



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – 5TH MARCH 2014

SUBJECT: MEMBER TRAINING AND SUPPORT

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To further strengthen the Council's corporate governance framework by formalising and recommending improvements to Members' training and support arrangements.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report proposes improvements to the current Members' training and support arrangements by recommending the implementation of a new scheme made up of three categories; namely, Mandatory, Recommended Training and Requested Training and a suite of training courses under these headings.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The report assists in the implementation of the Council's Governance Improvement Action Plan and makes recommendations to improve Members training and support arrangements.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Council has long since recognised the importance of supporting Members' many and varied roles with a programme of targeted training and development. Indeed, the Council was the first in Wales to be awarded the WLGA's Wales Charter for Member Support and Development in 2007.
- 4.2 Recent reviews have put particular emphasis on the role of Members in performing their scrutiny and monitoring role including the continued development needed to undertake these roles effectively. Other key Member roles such as Planning, Licensing, Audit, Standards, Appointments and Appeals etc are equally important but require different skill sets and expertise.
- 4.3 National agencies such as the Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Government promote the need to provide training and development, including the general induction training at the beginning of each administration, to equip Members with the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their duties effectively. This is then supplemented by more specialist training during the term of a Council depending on Members individual roles, responsibilities and needs.

- 4.4 The Action Plan which the Council prepared in response to the Wales Audit Office Report in the Public Interest contained recommendations relating to the following training matters:
- All Members were required to complete training in the Code of Conduct as soon as possible and within 3 months following each election or by election.
 - Member induction training needs are identified and delivered before the first meeting of any new committee (or similar forum).
 - Specific training is identified annually for each committee (or other similar forums) and delivered on a 6 monthly basis.
- 4.5 This report addresses the implementation of the above recommendations along with further improvements which will help in ensuring Members have the necessary subject knowledge to properly discharge their internal council committee (or other similar forums) roles through continuous learning opportunities.
- 4.6 Being a councillor requires the performance of many different roles, for example:
- 4.7 **Decision Maker** - Many Members have a decision making role within one or a number of different settings e.g. as a member of the Cabinet or various committees (Planning, Licensing Audit, Standards, Appointments and Appeals etc.), school governor or representative on a joint committee or member of a board on an outside body.
- 4.8 **Scrutineer** - All Members other than Cabinet Members have membership of one or more scrutiny committees. In addition, the Council's Audit, Democratic Services and Standards Committees can also be considered to have a scrutiny function as they exercise a challenge role. The importance of scrutiny as a key councillor function has recently been underlined by the WAO All Wales Scrutiny Improvement Study entitled 'Good Scrutiny: Good Question?' and the Welsh Government's additional legislative requirements to strengthen the role of scrutiny, including the continued policy emphasis on scrutiny being a positive driver in improving both council and other local public services.
- 4.9 **Community Leader and Local Politician** - This role is the most public facing and varied role which can include working with opposing groups, representing individuals, challenging decisions made by others, working with a variety of voluntary, business and public service provider etc. It can require councillors to understand and contribute to the political dynamic of a political group and work with other politicians representing different political parties.
- 4.10 The responsibilities of a modern councillor are ever more demanding, especially in these difficult economic times. They require a broad suite of personal skills and competencies to deliver a wide range of roles, knowledge of numerous subject areas and the ability to contribute in a variety of settings. For a number of years the Council has provided committee specific training to Members who serve on its regulatory committees, the Appointments Committee and Appeals Panel, however, to date this training has not been mandatory. This type of training assists Members to make decisions that are objective, compliant with legal and procedural considerations and capable of withstanding challenge.

The Training and Development Framework

- 4.11 Whilst each councillor role requires a different blend of skills, knowledge and competencies, a formal training and development framework for Members would provide a consistent process for identifying and delivering mandatory and non mandatory training based on Members individual roles. The following framework of training and development is suggested which would create three distinct categories:
- a. **Mandatory Training** – Certain training associated with Members' statutory responsibilities, Audit Committee and regulatory committee membership and committees with personnel functions are proposed as mandatory to ensure all councillors have the necessary knowledge to enable them to operate within the Council's Code of Conduct, have an understanding of the Council's constitution, undertake common essential duties and, where appropriate, discharge regulatory or personnel committee functions.

- b. Recommended Training – This type of training is considered as important whilst recognising that Members have different levels of experience and knowledge of the councillor role. The amount of training commitment required will depend on individual Members specific committee roles.
- c. Requested Training – This type of training would be identified by individual Members as part of the councillor training needs analysis undertaken every 2 years. It is similar to Recommended Training in being considered helpful but not compulsory.

Mandatory Induction Training

- 4.12 The Induction Training will be delivered within the first month of a new Council. Mandatory Induction training is made up of two 2½ hour modules held in the daytime and repeated in the evening:

Module 1 - Governance

- Code of Conduct – Understanding the Council's Code of Conduct and the role of the Council's Standards Committee and Public Service Ombudsman.
- The Council's Constitution – Understanding the key procedures for the operation of full Council and Council Committees.
- Electronic Voting and Webcasting – A guide to the operation of the Council's electronic voting system installed in the Council Chamber and to inform Members of the operation of webcasting of Council meetings.

Module 2 - Equalities and Information Management

- Information Management and Data Protection - Requirements of data protection legislation, awareness required to handle all personal information safely and freedom of information legal obligations.
- Equalities and Welsh Language – To provide Members with an overview of the Council's Equalities and Welsh Language obligations.

Mandatory Audit, Regulatory and Personnel Committee Training

- 4.13 The Council has an Audit Committee, 3 regulatory and 3 personnel related committees, namely:

- a. Audit Committee
- b. Planning Committee
- c. Licensing Committee
- d. Rights of Way Cabinet Committee
- e. Pension and Compensation Committee
- f. Appointments and Appeals
- g. Investigating and Disciplinary Committee

- 4.14 It is proposed that Members serving on these committees receive mandatory training at least (it may be more if there are changes to legislation) twice per Council term to ensure that they understand the role of the committee, any considerations to be taken into account before coming to a decision and any appeals processes. Membership of these committees will be dependant on Members undertaking the mandatory training. Should a Member fail to undertake any mandatory training their membership will automatically cease. The twice council term training requirement will be made up of two 2½ hour training modules for each committee.

- 4.15 As the above mandatory training subjects are considered essential, feedback about the quality and usefulness of the training will be reported to the Democratic Services Committee and any non attendance will be reported to the Standards Committee. Members who fail to attend the mandatory training will be required to attend a meeting of the Standards Committee to explain their absence to the Committee. It will be a matter for the Standards Committee to consider what course of action it considers appropriate but could result in a Member being censured.

Recommended Induction Training

- 4.16 This element of Induction Training will be delivered within the first month of a new Council and will focus on key Councillor roles. The recommended Induction Training can be delivered as a single 1 day module, held on a weekday and repeated on a weekend to ensure all Members can attend regardless of other responsibilities. It will assist Members understand their role as a local representative, effective committee member and political leader.

The Councillor Role

- Local Leadership – Role of the ward councillor, being an advocate for stakeholders and providing effective political leadership in the community.
- Partnership working – Understanding the councillor role and being an effective Member on partnerships and outside bodies.
- Communication Skills – Dealing constructively with the public and press, portraying a positive self image and skills for public speaking and social media.
- Political Understanding – Creating and maintaining positive Member/Officer relationships. Exploring councillors' unique roles - political activist, open minded decision maker and unbiased scrutineer.
- Scrutiny and Challenge – The benefits of scrutiny and keys skills for successful scrutiny and policy development.
- Regulating and Monitoring – Members responsibilities in the Council's governance framework to include: standards committee, monitoring performance of Council services, risk management and budget monitoring.

Recommended Training

- 4.17 Recommended training will support Councillors in their various committee roles. The amount of training any Member should attend will depend on an individual's specific committee roles. The training will focus on the skills, knowledge and competencies required for each committee role. For instance, serving as a Cabinet Member may require a different skill set from being Chair of the Audit Committee. Similarly, a Scrutiny Member role may differ considerably from a Planning Committee Member role. Each of the Committee Role Skills training requirements can be delivered in a half day. A full list of identified committee roles are given below:

Recommended Training	Position	Proposed Frequency
Chairing Skills	Chairs of Scrutiny, Audit, Planning, Licensing, Democratic Services and SDAP Committees. Chairs of Town Centre Management Groups etc	Twice per Council term
Role and Responsibilities of Cabinet Members	Cabinet Members	Twice per Council term
Performance Reviews	All Senior Salary Holders responsible for undertaking annual Performance Reviews	Twice per Council term
Scrutiny Skills	Scrutiny Committee Members	Twice per Council term
Committee Skills, Knowledge and competencies	All Members of each Council Committee/Panel etc	Annually. To be delivered before the first meeting of each Committee or Panel immediately after the Council's Annual General Meeting. Likely to last approx half an hour.

Update to legislation, case law, national policies and funding etc.	Members of Committees and Panels etc listed in Appendix 1	Twice per annum. To be delivered before the start of a committee meeting. Likely to last approx half an hour.
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Requested Training

- 4.18 There is a well established process in place for identifying Members individual training needs. A training needs questionnaire is circulated to each member every two years which is designed to identify personal skills and knowledge training and development opportunities. A planned training programme is developed based on the outcome of the returned questionnaires. This process will continue to run concurrently with the proposed Training and Development Framework outlined above.

Responsibilities and Publication

- 4.19 Democratic Services will manage the members training programme and in partnership with the Democratic Services Committee, Committee Chairs, the relevant Director and Heads of Service.
- 4.20 The training programme will be presented to Democratic Services Committee and published in May each year. The training offered and Members attendance will be published annually as part of each Members' Annual Report.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no specific equalities implications arising as a result of this report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 It is expected that the Mandatory Induction Training will be delivered by officers and cost £1,000 per Council term. It is envisaged that the Mandatory Regulatory Committee Training will be provided by specialist trainers at a cost of £5,000 per council term. It is envisaged that Mandatory Personnel Training will be provided by officers, with the exception of training for the Investigating and Disciplinary Committee. Training for this committee will be provided by external lawyers and is estimated at £1,000 per Council term. Officers can absorb the time required to develop and deliver the training as part of their existing duties. The Recommended Training will be delivered by either officers or specialist trainers. Officers can absorb the time required to develop and deliver the training as part of their existing duties and specialist trainers are estimated to cost £6,000 per Council term. It is expected that for 2013/14 Requested Training will cost £3,500 and this budget provision would continue to be provided going forward.
- 6.2 The additional costs associated with training can be met from the Council's existing Members' budget provision.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The recommendations contained in this report will result in additional tasks for Democratic Services staff. A Democratic Services Officer post was created in 2012 and this post will provide the capacity required to fulfil the additional workload.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 There are no consultation responses not contained in the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Members recommend to full Council:

- a. The introduction of Mandatory Induction, Regulatory, Audit and Personnel Committee Training.
- b. Membership of Regulatory, Audit and Personnel Committees is dependant on attending Mandatory Training.
- c. The introduction of Recommended Training.
- d. Members commit to participating in appropriate Recommended Training and completing a Training Needs Analysis undertaken every 2 years.
- e. That those who do not attend Mandatory Training be reported to the Standards Committee.

9.2 Note that all training offered and/or accepted be published as part of Members' Annual Reports.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 To further strengthen the Council's corporate governance framework by providing additional support for Members.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – List of Committees and Panels to receive update training on a six monthly basis.