

Meeting of:	DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	20 NOVEMBER 2025
Report Title:	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE
Report Owner: Responsible Chief Officer / Cabinet Member	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 Learning 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 2025 and sets out the process for informing and planning the future programme. • Members are asked to put forward suggestions for inclusion in the programme and prioritise accordingly. • The report also proposes establishing a small Working Group from this Committee to review the Member Development Strategy and begin preparations for the Member Induction 2027.

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 learning 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 26 June 2025.
- 3.2 Training requests are generally 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 Media training, which Members have specifically requested, as well as Governance and Audit (GAC) refresher training, which was useful for both new and existing GAC Members.

Development Control Committee Training Sessions

- 3.3 The following Development Control Committee training sessions have been provided since the last update to the Committee:
- 10 July 2025 – Planning Committee Protocol and Procedures
 - 20 August 2025 - Mining Remediation Authority "Risk assessment and management of the environmental impacts of coal mining"
 - 21 August 2025 – Houses in Multiple Occupancy Supplementary Planning Guidance Note Briefing for Members
 - 12 October 2025 - Training Refresher Session and Update

Council Briefings

- 3.4 The following Local Authority partners have also attended Full Council meetings to provide update briefings to all Members on the services they deliver:
- 25 September 2025 – Presentation by the Police and Crime Commissioner

Council Debate

- 3.5 At the October 2025 Council meeting, members also participated in a 'State of the County Borough Debate' on the subject of extreme weather, its impact and the resilience of the Local Authority in adapting and responding to these events.

Future Member Development

- 3.6 Attached at **Appendix B** is a schedule for continued training over the next few months, many of which are still awaiting dates to be confirmed, including some from external providers.

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 (Annual refresher)
- ICT Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding Children and Adults (3 yearly refresher)
- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
- Introduction to Equality and Diversity
- Welsh Language Awareness

- 3.9 Since last reported, two more mandatory e-learning modules have been added, these are:

- Health and Safety (3 yearly refresher)
- Climate Change

- 3.10 At the time of drafting this report, 50 Members have accessed the Learning and Development site and commenced their e-learning modules but only 32 Members have completed all eleven mandatory modules, including the two new modules. At the request of this Committee at its last meeting in June 2025, the details for all Members and their e-learning modules are provided at **Appendix C**.

- 3.11 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.'

- 3.12 Members are therefore encouraged to re-visit the e-learning website and undertake the new additional modules if not yet completed, as well as any refreshers or outstanding modules.

Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Training

- 3.13 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.
- 3.14 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 3 more are booked in for the upcoming Programme in 2026 as well as one reserve.

Learning and Development Website

- 3.15 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.
- 3.16 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 Strategy and Member Induction 2027

- 3.17 Part of the role of the Democratic Services Committee (DSC) is developing the Authority's member support and development strategy. The Welsh Local Government Association are already undertaking preparations for their training programme for 2027, therefore it seems timely to review our own strategy and commence plans for the Member Induction 2027.

- 3.18 It is therefore proposed to establish a small working group from Members who sit on the DSC to undertake some of this detailed work on the strategy, using their own knowledge and experiences, as well as those from other Members expressed via the Member survey that was undertaken last year. The purpose of this group will be to propose amendments and suggested improvements to the strategy and the Member Induction programme, for the Committee's final approval.

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;
- c) Consider and agree the proposal set out in paragraph 3.18 regarding establishing a Working Group from this Committee to review the Member Learning and Development Strategy and begin preparations for the new Member Induction Programme for 2027.

Background documents

None