

Meeting of:	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	21 NOVEMBER 2024
Report Title:	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
Responsible Officer:	RACHEL KEEPINS DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is the role of the Democratic Services Committee to develop a Member support and development strategy and ensure Members have access to a reasonable level of training and development and sufficient budget to do so. • This report provides an update on the Member Development Programme since June 2024 and sets out the process for informing and planning the future programme including Member Performance and Development Reviews. • Members are also asked to put forward suggestions for inclusion in the programme and prioritise accordingly.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Provide the Committee with an update on the delivery of the Council's Member Training and Development Programme and related activities;
- b) Request the Committee to identify any further topics for inclusion in the Member Development Programme.

2. Background

2.1 Following the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, local authorities were directed to place more emphasis on Member Development. Members are

encouraged to identify their own development needs and participate fully in learning and development activities.

2.2 Under the Council's Constitution part of the role description of a Member on the Democratic Services Committee is:

- developing the Authority's member support and development strategy;
- ensuring that members have access to a reasonable level of training and development as described in the member development strategy and the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development;
- ensuring that the budget for member development is sufficient;
- ensuring that members have access to personal development planning and annual personal development reviews.

3. Current situation / proposal

3.1 **Appendix A** details the training and development sessions that have taken place as part of the Member Development Programme since last reported to the Democratic Services Committee on 13 June 2024.

3.2 Training requests continue to be regularly forthcoming from both Members and Officers which has been extremely welcomed and encouraged as it enables the programme to be specifically targeted to needs. Examples of this include 'Complaints Procedure' training and the 'Department of Work and Pensions Briefing', both of which have been requested by Members as well as the 'New ESTYN Framework' training and 'All Member Budget Briefing', which have been requested by Corporate Directors.

3.3 There have also been a series of sessions for Members on the new Mod.Gov App to train Members in its use. It is hoped that this App will assist with a new online voting system for Committee meetings. Over 60% of Members have attended one of these sessions so far and the Democratic Services team will be looking to arrange additional sessions before Christmas with the aim to go live with the new system early in 2025.

Development Control Committee Training Sessions

3.4 The following Development Control Committee training sessions have been provided since the last update to the Committee:

- 26th June 2024 - Building Conservation and Design training
- 18th September 2024 – Presentation by Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (Chief Planning Inspector for Wales)

Council Briefings

3.5 The following Local Authority partners have also attended Full Council meetings to provide update briefings to all Members on the services they deliver:

- 24th July 2024 – Presentation by Welsh Water Dwr Cymru
- 23rd October 2024- Presentation by Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Future Member Development

- 3.6 Attached at **Appendix B** is a schedule for continued training over the next few months and includes some external training as a result of recommendations from the Scrutiny Review undertaken earlier this year. It also includes a training/briefing session on the new South-East Wales Corporate Joint Committee which could be a combined session with other Local Authorities involved in the CJC. Member Briefings have also been requested by Scrutiny Members as well as the Corporate Management Board and there are ongoing sessions related to Member Personal Safety.

E-Learning

- 3.7 In addition to Member Development sessions Members are also asked to undertake several e-learning modules via the online Learning and Development website. These e-learning courses have been devised by the Council for all staff and Members to support their learning and development needs and gives Members the opportunity to undertake this learning remotely at a convenient time at their own pace.
- 3.8 The following mandatory courses below have been previously provided:
- Corporate Induction
 - UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
 - Display Screen Equipment
 - Fire Safety Awareness
 - ICT Code of Conduct
 - Safeguarding Children and Adults
 - Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
 - New - Introduction to Equality and Diversity; and
 - New - Welsh Language Awareness.
- 3.9 At the time of drafting this report, 39 Members have accessed the Learning and Development site and commenced their e-learning modules but only 21 Members have completed all nine mandatory modules.
- 3.10 It is worth noting that following an internal Elected Members Audit, undertaken in 2022/23, one of the recommendations from the report which was subsequently reported to the Governance and Audit Committee stated:
- ‘All elected Members are encouraged and reminded to complete their Code of conduct and mandatory e-learning modules training.’***
- 3.11 Members are therefore encouraged to re-visit the e-learning website and undertake these additional modules if not yet completed.

Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Training

- 3.12 The WLGA have run a series of 'Progressive Community Leadership Training for Councillors' programmes throughout 2023 and 2024 aimed at exploring the barriers to successfully leading communities and offering strategies for overcoming them. It includes practical methods and techniques for public engagement, participation, and empowerment with a step-by-step framework to build sustainable and resilient communities. These places have been generally limited to 2 places per Local Authority for each set of sessions with extra spare places sometimes offered. So far 8 Bridgend Councillors have signed up and completed this training over 2023-24 and 2 more Members are signed up for February 2025.
- 3.13 Some Members have also attended the WLGA Leadership Programme which is the flagship leadership development support for Councillors in Wales. It also provides the WLGA with intelligence on the key issues facing local government. Recently feedback from participants has focused on the need to build resilience within the local government leadership and the need to succession plan for developing new leaders. As a result of this, and the restricted places per Local Authority, for 2024 the WLGA has tried to encourage a focus on Executive Members or potential future Executive Members. 6 of our current Members have attended this training and 2 more are booked in for the upcoming Programme in 2025.

Learning and Development Website

- 3.14 All Members have been provided with the link to the Learning and Development website with instructions on how to access the e-learning training. The review of the Member Learning and Development site by the Democratic Services team is unfortunately on hold and whilst it is hoped that this can be developed in the near future, this will depend on resources available.

Member Development and Support Survey

- 3.15 Following the local government elections in May 2022, a survey was undertaken to determine the timings of Member Development activities. This year we have repeated this, however we have expanded the survey to ask for more detail from Members on their views on past and future training as well as the support they receive. The survey went out to Members on 13 September 2024 asking for responses by 25 October 2024 and covered areas such as:
- The frequency of training sessions;
 - Preferred methods and format for training;
 - Quality of training information provided;
 - Satisfaction over topic choices;
 - Suggested topics for future training
 - Support provided by Democratic Services;
 - Digital Support provided to Members.
- 3.16 23 responses were received and these will now be analysed and used to inform the future Member Development Programme as well as identify any additional support required for Members. An updated report detailing the findings will be provided to the next Democratic Services Committee meeting.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 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.

5. Well-being of Future Generations Implications and Connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 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.

6. Climate Change Implications

6.1 There are no climate change implications as a result of this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

7.1 There are no safeguarding or corporate parent implications 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. Recommendations

9.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Note the report and appendices;
- b) Identify any additional Member development topics or briefings for inclusion in the Member Development Programme and prioritise them accordingly.

Background documents

None