a suitable number of managers will greatly inform the practicality of the proposals.

Preparation

A short position paper focusing on the implications of all three challenges in the Council's area

Programme

9.00 **Introduction to the Workshop and how it will work**

The workshop is more than a briefing in that it asks leading members to assess the challenges and opportunities **and** begin (or continue) prioritising what action the Council should take. Work will be in small task teams to maximise output and overall results.

9.10 **Input: What will change? – briefing on the challenges you face**

- a) Defining the **level of cuts** – what choices have you made and have yet to make?
- b) What does the **Localism Bill** imply for your council and what examples of the six 'essentials' are likely to be appropriate:
 1. **less bureaucracy** – the following are going - regional strategies, Standards Board, predetermination rules, CPA, LAAs and the Audit Commission

2. **empowering communities** – power of general competence, community right to buy, neighbourhood plans
3. **increased local finance control** – council tax referendum, business rate discounts, community infrastructure levy and a drive to self-financing (through new housing bonus/new business rate rebate)
4. **diversifying public service providers** – community right to challenge, community right to buy
5. **open up to scrutiny** – publishing over £500, transparency from public bodies on contracts, salaries and staffing
6. **accountability to local people** – local referendums, service users voting with their feet

Clarification and discussion.

9.50 **Team task 1: What should the Council tackle?**

Given the many ideas in the previous section what do you want to pursue? Mapping the priorities and allocating to teams for working up.

10.15 **Input: How you will change? – briefing on the different types of change and service providers**

A session setting out the:

- levels of change from 'easy wins' to 'organisational transformation' and 'total place' solutions
- different kinds of service providers from 'private contracts' to 'staff mutuals' and 'social enterprises'

Clarification and discussion

10.30 Coffee/tea

11.00 **Team task 2: Work up initial options**

Each team to use the ideas from the previous sessions and work up solutions to specific challenges.

11.30 **Witness sessions: Tapping into other peoples experience**

People experienced in different types of change and types of service provision will be available as witnesses for 30-40 minutes, either in person or by phone/Skype on a conference call. Different task team members will question different witnesses and bring the information back to their team.

12.10 **Team task 3: Working up the propositions and ritual dissent**

Pooling of the witness information and any other available information, so that the team can construct realistic strategic proposals. These then will be tested between teams with ritual dissent to strengthen the proposals

12.40 **Presentation, discussion and action planning**

Presentations by teams, discussion and agreement on the follow-up action; chaired by the Leader.

1.00 **Finish**