

Learning and development

Inhouse training from LGiU



LGiU
the local democracy think tank

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Foreword

A local government minister in the last government famously (or infamously) described councillors as “volunteers”.

Volunteering, of course, requires skills and commitment and one must concede that individuals do volunteer to put themselves forward to become councillors - but it was hardly surprising that elected members across all parties felt aggrieved this characterization of their role.

Local government has had a tough time over the past few years and this looks set to continue. One must not assume that people will continue to come forward in sufficient numbers to stand for elected office.

One assurance all potential candidates and existing councillors need is that they will get the training and personal development they need to take on responsibility for multi-million pound budgets and a wide range of statutory and discretionary services and being in the public eye.

There is a school of thought that training for councillors should be designed around responding to the latest initiatives flowing out of Whitehall.

As an organisation committed to ‘local’ government, this is not a view shared by the LGIU. The focus should be the councillor as local politician working in a political environment. Programmes, whether skills training for chairing meetings, public speaking or mastering the basics of local government finance need to be shaped around the personal and political needs of the councillor.

The LGiU understands the political environment in which elected members have to work – not just in the formal settings of council chamber and committee rooms but also the internal dynamics of the political group. We look at the role of the councillor in the round – at the complex balancing act requiring them to act as effective community leaders, not just in their own patch but also at the strategic level: not forgetting the need to develop personal resilience (including space for a life outside of politics) to deal with what remains one of the most stimulating, rewarding but often stressful jobs in British democracy.

Alan Waters
Learning and Development Manager, LGiU

Delivering cost effective training to your council

The LGiU has wide experience in delivering training to councillors and officers. We can bring that experience to you and provide in-house training for one local authority or a small number of neighbouring councils.

For councils this is a cost effective way of enabling many councillors and employees to benefit from learning and development opportunities.

This leaflet outlines a selection of our most popular programmes. Each of these programmes can be delivered as full day sessions, shortened to between two to three hours, or, in many cases, elements of the programmes can be combined to deliver a more bespoke training package.

To discuss your council's particular requirements please contact the LGiU's Learning and Development Manager, Alan Waters: alan.waters@lgiu.org.uk 07825 745620 or Barry O'Brien: barry.obrien@lgiu.org.uk 020 7554 2800.

Options for delivery

We will always help you to find the most cost effective way to meet your training needs. The programmes can be delivered in different ways, for example:

If you have a number of people in your authority who want to take part in training – councillors, officers or a combination of the two – then our trainer will come to your authority. This allows a large number of your people to benefit from the opportunity at the same time and it also means that we can discuss with you beforehand any particular angles that you would like the trainer to address in order to provide the maximum benefit for your council.

If your council would like to host a seminar, then in return for the venue we would provide the trainer and the host council would receive three free places. The LGiU would then sell tickets for the seminar in the normal way.

The trainers

All our trainers – either LGiU staff or the associates who work with us to deliver our programmes – are very experienced at delivering learning and development events to local government. Many come from a local government background as either councillors or officers.

Programmes

Each training programme can be delivered as a full day or half day /evening session (unless otherwise indicated)

Skills for effective councillors

Chairing skills

The programme is designed for elected members who chair meetings. It is ideal for those who need to develop their skills – either as chair or as a participant of formal and informal meetings. The course will help delegates understand the factors that go to make an effective meeting, including: preparation; questioning; listening; summarising skills; and the importance of body language. In these very challenging and difficult times for local councils and councillors, particular attention is paid to the strategies that can be used to resolve tense situations and potential conflict at meetings.

The training session will be very interactive with opportunities for participants to develop their skills through a range of practical activities.

Objectives

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- identify techniques and strategies for different types of meetings and situations
- control and chair meetings appropriately and in a time-effective manner
- handle conflict in a confident and constructive way.

Chairing Skills Booklet

All delegates receive a 30-page booklet, which covers key skills for chairing different types of meeting.

Community leadership skills for councillors (2.5 – 3 hours)

The role of the councillor as a community leader has never been more vital. Changes in local government have, over the past few years, reshaped the way elected members work and how they engage with the communities they represent. In a climate of political and economic uncertainty, the ability of elected members to work effectively with and on behalf of their communities is now more important than ever.

Objectives

The session will consider:

- the roles and skills required to be an effective community leader at local level
- the skills and competencies needed to play a full and effective role as a community leader (including engagement techniques)
- how to harness the skills and involvement of local communities and stakeholder groups

- the enhancement of community leadership through social media
- how to create the right environment within the authority for effective community leadership
- skills and support needed.

This is a practical training session and will give participants plenty of opportunity to explore different approaches and techniques that they can apply in their work as community leaders.

Confident public speaking

This programme has been developed for councillors whose role involves public speaking, and who would like to develop their skills and confidence.

It is a highly practical and useful workshop, which will involve some low-key and developmental skills practice, which will enable participants to build their confidence in presenting information to groups.

Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- plan speeches and presentations using straightforward structures
- use positive non-verbal communication when presenting
- project their voice and sound confident and assured
- use Power Point positively.

The training session comes with a 'handy tips' booklet to help participants further develop their skills following the training session.

Influencing skills

Councillors are set apart from others because their position of power is always visible. However, in a world where people can be distrustful of those with power and where people are becoming accustomed to challenge, holding the role of a councillor does not automatically confer authority, control or action. In addition, working relationships with fellow councillors who hold an equal position of power are crucial in pushing through proposals, achieving results and setting strategy and policy.

This programme is designed to develop knowledge, skill and understanding of the art and methods of influencing and persuading others in order to gain cooperation, support, and commitment. By the end of the programme participants gain heightened awareness and increased ability in communicating and achieving successful outcomes while retaining the respect and trust of others.

This will be an interactive session with plenty of opportunity for discussion, exploring concepts, swapping ideas, obtaining advice and sharing the experiences of each other.

Objectives

Participants will learn:

- to define ethical influencing skills
- about the interplay between the use of power, persuasion and influencing skills
- to recognise underpinning elements intrinsic to the effective use of power and influence
- about methods for enhancing positive personal influence.

Mentoring

Mentoring serves councillors in various ways, including:

- assisting members to take greater responsibility for personal and professional development where they are looking to enhance performance and increase their effectiveness
- supporting councillors new into a role to extend existing skills and develop new skills.

Evidence suggests that mentoring brings a range of benefits to the mentor the mentee and the organisation where it provides a real life cost effective learning experience. Mentors need a range of qualities, knowledge and skills including flexibility, the ability to provide support an understanding of adult development and possession of essential listening skills. In turn, mentees must also play an active role in the success of the mentoring process and relationship.

This programme examines the key elements to ensure the successful implementation of constructive councillor mentoring relationships. Relevant skills are developed with the use of a range of appropriate learning methods.

Personal effectiveness, interpersonal communication and behaviour

The role of a Member requires that incumbents engage in professional, social and personal interactions. Through the use of excellent interpersonal and communication skills, Councillors play a crucial role in organisational effectiveness, community engagement, partnership working, interpersonal and group cohesion, the achievement of goals etc. In addition, effective interpersonal communication skills have other advantages:

- individuals feel calm and in control
- greater understanding is achieved
- confidence is increased
- the development of a common vision, respect and values lead to a shared sense of accomplishment
- conflict is diminished
- success is heightened, people can grow.

The cost of ineffective behaviour can be high as others fail to contribute, withdraw from communication etc. Relations can be eroded and the reputation of individuals and the organisation reduced. Therefore, the purpose of this seminar is to hone skills, develop a working knowledge of different behaviours, think through suitable response and consider measured choices when dealing with others. By the end of the seminar Councillors will have heightened awareness and enhanced ability in communicating and achieving successful outcomes.

This will be an interactive session with plenty of opportunity for discussion, exploring concepts, swapping ideas, obtaining advice and sharing the experiences of each other.

Objectives

- To learn about self-concept, self-esteem and confidence
- To recognise the importance of a positive self-concept and its impact upon different relationships
- To learn about a basic set of personal rights
- How to define and recognise a continuum of behaviours
- To recognise the effects of different behaviours
- To identify personal behaviour when dealing with others and the effect this has upon interactions
- To use a range of interpersonal behaviours
- To recognise situations which cause personal difficulty and set goals to handle these situations

Personal resilience for elected members

Being an elected member can be tough: the public profile, credibility and expectations placed upon elected members are numerous, requiring the maintenance of high levels of energy and performance. Carrying out multiple roles and working with a variety of people and managing a variety of different roles and situations (not to mention getting the 'work – life balance' right) requires resilience.

Personal resilience is about maintaining a sense of wellbeing, being mentally strong, effectively meeting different demands and performing at one's best on behalf of individuals, communities as well as being an effective leader. This is a very practical seminar that will provide each participant with methods and helpful ideas to manage the pressures they face and enable them to be able to maximise the positive aspects of being an elected member.

This will be an interactive session with plenty of opportunity for discussion and sharing experiences.

Personal safety for councillors

This is an essential programme for councillors who lone work as part of their role and who want to be more aware of their personal safety. Designed to sit within any organisation's policy, the session is based on sensible advice and established good practice.

In addition to exploring issues around personal safety, the programme will make participants more aware about the reasons why people can behave in negative ways, and explores practical ways to avoid situations becoming uncontrollable.

Many of these approaches can be relevant to a wide range of situations including chairing difficult meetings, or interacting with groups of unhappy residents.

Objectives

By the end of this programme delegates will be able to:

- create a strategy for personal safety and awareness
- describe the underpinning motivators of aggressive or inappropriate behaviour
- explain the anger cycle and early warning signs that a situation is deteriorating
- identify behaviours that act as accelerants and that can inflame an individual
- use calming techniques to avoid situations becoming more heated
- recognise when the situation is becoming irretrievable and learn how to walk away or summon help
- develop sensible use of senses and instinct.

The programme is very participative and draws on the experiences of delegates. The theme of the course is diagnostic; encouraging delegates to identify areas where they can prevent aggressive situations from occurring and become aware of personal behaviours that unwittingly may create problems for others.

Reading for speed and retention (3 hours)

This is a very practical programme that will demonstrate how to use different reading styles in order to maximise the limited time that is available for review and retention of material.

During the workshop we will be using a variety of different exercises and examples to show ways in which a reader can double their reading speed, without losing retention.

Importantly, we will also be talking about strategies for understanding 'dense' documents – technical reports/legislation – which are typically harder to read. We will be identifying ways to analyse written information that are more about retention than speed. This means that the programme features ideas around reading more effectively – not just reading information faster.

Delegates usually report an immediate speed increase of around 50 per cent in their ability to scan a document for its main points.

Resilience: having difficult conversations and delivering bad news

For all of us life can sometimes present challenges when faced with difficult decisions and changing circumstances.

Elected members carry additional demands as they play a critical leadership role in leading others through testing and changing times. There are occasions when difficult conversations and giving bad news are unavoidable. Whether in a one-to-one situation or organisational wide, being the bearer of such news is when a leader's ability and character is truly tested. This half-day programme will heighten awareness of personal resilience and develop skills for meeting the needs of communities, organisations and individuals when having difficult conversations and delivering bad news.

This will be an interactive session with plenty of opportunity for discussion, exploring and swapping ideas, obtaining advice and sharing experiences.

Objectives

Participants will learn how to:

- effectively prepare to have difficult conversations and deliver bad news
- recognise the best ways to communicate with people
- identify the knowledge, skills and approach to deliver bad news professionally
- cope with the response to difficult conversations and bad news
- work towards positive outcomes for all parties and move forward.

Resilient groups, interpersonal and group cohesion

In challenging times of change, uncertainty and pressure personal resilience is extremely important, as is the manner in which people work together, engage and respond to each other. This programme is intended to heighten awareness of the cultural and behavioural factors that are key to sustainable and resilient groups of people.

The session will explore behaviour and the effects of actions on individuals and groups. Roles and responsibilities in bringing about effective and successful working relationships and culture will be considered, in order to mitigate against risk while promoting an atmosphere of fairness, respect and support fundamental to fully operational and future-fit groups and organisations.

A range of appropriate learning methods will be incorporated into the programme including opportunities to share and build upon existing experience.

Objectives

Participants will:

- recognise building blocks key to cohesive groups of people and fully functioning organisations
- develop understanding of behaviour at an individual and group level

- consider the advantages of cooperation and cohesion
- identify positive behaviour and attitudes
- comprehend fundamentals concerning prejudice, stereotyping, bias and discrimination
- have an insight concerning concepts and term under equalities legislation
- identify harassment and bullying – conditions, cause, effects and consequence
- recognise roles and responsibility in setting standards of behaviour.

Time management and coping strategies

This programme has been written for members who need to manage their time effectively in order to be as productive as possible in their role.

It is designed to provide a set of strategies for helping to make the most of limited time resources, and includes a significant number of tips and techniques that will place councillors more in control of their workloads.

The focus of the course is on taking responsibility for managing time using specific tips and techniques, particularly around personal organisation and balancing complex responsibilities.

This is a highly practical and transferable session that will provide councillors with an opportunity to step back from their role, and explore some of the personal issues they are experiencing with balancing commitments.

The session takes a practical and common-sense approach to personal organisation, and features a number of tried and tested techniques that will enable participants to put into practice some straightforward, effective methods of managing time more productively.

Objectives

By the end of this programme delegates will be able to:

- identify and explain the effect of personal attitudes and behaviour on the use of time
- zone tasks, to identify urgent and important tasks
- manage a diary system
- implement a series of established personal organisation systems to minimise paper and desk mess
- manage interruptions assertively, and set boundaries on meetings
- identify early warning signs of not coping
- use recognised stress management techniques.

Full workbooks are provided. Maximum number of participants: 15

Overview and scrutiny

An introduction to overview and scrutiny

Members who are new to overview and scrutiny need to find their feet as soon as possible. This introductory session explores the role of overview and scrutiny within an authority, how to get the best results from its work and the key skills and approaches for doing so. The session can be tailored to meet an authority's particular circumstances and requirements but would usually include working with other Members, officers, partners and the public and a focus on ways to enable overview and scrutiny to secure positive outcomes. Run as a session for new Members and those already have overview and scrutiny experience, it can provide an opportunity for both team-building and induction.

Being an effective 'critical friend': the importance of questioning skills

A key role for overview and scrutiny is to provide a 'critical friend' challenge to policy and decision makers, inside and outside the authority. This session is for overview and scrutiny Members who would like to improve their questioning skills, through honing their approach to preparing for scrutiny work and conducting it in practice. It covers questioning skills and techniques (and the importance of listening skills) and how best to apply them. Part of the programme is given over to an exercise to enable participants to practise these skills through an exercise, such as devising Key Lines of Enquiry for a forthcoming scrutiny topic.

Commissioning, procurement and contract management: how overview and scrutiny can add value

An increasing number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) are turning their attention to the issue of how they can effectively exercise greater oversight of commissioning activity, whether by councils or health services, and ensure that commissioning processes are more engaged with what service users and residents want. OSCs are also concerned about how councils' spending power can secure more social benefits for their area and its residents, as provided for by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

Beyond this concern that tender specifications capture local needs to the best possible extent is a desire to ensure that, when delivered, contracted services perform to deliver value for money and customer satisfaction.

The objectives of the session are to enable scrutiny committee members to develop their understanding of:

- how commissioning processes benefit from early engagement with stakeholders
- how a robust and effective procurement strategy can benefit from transparency, democratic oversight and a commitment to securing social value
- the potential role that scrutiny can play in both commissioning and the procurement process

- ways in which contracts should be drawn up to be fit for purpose
- how contracts can be drawn up to include scrutiny's rights to information and attendance at scrutiny community meetings, to enhance accountability
- ways in which the community's experience and views of contract performance can be obtained
- the techniques available to challenge contract performance and maximise Member influence to achieve improvements in contract management and service delivery.

Effective work programming: how to add value through overview and scrutiny

Overview and scrutiny finds itself increasingly expected to deliver but to do so with often diminishing resources. Effective work programming is the bedrock of a successful scrutiny function. How can overview and scrutiny make the best use of available resources to focus on work areas and issues that matter most to both the Council and local people, in a way that adds real value? Are there 'smarter' ways of scrutiny working that can deliver targeted, incisive and timely results?

This session focuses on helping Members to enhance their current skills in deciding which issues to include in work programmes and how to investigate them. It explores how to develop and prioritise an effective work programme, including the use of a range of information to identify areas that require more in-depth scrutiny. Through examples from a range of authorities, it presents ways in which topics within a work programme can be effectively dealt with, depending on the importance of the issue, available resources and the timescales within which they need to be handled. Part of the session provides an opportunity for Members to practise these skills, for example through carrying out a scoping exercise on a topic of local relevance.

Sharpening up the practice of overview and scrutiny

Members sometimes find themselves in the position where they have developed some experience of overview and scrutiny but can't join up all the dots to make it more effective. This session provides an opportunity for Members interested in developing overview and scrutiny and tackling the issues that are acting as barriers to improving its performance.

A tailored session can set out the principles of effective scrutiny, with examples of good practice, as a basis for enabling Members to reflect in small groups and plenary sessions on current practice. The emphasis is on positively identifying barriers to success and actions which will assist improvement in practice.

Councillor and officer development

An Introduction to local government finance

It is more important than ever that all councillors understand how the local government finance system works because council budgets look likely to be under significant pressure until the end of the decade. All elected members have a role to play in the financial affairs of the council: executive councillors have to develop and implement the budget; councillors on scrutiny committees should be reviewing the budget process and financial planning and every councillor needs to involve their residents in the political choices that have to be made about budgets and council tax. If you are going to make a difference as a councillor it is crucial that you understand finance and are confident about your role.

This workshop gives a very good grounding in how local government finance works in practice and sets the basics as part of the bigger picture of current developments and longer-term trends – the emergency budget; funding plans for the next five years and the implications of devolution.

This session gives a very good grounding in how local government finance works in practice and sets the basics as part of the bigger picture of current developments and longer-term trends – the approach of the new Chancellor, Philip Hammond, funding plans for the next five years and the implications of devolution and Brexit.

The session will also cover the emerging impact of major changes to local government finance: the current consultation about the 100 per cent localisation of Business Rates and the expectation of councils generating local economic growth to help fund services. The impact on council budgets of welfare reform changes; the Localism Act and any fresh or recent government initiatives and announcements will also be assessed.

Assertiveness skills for effective communication with communities

In the current climate of reductions in service budgets, Brexit and increased tensions in communities, this session can help Elected Members and officers be more effective in their communication skills. The workshop gives a broad introduction to assertiveness, set in the context of engaging with communities at local level. It is based on an approach that builds on our existing skills and experience, providing tried and tested practical tools to try out in a supportive environment.

Developing commercial awareness in your council (3 hours)

In discussions with many authorities the need to develop a range of new and dynamic skills to meet future demands and challenges is often to the fore. A frequently sighted area is commercial awareness. But what does that mean in terms of organisational culture, management style and individual skills. Is the organisation espousing the need for commercial thinking but at the same time putting barriers in the way? This workshop is an interactive opportunity to develop your awareness and understanding, share experiences and stimulate ideas and possibilities.

Objectives

- A clear understanding of what it means in your organisation.
- Developing strategies to move towards an appropriate commercial model and culture.
- A chance to generate ideas for specific commercial activity.

Developing mentoring skills (1 day workshop)

Whilst the importance of coaching is widely recognised it is important to maintain the organisations mentoring capability. Be this formal mentoring where the mentor has been assigned or using mentoring skill in a more day-to-day conversational way having people who are skilled at providing guidance and developing people can have a marked effect on organisational performance. The workshop is suitable for anybody with either a formal or informal role as a mentor and also for line managers wishing to develop this skill. The workshop can be run in-house as a way of developing a mentoring culture across the organisation or for specific service areas.

Outcomes:

- A thorough understanding of the role its boundaries and impact on performance
- Considering the linkage between mentoring and developmental coaching
- An opportunity to consider your role as a mentor and understand how to apply skills that will make maximise the positive impact for your mentee
- Consideration of your approach to developing and imbedding a mentoring culture.

Developing political awareness and sensitivity

Whilst the relationship between elected Members and officers has always been important for local government this is particularly the case when the organisation faces financial pressures and the need make tough decisions about priorities or us undergoing significant organisational change. In addition it can be a challenge for new staff coming into the organisation to grasp the importance and efficacy of political leadership. This workshop is a chance to explore what you know and don't know and to develop the skills to build effective relationships with Members.

Objectives

- Help delegates to become more aware of the political reality of an organisation.
- Build knowledge and awareness.
- Help delegates in developing communication strategies and positive influence.

Giving effective speeches and presentations

A vital skill for both council officers and councillors is verbal communication, whether briefing individuals, small groups or speaking in public.

As budgets become tighter this becomes ever more vital to help the public understand your

message and ensure decisions are made with the right information. Many people want to improve their confidence in giving presentations or public speeches while others may enjoy it, but wish to build their skills in a supportive environment. This session takes a highly practical approach and includes practice to build confidence in presenting information to groups in a range of contexts.

Local government and human rights: a practical introduction

Elected members and council officers engage with issue of human rights every day, often in quite ordinary ways, and they have a unique role in upholding human rights in the community. The Human Rights Act places a legal duty on those in local government to act compatibly with human rights, ensuring that human rights are considered when developing policies, making laws, delivering services and making decisions. This is not simply about legal compliance – it goes to the heart of local government, helping to:

- strengthen your local vision and values
- achieve more meaningful engagement and participation with the local community
- improve decision-making for policy and service delivery, increasing transparency and accountability, and securing better outcomes for people
- enable support staff to deliver on various other duties and powers
- mitigate the risk of reputations damage and complaints.

This session will help participants strengthen their practical understanding of what the Human Rights Act means for local government. It includes:

- plain language explanations of the law
- the use of relevant real life examples
- interactive exercises including group discussion and worked through case studies
- tips and tools for developing your practice.

Managing people through the challenge of change

Organisational change and shifts in organisational culture present challenges not only in maintaining morale and motivation but also ensuring the well being of your teams and your self. The impact, although hard to measure, can be significant both in terms of the performance of the organisation and the physical and mental well being of people.

This workshop helps to develop an understanding of what goes on during organisational change, the impact and the practical steps you can take to move forward positively.

Objectives

- an increased level of personal awareness and understanding
- development of change 'management' skills

- more knowledge about the impact of change on well being
- an opportunity to consider the way in which your organisation approaches these issues.

Practical project management

Projects tend to mean change and change tends to mean projects and in the environment of constant change that is local government an ability to manage and participate effectively in projects has become a major staff development issue.

For major projects certificated approaches and methodologies are important. However, there is also a need to equip people in the fundamental principles in a way that can be scaled for use on any size of project.

This workshop will give participants a thorough understanding of good project management process in an easily accessible and practical way. This will help participants to be effective members of project teams, provide a refresher for established project managers and a foundation for new project managers. It is based on the principal of eight key steps or documents.

Objectives

- a thorough understanding of practical project management steps
- an understanding of the eight key stages/documents
- a chance to consider people management issues sometimes missing in other approaches
- an opportunity to practice the application of the principles.

Putting elected members at the heart of commissioning, procurement and contract management

Commissioning, procurement and contract management play a central role in the way councils operate. Oversight of these functions by elected members is crucial. This session explores:

- the full range of options available to elected members when making decisions about commissioning services (including 'in-house' options)
- how a robust and effective commissioning and procurement strategy can benefit from transparency, democratic oversight and a commitment to securing social value
- how commissioning processes benefit from early engagement with stakeholders
- the potential role that scrutiny can play in both commissioning and the procurement process
- ways in which contracts should be drawn up to be fit for purpose
- how contracts can be drawn up to include scrutiny's rights to information and attendance at scrutiny community meetings, to enhance accountability
- ways in which the community's experience and views of contract performance can be obtained

- the techniques available to challenge contract performance and maximise Member influence to achieve improvements in contract management and service delivery.

Local authority examples will be provided as part of the workshop, which will also feature a mixture of presentations, group discussions, and question and answer opportunities.

Reviewing the “big three” financial reports effectively

Every council prepares an annual budget report, regular monitoring reports and a set of financial statements for elected members and officers. These “big three” reports contain a wealth of information on the council’s finance. However, their length and complexity can make them daunting for elected members, particularly those without a financial background.

This workshop is designed to enable all elected members and officers to better engage with, and effectively question, these “big three” documents. The overall objective of the session is to demystify the way the council plans, manages and reports its spending and income and to enable councillors to more effectively engage with council finances.

Delegates are encouraged to bring along copies of their council’s “big three” documents and they will have an opportunity to work through these during the workshop. Plenty of time will be provided for participants to ask questions.

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- understand the role of the elected member in the council’s financial planning and management processes
- understand how to read and review their Council’s “big three” financial documents
- confront and overcome the barriers of jargon and technicality that make getting to grips with these documents so difficult.

No prior knowledge of council finance is required and all finance jargon, acronyms and terms will be explained.

Understanding strategic thinking

The workshop is ideal for managers or specialists who have a strategic role or who are looking to develop a better understanding and skills in the area of longer-term planning and strategy.

Strategy or being ‘strategic’ can by its very nature seem quite a vague concept in organisations although it is a term that is frequently used. This session is designed to provide a clear understanding of the concept and the tools to think strategically but also to influence and implement strategy. The workshop will particularly focus on the challenges of strategic thinking in a politically led and fast changing organisation. This is about thinking strategically rather than strategic planning.

Objectives

- To develop a clear understanding of what strategic thinking means in your organisations and how it is used.

- To develop plans to influence the organisation to think and operate more strategically.
- A chance to consider the use of specific strategic thinking 'tools'.

Working effectively with your council communications team

This session will help you consider the appropriate use of your council's comms team as well as your personal approach to using traditional and social media, focusing on how you convey your message as well as listen to and engage with your residents.

Councillors and council staff have more ways than ever before to engage with and respond to their residents. However, building a personal brand and knowing why you are engaging is an important first step.

Social media, traditional press alongside radio and TV interviews and newsletters can all play a part in engaging with the public. As budgets become tighter using these effectively to help the public understand your message as well as gain feedback is increasingly important.

The session will look at practical ways to keep up with social media; dealing with risks and attacks; the continuing importance of relationships with the press and other media; and practicing interview techniques.

Community engagement

Community leadership for councillors in a time of change

The role of the councillor as a community leader has never been more vital. Changes in local government have, over the past few years, reshaped the way elected members work and how they engage with the communities they represent. In a climate of political and economic uncertainty the ability of elected members to work effectively with and on behalf of their communities is now more important than ever.

The session will cover:

- an overview of the roles and skills required for effective community leader at local level
- approaches to 'profiling' communities and how this information can be used to strengthen the role and influence of the elected member and as a way of identifying 'active citizens', organisations and groups involved in the locality
- partnership working; commissioning services; building alliances; working with service providers; harnessing the skills and involvement of communities
- using 'Best Value' and the Social Value Act (2012) to support communities.

This is a practical session and will give participants plenty of opportunity to explore different approaches and techniques that they can apply in their work as local councillors.

The session will draw on:

- key developments affecting local government and the role of elected members including the impact of localism and the Localism Act
- recent research on skills for effective leadership
- recent work on the roles of community leaders.

The training will include practical activities in small groups, informal discussion, feedback and handouts.

Developing community champions or community researchers

Either working directly with volunteers and elected members or with officers to develop, sustain and add benefit to the role of the community volunteer or train a group of community researchers to work on behalf their community to gather honest, true data. We can design a course to your specifications.

Developing youth forums

Young people are the eyes and ears of your community and the young decision-makers of the future but we often forget to gather their views. Whether you are looking to set up sustainable forums to engage and consult or develop young people as young reporters working with their peers to gain a true reflection of their views, we can design a programme around your needs.

Practical skills for community engagement

Effective engagement with communities is now essential for local authorities. With reductions in budgets for services, many authorities are relying on communities to take action to solve problems and get involved in initiatives to tackle local needs. This is a practical training session on the skills needed to support communities in achieving this.

It includes a range of planning and facilitation techniques and methods that Elected Members and officers can use in community engagement. Practical methods covered will include:

- organising effective community meetings and events – preparation, participatory ways to run meetings and events where people get actively involved
- how to help groups develop community initiatives and projects – translating ideas into action – planning tools, action planning, follow up
- practical ways to help local groups to be better organised and more active – facilitation methods, building links between groups
- how people can develop their skills as active residents and community leaders.

Simple and effective ways to consult with your community

Involving residents has always been an important element of a local authority' work. This has never been a more important time to work alongside residents. The question is how to do this without setting up a costly process of consultation and capacity building? This programme offers:

- simple ways to consult all ages and abilities using simple and non intimidating methods
- getting residents involved in presenting their issues and findings to partners
- ways to get the public to your events and activities
- getting positive outcomes from resident groups.

Understanding communities through Participatory Appraisal

Participatory Appraisal is a method of consultation, designed to be none threatening and offer a fun and alternative method of gathering both qualitative and quantitative results.

PA, by its approach is suitable to use with all members of the community as it easily cuts across age and language barriers. It also provides the skills and insights for elected members in their capacity as community leaders.

PA uses hand draw pictures, post-it notes and sticky dots to gather the required information, which can be collected and analysed, and cross-referenced to produce statistical reports. The data will remain confidential for the consultee, but will offer the required information for the organisation using a simple key that can gather required data such as gender, ethnicity, age etc.

This training day is very practical and hands on, teaching delegates to enjoy consulting. During this session delegates will:

- get a practical and basic knowledge of the PA ‘tools’ and how to use them
- design their own consultation book and tools
- understand how to use consultation in a meaningful way
- look at how to get the most information out of the community
- be actively involved throughout the day as you explore a range of techniques and methods for consulting people all of which you can adapt to your own needs and use immediately.

Using Neighbourhood Agreements to build strong and active communities at a time of austerity (full day)

This is a very practical session demonstrating how Neighbourhood Agreements can help build strong and active communities at a time of shrinking budgets.

A neighbourhood agreement is a ‘deal’ between ‘stakeholders’ in a defined neighbourhood in which each party makes commitments about how they will help improve the area. Usually this means an agreement between local residents and providers of local services and amenities.

Agreements help to give local residents the opportunity to look at how services work for them, become educated about the services they can expect and also look at the responsibilities within their neighbourhood. No two agreements are the same and they are tailor made to the estate, street or ward they are developed with.

What are the benefits?

Some public service managers see neighbourhood agreements as a way to ensure they are meeting local need. Councillors may see them as a way to better understand what service providers are offering to confirm their own assumptions about local needs. The main benefits of developing neighbourhood agreements include:

- Increases satisfaction of residents with public services and the local area generally
- Enables residents to have more direct influence over local decision-making
- Helps public services be delivered more efficiently, directing resources to where they are needed most and in ways that better meet users needs
- Improves communication and relationships between councillors, service providers and residents directly involved in the agreement
- Helps communities reach agreement among themselves about acceptable standards, behaviour and expectations

Using social media for community engagement and community leadership

Community leaders and staff with a role involved in engagement and consultation have a menu of ways to reach their communities, but social media is often neglected as an option.

Social media is not going to go away and certainly isn't a fad and this means that if we really want to engage more people with ever decreasing budgets then we need to embrace social media as one of our tools.

This course will look at the most popular methods of social media, which are best for your personal needs and the needs for your organisation as well as the risks and the solutions to keep you both safe in your work as well as up- to- date with your methods.

Whether you are totally new to social media or are trying to decide which method works best for your needs this course has something for you.

Working and supporting volunteers and community champions

Volunteering is both a great opportunity for the volunteer and an important way to show support and transparency in communities when embedding community projects. Reductions in public spending with fewer staff working in communities means that volunteering can provide an important community link and help work from within communities, working with hard to reach and hard to engage individuals and neighbourhoods. Volunteers and community champions have so much to give to their neighbourhoods and the possibilities are endless from low level volunteering to community researchers that add local knowledge to consultation.

To build a strong volunteer base requires careful planning for both the volunteers and the organisation before starting the recruitment process.

This workshop takes delegates through the questions and processes that make for a strong and effective volunteer and community champion programme.



LGiU is an award winning think-tank and local authority membership organisation. Our mission is to strengthen local democracy to put citizens in control of their own lives, communities and local services. We work with local councils and other public services providers, along with a wider network of public, private and third sector organisations.

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