



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

1st MAY 2024

MEMBER'S TRAINING - MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

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 delivery of the Council's Member Development Programme 2023 – 2024, which looks to assist Members with the skills necessary to undertake their roles.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) Consider the update provided in respect of the provision of training;
- (ii) Provide comment on the content and delivery of the 2023 – 2024 Member Development Programme;
- (iii) Note that the recently conducted Members Annual Survey 2024 and the forthcoming Member Personal Development Reviews are utilised as conduits to gain further information in respect of Members training needs.
- (iv) Agree that following the completion of the 2024 Personal Development Review process, the Draft 2024 – 2025 Member Development Programme is presented to the Democratic Services Committee for consideration and approval.

3. **BACKGROUND**

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.

3.3 The Head of Democratic Services along with colleagues in the Council Business Unit identified training support and opportunities through the Member

Personal Development Review process, which was undertaken with Elected Members in 2023.

- 3.4 Other training opportunities were identified through the Members survey that was undertaken and Members direct requests to the Head of Democratic Services and requests through Committee meetings. Consideration was also given to the Welsh Government Competency Framework and modules identified through this framework as general good practice.
- 3.5 In July 2023 the Head of Democratic Services presented the Committee with a draft [Member Development Programme 2023 – 2024](#), which provided a robust training programme for the Municipal Year.

4 MEMBER TRAINING PROVIDED TO DATE

- 4.1 The table below indicated the training delivered to Members this Municipal Year, organised through the Head of Democratic Services. Following such training, where available, powerpoint presentations were provided to Members as well recordings of the sessions. These recordings will be made available on the Members Portal for future reference.

Name Of Training	Provider	Date	Attendance (Members)
O&S Committee Refresher	In house	24.05.23	7
Education Scrutiny Refresher	In house	26.06.23	15
CCFSP Scrutiny Training	In house	June 23	12
Community Services Scrutiny Refresher	In house	June 23	11
Standards (Mock Code of Conduct Hearing – Joint with RCT & MT Council)	Anthony Collins Solicitors	June 23	5 (RCT)
Planning Refresher	In House	June 23	10
Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs	WLGA	13.07.2023	6
Treasury Management Training	In House	04.09.23	26
CCTM PSB JOSC – Future Generations Act	Future Generations	05.09.23	5
Appeals Refresher	Eversheds	06.09.23	4
Housing Allocation	In House	06.09.23	29
Cyber Security Training	In House	08.09.23	4
Scrutiny Data Training (O&S)	Data Cymru 101	12.09.23	7
Member Support Arrangements	In House	13.09.23	36
Cyber Security	In House	18.09.23	27

Understanding the council's budget	In House	27.09.23	13
Cyber Security	In House	28.09.23	7
Member safety Briefing	SWP	02.10.23	21
Building Control	In House	06.10.23	8
Equality Act Training	WLGA	09.10.23	11
Ombudsman Complaints Training	Ombudsman	10.10.23	20
Cyber Security	SWP	October 23	12
Licensing Committee Training	IN House	17.10.23	15
Well-being session (Sleep)	In House	25.10.23	16
Winter Maintenance	In House	06.11.23	40
Scrutiny Questioning	WLGA	8.11.23	15
Member Briefing: Procurement	In house	13.11.23	9
Safeguarding	IN House	14.11.23	24
Understanding performance data (O&S)	Data Cymru 101	15.11.23	4
Cyber Security	In House	28.11.23	10
Emergency Planning	In House	27.11.23	33
Members Wellbeing DSE guidance	In House	04.12.23	15
Gender Fluidity	Umbrella	11.12.23	10
FGA Training	Future Generations Office	09.01.24	11
FGA Training	Future Generations Office	01.02.24	21
Information Management	In House	05.02.24	11
Emergency Planning	In House	20.02.24	25
Anti Racism Training	No Boundaries	08.03.24	10
Highways	In House	14.03.24	19
Domestic Abuse	In House	20.03.24	12

- 4.2 The Programme outlined a tiered approach with 'open' training (as indicated above) which was open to all Members either through open briefing sessions or through online learning opportunities. 'Bespoke' training requested by individual Members have also been taken forward either through 1:1 settings or smaller group settings depending on the requests received and the nature of the request.
- 4.3 These individual training or smaller groups sessions are not indicated in the table in 4.1, however such sessions have focussed on Time Management Training / Information Management / Introduction to Local Government Finance / Pension Fund / Social Media.

- 4.4 All Members were encouraged to attend the Committee Refresher training that was conducted following the 2023 Council AGM, regardless of whether Members were returning to a Committee membership or were taking part as a new Committee Member. This training was provided for all Scrutiny Committees and Regulatory Committees. We would appreciate Members feedback as to whether this refresher training would be welcomed again this year after the Council AGM, or whether individual training is provided to a Member following a membership change only.
- 4.5 Training has also been delivered to a group of Members who are trialling the Stay Safe App, which will hopefully be rolled out to all Members in the near future.
- 4.6 In addition to the training presented by the Council, the Council Business Unit have been actively seeking opportunities for Members on other training programmes such as the successful WLGA Community Project / Leadership Programme.
- 4.7 Training has been taken forward by the Councils ICT team department with Members following specific training requests and advice on using Council devices and software. Monthly updates are also provided in respect of 'bitesize' workshops through the Councils Digital Team.
- 4.8 The Council Business Units weekly update also provides other training opportunities such as training provided by Data Cymru and the Local Government Association. In addition, any workshops / training delivered in house by the Human Resources department / Councils Equalities and Diversity team are also highlighted to Members.
- 4.9 E-learning opportunities have also been made available through the Councils Source platform, with all Members being provided with log in details to access the array of modules contained within. The Unit have been keen to recommend the completion of 3 specific e-learning modules by Members– Cyber Security , Autism Awareness training and Climate Change.
- 4.10 Promotion of Welsh Language training opportunities have also been provided to Members, with details of physical face to face course and online courses available. These sessions are provided with the aim of increasing participation through the medium of Welsh as part of committee proceedings.
- 4.11 With the move of the Council Headquarters, induction visits were also provided to Members to provide the opportunity for Members to learn of the new working arrangements and opportunities available to Elected Members including training in respect of the Council Chamber voting arrangements.
- 4.12 It was the intention to hold a number of 'informal drop in ' sessions, providing Members with the environment to come together to share good practices, however due to the need to move to virtual only meetings for a number of months due to the relocation of the Council Headquarters, these opportunities were put on hold, however, these will look to be rolled forward to the next Development

Programme. Due to the new facilities within the Council Headquarters, Llys Cadwyn will better support such sessions.

- 4.13 Arrangements were also made for Members to receive the flu vaccine, with health professionals on site at the previous Council Chamber, which coincided with a Members Wellbeing training session.
- 4.14 Working with the Council's Health & Safety department the Council Business Unit were pleased to launch the new guidance for Elected Members on working from home with display screen equipment (DSE) and will continue to promote this important message to Members to undertake the necessary self assessments.
- 4.15 Following Members requests, a list of acronyms associated with Education and Pensions has been compiled to hopefully assist Members when considering future reports on these subjects. This list was further extended to include acronyms from a Governor perspective.
- 4.16 In respect of the Pension Committee, their Terms of Reference require:

"To receive regular training to enable Committee Members to make effective decisions and be fully aware of their statutory and fiduciary responsibilities and their stewardship role."

The Pension Fund maintains a CIPFA Pension 'knowledge and skills' framework, for both elected members and officers involved in the governance arrangements of the Fund. The activity is published in the Fund's Annual report.

- 4.17 Similarly the Council's Governance and Audit Committee Members are also expected to complete necessary training to assist them in undertaking their role. Training updates are provided in the Governance and Audit Committee Annual Report, which will be presented to the Committee in the new Municipal Year.

5 CHALLENGES WITH THE DELIVERY OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.

- 5.1 The 2023 – 2024 Development Programme has been the most comprehensive training programme delivered to date by the Council, and our thanks are given to the officers who have provided their time and expertise in delivering the training and to Members for their attendance and engagement at each session.
- 5.2 There have however been challenges faced in delivering such a comprehensive training programme, which is highlighted below:
- 5.3 Trying to establish a preferred day of the week and time for training is continuing to prove difficult. Where possible the Head of Democratic Services has scheduled training for 4pm, to allow flexibility for Members with several commitments such as work / caring commitments. However, with a very busy Committee calendar in place throughout the Municipal year, combined with the Council's approach to no Committee business / training during school holidays the availability of such 'free evenings' is minimal. The Council Business Unit

have therefore on several occasions delivered duplicate training sessions on different days and times of the week to try and accommodate Members availability.

- 5.4 A 'month ahead' outlook of training is provided to Members, so that Members can view forth coming training, before diary markers and associated details are provided. It is a balance when trying to provide this information, so that it is not provided too early or too late that Members can not commit due to already busy calendars. The Council Business Unit are conscious of the amount of emails generated to Members by the Unit, which can also lead to training opportunities unfortunately being overlooked.
- 5.5 Training sessions have predominantly been delivered virtually again, to try and maximise attendance and due to the Chamber relocation, where all meetings were moved to virtual. Methods of delivery will be reflected upon, following the responses to the Member's Survey.
- 5.6 The feedback on the training provided has been anecdotally positive and we look forward to gaining further intelligence about the training provided over the Municipal Year through the Member Survey. At the start of the year, specific evaluation forms were circulated to Members for completion however, the response rate to these requests were very poor and we will look to alternative methods, potentially through the Members portal to gather this intelligence in future. The Head of Democratic Services always holds an 'open door policy' and welcomes any feedback at any time from Members from any aspect of the support to Members, including the training opportunities provided.
- 5.7 We are confident that we have delivered on the Development Programme for the municipal year, apart from one or two specifics. One area still to be actioned is public speaker training, which was requested by a handful of Members, and we are still looking at options available to take this forward. The Development Programme also outlined the intention to take forward previous planned training, suggested by the Head of Democratic Services in respect of 'Resonant Leadership'. Unfortunately, this training has still not been scheduled due to the fact that the Unit have been delivering upon the training specifically requested by Members through the PDR process or requests made by Committees. It was also felt that with the opportunities made available by the WLGA through the free training on the Community Leadership Programme provided the opportunity for the resonant leadership programme to be put on hold until a more suitable time.
- 5.8 Members views are sought in respect of the Head of Democratic Services, determining via discussion with Group Leader, which areas of training should be 'mandated'. While any areas of training above and the beyond the existing requirements (Such as Code of Conduct) could not enforced, the support and direction within political groups to participate, would make a positive difference in uptake, and the continuous improvements of members skills and knowledge base.

5.9 This arrangement would positively lend itself to our future Members Self-Assessment Framework evaluation.

6 2024 – 2025 MEMBERS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.

- 6.1 At the most recent Group Leaders meeting, Group Leaders supported the continuation of the PDR process through the Head of Democratic Services. The Council Business Unit will therefore shortly commence the arrangements for the undertaking of such reviews and we recommend all Members to engage in this process. The PDRs provides the opportunity for confidential discussions to identify any training or support needs. The PDRS are not an appraisal of a Members role.
- 6.2 To help both Members and Officers in getting the most out of the PDR a range of questions have been provided within the Members Survey for Members to complete. This information will help inform discussions and will remain confidential at all times.
- 6.3 If Members agreed, opportunities could be made for Members to undertake a training needs analysis with colleagues in the Council's Development team to further highlight any specific training needs.
- 6.4 Through the responses provided during the Member survey and the PDR process, the Head of Democratic Services should have sufficient information to be able to collate the Member Development Programme for 2024 – 2025. As in previous years, this programme will remain fluid to allow for any necessary changes to be made, to reflect changing priorities and requests of Members.
- 6.5 Through the use of the Member Portal and the Training Calendar contained within, identifying training opportunities across the municipal year should assist Members with their diary commitments and provide a clearer picture of the training opportunities provided to Members. The Portal booking system will provide details of forthcoming training as well as the training tracker, meaning that Members will be able to access this information in once succinct place.
- 6.6 Elected Member learning and development will continue to be resourced from the allocated Member Development budget. Where appropriate, in house training will be provided by Directorates if the topic relates to their service areas. The Council will look to capitalise on any free training that is offered by the WLGA and other organisations as appropriate.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 7.1 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.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Members PDRs were conducted to allow information to be gathered in respect of any training requirements to assist Members in their roles.
- 8.2 Members should continue to advise of any training requests at any opportunity and discussions will be taken forward by the Head of Democratic Services with Group Leaders to ensure all Members are supported with development opportunities.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 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.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There is a statutory responsibility placed upon the Head of Democratic Services to provide sufficient training and development support to elected members. This includes conducting or facilitating Personal Development Reviews with all elected members.

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

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 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.

13 CONCLUSION

- 13.1 The Council Business unit will continue to support Members with any training opportunities identified to assist Members in undertaking their roles.
- 13.2 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.