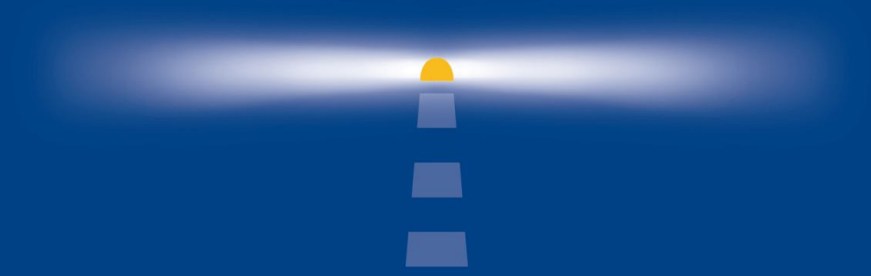

Leadership Centre for local government

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# Manifesto for a modern local politics
# 21st Century Councillor

- New
- Politically and locally driven
- Reconnecting politicians with people

A 21st Century councillor is one who is a supported, confident, talented and professional community leader.
One who understands but can also transform their place. One who can think strategically, as well as be informed and inspired by their local roots.

## 8 Challenges for the new Century

- 1. Political parties are voluntary associations who reach out to the community and seek to engage people in their work

## 1. Radical reform of the recruitment approach for politicians

- Roll out of www.beacouncillor.org.uk
- All-party group sign-up
- Promoting talented and effective members
- Nationwide events
- 2010 conference in London for all candidates
- Both a generic promotion and within party work

## 2. Champions of place and people, not of processes and organisations

- Bring alive the strategic leadership of place role
- Civic Pride as the core aspiration
- Stretching across all provision of service

## 3. Cabinet member for your ward

- Bring alive the role of the local frontline councillor as a role of intrinsic value in its own right

## 4. Radically reinvent scrutiny

- The champion of the **individual**
- The test of **outcome**
- The driver of **value for money** for the tax payer

## 5. From speeches to conversations

- A different way of communicating with and engaging citizens
- Storytellers who create cohesions and commitment for change

## 6. Working in an age of limited budgets

- No return to the ‘golden age’ until 2032
- So **efficiency** no longer sufficient
- **Effectiveness** using less not more

## 7. Changing the institutions to match 21st century expectations

- Reworking the council system so it supports elected members in the new roles rather than perpetuating them in the old ones

## 8. Politicians should be politicians not managers

- Understand and celebrate the difference between the two roles

# 21st Century Councillor

- Currently projects are:

✓ Durham
✓ Hackney
✓ Herefordshire
✓ Kirklees
✓ Leicestershire
✓ Liverpool
✓ Slough
✓ Sutton
✓ Westminster
✓ Swindon
✓ Oldham
✓ Hull

## Case study 1: Liverpool Democracy Commission

- Ground breaking Commission set up to examine the health of Liverpool's democracy

- Membership from local government, parliament, voluntary and business sectors, chaired by Vice Chancellor of Liverpool John Moores University

- Objectives:

1. To raise the game on expectations of Liverpool's political class
2. To define the strategic and local role for the ward councillor
3. To build grassroots confidence in the talent of and effectiveness of political representatives

## What Liverpool hopes to achieve...

- Training and support
- Recruitment
- Barriers to entry
- Role of non-executive members
- Scrutiny
- Devolving budgets
- Empowering local decision making
- Working with partners

*Politicians in Liverpool need to work together to deliver a 'place' that meets the high expectations of the people of Liverpool. This will demonstrate how to put* ***leadership of place*** *into practice.*

## Case study 2: How to win the hearts and minds of Herefordshire

- In Herefordshire we are going to run four local events with councillors and partners and use these to find new ways to:

1. Listen to local people
2. Develop political skills and awareness
3. Develop local and community level scrutiny
4. Support confident community leaders

*Scrutiny is no longer about internal cross-checking of the bureaucracy – it's about finding constructive and complementary ways to scrutinise council activities so they are accountable to residents.*

## Case study 3: Kirklees

- Understanding the barriers
- Improving support
- Better communication, information and intelligence
- Understanding and valuing the role of councillor
- Working more effectively with councillors

*Are we providing the right amount of targeted information at ward level to every member? The value to us of the front line councillor is in their understanding of, inspiring and working with their community. We want to maximise those opportunities…*

## Kirklees plan of action

- Build an evidence base about ex-members' experience and feelings about being on the council
- Talk to, and work with, local employers about the value in having an elected councillor as a work colleague
- Build political awareness into the workings of the council and staff
- Adapt knowledge systems to provide tailored information to elected members
- Explore and exploit current developments in the web, software and social networking to maximise conversations and exchange of information within Kirklees

## Who is involved?

- The Leadership Centre is working with the national parties, political consultants, and local authorities, to develop the work packages
- On January 14 Hazel Blears MP announced her department's financial support and her personal interest in the work being done by exemplar authorities
- Capital Ambition's board agreed later that month to add significant funding to the three councils in London taking part (Hackney, Sutton, Westminster)
- Other RIEPs are adding their regional support to ensure there is a regional dimension and context value

## But we need to do more

- Present focus on the “political class” still has more to run
- Assume that local government could be next in line for media focus
- But crisis is also opportunity

## Opportunity

- Local government now in the vanguard of extending the reach to engage people in the political process (Be A Councillor)
- And also radically reworking the role of the local politician (21st Century Councillor)

## Next Steps

- We need to
- raise the profile
- raise the bar
- And use this as central to the argument about a new localism