Meeting of:	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	26 JUNE 2025
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:	• 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 November 2024 and sets out the process for informing and planning the future programme. • The report also highlights the results of a Member Support Survey undertaken. • Members are 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 21 November 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 Social Services briefings, some requested by Officers, others following a request from the relevant Scrutiny Committee, which was opened up to, and benefited, all Members.

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 90% of Members have attended one of these sessions and now frequent weekly sessions are being held to enable Members to practice and familiarise themselves with using the system with the aim of going live with it for any potential votes in June's Council.

Development Control Committee Training Sessions

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

- 23 January 2025 - Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance
- 6 March 2025 - Retail and Commercial Development Supplementary Planning Guidance
- 16 April 2025 - Outdoor Recreation Facilities Supplementary Planning Guidance
- 29 May 2025 - Rights of Way

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:

- 20 November 2024 – Presentation by Halo Leisure
- 15 January 2025 - Presentation by South Wales Fire & Rescue Service
- 25 June 2025 – Presentation by V2C

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 (CJC) 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:

   o   Corporate Induction
   o   UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
   o   Display Screen Equipment
   o   Fire Safety Awareness
   o   ICT Code of Conduct
   o   Safeguarding Children and Adults
   o   Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
   o   New - Introduction to Equality and Diversity; and
   o   New - Welsh Language Awareness.

3.9   At the time of drafting this report, 38 Members have accessed the Learning and Development site and commenced their e-learning modules but only 28 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 Councillor programmes throughout 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 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 10 Bridgend Councillors have signed up and completed this training over 2023/24 and 2024/25. This training has been revised for 2025 with it now being specifically designed to be more accessible for Councillors with limited availability. The key difference is that it will take place on a single day, offering a more concentrated format compared to the previous three separate dates. Unfortunately no Bridgend Members expressed an interest in attending June's workshop but hopefully further dates will be available and advertised soon.

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 and 2025 the WLGA has tried to encourage a focus on Executive Members or potential future Executive Members. 8 of our current Members have attended this training and 2 more are booked in for the upcoming Programme in 2026 as well as one reserve.

Learning and Development Website

3.14   All Members have been provided with the link to the Learning and Development (L&D) website with instructions on how to access the e-learning training. Members can now also click directly onto the icon for the L&D page from their homepage when they open Microsoft Edge on their laptops which should make access much easier.

In addition to accessing e-learning modules, all recordings and associated power point presentations of hybrid or remote training have been uploaded to this site, available either as refresher training for Members or simply for those who may have been unable to make the session.

Member Development and Support Survey

3.15   Members will recall that a Member Development and Support survey went out to Members on 13 September 2024, which asked questions of Members on their views on past and future training as well as the support they receive including such things 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 from the survey with a summary of responses attached at **Appendix C.** These responses will be used to inform future training including the future Member Induction following the 2027 election.

Some of the highlights are listed below:

3.16.1 **Member Induction**
- 70% respondents preferred a 10am start for Member training though some Members also asking for a repeat 4pm session possibly due to work commitments;
- Overall Member Induction training met expectations but Members commented that some could be more interactive with more question and answer or workshop sessions;
- Mixed views regarding in person and hybrid or virtual training though some Members stated that in person would be better for Induction training to enable Members to get to know their fellow colleagues;
- More IT training as well as training on key policy topics and challenges facing the Local Authority.

3.16.2 **Continued Member Development**
- Met all respondents expectations with 92% of respondents stating the quality met or exceeded their expectations. For those who it didn't there wasn't much clarification other than some difficulties with online training;
- Mixed views again on timing and whether in person or online, but with recognition that this will vary for all Members. One suggestion of set days possibly for Member training;

3.16.3 **E-Learning Modules**
- The majority (95%) of respondents stated the e-learning models met or exceeded their expectations however some Members stated they did not;
- Issues include them being time consuming, complex and fussy, less engaging, difficult to navigate and at times repetitive of other training undertaken. Some Members stated that they would prefer that as these modules are mandatory that they be in person or online, not via e-learning;
- Other comments included that they found them very useful topics, that they liked being able to undertake then in their own time, and that whilst some minor issues were experienced at first, once support was provided, they were able to complete them;

3.16.4 **Future Member Development**
- Varied views on preferred timings but overall still the majority of respondents requesting 10am;
- 57% preferring hybrid training, with 35% asking for 'in person'. Members stated that whilst they would prefer to attend in person training the online option with hybrid enables participation if there are diary constraints. Others raised the point that remotely the training is easier to hear, provides more flexibility, is more convenient at times and saves on travel expenses. Other Members found in person training more interactive easier to engage and learn from one another in group work.

3.16.5 **Topic Suggestions**
- Planning:

- o Enforcement
- o Section 106
- o Strategic planning Guidance
- o Changes in Planning Laws
- Good Practice Guidance about casework and liaising with the public sector organisations and Registered Social Landlords
- IT
- Key policy challenges briefing sessions with Q&As
- Budget – to improve Member's understanding of the Council's finances
- Constitution training – voting, points of order, Declarations of interests, debate rules etc

3.16.6 Methods of Training
- A general request for more workshops rather than being 'talked at'
- More case study examples and role play scenarios
- Different method requirements for different sessions
- Briefings with a Q&A or group discussions to make them more interactive
- e-learning also mentioned by a small number of members
- Quizzes to review understanding of training session

3.16.7 Other comments
- PowerPoint training to be short and sharp to assist in Members being able to absorb the information
- Forward annual planning of 'core' and 'optional' training
- Needs to be a recognition of skills, knowledge and training that Members may already have
- Suggestion for refresher Courses
- More training from external partners

3.16.8 Democratic Services Support
Overall satisfaction and positive comments over support services provided by Democratic Services

3.16.9 Digital Support
- Mixed views on how comfortable Members feel using their Council devices and similarly in using systems such as the Councillor Portal, Outlook and the Mod.Gov App
- Issues sometimes locating Learning and Development page
- Suggestion of more training for those who are not fully computer literate
- Suggestion also for BCBC Systems training is provided early on in induction

3.16.10 Overall comments were positive. Some examples include….

"I am pleased about the training and support which has been provided from the outset."
"Member development is satisfactory and one has to also 'learn on the job'."
"Councillor support is generally very good."
"The support that councillors require is there and delivered if needed."

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 and Nature Implications

6.1   There are no climate change and nature 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