The Political Skills Framework: A Councillor Tool-Kit

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Contents

What is the PSF and why was it developed?

To be effective in any job you need to know what is required of you and have the knowledge and skills to achieve it. Teachers, doctors, plumbers and chief executives are not born with the knowledge and skills they need for their jobs - these are learned, practised and improved over time.

When we began this work in 2004 surprisingly little attention had been paid to the knowledge and skills required by local councillors - despite their role being one of the most complex in politics or the wider work context. The role of a local councillor can certainly be more complicated than that of Member of Parliament.

With growing need to support new and experienced councillors in their efforts to develop the knowledge and skills they need to be effective in their role, Professor Jo Silvester began working with the Local Government Group (then the IDeA) to identify and map the core skills required by councillors. We set up an advisory group, conducted 45 critical incident interviews and held focus groups with senior officers, politicians and visionaries. W then validated our findings by surveying over 350 elected members and officers from all types of council and political background. The result was the **Political Skills Framework** [**PSF**] and copies were sent to all local authorities with the aim of supporting development opportunities for politicians and ultimately attracting new 'members of talent'.

Two Later: Evaluating the Political Skills Framework

Two years after the PSF was launched, we conducted a review of how and where it had been used in local authorities. We explored what users liked - and did not like - about the PSF and determined how it could be improved. Again, we made sure we talked to many different groups; politicians and officers from different types of local authorities in different parts of the country, as well as people in other local government organisations that had been using the PSF, such as the North East Improvement Board, the Local Government Information Unit, and the South-East Employers' Organisation.

We found that between 2004 and 2006 there had been a substantial culture change in attitudes towards political roles and how they should be carried out. This included growing recognition of the need for training and development among councillors themselves. There was also widespread support for the PSF, which was being used in many different ways by different user groups, including as a support for self-review materials, training needs analysis, 360-review, structured mentoring programmes, development centres, personal development plans [PDPs], induction programmes and learning materials.

Nearly everyone interviewed said that they would like to see wider use of the PSF, but they also wanted more information about how it could be used in their own councils. This led us to review the original PSF to bring it more closely in line with what users need.

Another Five Years: A revised Political Skills Toolkit

Since 2006 there have been many more changes in local government and, not surprisingly, the role of the local councillor continues to evolve. Best practice recommends that any toolkit should be reviewed and up–dated periodically to take account of this change. But given the widespread and often profound challenges faced by those in local government over recent years, there is a particular need to step back and review the impact for councillors in how they perform their roles, and how they can be supported most effectively.

For example, although councillors' responsibilities may remain largely unaltered, but the political and social environment in which they carry out these responsibilities has changed fundamentally. New council structures, vastly increased use of new technology and social media, public sector spending cuts, and rising public expectations (to name but a few) are all having a profound effect on how councillors enact their role.

To produce this revised toolkit we have talked to members and officers in order to gain a better understanding of how they think these changes are impacting on councillor roles, as well as the knowledge and skills that will be needed to function successfully in new and emerging political landscapes.

Political Skills Toolkit II

The Political Skills Tool-kit (PSF) is designed to support local councillors and those working with them in their efforts to review and support individual development needs. The tool-kit contains:

1. A revised easy-to-access political skills framework that takes account of changes in councillors' roles prompted by recent developments in local government and the wider social context.

2. Background information about the PSF and how it can be used by councillors themselves or by others looking to support member development.

3. Some examples of how the PSF has been used by people in local government to create development processes that meet their own unique local needs.

4. Self-reflection learning reviews based on each of the PSF skill sets that can be used by councillors to identify their own areas of strength and areas for development.

Six Core Skills for Councillors

There are six core skill areas for all councillors in this tool-kit. Depending upon your specific role as a councillor the circumstances and contexts within which you apply these skills may vary, the core skill areas will remain relevant for all councillors.

- Local Leadership

  This refers to the need for councillors to engage with members of their community in order to learn about issues of local concern and help to facilitate a vision for the locality. It involves encouraging trust and respect between individuals and groups by mediating fairly and constructively between different organisations and sections of the community.

- Partnership Working

  This aspect of the councillor role focuses on the need to build good relationships with others (i.e. colleagues, officers, community groups and other organisations) by identifying and working collaboratively to achieve shared goals. It recognises the need for councillors to recognise and value different contributions, delegate or provide support as required, and to take a long-term view in developing partnerships.

- Communication Skills

  This skill area recognises the need for councillors need to demonstrate excellent communication skills across many different settings, including the ability to listen sensitively and use appropriate language with different groups. Councillors must also communicate regularly and effectively with all parts of their community using different forms of media.

- Political Understanding

  This skill set recognises the need for councillors to develop a range of political skills in order to communicate their values, promote a political vision, and encourage democratic process and public engagement. It recognises that councillors need to work across group boundaries at times, yet still be able to maintain their own political integrity.

- Scrutiny & Challenge

  Scrutiny and challenge is an important day-to-day aspect of the councillor role. Councillors need to act as a critical friend by identifying opportunities for scrutiny inside and outside the council, and by providing constructive challenge and feedback to others. To be effective in this role, councillors need to analyse information quickly and present arguments that are concise, meaningful and easily understood.

- Regulating & Monitoring

  This skill set relates to the more judicial aspects of the role that require councillors to understand their legal responsibilities and follow protocol when evaluating arguments and making decisions. Not only do councillors need to balance public needs and local policy, they must also monitor progress and seek feedback on their own learning needs.

Positive and Negative Indicators

The skill set definitions describe what is expected of councillors if they are to be effective and influential in their role. We recognise that there is no 'one best way' to be a councillor - after all we would not want councillors to look like clones of one another! One member may approach their role as a community leader in a very different way to their colleagues, but by talking with over 350 members and officers we do know that there are commonly held views about what might be considered good and bad councillor behaviour.

We have included these as Positive (desirable) behaviours and Negative (undesirable) behaviours for each of the skill sets. No member could be expected to demonstrate excellent levels of Positive behaviour all of the time, and never demonstrate any Negative behaviour, but excellent councillors generally demonstrate far more Positive than Negative characteristics.

We call these behaviours positive and negative *indicators* because they provide an *indication* of the types of behaviour that councillors associate with excellent and poor performance. They are not meant to be prescriptive – but rather to help councillors and those who work with them reflect on how they perform their role and how what they do fits with each of the skill areas.

They also provide a way to foster a shared understanding of what constitutes excellent councillor performance among the wider community.

Local Leadership

"People can elect their councillor confident in the knowledge that they will be able to act on the issues they care about and have campaigned on". (A Plain English Guide to the Localism Act, November 2011, p.5)

Positive

- Engages with their community, canvasses opinion & looks for new ways of representing people

- Keeps up-to-date with local concerns by drawing information from diverse sources, including hard to reach groups

- Encourages trust and respect by being approachable, empathising & finding new ways to engage with others

- Creates partnerships with different sections and groups in the community & ensures their involvement in decision-making

- Mediates fairly & constructively between people & groups with conflicting needs

- Works with others to develop & champion a shared local vision

Negative

- Doesn't engage with their community, waits to be approached & is difficult to contact

- Maintains a low public profile, not easily recognised in their community

- Treats groups or people unequally, fails to build integration or cohesion

- Has a poor understanding of local concerns & how these might be addressed

- Concentrates on council processes rather than people

- Is unrealistic about what they can achieve & fails to deliver on promises

How Local Leadership is Changing

Local leadership has always been important for councillors, but the recent Localism Act has introduced new rights and powers for communities and individuals that are likely to have considerable impacts on how councillors undertake their role.

A core responsibility for all councillors remains the need to represent their community, engage with different groups and help to develop a shared local vision. But while the Localism Act will not change these fundamental aspects of local leadership, it is likely to introduce new ways in which councillors are expected to represent and work with their community. For example, councillors are likely to become more involved in identifying how community groups can take control of services and in working with these groups to help them understand what is involved and how to navigate council processes.

The shifting emphasis towards accountability and transparency means that it will also be increasingly important for councillors to manage the expectations of residents.

Partnership Working

Positive

- Works proactively to build good relationships with colleagues, officers, community groups & other organisations

- Focused on achieving shared goals by maintaining focus & mobilising others

- Knows when to delegate, provide support or empower others to take responsibility

- Makes people from all backgrounds feel valued, trusted & included (e.g., says 'thank you')

- Understands & acts on their role in building & shaping key partnerships at local, regional & national levels

- Understands how & when to assert authority to resolve conflict or deadlock effectively

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Negative

- Prefers to exert control & impose solutions by using status rather than through persuasion & involving others

- Fails to recognise or make use of others' skills & ideas

- Typically avoids working with people with different views or political values

- Prefers to act alone & fails to engage or network with others

- Often uses divisive tactics to upset relationships within their group, or council policies & decisions

- Defensive when criticised, blames others & doesn't admit to being wrong

How Partnership Working is Changing

In earlier versions of the political skills framework the 'partnership working' skill set focused mostly on building relationships with officers, colleagues and community members. An important consequence of the Localism Act, however, is that councillors are increasingly being expected to facilitate relationship building between *other* groups. This might involve bringing together different individuals and groups in the community who are interested in providing a shared service, or between the different parties involved in strategic partnerships.

The positive and negative indicators for 'partnership working' have therefore not changed substantially, but in their evolving role councillors are likely to find themselves using partnership working skills in more diverse ways with a wider range of groups. That said, one small but significant difference is greater recognition of the need for councillors to be proactive in building relationships and working with others.

Communication Skills

Positive

- Provides regular feedback to people, making sure they are kept informed & managing expectations

- Regularly informs & communicates with their community using all available media (e.g., internet newsletters & email)

- Listens to others, checks for understanding & adapts their own communication style as required

- Creates opportunities to communicate with different sectors, including vulnerable & hard to reach groups

- Speaks confidently in public settings (e.g., in council and community meetings, & the media)

- Communicates clearly in spoken & written forms (e.g., uses appropriate language & avoids jargon or 'council speak')

Negative

- Slow to respond to others; tends to communicate only when necessary

- Doesn't listen when people are speaking & uses inappropriate or insensitive language

- Communicates in a dogmatic & inflexible way

- Unwilling to deliver unpopular messages, uses information dishonestly to discredit others

- Tends not to participate in meetings & lacks confidence when speaking in public

- Presents confused arguments using poor language & style

How Communication Skills have Changed

Again, the need for councillors to demonstrate excellent communication skills has not changed - but the world around them certainly has. Increasing use of internet technology and 24/7 media coverage all present challenges for councillors. Constituents are more likely to expect fast and easy communication with their councillor, using all kinds of media and routes. With social media a natural part of life for many people, there is a growing expectation among many sections of society (rightly or wrongly) that councillors should be similarly engaged.

The changes to this skill set are relatively subtle, but they reflect the growing need for councillors to understand and use different forms of communication.

Political Understanding

Positive

- Demonstrates a consistency in views & values through their decisions & actions

- Helps to develop cohesion within & between different groups & between different groups & the council

- Clearly communicates political values through canvassing & campaigning

- Actively develops their own political intelligence (e.g., understanding local & national political landscapes)

- Looks for ways to promote democracy & increase public engagement

- Is able to put party politics aside & work across political boundaries when required, without compromising political values

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Negative

- Lacks integrity, has inconsistent political values & tends to say what others want to hear

- Puts personal motives first or changes beliefs to match those in power

- Has poor knowledge of group manifesto, values & objectives

- Fails to support political colleagues in public

- Doesn't translate group values into ways of helping the community

- Lacks a clear political vision of what they would like to achieve

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How Political Understanding has Changed

Political understanding remains an important skill set for councillors, although when we talked with people about how things have changed over the past five years many suggested that greater emphasis should be placed on the need for councillors to develop political skills with a small 'p'. By this, they meant that political understanding was not just about party politics, but also about how to work effectively with groups and organisations outside the council in what can be highly political environments. Political understanding also includes being able to influence, persuade, and mobilise people to support and achieve objectives, and mediating between groups with different views.

Scrutiny & Challenge

Positive

- Identifies areas suitable for scrutiny & ensures that citizens & communities are involved in the scrutiny process

- Quickly understands & analyses complex information

- Presents concise arguments that are meaningful & easily understood

- Understands the scrutiny process, asks for explanations & checks that recommendations have been implemented

- Objective & rigorous when challenging process, decisions & people

- Asks challenging but constructive questions

Negative

- Doesn't prepare well or check facts & draws biased conclusions

- Too reliant on officers, tends to back down when challenged

- Fails to see scrutiny as part of their role

- Too focused on detail, doesn't distinguish between good, poor & irrelevant information

- Uses scrutiny resources inappropriately (e.g., on issues over which they have no influence)

- Overly aggressive: prefers political 'blood sports' to collaboration & uses scrutiny for political gain

How Scrutiny and Challenge has Changed

We made very few changes to the positive and negative behaviours for Scrutiny and Challenge. The people we talked to emphasised that scrutiny and challenge are on-going responsibilities for all councillors, that don't just happen as part of formal scrutiny procedures. Although recent funding cuts in local government have meant that in many cases less money is available for scrutiny processes, the need to ask questions and challenge remains important and as some of the people we spoke to indicated, may even be more important with the introduction of new commissioning structures and health partnerships.

Regulating & Monitoring

Positive

- Understands & acts on their judicial role in meeting legal responsibilities (e.g., duty of care, corporate parenting)

- Uses evidence to evaluate arguments & make independent, impartial judgements

- Chairs meetings effectively, follows protocol to make sure all views are explored & keeps process on track

- Follows legal process, balances public needs & local policy

- Monitors others' performance & intervenes when necessary to ensure progress

- Is committed to self-development, seeks feedback & looks for opportunities to learn

Negative

- Doesn't declare personal interests, makes decisions for personal gain

- Fails to check facts or consider all sides & makes subjective or uninformed judgements

- Leaves monitoring & checks on progress to others

- Makes decisions without taking advice, considering regulations or taking account of wider issues

- Understands and abides by the councillor's code of conduct

- Misses deadlines, leaves business unfinished & lacks balance between council & other commitments

How Regulating and Monitoring has Changed

Since the original political skills framework was developed, the councillor's code of conduct was launched successfully and this is included in the revised behavioural indicators. There has also been greater acceptance of the need for councillors to engage in on-going learning and development in order to cope with changing and often more complex council procedures. In our discussions with people about how the skills framework might be revised it was suggested that the need for councillors to understand their judicial role should be the characteristic to lead this skill set.

Some Questions and Answers

All these behaviours look very daunting, aren't they a little unrealistic?

There are many different ways in which local councillors can perform their roles well, and no two councillors are likely to perform their roles in exactly the same way. Every member has their unique areas of strength as well as areas they would like to improve.

Councils may of course require different sets of skills at different times – and since a council is a team it's not necessary or even desirable for all members to have all the skills. For example, if the Leader is not a particularly inspired communicator, s/he could ask a colleague to handle the media or major presentations while the Leader concentrates on using their strengths elsewhere.

The PSF provides a starting point for individual councillors to reflect on their own skill profile, before deciding what they want to develop and how. Some councillors might decide that they want to be excellent in all areas, whereas others might prefer to focus on one or two key areas.

One important message from the work that went into creating the PSF, is that there are common views about what makes a good or a poor councillor and, wherever possible, councillors should strive to demonstrate Positive rather than Negative behaviours.

Learning prompt for councillors: Think about the way you perform your role. Focus on one of the skill areas and decide whether you (or others) would rate this as an area of strength. Can you recall any recent occasions when you have demonstrated any of the Positive characteristics for this skill set? Have there been times when you have used negative behaviours? Are any of the behaviour surprising?

Why are there negative indicators?

In any role it is just as important to be clear about what we think is unacceptable or poor behaviour as it is to be clear about what we view as excellent. Although there may be some difference of opinion, this work has helped us to understand the views most people share. For example, we know that behavioural integrity is important because most of the people we interviewed considered it unacceptable for members to change their views just to fit with the views of those in power. Neither was it considered appropriate for them to act in a way that did not reflect their values or those of their political group.

Learning prompt for councillors: Take time to think about your own personal values – does your behaviour always reflect what you believe? When is it difficult to act with integrity? Do you think that some styles of behaviour are not appropriate in politics – or does 'anything go'?

Can I change some of these characteristics?

These characteristics are valid because they are based on the views of over 350 elected members and officers, so we do not recommend that you change them. However, they are not prescriptive; they provide a base for members and officers to consider their own unique council structure, culture and context. You may decide that the culture of your own authority influences the way in which members are expected to behave towards officers, for example, or the way in which political groups communicate with one another.

Learning prompt for councillors: Think about the behaviour of your political colleagues. How might their behaviour reflect the council's culture? For example, do members generally keep up-to-date with community issues and local concerns? What support is provided to help them to do this? Are there reasons why some members are not as able to keep as up-to-date with these issues as other members?

Why is political understanding included?

Most councillors are affiliated to a political party. Even if standing as independent, values form an important guide for the electorate in deciding how to vote. Political systems are at the heart of local government and to be successful, councillors must be able to understand the processes by which decisions are taken and influence exerted.

However, there is also an ongoing need for political skill with a small 'p'. Political skill means being able to influence and persuade others, and the ability to mobilise support to achieve objectives. Members must be able to work in political environments inside and outside the council.

Learning prompt for councillors: How do the political parties in your local authority work together? Is there the opportunity for cross-party working? In what way does this impact on the success of large council projects?

Using the Political Skills Framework

The PSF can be used in many different ways and in many different areas. As part of our reviews we have asked members and officers how they have used the PSF, these were some of the examples they gave:

- member induction
- training and development programmes
- self-review
- 360-review systems
- mentoring
- learning materials
- personal development plans
- development centres

For example, Irene MacDonald (a councillor and member peer) has used the PSF for new councillor induction: drawing up and delivering a programme of training linked to the PSF. She has also used it for work with political groups to stimulate discussion. Irene says this works very well because it encourages the political group to share their perceptions of the group's strengths and where they could develop further. This has led to action plans focusing on what is needed to achieve organisational development.

On the following pages we have provided examples of how the PSF has been used in councils as the basis for creating bespoke development activities for councillors.

Community Development

In Newham, Debbie Forde, Head of Democratic Services has been responsible for developing the Councillors' Community Leadership role. As part of the Council's community resilience agenda, the Mayor is devolving more powers to local councillors so that local services reflect, and respond to, local views. Community hubs – bringing people and services together will further ensure that councillors are seen as community leaders who have the mandate to work with residents to improve local areas. Bringing people and services together into Community Hubs will also allow residents to have a greater say over how services are run and create space for voluntary and private sector activities with community benefit.

Naturally, the development needs of councillors will also change and, using the PSF as a basis, Debbie has helped to identify the new skills and abilities they will need, including knowing how to identify opportunities to deliver services in new ways, and understanding how to work with those people commissioned to provide services. She identifies 'mapping' (i.e. knowing the different activities in the area) and 'Bringing together resources' (i.e. the ability to facilitate inter-group working between agencies like schools, children's centres, and G.P.s) as core skills that build on the traditional Local Leadership and Partnership Working skill sets from the PSF.
The councillor role is becoming increasingly one of a shaper and facilitator, with councillors proactively engaged in identifying and raising awareness of opportunities in their local community, and mobilizing people and groups within the locality to establish new services and businesses.

Personal Development Planning

Lisa Butterfill, HR and Development Manager at East Midlands Council, describes how they have been using the Political Skills Framework and Toolkit as a basis for personal development planning with members in the 46 councils they work with. Depending on the needs within a specific council, Lisa and her colleagues will use the PSF as a basis for discussing with members to scope what their role entails and, more broadly, how the priorities of various stakeholders (e.g., the authority, individual member and the community) might inform what is expected of councillors. She points out that some councils already have well-developed role profiles and systems to identify development needs, but the Political Skills Toolkit provides a user-friendly document to help members reflect on their own areas of strength and development needs and begin the discussion about how these might be met.

Lindsey Rogers, Manager of the Member Services Unit in Sandwell MBC has also used the PSF as a basis for one to one review sessions with councillors, to identify training needs and create personal development plans (PDPs). Her aim was create opportunities for members to reflect on and discuss how they see themselves in relation to the PSF skill areas.

Lindsey started to grow the process as part of Sandwell's move to achieve full Member Development Charter status in 2006. They incorporated a process of ongoing performance review and feedback by members for members, where each member had a PDP interview with another member nominated on the basis of their involvement in and experience of specific areas (e.g., scrutiny). All members conducting the PDP interviews received a half-day training session and every effort was made to make the paperwork for the process available to all and as user friendly as possible.

360-Review for the Next Generation Programme

As part of the Next Generation Programme for political leaders that has run for the past five years, participants have been engaging in a 360-feedback system based on the PSF that provides them with individual feedback about their own political style and how this compares with elected members more generally. Individuals complete an on-line questionnaire, describing their own political style and preferences, then requests anonymous feedback from officers, political colleagues and constituents who know them well. This feedback is then compared with the member's self-review, and the information is provided to the member in a confidential report detailing suggestions for development that can be used in whatever way the member chooses.

Key Role Effectiveness Criteria in Sheffield City Council

Louise Pellet, Member Development Officer describes how a cross party working group led on setting up a structured approach to Member Development in Sheffield City Council. They held workshops where the group consulted with a wide cross section of elected members to design key role descriptions based on an elected member's key tasks and the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to carry out those tasks. In a further workshop members used the Political Skills Framework to decide on key headings and effectiveness criteria for each role.

Sheffield City Council's role effectiveness framework was subsequently used to carry out personal development planning and incorporated into learning and development programmes such as 'Representing Our Diverse Communities'. This looked at the key effectiveness criteria for a community leader as part of a learning discussion, with the aim of understanding how to best reach out to diverse communities.

Using the PSF in Councillor Development

On the following pages we have provided some review forms that can be used by councillors to reflect on how they perform different aspects of their role related to the six political skill sets. It is designed for self-reflection and self-evaluation. Although councillors are asked to consider their own strengths and development areas, they can also use the forms to ask colleagues to provide them with feedback from their perspective.

It is important to remember that the councillor role is complex and there will be many different ways to perform it well. Councillors will have their own personal objectives, but this process can provide a way of helping councillors to reflect on their personal style and communicate this to others.

A Self-Reflecting Learning Tool

How do I see myself as a Ward Member?	
What do you think are your particular strengths? (E.g., what do you bring to the role of councillor that you think is particularly good?) • • •	**Prompts…** • *What sections of my community have I engaged with and canvassed opinion?* • *How have I looked for new ways of representing people?* • *How up-to-date am I on local concerns?* • *Would others see me as approachable?* • *Who have I built partnerships with?* • *When did I last act as a mediator?* • *How do I champion others' needs?*
Can you illustrate these strengths by writing down examples of things you think you have done really well over the past year?	
In which of these areas would you like to improve and how?	

How am I at Regulating & Monitoring?	
What do you think are your particular strengths in this area? (E.g., what do you bring to this area of your as a councillor that you think is particularly good?) • • •	**Prompts…** • *How well do I understand and act on my judicial role? (e.g., corporate parenting)* • *How do I chair meetings?* • *Do I know enough about legal process?* • *Are my judgements based on evidence?* • *Do I monitor others to ensure progress?* • *When have I sought feedback or looked for opportunities to learn?*
Can you illustrate these strengths by writing down examples of things you think you have done really well over the past year?	
Which of these areas would you like to improve and how?	

How am I at Scrutiny and Challenge?	
What do you think are your particular strengths in this area? (E.g., what do you bring to this area of your as a councillor that you think is particularly good?) • • • 	**Prompts…** • *How do I engage in scrutiny as an everyday part of my role?* • *What new areas have I identified for scrutiny?* • *How do I deal with new information?* • *Are my arguments always concise, meaningful & easily understood?* • *Am I fair, objective and rigorous when challenging processes or people?*
Can you illustrate these strengths by writing down examples of things you think you have done really well over the past year?	
Which of these areas would you like to improve and how?	

How am I at Communicating with others?	
What do you think are your particular strengths in this area? (E.g., what do you bring to this area of your as a councillor that you think is particularly good?) • • • 	**Prompts…** • *How regularly do I communicate with different sections of the community?* • *What different methods do I use to communicate?* • *How well do I listen and adapt to others?* • *Do I feel comfortable using technology to communicate with people?* • *Am I confident when speaking in public?* • *Do I feedback regularly to others to keep them informed?*
Can you illustrate these strengths by writing down examples of things you think you have done really well over the past year?	
Which of these areas would you like to improve and how?	

How am I at Working in Partnership?	
What do you think are your particular strengths in this area? (E.g., what do you bring to this area of your as a councillor that you think is particularly good?) • • •	**Prompts…** • *Do I have good relationships with colleagues and officers?* • *How do I help others build partnerships?* • *How do I support and empower others?* • *Do I value & include people from different backgrounds?* • *What networks and partnerships have I developed?* • *Do I stay calm & focused under pressure?*
Can you illustrate these strengths by writing down examples of things you think you have done really well over the past year?	
Which of these areas would you like to improve and how?	

How am I at Political Understanding?	
What do you think are your particular strengths in this area? (E.g., what do you bring to this area of your as a councillor that you think is particularly good?) • • •	**Prompts…** • *How have I promoted democracy & increased public engagement?* • *Are my values clear & reflected in what I do?* • *How do I build cohesion between members of my own group?* • *Can I work effectively in other political environments (e.g., outside council)?* • *How have I developed my political intelligence?* • *How well do I work with people with different views and values?*
Can you illustrate these strengths by writing down examples of things you think you have done really well over the past year?	
Which of these areas would you like to improve and how?	

Learning Resources

There is a growing array of learning resources available to councils and councillors and most local councils will already have many resources to draw upon. However, learning and development should be based on a needs analysis and the learning objectives clearly described. The PSF provides a basis for conducting individual and organisational learning needs analyses. Once the needs have been identified the types of development opportunities available might include:

Member handbooks
New councillor handbook
Induction training
Officer Briefings
Guidance Notes
E-Learning resource packs
Workshops/Seminars
External training & know-how
Work shadowing
Visits to other councils
Mentoring & Coaching
Training
Learning Needs Analysis
360-Degree Review

Rotherham's Training Map

The training map created by Rotherham Council is an example of best practice. It identifies and maps relevant training courses, learning resources and information sources (e.g., e-learning materials) for five of the PSF skill sets. You may like to consider how resources within your own council could be included here.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP	
• Freedom of Information (policy, elected member briefing note & e-learning) • Data Protection (policy & practice guidelines) • The Influential Councillor (audio CD)	• Information management – working smarter (e-learning) • Maths skills manual (general reference) • Negotiation skills (e-learning
PARTNERSHIP WORKING	
• Corporate plan (general reference) • Building partnerships (e-learning) • Member / officer protocol (general reference) • Disability discrimination (e-learning)	• Diversity handbook (practice guidance) • Drugs awareness – CADES (course) • Valuing Diversity (course) • Managing Time for better results (e-learning)
SCRUTINY & CHALLENGE	
• Benchmarking (Practice Guidelines) • Performance information standard (practice guidelines)The	

REGULATING & MONITORING

- Constitution (practice guidelines)
- The Council's report making & decision making guide
- Decision making & problem solving (e-learning)
- Management learning guides (e-learning)
- The skills of chairing meetings (Audio CD)

- Planning Approval – Elected Members (e-learning)
- Project management - Prince2 (e-learning)
- Project management – 'The fundamentals' (e-learning)
- Project management – to support improvement (practice guidelines)

COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

- A-Z of services (general reference)
- Centrex telephone users' guide (practice guidelines)
- Coping with a hostile and aggressive situations (audio CD)
- Email & the internet (on-line)
- Facilitation skills (training course)
- Glossaries of acronyms and terms (general reference)
- I T training calendar (training courses)
- Media release (practice guidelines)
- Meeting skills (e-learning)
- Meeting skills – organising (e-learning)

- Presentation skills (e-learning & course)
- Protocol for Mayoral parties at civic functions (guidelines)
- Sign language – British (e-learning)
- Style guide – Corporate (practice guidelines)
- Presentation & speaking skills (training course)
- Effective use of English (practice guidelines)
- Effective business writing (training course)
- Writing reports (e-learning)
- Making the speech (audio CD)

Over to You

This tool-kit is a starting point. It can be used with new members to help them understand their roles as well as a base for member reviews and personal development planning. We encourage you to innovate and adapt the materials for your own use. Our ultimate aim is to support and enhance the performance of local councillors in what can be a complex and isolated role.

Useful Contacts - update

Councillor development contacts in:

Local Government Group

Political Mentoring Toolkit - free to download from:
http://www.city.ac.uk/interdisciplinary-city/centre-for-performance-at-work/research/publications/political-mentoring-toolkit

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