

# Elected Member Engagement Strategy

2012-2014



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## Version control – complete as appropriate

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Version Number	Purpose/Change	Author	Date
<b>0.1</b>	Initial draft – to line manager	Victoria Cook, Graduate Trainee	12/09/2012
<b>0.2</b>	Consultation draft – Corporate Affairs Portfolio Meeting		13/09/2012
<b>0.3</b>	Consultation draft to Cabinet		28/11/2012
<b>1.0</b>	Final Version to Full Council		12/12/2012

# Welcome to Elected Member Engagement Strategy

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I am very pleased to welcome to you our Elected Member Engagement Strategy. Engagement is a key priority for Bury Council; we are committed to greater openness and transparency in decision making and better levels of engagement with our elected members, employees, trade unions, customers and residents. We will continue to implement a range of strategies to positively impact upon elected member engagement levels. Employee commitment alone cannot engage elected members; party leaders have a key role in engaging their groups and individuals have a role in supporting both their leader and their fellow councillors.

This strategy sets out how we will create a culture which encourages member engagement and allows engaged members to thrive in order to enable them to have a key role in "shaping and maintaining a prosperous, sustainable Bury that is fit for the future".



Councillor John Smith

Deputy Leader and Corporate Affairs

# 1: The Business Case

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Bury Council recognises that developing engaged members is critical to the achievement of our corporate vision and outcomes. All members are working towards the delivery of the Bury Vision. Elected members have a key role in "leading, shaping and maintaining a prosperous, sustainable Bury that is fit for the future." Elected members cannot deliver the Bury outcomes of reducing poverty and its effects, supporting vulnerable residents and making Bury a better place to live if they are not engaged with the council, its vision and values.

Bury defines elected member engagement as a positive attitude held by the elected member towards the council and its values. We would expect an engaged elected member to:

- Be committed to Bury Council's vision and values;
- Take a proactive lead in shaping their community;
- Feel positive when they do a good job;
- Keep themselves informed of national policy developments and social changes and their application at a local level.

The council recognises that there are positive outcomes of engagement for the organisation, individual members, the borough and residents. Engaged elected members are more likely to be community cohesion champions, communicate effectively with residents, engage with new technologies and have a long-term strategy for their ward to tackle complex issues. On a personal level, engaged elected members enjoy greater levels of wellbeing and are more likely to feel that their work is manageable and sustainable. It is therefore a key priority for the council to ensure that elected members are engaged.

# 2: Engagement

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There are three key facets to elected member engagement:

1. Intellectual engagement:

Members need to know about national policy developments and social changes and their application in Bury.

2. Affective engagement:

Members need to feel positive about doing a good job.

3. Social engagement:

Members need to take a proactive lead in shaping their community.

## Engagement Drivers

The Council recognises that the following drivers contribute to engagement:

- Meaningfulness of Role
- Voice
- Leadership Commitment and Vision
- Supportive Environment
- Person Role Fit
- Leadership Style

The Strategy considers each factor in turn in terms of to how Bury can plan to increase engagement in members, both from a member and an officer perspective.

## Meaningfulness of Role

This is considered to be the most important driver of engagement generally and is especially true for elected members. Most elected members become engaged with the democratic process because they believe it is important to contribute to society and they derive satisfaction from that. Party leaders also contribute to this by matching members' skills and abilities with appropriate cabinet portfolios, spokesperson responsibilities or membership of appropriate committees. It needs to be clear to elected members how their role links to the council's outcomes and this will increase engagement levels. Employees can support this through effective new member induction which clearly demonstrates how members both shape and meet the council's outcomes.

## **Voice**

Elected members have multiple opportunities by virtue of their role to express their opinions and to shape policy development and this will contribute positively to their levels of engagement. From an officer perspective, “voice” can be supported by taking councillors’ issues and complaints seriously, giving feedback in a timely manner and taking on board suggestions from councillors. The personal development plan process will also enable councillors to have a voice in terms of the training they are receiving as well as providing an opportunity to raise any other issues regarding the council.

## **Leadership Commitment and Vision**

The Leader of the Council, the Cabinet and the leaders of the opposition parties have the responsibility to shape the vision of the council and communicate this to councillors. From an employee’s perspective, it is the role of the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that the vision of the leader is communicated to all employees in order that they may support councillors in the delivery of that to the best of their ability.

## **Supportive Environment**

There are two environments in which Councillor's work; the first is the political work environment which consists of their group, wards and relationships with other councillors and the second is the local authority work environment. It is not the remit of council employees to engage in the political sphere. However, in the local authority context, employees can provide a supportive work environment by working cooperatively with councillors. This includes utilising their political awareness to ensure that councillors are aware of all relevant factors before making decisions and that employees send decisions to Cabinet/Full Council at an appropriate time in the political cycle; giving due consideration to both the local and national political context.

## **Person Role Fit**

Party leaders have a role in ensuring that elected members are matched to appropriate positions in the council, drawing on the full spectrum of their life experience to date as well as their interests, in consultation with the members themselves.

The council’s People Strategy and Organisational Development Team will provide councillors with development opportunities to enable them to operate effectively in their role as community figureheads and elected members will be actively encouraged to develop skills appropriate to their role. This will be done through the Elected Member Development Strategy and the prioritisation of elected member development days. Any skill gaps will be identified through the personal development plan process. Members can then work towards meeting those training needs.

## Leadership Style

This engagement factor is influenced by how the leaders of the political parties choose to operate within their group context. Key features of leadership styles which encourage a high level of engagement are:

- Coaching leadership styles that empower councillors.
- Giving elected members an opportunity to give their opinions/contributions to policy development and decisions.
- Including elected members as much as possible in the decision making process.
- Ensuring clear alignment between the work the council is undertaking and the values that have been agreed.
- Having a degree of flexibility for elected members in the way they choose to interact within their ward.

# 3: Measuring our success

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The three key facets of elected member development will be used as a framework for measuring success in member engagement:

- 1) Intellectual Engagement
- 2) Affective Engagement
- 3) Social Engagement

## 1) Intellectual Engagement

***"Members need to be informed of national policy developments and social changes and their application in Bury."***

We will know when we are successful in encouraging member engagement in this area when:

- A high percentage of members attend briefings on national developments such as localism.
- Employees approach members for advice on the application of national issues within the Bury context because of the members' proactive involvement in raising awareness.
- Members suggest areas for training and development because they realise the importance of councillors/employees having awareness of these issues.

## 2) Affective Engagement

***"Members need to feel positive about doing a good job."***

We will know when we are successful in encouraging member engagement in this area when:

- Members consistently feel confident in their role as elected members as evidenced by their personal development plans.
- There is a public perception of members making a positive contribution in their wards as evidenced in Township Forum meetings.
- Members feel that their workload is manageable as evidenced through their Personal Development Plan and evaluation of training.

## 3) Social Engagement:

***"Members need to take a proactive lead in shaping their community."***

We will know when we are successful in encouraging member engagement in this area when:

- Members have an excellent understanding of the issues facing their wards and want to proactively tackle them as evidenced through their Personal Development Plans.
- Members are known in their communities as evidenced by attendance at Township Forums and related events.



# Contact us

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For further information about the Elected Member Engagement Strategy please contact Tracy Johnson:

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