



SCRUTINY LEADERSHIP GROUP – 27TH JULY 2017

SUBJECT: SCRUTINY TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

REPORT BY: ACTING HEAD OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report outlines scrutiny training practice at Caerphilly County Borough Council and presents various options for future scrutiny training delivery following the Local Government Election 2017.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Wales Audit Office (WAO) in its 'Good Scrutiny? Good Question?' improvement study in May 2014 recognised the importance of providing training and support to Councillors in their recommendation R2 to 'ensure that scrutiny members and specifically scrutiny chairs, receive training and support to fully equip them with the skills required to undertake effective scrutiny' and placed the onus for this provision on Councils, Welsh Government and Welsh Local Government Association as responsible partners. This report outlines the training provided to Councillors to support their role as scrutineers and presents some preliminary training options for returning Members continued personnel development together with introductory level sessions for newly elected Members taking on the scrutiny role for the first time.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 Member training and development is required by the Local Government Act 2000, Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011 and Caerphilly County Borough Council Member Development Strategy 2015/18. By ensuring that decision makers are held to account the scrutiny function is vital to good government, assisting in the development and improvement of the Council's policies and services. Scrutiny training will therefore contribute to the following Well-being Goals within the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act (Wales) 2016 as it prepares Councillors for their role as scrutineers where they will be called upon to make recommendations that impact on future generations:

A prosperous Wales

A resilient Wales

A healthier Wales

A more equal Wales

A Wales of cohesive communities

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

A globally responsible Wales

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Caerphilly already has a well-established and extensive programme of Member Support and Development which was further enhanced as part of the Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan and Member Development Protocol. The Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan recommended certain training for Scrutiny Committee Members to improve the critical friend challenge and impact of scrutiny and the Member Development Protocol recommended a programme of mandatory, recommended and requested training for all Members.
- 4.2 During November 2013 through to March 2014 a series of specifically tailored scrutiny training sessions were held aimed at developing questioning and listening skills, the effectiveness of pre-meetings and chairing skills. The target attendance levels for the sessions were set at 90% for the first two modules and 100% for the chairing skills module and these were achieved by offering additional opportunities following on from the original roll-out. The overall feedback on the facilitator Mr D. McGrath of LinkUK Limited was extremely positive with between 89%-100% of Members that attended the training rating it as very useful to their role.
- 4.3 Comments arising from the feedback workshops on scrutiny development identified areas of training that Members felt required further consideration and these included the need for Cabinet Members to receive training on their role in scrutiny, more strategically focused training on public speaking and finance training. It is worth noting that Public Speaking (4th April 2016), Roles and Responsibilities of Cabinet Members (30th March 2015), Listening and Question Skills for Cabinet Members (7th July 2016) and Finance (16th May 2016) training modules were delivered during 2015/16.
- 4.4 The Member Development Protocol which was agreed by Council on the 22nd of April 2014 has been in place for last three years and implemented a programme of mandatory, recommended and requested training (based on Members Training Analysis questionnaire). The programme has been well supported by Members with regular updates on its progress presented to the Democratic Services Committee. The annual refresher training sessions have assisted new scrutiny committee Members appointed at the AGM to understand their committee's terms of reference and have been accompanied by 6 monthly update training sessions, that have ensure that Members are kept up to date on any relevant legislative changes, such as the recent training on the implications for scrutiny of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.
- 4.5 The Senior Councillor Development Programme was piloted during 2015/16 was also well received by Councillors and following a submission to the WLGA received a Good Practice and Innovation Award. The programme sought to enhance Members skills at a strategic level embedding a variety of competencies that would be transferable to and be of benefit for those in or aspiring to senior office or wishing to undertake a more prominent scrutiny role.
- 4.6 Looking forward to post Local Government Elections the Members Induction Programme will start the development and support process with a series of all Member Seminars (some of which will be mandatory) and 'introduction to' committee sessions, which will be held an hour before the formal scrutiny committee meeting. These sessions will be delivered at a basic level in order to accommodate newly elected Members taking on the scrutiny role for the first time.

Depending on the feedback from the induction 'introduction to' sessions should Councillors identify any specific areas of scrutiny they would like further training to concentrate on, there will be an opportunity to incorporate these topics into the forthcoming training needs analysis questionnaire which can be rolled out with a focus on the role of overview and scrutiny.

After induction the aforementioned training needs questionnaire will be compiled within which, for the first time, we now hope to include a section that will give Members the opportunity to identify any key skills or competencies they already possess or any specific areas they would like to develop. This skills baseline audit will allow us to improve Member support and enable us to appropriately highlight development opportunities as they come forward and we would

welcome the Scrutiny Leadership's comments on this new approach. As in previous years, the questionnaire will ask Members to choose from a variety of training module topics which will be then be prioritised so that a responsive schedule of training can be devised. Councillors will also be asked to identify their preferred start times for meetings and training and offered a choice of delivery methods (facilitator, seminar and e-learning or distance learning options).

At this time we envisage that Charing Skills at an introductory and advanced level will be offered using both facilitator and e-learning resources with the advanced level training specifically targeted to scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs. Questioning and listening skills and holding effective pre-meetings will also be included as an option and again this training will be specifically targeted at scrutiny committee Members. In this way we hope to ensure that scrutiny have received all the training they require in order to maintain the quality achieved through the Scrutiny Improvement Plan continues going forward.

- 4.7 We are also mindful that the Welsh Government's White Paper 'Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed' will have major implications in terms of regional working and the governance mechanisms required to underpin them. The Councillor role will be at the centre of this new decision making process in terms of accountability and scrutiny and we fully appreciate that additional training will be required and will need to be specifically tailored to assist Members with regional functions.

5. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 5.1 This report contributes to the Well-being Goals as set out in Links to Strategy above. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act in that the training of scrutiny committee Members better prepares them in their role as scrutineers, to hold decision makers to account and by acting as a critical friend ensure that the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the community is recognised and the long term outcomes of a decision and its positive or negative impacts on future generations, long term community resilience and economic, environmental and social capital are considered.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report is for information purposes only, so the Council's full Equalities Impact Assessment process does not need to be applied.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no personnel implications as a result of this report.

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 There are no consultations that have not been included in the report

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The Scrutiny Leadership Group note the content of the report and provide comments on the proposal to include a Councillor skills audit within the next training needs analysis questionnaire.

11. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 To inform the Scrutiny Leadership Group on past and future scrutiny training and development opportunities.

12. STATUTORY POWER

- 12.1 Local Government Act 2000, Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011 and Caerphilly County Borough Council Member Development Strategy 2015/18.

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Background Papers:

Scrutiny Improvement Action Plan – Member Training (Democratic Services Committee – 13th April 2014)

Member Training and Support Programme (Democratic Services Committee – 21st September 2016)