



## RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

### DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

27<sup>TH</sup> April 2023

### MEMBER'S 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 the training opportunities that have been made available to Members 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 Member Induction Programme
- (ii) Consider the forthcoming training opportunities made available to Members and to provide any additional comments in respect of Members Training.

#### 3. MEMBER TRAINING

- 3.1 The role of an Elected Member can be complex and challenging. Constantly changing priorities and legislation require difficult decisions for which Members need to be well informed. It is therefore essential that Members are equipped and supported to allow them to undertake their role confidently
- 3.2 The Head of Democratic Services, in conjunction with the Democratic Services Committee seeks to ensure that Members are provided with sufficient training to assist them in undertaking all aspects of their role. As a Council we have made it a requirement that Members must undertake training on a Committee they become a member of before they can engage in that Committee.
- 3.3 Training opportunities have been undertaken through the detailed Member Induction Programme and additional training has also been undertaken through specific Member or Committee requests as detailed further in the report. Training support and opportunities have also been identified through the Member Personal Development Review programme, which is nearing completion.

- 3.4 Members can view their training record under each of the Member profiles on the Council website. [Profiles](#)

#### **4 MEMBER INDUCTION PROGRAMME.**

- 4.1 Following the 2022 Local Government Elections, a full programme of training opportunities was provided to newly elected and returning Members which included a number of mandatory training sessions such as:

- How the Council works
- Democratic processes
- Rules of proceedings
- Code of Conduct training
- Meeting participation

- 4.2 In addition, general and bespoke training sessions, were also delivered through external providers such as the WLGA, James Button (Licensing) or internally with Council Officers:

- Understanding Local Government Finance
- Elected Members Pension Scheme
- Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding
- Planning and Development
- Licensing
- Members Safety
- Information Management
- Scrutiny Questioning Skills
- Scrutiny Chairing Skills
- Accessing the Members Portal
- Welsh Language Skills
- Equality and Diversity

- 4.3 These training sessions were undertaken both virtually and through the hybrid approach and at various times to accommodate Members with their personal and business commitments. All power point slides/handouts were disseminated

following the training sessions and in cases where Members were unable to attend, individual 1-1 sessions were arranged.

- 4.4 Feedback forms were circulated to Members following the sessions in order to fully evaluate the training, a process which will assist the Council Business Unit to understand how effective the training sessions have been as well as to identify any gaps in learning.
- 4.5 Members were also surveyed on the comprehensive Induction Programme to ascertain the relevance/length/content of the sessions and where, if any, improvements could be made for future induction training programmes. Overall, 87% of Members said they were satisfied with the delivery, timings and content of the training.
- 4.6 All recordings and training materials in respect of the Induction Program will be available on the Members Portal for Members future reference. Developments are underway to see if the training can be 'tagged' under each Members profile on the portal so that Members can clearly see which training they attended.

## **5 MEMBER PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW**

- 5.1 The Head of Democratic Services, along with colleagues in the Council Business Unit have taken forward the Member Personal Development Review process with Elected Members and for the first time, includes co-opted Members. The process is nearing completion with a handful of Members yet to meet.
- 5.2 The reviews have been conducted virtually and have been well received by those Members that have completed the process. The Head of Democratic Services would like to thank all Members for their time and contributions at these meetings.
- 5.3 The reviews are confidential in nature and are an opportunity for Members to discuss support and training opportunities as well as discussing Members wellbeing. The majority of Members have asked for a follow up meeting, which the Head of Democratic Services has agreed to provide. This will provide further opportunities for Members to discuss support arrangements and general wellbeing.
- 5.4 A detail Training programme identifying training requested and how this is to be accommodated (ie through 1:1 training or all Member briefing session) is being developed following the information received during the meetings.
- 5.5 To date, most Members are supportive of refresher training following the Council AGM in respect of scrutiny, planning and licensing. A number of ICT support requests were identified through the process which have been actioned. Digital training and social media training is also a common request by Members, as well as a better understanding of the Councils budget.
- 5.6 Forms of good practice by Members have also been identified through the process and where possible, such ways of working will look to be shared to all Members to further assist them in their roles.

## **6 ADDITIONAL TRAINING**

6.1 The Council's Governance and Audit Committee have agreed its programme for learning and development to support the delivery of its Terms of Reference, during its meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2023. Examples of the Learning and Development Areas to be undertaken include:

- Risk Management
- Complaints Handling
- Fraud and Corruption
- Financial Management and Accounting
- Governance
- External Audit and Internal Audit

6.2 A number of pre-Council surgeries have been taken forward to assist Members with any digital support that they require. It is the intention for further pre-Committee surgeries to take place in the new Municipal Year.

6.3 Data Cymru have provided opportunities for 2 delegates per Authority to attend 'data training for Councillors'. These spaces were taken forward by 2 Members of the Council's overview and Scrutiny Committee due to their scrutiny of the Council's Performance and Resources reports.

6.4 The Council are currently working towards becoming an Autism Aware organisation. Autism Aware is an accreditation that shows customers and staff that we are an inclusive organisation that looks to support its staff and customers. The scheme aims to increase knowledge and awareness of the needs of individuals with autism. All Cabinet Members and Members of the Council's Senior Leadership Team have completed this training and it is the intention for this training to be rolled out to all Elected Members by the summer. In completing this training, there is an opportunity for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council to become the first Autism Aware certified Council (Elected Members) in Wales.

6.5 Six Elected Members are undertaking regular Welsh classes with the Council's Welsh language tutor.

6.6 Member Briefing Session – A number of briefing sessions have been taken forward to assist Members with their role.

- a. Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (23.11.22) – Winter pressures
- b. Children's Services residential transformation strategy. During March, a number of briefing sessions were hosted for Members (both virtually and hybrid) providing Members the opportunity to find out more about the ambition of the residential transformation strategy, the duties to look after young people and to support Elected Members in responding to any queries from constituents.
- c. Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust (29.03.23) – Winter Pressures

- 6.7 Secure by Design (SBD) from Design Out Crime Officers from South Wales Police, provided a training session in March in advance of a planning Committee meeting which all Members were invited to attend. SBD is the official police security initiative that works to improve the security of buildings and their immediate surroundings to provide safe places to live, work, shop and visit. South Wales Police had approached RCT Planning on several Planning Applications within the Borough and were keen to develop the partnership further by presenting to Members. Members of the planning committee have found this training to be useful when considering applications before them.
- 6.8 Training in respect of the Council's Winter Maintenance plan was presented to Members on the 15th November 2022
- 6.9 Training sessions on the Modern Gov Voting app have been taken forward through a number of different settings, including 1:1 sessions with Cabinet Members , Democratic Services Members and Planning Committee Members. It will be the intention to revisit this training, following the conclusion of the review of the voting application opportunities taken forward by the Head of Democratic Services.
- 6.10 Treasury Management training was provided to all Members on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022
- 6.11 Training has recently been provided by the Head of Democratic Services to the Plaid Cymru group following a specific request in respect of 'Notice of Motion'.
- 6.12 The Council have taken forward their allotted allocation on the WLGA Leadership Academy.

## **7 FUTURE TRAINING**

- 7.1 Following the AGM training will be 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 any potential 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 will also be provided in respect of Planning and Development and training in respect of Licensing.
- 7.2 Future briefing sessions will be taken forward prior to full Council meetings to assist Members in their role. A draft programme is outlined below which may be subject to change to take into consideration any emerging priorities:

Month	Subject
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June	Trivallis Update
July	Housing Allocation
<b>August Recess</b>	
September	Council Budget and Reserves (MTFP)
October	Council Winter Maintenance Plan
November	TBC

- 7.3 With the increase in phishing and cyber attacks on the Council and the targeting of Elected Members, an ICT course on Cyber Security and Staying Safe in a digital world will be made available to Members.
- 7.4 Work is being undertaken by the Council Business Unit and the Council's Performance team to develop a climate change toolkit to assist Members in scrutinising reports with the Climate Change agenda in mind. In addition, an ICT course in respect of Climate Change is currently being developed and will be rolled out to all Elected Members to assist with their knowledge base in this important area.
- 7.5 A training session will be taken forward by the Council's Monitoring Officer and Council Business Unit to provide Members with further guidance on the completion of Declarations of Interest and the importance of updating declarations within the 28 day period.
- 7.6 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 training on digital devices, Training on the Members Portal (once recent developments have been completed). 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 be provided to Members.
- 7.7 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 available to assist Members.
- 7.8 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. Free Short online taster courses will also be promoted to Members through the Members weekly update, which introduce everyday words and phrases for Members to use on a daily basis.

- 7.9 A mock Code of Conduct hearing has been scheduled for Members of the Standards Committee to assist them in taking forward their role. This training is being delivered on a joint basis with both RCT Council and Merthyr Tydfil Council Standards Members.
- 7.10 The Council are currently developing an online data library. Once developed, training will be provided to Members on how to access and use the data library.
- 7.11 Work is also ongoing to support the training needs identified through the PDR process, with training to be held on a one to one basis or full Members training if deemed appropriate.
- 7.12 Where appropriate, training sessions will be recorded and will be available for Members to view through the Members portal.
- 7.13 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.

## **8 EVALUATING TRAINING**

- 8.1 As a form of good practice, the Council Business Unit circulate training evaluation forms to assist in gauging the training provided to Members, however open feedback is always welcome.
- 8.2 Evaluation forms were circulated to all Members following the induction training programme at the beginning of the Municipal Year.
- 8.3 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.

## **9 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 9.1 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.

## **10 CONSULTATION**

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

## **11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 11.1 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.

## **12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 None

## **13. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

- 13.1 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.
- 13.2 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.

## **14 CONCLUSION**

- 14.1 The Council Business unit will continue to support Members with any training opportunities identified to assist Members in undertaking their roles.
- 14.2 Members are reminded that they may request any form of training that they feel would assist them in undertaking their role to the Head of Democratic Services.



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SERVICES & COMMUNICATION**

Free Standing Matter.