



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

1st MARCH 2021

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

MEMBERS TRAINING

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update in respect of Members training following the Personal Development Reviews that were undertaken during the 2019 – 2020 Municipal Year and the training to be taken forward during the 2020-2021 Municipal Year.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Democratic Services Committee:

- I. Note the training and development activities undertaken by Members outlined within section 3 of the report.
- II. Note the specific one to one training provided to all Members through the Council Business Unit in respect of virtual meetings to allow Members to continue their role through the Covid pandemic.
- III. Agree to re-commence the Pre-Council Training opportunities through the virtual meeting arrangements and to provide potential items for a forward work programme in respect of such training.

3. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS – ESTABLISHING TRAINING NEEDS

3.1 The undertaking of Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) now lies with the Human Resources department and all Members are offered a PDR by the Head of Organisational Development. The PDRs are confidential and allow the opportunity for Members to discuss training and support requirements going forward.

3.2 In November 2019, the Democratic Services Committee were advised that the Head of Organisational Development had taken forward PDRs during the 2019-20 Municipal Year for those Members who took forward the offer.

- 3.3 Training opportunities were established for each of the Members following the review and a meeting took place with the Head of Democratic Services and the Head of Organisational Development to discuss how such training could be taken forward, through one to one engagement sessions or open training for all Members to access, dependent on the training needs.
- 3.4 One popular training request identified by Members at this time was the provision of 'Social Media' training. Going forward a training session was arranged for all Members to attend and was based on an interactive session which was welcomed by Members who attended. One to One training sessions in this area were also provided.
- 3.5 With the agreement of Committee Chairs, open training to all Members had also been undertaken during Committee meeting settings – where the training specifically relates to a terms of reference of a Committee – i.e. Treasury management training at the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.6 Pre-Council Training was still being provided although the attendance at these events was often very poor before the commencement of virtual meetings.
- 3.7 Other general training sessions provided to Members over the 2019 - 2020 Municipal Year are outlined in Appendix A (Please note this information has been anonymised)
- 3.8 During the 2019 -2020 Municipal Year invites were made to each of the Group Leaders and Independent Members to meet with the Head of Democratic Services and Council Business Manager to discuss any support that the Council Business Unit could provide to Members through training opportunities with such meetings being taken forward by some Group Leaders on a quarterly basis. The Head of Democratic Services has maintained regular contact with Group Leaders on this and other member needs during the current circumstances.
- 3.9 During this year, arrangements were also made for newly Elected Members to meet with the Council Business Unit and relevant Senior Leadership Officers to provide an overview of the terms of reference for any committee they had been made a member of, to assist them in their role on the committee. Going forward, this arrangement will be further embedded within the training opportunities for any Member that may change membership on a Committee following the Councils AGM or following changes made during the year, to provide them with the support needed to undertake their role on the new Committee setting.
- 3.10 Training, including code of conduct training was also provided to newly appointed co-opted Members throughout the 2019-2020 Municipal Year.
- 3.11 Training in respect of the use of the Modern.Gov app was also rolled out by the Council Business Unit to Members to promote the paperless agenda approach to Committee meetings.

- 3.12 Cabinet Members and Scrutiny Chairs / Vice Chairs have been put forward for the WLGA's Leadership Programme for Elected Members by the request of the Member. The Leadership Programme is a place where leaders, and those in leadership positions, can explore the latest thinking in political leadership, and equip themselves with the knowledge and skills they need to rise to these challenges.

MEMBERS TRAINING 2020 – 2021

- 3.13 In March 2020, during the Covid pandemic Committee meetings and Members training was put on hold. During this time the Council Business Unit worked with Members and ICT to ensure Members were equipped with the correct devices to allow them to conduct their roles and support their constituents in very difficult and uncertain times.
- 3.14 One to one training through a virtual basis was offered to all Members and Co-opted Members via the Council Business Unit. Such training allowed Members to conduct their committee responsibilities through a virtual basis. Appendix A illustrates the training provided.
- 3.15 The Council Business Unit also supported the clerks of the Community and Town Councils within RCT with training and support in respect of scheduling and conducting virtual meetings arrangements during this period.
- 3.16 As Members and Offices are now working comfortably on the virtual basis the Head of Organisational Development has resumed the PDR process and all Group Leaders and Independent Member have been contacted in respect of this process. Following the completion of the PDRs a meeting will be taken forward with the Head of Democratic Services to discuss how such training needs will then be met.
- 3.17 Due to the improved attendance at meetings, through the virtual meeting approach pre-council training has resumed with a training session in respect of the Council's Winter Maintenance plan taken forward in November and the Gypsy and Traveller Awareness training in January. Notably improved attendance figures were noted in comparison to the attendance within the Council Chamber.
- 3.18 It is suggested that such Pre-Council training is built upon and a forward work programme for such training is put forward for Members consideration and comment at Appendix B.
- 3.19 During January 2021 a questionnaire was undertaken with the Audit Committee Members and Co-opted Member to assist in informing a programme of development for the Committee. Officers are utilising the results of the survey to introduce a bespoke training programme for the Committee which will help equip Members in undertaking their roles on the Committee.
- 3.20 Refresher Code of Conduct training is always available to Members on a one to one basis as and when requested, although general refresher training will be

taken forward during the Municipal year for all Members and will be advised upon from the Monitoring Officer.

- 3.21 Members will be aware of the need for future training for all Members in respect of the new webcasting system that is currently being implemented within the Council Chamber. Training in respect of utilising the new equipment and the potential hybrid approach will be provided once staff are trained on the new systems and when it is safe to do so in respect of the Covid pandemic.
- 3.22 The welfare and mental health of Members is crucially important and Members need to be aware of the support that is available to them if they wish to utilise. It is suggested that a pre-council training session is taken forward on this subject in the near future. In addition, the Council Business Unit are looking to facilitate a 'virtual coffee morning' for Members, to give Members the opportunity to come together, chat and share experiences, which is hoped will boost Members wellbeing during the covid restrictions.

4. E-LEARNING MODULES AND THE MEMBERS PORTAL

- 4.1 Members will recall the decision taken by the Committee to develop a Members Portal and a demonstration of the Portal was provided to Members during its meeting in October 2020 (Minute 29 refers).
- 4.2 Although still in its development phase, one key feature of the Portal in the long term will be the availability of E-learning Modules.
- 4.3 A number of E-learning modules are currently available for Members through the RCT source and it is anticipated these will be made accessible going forward through the portal for Members, although work will need to be undertaken to ensure that they are ICT compatible with the new system and still fit for purpose.
- 4.4 The development of additional e-learning modules will be taken forward and led by the Council Business Unit department with the assistance of Human Resources, however such development may take time to ensure accuracy and appropriateness of such training modules for Members.
- 4.5 Following a survey of Members the following list of potential E-learning modules has been produced, with these modules taken forward in the first instance:
- Social Media
 - Safeguarding
 - Stress / Mental Health and Well-being
 - Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence
 - Council Budget / Medium Term Financial Planning
 - Charing Skills
 - How the Council Works / Code of Conduct
- 4.6 Members will also recall that Officers across Wales agreed to take forward a collaborative approach to developing E-Learning modules for all Authorities to access. It was agreed that the most sustainable way of developing content

would be for each authority to take responsibility for one module, which should result in 22 high quality accessible modules for members across Wales to share. Each module would be specifically designed for members rather than officers.

- 4.7 An agreed process for taking forward the modules had been agreed with specific leads from each Authority working with a task and finish group. Rhondda Cynon Taf agreed to take forward 'Violence against women domestic abuse and sexual violence' and would also assist with the development of the Welsh Language Act and Standards.
- 4.8 Due to the Covid pandemic the development of the E-learning modules as outlined above has been delayed. Updates in respect of the development of these modules will be brought forward to the Democratic Services Committee as and when appropriate.

5 MEMBER INDUCTION TRAINING.

- 5.1 The Council have been recognised as providing a detailed and thorough Member Induction Programme, and with the Local Government Elections taking place in 2022, work will need to commence to ensure that the induction programme is still 'Fit for Purpose' to allow newly Elected Members to be supported from the very start.
- 5.2 Members will recall that at the November 2019 meeting following the Committees work in respect of the 'Lone Working- Members policy', Members agreed that information in respect of this item was to be included in the Member Induction Programme.
- 5.3 The Head of Democratic Services will shortly commence discussions with Group Leaders around planning and preparation for the induction of Elected Members in 2022.
- 5.4 It is proposed that details of the Induction Programme will be brought forward to a future meeting of the Committee.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report supports the need for all Members to have equal access to support regardless of political allegiance. The report encourages the authority to examine the way that business is conducted to ensure the equality of access and involvement of all people as councillors. The provision of E-learning Modules and hybrid meetings / training sessions will ensure all Members have equal access to training provision.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 A meeting with the Head of Democratic Services and the Head of Organisational development was conducted following the Member PDRs to

ensure a training needs plan was put in place during the 2019 – 2020 Municipal Year and the same arrangement will be taken forward this Municipal Year.

- 7.2 Members PDRs were conducted to allow information to be gathered in respect of any training requirements to assist Members in their roles.
- 7.3 Further consultation in respect of future developments of the Member Induction Programme, future Pre Council Training Work Programme is proposed within the report, subject to Members agreement.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 Members training is an important aspect to allow Members to feel equipped to undertake their duties and roles required of them. The Council have a Members training budget, which is accessed to provide any external training needed. Where practical in-house training is also provided to Members.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None

10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 10.1 The work of all Councillors is fundamental to the work of the Council and subsequently the delivery of the Corporate Plan, hence ensuring Members are fully supported in undertaking their roles is important to the work of the Council overall.
- 10.2 Ensuring all Members are supported and have equal access to support and development links to the future generations well being goals of a more equal Wales and a Wales of cohesive communities.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Through the new way of working Officers will continue to support Members with any training opportunities identified to assist Members in undertaking their roles.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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BACKGROUND PAPERS - Democratic Services – Support for Members

Democratic Services – Work Programme