

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Resources Committee
18th February 2009**

Agenda Item	
Report No	

**Consultation on the Draft National Elected Member Development Strategy for
Scottish Local Government
Report by the Assistant Chief Executive**

Summary

This paper presents the Highland Council's proposed response to the consultation from the Improvement Service on the Draft National Elected Member Development Strategy for Scottish Local Government.

1. Introduction

The Improvement Service has drafted a National Elected Member Development Strategy for Scottish Local Government and wishes to consult with all Scottish councils.

The strategy has been drafted to set out a framework through which enhanced, more focused and more structured support arrangements can be put in place for elected members in leading local government through a period of considerable change.

2. The Draft National Elected Member Development Strategy

- 2.1 The key aims of the strategy include the Improvement Service providing a national resource in terms of planning development and providing advice and expertise to support elected member development needs. The Improvement Service also aims to provide a focus for national, regional and local development programmes, promote a high standard of provision and encourage collaboration and sharing of resources to provide high quality and cost-effective development opportunities for elected members.
- 2.2 The strategy sets out key elements of the national development framework for elected members as follows:
- Local Development Programmes
 - National & Regional Skills Development Programmes
 - National CPD Framework
 - Senior Leadership Development Programmes
 - Accredited Leadership Programmes
- 2.3 The strategy also makes proposals for a self-evaluation framework to ensure the quality and standard of councils' support for elected members' development needs.
- 2.4 Finally, the strategy identifies that making resources available to support elected member development is essential and proposes that all local and national bodies should direct dedicated resources towards investing in the elements outlined in the strategy.
- 2.5 The full Draft National Elected Member Development Strategy for Scottish Local

Government can be found on this link.

<http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/news/news-across-scotland/consultation-on-draft-national-elected-member-development-strategy-for-scottish-local-government.html>

3. Consultation

- 3.1 The Improvement Service has added questions to each section of the draft strategy and are seeking views from councils. These questions and the proposed response from Highland Council are in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The Council's proposed response broadly welcomes the aims and outcomes of the strategy, especially the opportunity for national and regional support and effective use of resources through collaboration.

However, the response also identifies the need to be cautious with regard to setting up additional assessment and audit frameworks and that the strategy should recognise the requirements for delivering and recording elected member training and development under the Local Governance Act 2004 and the remit of SLARC.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 The strategy identifies the importance of investment in development and asks that Scottish Government, COSLA and the Improvement Service as well as councils apportion resources. Any support and collaboration to develop materials and programmes will certainly assist with providing more cost-effective development options for elected members.

Recommendation

That the Resources Committee:

- a) approve the proposed response from Highland Council to the Improvement Service's consultation on the Draft National Elected Member Development Strategy for Scottish Local Government.

Signature:

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive

Author: Cathy Christie, Employee Development Manager

Date: 30 January 2009

**Improvement Service
Draft National Elected Member Development Strategy for Scottish Local
Government**

**Highland Council
Response to the Consultation Questions**

1. *Is the vision set out in this document appropriate to support the development needs of elected members in Scottish Local Government?*

Yes. We support the emphasis on collaboration.

2. *Are the aims set out in this document sufficient to support the development needs of elected members in Scottish Local Government?*

The aims as set out provide a strong basis for the development of elected members in Scotland, particularly the aim of providing expertise, advice and support in meeting development needs. The lack of specific and appropriate development for elected members is a key challenge. The strategic aim 'to promote excellent standards in the provision of development' is a little vague and is not clarified in the strategy or deliverables other than the suggestion for a self-assessment framework. It would be helpful to have some further explanation of this, including the Improvement Service's role.

3. *Are the benefits as set out sufficient to encourage councils to participate in the implementation of the strategy?*

Yes, particularly the improved availability of high quality development programmes.

4. *Are the benefits as set out clear and comprehensive?*

Yes, they cover the three main elements: – cost effectiveness and access to suitable resources, availability of development opportunities and benefits of cross-council working.

5. *Should the development of a skills based CPD framework for elected members in Scottish local government be carried out on a collaborative basis or is this best left to individual councils to develop for themselves?*

The development of the skills based CPD should be collaborative so that the framework is common to all Scottish local government. The implementation of the framework should remain the responsibility of individual councils.

6. *Is it desirable to have a skills based CPD framework that is capable of*

offering 360 degree feedback to elected members who wish to receive it?

The availability of 360 degree feedback is not a priority and therefore should not be developed at the expense of other development tools. However, if it is easily available, then it may be helpful for some Councils.

7. *Is it desirable to develop on a collaborative basis national and regional co-ordinated development programmes to support elected members development needs?*

The availability of national and regional development programmes would be an excellent resource for elected members, not only from a cost-effectiveness perspective but also the opportunity to share with councillors from other authorities.

8. *Is it desirable that any such programmes deliver development opportunities on a cross council basis where appropriate?*

Delivery on a cross council basis would bring benefits in specific areas. For example, as suggested, national/regional programmes would provide opportunities for a coaching and mentoring programme, which is difficult for an individual council to deliver.

9. *Is it desirable that all councils offer a development programme to their elected members, including access to relevant national and regional programmes?*

All Councils are required to undertake training and member development under the Local Governance Act 2004 and the remit of SLARC. This should be a local development programme that reflects the needs and requirements of their organisation, with access to relevant national and regional programmes as required.

10. *Is it desirable that all councils should share the development of materials, knowledge and learning with respect to elected member development with other councils, the IS and other relevant national bodies?*

Yes, it is helpful that councils share the development of materials and knowledge. This builds on what is current practice.

11. *Is it desirable that the IS continues to offer the PLP and their programmes to senior elected members and this is recognised as a major component of their CPD?*

The Political Leadership Programme should continue to be offered for senior elected members and recognised as part of their CPD, but there should be clarification on what is meant by 'major component'. Other development opportunities for senior members should be available and

recognised to ensure there is a range of ways of meeting the needs of senior elected members.

12. *Is it desirable that the IS continues to work with councils to further develop relevant development opportunities for senior elected members?*

Yes, it is extremely helpful to have development opportunities that support the important role of senior members. (see also answer to Q 11).

13. *Is it desirable that accreditation is sought for elected members' development opportunities, where appropriate?*

Accreditation of elected members' development opportunities is not a priority and indeed past experience with accreditation for elected members suggests that it can create barriers to development. The key driver for any development should be that it assists elected members in undertaking their responsibilities effectively.

14. *Is it desirable that the IS and councils develop a proportionate self assessment framework to support councils in meeting elected members development needs?*

It is helpful to have a clear standard of elected member development, so that authorities and elected members understand how local programmes fit with the national picture. However, the key word is 'proportionate' and there is a danger that a performance framework may become overly bureaucratic. There should be a clear understanding as to the purpose of the framework and how it is to be used, ideally as an internal process without the need for external measuring and scrutiny.

Audit Scotland has also been doing work on this area and so it is important that any self-assessment framework is developed in consultation with Audit Scotland and that Councils do not suffer a duplication of audits.

15. *Should the Scottish Government apportion resources to support elected member development across Scotland?*

Yes – as outlined in the strategy, investment is key to designing and delivering appropriate development for elected members who have a key role to play in delivering the Scottish Government's objectives.

16. *Should COSLA apportion resources to support elected member development across Scotland?*

Yes – COSLA have a role in supporting national developments.

17. *Should the IS apportion resources to support elected member development across Scotland?*

Yes – IS have a role in developing programmes and materials and ensuring the provision of advice, guidance and expertise.

18. *Should individual councils provide dedicated resources to support the development needs of their elected members?*

Most councils already have a defined budget for elected member development and this should continue. However, the fact that the question asks about 'dedicated resources' rather than 'apportioned resources', as in previous questions, implies that the strategy is suggesting more than just identified budget. It would be helpful to understand the definition of 'dedicated resources'.

19. *Is it desirable that a working group should be established to further develop and support the implementation of this draft strategy?*

The setting up of a working group may well assist with delivering this strategy, however it must have a clear and agreed remit, with key deliverables and timescales.