

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COUNCIL

21 JULY 2021

REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

ELECTED MEMBER LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

1. Purpose of report

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

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objective under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-**

- **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being-objectives.

3. Background

3.1 The Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy has provided the framework for provision and delivery of Member Development for Elected Members from induction and throughout their term of office. The Strategy is coming towards the end of its effective life and in preparation for the 2022 Local Government Elections, and the subsequent induction of newly Elected Members, a desktop review of the 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 Strategy.

3.2 The Democratic Services Committee considered the Strategy at its meeting of 25 March 2021 and endorsed the report for submission and approval to Council.

4. Current situation/proposal

4.1 The Strategy is divided into the following 5 phases:

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

3. The Core Functions - to provide 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 Members – 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 2022;
5. Continuing Development - to provide 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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 and Safeguarding will be identified for inclusion in the Member Development programme and categorised by the Democratic Services Committee accordingly. Members will be requested to complete the specified e-learning module by a particular date. A subsequent report will be run by the Learning and Development team to confirm that the e-learning modules have been completed accordingly;
- For those returning Members, or those who have previously attended face-to-face training on topics such as Corporate Parenting, they will be able to undertake the e-learning module rather than attending the annual repeat of 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.

4.4 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.

4.5 The Democratic Services Committee considered the Strategy at its meeting on 25 March 2021 and determined that it meets the following expectations and outcomes:

Expectations:

- There is a planned and structured approach to Elected Member learning and Development;
- Elected Members have access to appropriate learning and development activities to enable them to acquire the knowledge and skills required to be an effective Elected Member;
- Learning and development, wherever possible, is linked to the roles of Elected Members;
- Access to learning and development activities is equitable;
- Members are encouraged to identify their own development needs and participate fully in learning and development activities;
- All Members will have access to a Personal Development Review process that identifies learning and development needs with any additional support that may be required;
- All Members will have the opportunity to compile a Personal Development Portfolio (PDP) which details their learning and development activities and records their achievements;
- The Member Development Programme will be produced and updated on a quarterly basis in order to support the Council's strategic plans, the roles and functions of Members and key changes affecting the Council's priorities;
- Member learning and development activity is adequately resourced within available budgets.

Outcomes:

Phase 1 – Administration

- All Acceptances of Office completed;
- Member induction administration completed.

Phase 2 – Essentials

- All Members have a basic knowledge of the Council and its structure and role
- Code of Conduct training completed by all Members;
- Elected Members are able to effectively undertake their role at Council meetings.

Phase 3 – The Core Functions

- Members understand their roles to which they have been appointed by Council or Cabinet;
- Members understand their role in their wards;
- Members are aware of their responsibilities when representing the Authority.

Phase 4 – Identifying the Needs of Individual Councillors

- Members undertake a Personal Development Review annually to identify their support and development needs;
- Members have been offered a Member Mentor or suitably trained officer to assist their development.

Phase 5 – Continuing Development

- The Member Development Programme is compiled to meet Corporate and Elected Member priorities;
- Member Development activities are relevant, cost effective and delivered to a high standard;
- The training and support provided meets the developing needs of Elected Members;
- Collaboration with other local authorities will be considered for the delivery of learning activities where appropriate.

4.6 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.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 There is no effect upon policy framework and procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. It is considered that there is no significant or unacceptable impact upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of this report.

8. Financial implications

8.1 Elected Member learning and development is resourced from the allocated Member Development budget. Reasonable allocation will be made as part of the annual budget round and applied with regard to the corporate needs of the Authority. The Head of Democratic Services will monitor appropriate spend on the budget. In-house training will be provided by Directorates if the topic relates to their service areas. The costs for this type of event will be met from within Directorate budgets and not from the Member Development budget.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that Council approve the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy attached as Appendix 1.

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Background documents:
None