

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

13 JULY 2017

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

ACHIEVING THE WELSH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (WLGA) CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 To consider proposals for this Authority to achieve the WLGA Charter for Member Support & Development.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The support provided by the authority to Elected Members assists in the achievement of all Corporate Priorities.

3. Background.

3.1 What is the Charter?

- 3.1.1 Elected Members today face increasing challenges. Under the modernisation agenda, there are heightened expectations on them to undertake a diversity of roles ranging from that of community leader to their special responsibilities within the Council. Throughout Wales, authorities are striving to provide the best possible support for their members to enable them to meet these challenges. This takes the form of skill and knowledge development, support facilities, and support services.

- 3.1.2 The Welsh Local Government Association has a long history of working with authorities to help them develop these activities. To provide structure to the national programme of support, the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development was developed collaboratively by the Association, members representing each of the political groups and member support officers from each authority.

- 3.2 The Charter aims to provide a broad framework for local planning, self-assessment, action and review together with networking and comparison amongst authorities and the sharing of good and innovative practice. Its wide adoption has raised the overall amount and standard of support given to members in Wales.

- 3.2.1 There are 3 levels of award with each level normally requiring to be achieved before progressing to the next level:

1. (Standard) Charter Award
2. Advanced Charter Award

- 3.2.2 The following local authorities currently hold the Charter and Advanced Charter awards:

(Standard) Charter Level

1. Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
2. Snowdonia National Park Authority
3. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
4. Caerphilly County Borough Council (Renewed)
5. Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (Renewed)
6. Caerphilly County Borough Council
7. Powys County Council

Advanced Charter Level

8. Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
9. Brecon Beacons National Park Authority

3.2.3 The Charter is awarded for a period of three years after which an authority is able to relinquish, maintain or improve its charter status. There is no requirement to wait the full 3 year period between achieving the (Standard) Charter Award before progressing to the Advanced Charter Level.

3.3 The Good Practice and Innovation Award for Member Support and Development is an award which seeks to recognise and share excellent or innovative practice in member support and development. The award aims to recognise activities that have demonstrably improved practice in Wales. The following Authorities achieved the Good Practice and Innovation Award:

- Caerphilly County Borough Council - 2016
- Bridgend County Borough Council - 2013
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council - 2013

3.4 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 introduced legislative requirements for corporate governance and member support and development. Therefore, the Charter criteria were further developed to enhance and enable these legal requirements.

3.4.1 The assessment for each award has been updated as follows:

3.4.2 The (Standard) **Charter Award** is a self assessment undertaken by the Authority, documented and submitted to the WLGA, who will review the submission and determine whether to make the award. The (Standard) Charter Award is designed to establish that an essential range of support and development arrangements are in place, monitored and recorded.

3.4.3 The **Advanced Charter** is a further self assessment, documented and submitted to the WLGA in the same way as the (Standard) Charter Award submission. It is further underpinned by a peer assessment including a site visit undertaken by officers, and member peers from Wales and England. The Advanced Charter is designed to recognise that the arrangements required for the Charter are working effectively.

4. Current situation / proposal.

4.1 Bridgend County Borough Council was awarded the WLGA (Standard) Charter Award in 2010. The Authority's charter status was not renewed in 2013 but following the Local Government Elections it is considered relevant to request the views on renewal from the new administration. There are a number of factors which should be considered when determining which option is most appropriate for this Authority to undertake in respect of the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development.

4.2 Newly Elected Members




4.2.1 At the Local Government Elections in 2017, 29 new councillors were elected to Bridgend County Borough Council. This is a significant number of new members (approximately 54%) who initially may have had a very limited knowledge of the local authority or their role as a councillor.

4.3 Introduction of the Local Government (Wales) 2011 Measure

4.3.1 Since Bridgend's successful achievement of the (Standard) Charter Award the Local Government (Wales) Measure has been introduced which further enhanced the support and development of Elected Members. This was then reflected in the criteria for the achievement of the WLGA Charter. For example, the Measure requires Personal Development Reviews to be provided to members on request. The Charter requires members to be provided with role descriptions which support the Personal Development Reviews.

4.4 Meeting the Requirements

4.4.1 The full criteria for the achievement of the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development is at Standard and Advanced level shown at **Appendix 1**. An assessment has been undertaken for each of the main criteria that form the award and have been categorised as follows:

Green		-	Few or minimal changes to established processes
Amber		-	Some changes with an element of significant change to existing processes and activities
Red		-	Significant change to existing processes and activities or the introduction of new processes or activities

4.4.2 The following table shows the initial assessment of the implications of achieving the Charter at Standard level:

	Topic	Standard	Clarification	Status
A1	Members are supported with role descriptions.	Role descriptions are adopted for the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader • Deputy Leader • Cabinet Members • Scrutiny members • Scrutiny Chairs • Scrutiny Co-optees 	What does adopted mean? Role descriptions exist and have been formally adopted for all the roles listed. There is no need at this level for	Amber

	Topic	Standard	Clarification	Status
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs of statutory committees • Chairs of area committees • Chair of the Audit Committee • Members of Audit Committee • Chair of Democratic Services • Member of Democratic Services • Ward Member, including community leadership and case work • Chair of Standards committee • Member of Standards Committee • Leader of the Opposition • Member Champion <p>Guidance is provided to members on their role on outside bodies.</p>	<p>members to evidence that they perform the roles outlined in the descriptions but they should understand what their role is and what is expected of them.</p> <p>What can be defined as a role description?</p> <p>See</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the WLGA model role descriptions for Welsh Authorities and ▪ the WLGA document <i>The Role of Councillors in Collaboration and</i> ▪ The Model Role description for a Scrutiny Co optee Appendix A local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 <p>Outside Bodies Where members are responsible for formally representing the Authority or making decisions that could impact on the Authority or have legal obligations as - for example trustees of an organisation, they should be provided with a role description. In all instances members should be provided with guidance on their role on the outside body. Officers should secure (where available) terms of</p>	

	Topic	Standard	Clarification	Status
			reference from outside bodies.	
A2	Members are supported in undertaking their duties according to high standards of conduct.	All members are provided with training and development in the detail of the Members Code of conduct, taking into account any changes in the model or local codes as they emerge.	What can be interpreted as training and development? Any activities which help members understand what the code is and how they need to work within it. This could include written guidance, induction sessions, workshops, Q&A sessions.	Green
A3	Members are supported in understanding their roles and responsibilities as set out in the Constitution.	All members have received training on and understand the contents of the Constitution, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the roles, responsibilities and limits to the roles of committees • the role of individual members and officers • Member/officer protocols • meeting practice • standing orders • rules of debate 	Training has been made available to all members and take up of this has been high. The Constitution sets out the roles and responsibilities of every committee and broadly the role of the key players at each committee, for example chairs, support officers and regular/key participants. Role descriptions may be in the Constitution or as a separate document but should be formally adopted and valued.	Amber
B1	A member learning and development strategy has been adopted.	A local member development strategy is in place. The strategy sets out the approach that the Authority and the Democratic Services Committee takes to member development. It includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a commitment to and methodology for undertaking development needs analyses through a PDR scheme or TNA for those members not requesting a PDR, which identifies the local and national, collective and individual development needs of all members. • a commitment to and methodology for developing members 		Amber

	Topic	Standard	Clarification	Status
		<p>according to the needs of the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a commitment to and methodology for creating personal development plans for all members. • a methodology for responding to the development needs of members identified in their personal support and development reviews or TNAs. 		
B2	<p>Arrangements are in place for <u>all</u> members to be offered a PDR.</p>	<p>Personal support and development reviews which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • based on role descriptions • contribute to personal development plans • are conducted by senior members or other deemed suitably qualified as set out in the Measure guidance • are made available for all members and <u>must</u> be undertaken by members in a receipt of a senior/civic salary. <p>Note. although the Measure does not require the Leader to undertake a review, the Charter does. The Charter requires that all members in receipt of a senior salary undertake this. The Measure is voluntary but for all members.</p>	<p>What is a PDR? An opportunity for a member to discuss with any senior member or other suitably qualified person their own requirements for training and development.</p> <p>This should include some examination of current duties as set out in the role descriptions listed above and may include some self or supported reflection on current performance as a starting point. The outcomes of the discussion should feed into a personal development plan held by the member with the required development activities and also be recorded by the Authority so that development activities can be arranged to support every members needs.</p> <p>The WLGA document 'Guidance for Authorities Planning to Implement Personal Development Reviews for Member' provides guidance in this area.</p>	Red

	Topic	Standard	Clarification	Status
			Anyone conducting reviews should have received training in their purpose and methodology.	
B3	<p>A development programme for councillors is in place with a mechanism for its annual review.</p> <p>All councillors are made aware of, guided to and are able to access the development activities equally.</p>	<p>An annual development programme informed by the member development strategy is in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual development programme is planned and publicised in advance. • Members are made aware of development opportunities provided in response to their needs. <p>The timings and settings of activities are varied to enable equal access by all, including those members who are working, are carers or have child care responsibilities.</p>	<p>There is an annual programme of events and learning opportunities for members both collectively and individually. This programme is informed by the organisational priorities set out in the strategy and in any requirements identified in the personal development plans which emerge from PDRs and TNAs.</p> <p>The programme should be developed by relevant officers and members for example the DSC/MDWG/ MD Champion, DS/HR officers and directors/service heads.</p> <p>The programme includes 'specialist' areas of development reflecting the needs of members in developing skills and understanding in both corporate governance and thematic or service areas.</p> <p>The programme is provided to members giving sufficient notice for attendance.</p> <p>Members are notified of specific events in which they have expressed an interest.</p> <p>The programme is designed to offer choice or variety of</p>	Green

	Topic	Standard	Clarification	Status
			opportunities to attend.	
B4	Prospective candidates, candidates and new members are informed of their role and responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Council uses the national guidance and support materials available for candidates and prospective candidates. ▪ All new or returning members are provided with a programme of induction. 	<p>What is the national Guidance? This refers to the materials provided by the Association and others, to people in the community (not just those who have decided to stand) to encourage them to stand for office and to those who have already declared their intention to stand. These will be different for each election and at different times in the political calendar. The Association will have an overview of what is available.</p> <p>What constitutes an induction programme? This will vary between authorities but should at the base level be any activity that introduces new members to their roles both within and outside the council and the work of the authority generally.</p> <p>Use is made of the national induction materials provided by the WLGA.</p>	Green
B5	Development activities are relevant and of high quality.	Learning activities are provided in appropriate styles and settings based on the learning needs and styles of individuals and committees. The Authority has a systematic and effective approach to commissioning, developing, providing and evaluating its training and development activities. This could include internal, external and collaborative arrangements.	<p>What are appropriate styles and settings? A mix of for example formal/informal group/individual, interactive/passive working environment/away day The authority would need to demonstrate an effective selection process for commissioning training. This might include working with</p>	Green

	Topic	Standard	Clarification	Status
			<p>the WLGA and should include working collaboratively where appropriate with other authorities to share intelligence or undertake joint procurement.</p> <p>Internal training, (rather than briefing) should be designed and provided with the support of training/OD professionals in addition to member support or policy/service officers.</p>	
B6	There is a clear responsibility for leading the programme, driving the strategy and monitoring the outcomes.	The Authority has clearly defined the arrangements for developing, implementing and monitoring its strategy for member support and development. Individual members and officers have clear roles in leading and championing this area. The needs of all political groups and independent members are taken into account regardless of political affiliation.	This role should be undertaken by the Democratic Services Committee and its chair or other appropriate fora such as a member support and development working group. Individual member(s) and officer(s) have clear overall responsibility for developing, implementing and monitoring the strategy and progress of the programme.	Green
B7	Resources are identified and provided for member development.	<p>Dedicated resources are identified and provided for member development activities.</p> <p>The Authority provides the “reasonable level” of development required by the Measure.</p>	<p>How dedicated is dedicated? Resources are specifically put aside and used for member development. The development activity can be very widely interpreted but should not be the usual business of the council. It could include traditional briefing, workshops or seminars handbooks, e. learning, induction activities. Resources should also include staff time, shared</p>	Green

	Topic	Standard	Clarification	Status
			where possible between authorities.	
B8	Members are offered the opportunity to be mentored by member peers.	The Authority is exploring the needs of members to be mentored. Any member who has requested a mentor is provided with one. Mentors are trained in mentoring skills.	The Authority is speaking to members about the concept and benefits of mentoring to gauge interest. Mentoring might include member to member or working with member or officer "buddies" The Authority should be exploring the need to provide Leadership mentoring for the Leader and Cabinet if requested.	Red
C1	Officer support is provided for member development, support and scrutiny.	<p>Every member committee, panel, forum etc. has officer support provided. Members are also supported in their case work.</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny committees have dedicated support from officers who can provide impartial research, support and advice.</p> <p>The nature of the support has been clearly articulated to members</p>	<p>Officer support should be provided for every council meeting and committee.</p> <p>Systems should be in place to support members in non Party Political case and community work whether from member support or other service areas. Support for collaborative governance arrangements such as joint committees and commissioning boards should also be evidenced.</p> <p>There needs to be a resource (dedicated or otherwise) in the authority who can provide members with advice in relation to the discharge of the authority's scrutiny function, and support for scrutiny members or committees by impartially researching information. This should be in direct response to the needs of members</p>	Green

	Topic	Standard	Clarification	Status
			when they are undertaking their legitimate scrutiny role.	
C2	Arrangements made for the business of the Council are flexible and enable members to participate fully regardless of personal circumstances	<p>A review of the arrangements for council business has taken place and as a result, meeting times, arrangements and venues reflect the needs of members as closely as possible.</p> <p>Members have been involved in developing the approaches to remote attendance as set out in the standing orders as/when required by the Measure.</p>	<p>Authorities should have undertaken a review in line with Measure guidance i.e at least once every term, preferably shortly after the new council is elected which at least measures whether daytime or evenings are preferred and if particular times cause problems for individual members. Individual committees should be able to define what is convenient for members of that committee. What should be demonstrated is an awareness of the restrictions placed on members by holding council meetings at certain times and some evidence of flexibility in meeting arrangements as a result.</p>	<p>Green</p> <p>Red</p>
C3	Contact management and communication	Systems are in place to enable members to liaise with council officers regarding services provided both within and outside the authority. Community groups and individuals are also assisted in contacting local members. Members are able to contact stakeholders.	These systems should include agreed standards for response times, complaints procedures and processes to support community and casework. Members should be provided with information regarding which officers to contact regarding complaints and casework relating to any service delivered by or on behalf of the council.	Green
C4	Annual reports	The Authority makes arrangements for all members to be able to publish annual reports, according to the guidance in the measure.	Members are provided with support and guidance on using the authority's systems.	Amber

	Topic	Standard	Clarification	Status
C5	Personal support for members	Members are provided with access to guidance on their rights and benefits as members.	Members are provided with general advice on what might be described as 'employment' rights and benefits relating to their role as councillors. This includes member salaries, family absence, allowances, tax and benefits, pensions, indemnities, data protection and freedom of information.	Green
D1	D1. All members are provided with adequate access to ICT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members are provided with the equipment, or connectivity required to undertake their role. ▪ Basic training is provided in its use and help desk facilities are available. ▪ Members are able to communicate with the council and the public electronically. 	<p>Members are provided with equipment for their individual use to undertake council business.</p> <p>They are shown how to use the equipment and packages.</p> <p>They are able to have assistance if they are experiencing problems with using the equipment or it is faulty.</p>	Green
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members are supported in remote working through the use of remote access codes and Skype etc. ▪ Members are provided with support to enable them to remotely attend meetings according to the standards set out in the standing orders (when implemented through the Measure). 	<p>Members are advised on the use of mobile communications and digital and social media and have access to relevant social media sites, discussion fora and communities of practice such as is required to undertake their role.</p> <p>All council agendas and meeting papers are provided electronically.</p>	Amber
D2	Information resources are provided	A central collection of information dedicated to member needs is provided as part of the information and research support available to members.	An up to date and regularly revised collection of information resources is available specifically for members.	Green

	Topic	Standard	Clarification	Status
			<p>This contains agendas, minutes, training opportunities, links to web resources and access to performance data.</p> <p>Members are informed about the information that is available.</p>	Green
D3	D3. Facilities for members to work in the Council are available.	<p>Member needs have been reviewed and where required the following are provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shared areas for example for each political group. ▪ Private rooms for meetings. ▪ Offices for senior office holders. 	<p>The needs of members must have been assessed.</p> <p>Rooms must be available but not necessarily permanently dedicated.</p>	

4.4.3 The following options and implications regarding the WLGA Charter for Member Support & Development have been considered:

- Option 1 **Do nothing**
The Authority currently follows a number of the processes and procedures needed to meet Charter requirements. However the do nothing would prevent any additional commitment in terms of financial or other resources in respect of Elected Members and Democratic Services.
- Option 2 **Re-apply for Standard Level Charter Status in 2018 and remaining at that level**
This option would provide the opportunity to make the required changes in the processes and culture in Bridgend to regain Charter Status. It would allow the new members to be fully involved in all the activities required to achieve the (Standard) Charter Award
- Option 3 **Re-apply for Standard Level Charter Status in 2018 followed by Advanced Level Charter in due course.** This option would provide the opportunity to make the required changes in the processes and culture in Bridgend to regain Charter Status. It would allow the new members to be fully involved in all the activities required to achieve the (Standard) Charter Award and provide time to consider the implications of the requirements for an Advanced Charter submission at a later date.

4.4.4 There is also a significant commitment in time and resources for all political groups, senior salary holders, individual members and officers of the Authority. The Democratic Services Team can provide some support, guidance and basic assistance but already has a significant workload. The achievement of the Charter

will be predominantly the responsibility of each and every Elected Member of the Authority.

4.4.5 It is anticipated that the Democratic Services Committee will have a significant role to play in the development and monitoring of all aspects of member development and support and particularly in respect of achieving any Charter Award.

4.4.6 The Democratic Services Committee is requested to consider the options shown at paragraph 4.4.3 with the intention that:

- a report with appropriate recommendations be made to Council in respect of the achievement of the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development.
- the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy be drafted in accordance with the determination of the Committee.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 There is no effect on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no equalities implications in respect of this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There is a financial implication in the achievement of the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development. The cost of translation for the publication of Annual Reports is estimated to be approximately £2000 per year based on 54 Annual Report with 500 words in each report which could be met from existing budgets.

7.2 Additional cost are likely to arise but with consideration of the available budget later this year may result in there being insufficient funding in forthcoming years to achieve the Charter.

8. Recommendation.

It is requested that the Democratic Services Committee:

8.1 considers the content of the report and recommends the most appropriate option regarding the achievement of the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development

8.2 approves that the Democratic Services Committee submits a report to Council requesting endorsement of the recommendation made at paragraph 8.1

8.3 Note that the draft Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy will be presented to the Committee at a subsequent meeting before being submitted to Council for endorsement.

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Background documents – None