BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COUNCIL

29 NOVEMBER 2017

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

ELECTED MEMBER LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1   The purpose of the report is to request approval of the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy as attached at **Appendix 1**.

2.   Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

2.1   Elected Members have a wide range of roles and responsibilities that they are expected to undertake. The Elected Member Learning & Development Strategy provides a framework for the development of key skills and knowledge of all Elected Members and will assist in the achievement of all the following Corporate Priorities.

   1.   **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.

   2.   **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.

   3.   **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3.   Background

3.1   The Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy 2012-17 was approved by Council in 2013. It provided a framework which set out the structure of learning and development for all Elected Members from their election and throughout a term of office.

3.2   At its meeting on 6 September 2017, Council approved its intention to make a submission for the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Charter for Member Support and Development. One of the requirements of the Charter is for a Member Development Strategy to be approved by Council.

4.   Current situation / proposal

4.1   A desktop review of the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy

has been undertaken to ensure that it is fit for purpose and updated to reflect a number of factors which have changed since the approval of the original Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy.

4.2   Digitisation and e-learning

4.2.1   Significant progress has been made regarding the digitisation of services across Wales which has also led to an increase in the availability of e-learning material. The Bridgend County Borough Council Learning and Development website now contains a number of topics which could be utilised as part of the member development programme. The WLGA has also been instrumental in developing the All Wales Academy (AWA). The AWA is an e-learning portal which is hosted by the NHS which can be accessed by all local Authorities in Wales. A list of available topics and facilities for these portals is shown at **Appendix 2**.

4.3   Councillors Elected in 2017

4.3.1   Following the Local Government Elections in 2017 there were 29 newly Elected Members in Bridgend. These newly Elected Members have indicated that changes are needed with the delivery of Member Development Activities.

4.3.2   The timings of meetings survey included a section on member development events. Due to the larger number of working councillors it was identified that Elected Members would prefer learning events to be undertaken at the start or end of the day to enable then to balance their working commitments. As a result Member Development events are now planned to be carried out on Tuesdays or Wednesdays and start at either 9:00am or 4:00pm.

4.3.3   During the Elected Member induction, some councillors indicated that they had attended some of the topics in the previous administration or had undertaken similar training as part of their work commitments or had developed experience in particular topics and therefore they did not feel that the training was appropriate or relevant.

4.4   Volume of Learning and Development Opportunities

4.4.1   Since the 2017 Local Government Elections, a total of 30 repeated Member Development topics and 6 pre-Council briefings have been provided to Elected Members. This is a considerable commitment and many councillors have requested that the topics be prioritised or categorised so that they can ensure that they attend the essential training and negotiate with employers regarding the other topics.

4.4.3   Identifying appropriate attendance or categorising member development topics would assist in assessment and evaluation of any training to ensure that it is relevant, timely and has achieved the desired outcomes.

4.5   The proposed Strategy is divided into the following 5 phases:

        1. Administration - to establish the newly Elected Members within the Council

2. The Essentials - to provide Elected Members with sufficient knowledge to prepare them to undertake their initial role in the support of Council business.

3. The Core Functions - to provide Elected Members with the knowledge and skills to enable them to undertake their core functions as Elected Members in their wards and on the committees they are appointed to.

4. Identifying the needs of the individual Councillors – the provision of Personal Development Reviews (PDR) with either an Elected Member peer or with assistance from suitably trained officers as soon as possible. This will be "dovetailed" with Member Mentoring for those Councillors elected after the Local Government Election in 2017.

5. Continuing Development - to provide Elected Members with knowledge and skills relating to:
   - leading the community,
   - working with external partners
   - developing those individual and specialist requirements identified within the PDR process and
   - learning and development identified by the Democratic Services Committee.

4.6   It should be noted that in the first year after the election, Member Development activities are primarily for information provision and process development which should be delivered in-house or by appropriate organisations such as the WLGA. After the first year the focus in the delivery of member development will change to the provision of wider in-depth topics at a local level and more topics which relate to regional and national issues.

4.7   A key component in the successful delivery of the Strategy is to encourage every individual Elected Member to engage with the various Member Development processes and to:

   - support the identification of appropriate learning and development opportunities;
   - actively participate in Member Development activities such as Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) and learning events and,
   - assist in the evaluation of the Member Development activities to ensure that the desired outcomes are achieved.

4.8   To assist Elected Members prioritise which topics they need to attend it is proposed that the Democratic Services Committee categorise member development topics as follows:

Essential	Those training topics for quasi-judicial functions and those which are key to an elected member's role e.g. Corporate Parenting, Data Protection and Safeguarding.
Recommended	This category may include topics such as Risk Management and Scrutiny Questioning Skills which are not essential but will support a councillor's role.
Optional	This category identifies topics that may be useful to some

councillors but are not a priority.

4.8.1 These categories could be prescribed by the Democratic Services Committee to all members for some topics or to target a specific group of councillors i.e. all scrutiny members or all of the Appeals Panel.

4.8.2 For those topics which have been arranged at short notice and the Democratic Services Committee is unable to categorise the topic, it is proposed that the Chairperson of the Democratic Services Committee in liaison with the Head of Democratic Services categorise the topics as necessary.

4.9. It is proposed that greater use of the e-learning facilities be incorporated into the member development programme. This is proposed to be accomplished as follows:

- The Corporate Induction e-learning modules should be completed by all members in the first year of their term of office.
- Some topics such as Data Protection will be identified for inclusion in the Member Development programme and categorised by the Democratic Services Committee accordingly. Councillors will be requested to complete the specified e-learning module by a particular date. A subsequent report will be run by Organisational Development to confirm that the e-learning modules have been completed as requested by the Democratic Services committee being advised accordingly.
- For those returning councillors or those who have previously attended face-to face training on topics such as corporate parenting will be able to undertake the e-learning module rather than attending the annual repeat of the face-to-face training session.
- Those members who are able to provide evidence that they have recently attended similar training in their professional roles can be credited with completing the training.

4.10 Additional reports will be provided in due course to the Democratic Services Committee to clarify the processes for Annual Reports, Personal Development Reviews and Member Mentoring.

4.11 Support for individual member training may be provided following liaison between the relevant Group Leaders and the Head of Democratic Services. It is envisaged that the Strategy and associated Member Development budget will facilitate the provision of appropriate development opportunities.

4.12 It is anticipated that the Democratic Services Committee will provide direction for the Member Development activities that need to be undertaken and to ensure that the development needs of Elected Members are met. The Committee will also receive updates regarding the Member Development Budget and any evaluation of the Strategy that is undertaken.

4.13 Following Council's decision to achieve the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development it is hoped that the changes to the Strategy will encourage appropriate attendance and participation in member development events.

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   All activities described in this report will be met from existing budget provisions.

8.   Recommendation

8.1   It is recommended that Council approves the Elected Member Learning & Development Strategy as attached as Appendix 1.

P A Jolley
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Background documents – None