



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27TH SEPTEMBER 2021

MEMBER'S TRAINING -UPDATE

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION.

1. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update in respect of the training opportunities that have been made available to Members over the last few months and the active offers of training to be taken forward.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Acknowledge the training provided to Members since the Council AGM
- (ii) Consider the forthcoming training opportunities made available to Members and to provide any additional comments in respect of Members Training.

3. **MEMBERS TRAINING.**

3.1 Following on from the Members PDRs, individual requests through Committee meetings and approaches directly to the Head of Democratic Services a number of advancements have been made in respect of training provision to Members since the Council AGM.

3.2 Pre-retirement Courses have been scheduled, which is open for all Members to attend, with this training provision supported through 'Affinity'. The training will look to encourage a positive and realistic approach to a financially secure retirement and help Elected Members to make informed choices about retirement. The first of these sessions is to be held on the 24th September and the second session is to be held on the 30th September.

3.3 Introduction to Scrutiny and other Committees - Following the AGM training has also been provided by the Council Business Unit for scrutiny Members and Co-opted Members, with a training session run for each of the Committees, to remind new and old members to the committee (following changes to membership at the

AGM) of the Committees Terms of Reference, general good practice with scrutiny and providing an opportunity for related Senior officers to discuss emerging priorities for the service area to assist Members with their future discussions surrounding work programmes. Refresher training was also provided to Planning and Development Committee which was tailored to consider aspects of planning as requested by the Chair and training in respect of Licensing.

- 3.4 Training has also been taken forward with the three newly elected Members as part of their induction programme.
- 3.5 Training through the demonstration meetings of hybrid meetings have been undertaken as well as Modern Gov training on the new version of the App.
- 3.6 Treasury Management training was provided to all Members in September in advance of the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.7 Social Media training has been provided to Members on a one to one basis following specific requests for this provision.

4 FUTURE TRAINING

- 4.1 Emergency Planning 'interactive training sessions' have been scheduled for the October and notification of these dates will be shortly circulated to Members. It is intended that these sessions will take forward interactive sessions to discuss proactive approaches to any emergency within the County Borough.
- 4.2 Further training is being arranged in respect of the subject areas
 - Members Health & Wellbeing – 15th November 5pm
 - Unconscious bias – TBC
 - Scrutiny Training to Joint Scrutiny Committee Members - TBC
- 4.3 Where possible training will continue to be provided at 5pm although due to a busy committee calendar this may not always be accommodated.
- 4.4 Work is also being undertaken to offer Members with ICT Bitesize courses, similar to the training provision offered to Council staff. These courses will include zoom / teams training, Introduction to Ipad, Training on the Members Portal (once testing stage has been completed by the Democratic Services Committee Members), Staying safe in a virtual world and digital accessibility tools. These sessions will look to be run as mini online sessions with a small group of Members although individual one to one sessions can also be accommodated. Details of these opportunities will shortly be provided to Members.
- 4.5 An email will shortly be circulated to Members to remind Members of the online training opportunities through the RCT Source and a useful bilingual guide is currently being drafted to assist Members.

- 4.6 In addition to the above we will also be reminding and encouraging Members of the Welsh Language training opportunities that are available. Details of the opportunities for Members to undertake the Level 1 course will be promoted. This course is an interactive PowerPoint training based course, which Members can complete overtime and will provide a basic understanding and knowledge base for opening conversations, the Welsh alphabet and some phrases Members may wish to use during meetings. For those Members who wish to progress their Welsh language skills further, opportunities are available for the Welsh Language Level 2 course.
- 4.7 Work is also ongoing to support the training needs identified through the PDR process and a further report will be presented to Committee to advise upon this training programme.
- 4.8 Where appropriate, training sessions will be recorded and will be available for Members to view through the Members portal.
- 4.9 Refresher Code of Conduct training is always available to Members on a one to one basis as and when requested, with advice on hand from the Council's Monitoring Officer and Head of Democratic Services. Over the next few months virtual bitesize training sessions in respect of the Code of Conduct including details of the recent ombudsman guidance will be offered to Members by the Monitoring Officer. Details of which will shortly be provided to Members.
- 4.10 Where appropriate, factsheet information will be circulated to Members to advise and support them in their role. Such a fact sheet was circulated to Members regarding scam and nuisance calls and a further sheet is currently being created to assist Members in recognising scam emails, following recent cyber related issues witnessed by the Council.
- 4.11 The Council Business unit have commenced work on the draft Member Induction Programme to be taken forward following the Local Government Elections and will look to utilise good practices witnessed following the Senedd elections in respect of Member Induction to advance some of the training we provide. This programme will be shared with Group Leaders and the Democratic Services Committee for comment.

5 EVALUATING TRAINING

- 5.1 As a form of good practice, the Council Business Unit have reintroduced training evaluation forms to assist us gauge the training provided to Members, however open feedback is always welcome.
- 5.2 Evaluation forms were circulated to all Members following the induction training provided at the beginning of the Municipal Year. There was a very poor response

to the return of these forms, although the responses received were very positive about the training provided.

- 5.3 The unit will continue to engage in Member feedback on the training that is provided to ensure that we provide training that is fit for purpose.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 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.
- 7.2 Members PDRs were conducted to allow information to be gathered in respect of any training requirements to assist Members in their roles.

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.