



monmouthshire
sir fynwy

Elected Member Training and Development Strategy

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Introduction

The expectations placed upon elected members operating in the current local government climate has never been greater. With the challenges that local authorities face in maintaining and delivering services effectively, and within budget, has led to Councillors requiring skills and knowledge in a diverse range of topics and roles. Throughout Wales, Authorities are striving to provide the best possible support for their Councillors to enable them to meet these challenges, be that through skills and knowledge development as well as support services and facilities.

The Elected Member Training and Development Strategy sets out the support mechanisms that Monmouthshire County Council offers its elected members. The strategy covers the development path councillors can engage with from induction for newly elected members, continual professional development throughout the term of office via personal development reviews as well as workshops/seminars for topical issues as they arise.

The strategy aims to assist in equipping all elected members with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet future challenges.

Expectations of the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy

Elected members are an integral part of ensuring that the strategic aims and objectives of the Council are met in carrying out their duties of making local decisions and delivering better outcomes for the citizens of Monmouthshire.

The Council is working to support the development of all its elected members to ensure they are able to meet the demands of their role both in the present and for any future expectations. The Council is committed to ensuring that;

Elected members have equal access to training and development opportunities during their term of office

All elected member regardless of length of service, party membership or post held within the political framework will have equal access to training and development opportunities be that as a collective group of members through workshops and seminars or individually tailored development programmes through the use of personal development reviews.

There is a clear and structured approach to elected member training delivered through an ongoing programming of events and activities to support the development.

All members understand the development opportunities available to them upon election and throughout their term of office and how the Council can support them in their role.

To offer elected members the ability to self assess their skills and knowledge against a recognised framework of expectations and agreed role descriptions.

To help members identify areas for development and understand the roles within the political framework, supporting documents will be available to members to understand the expectations placed upon them and understand what the Council can do to support members in these areas. As a result, members will be encouraged to identify their own development needs.

Elected members have access to appropriate learning and development activities to enable them to acquire the skills and knowledge required to carry out the role effectively.

To ensure members get the most from the development opportunities, the Council will provide effective, planned, appropriately resourced, monitored and evaluated training.

Roles and Responsibilities

Head of Democratic Services/Local Democracy Manager

It is the role of the Head of Democratic Services to produce and monitor the Member Development Programme, to collate the learning and development needs of elected members use these needs to inform the annual training programme and ongoing member development.

Democratic Services Committee

The Democratic Services Committee will provide overall direction to the strategy and development of elected members.

The committee will review the members' induction programme in consultation with all elected members to ensure that it is fit for purpose as well as carry out an evaluation of the programme. The committee will also be tasked with identifying which modules of the induction programme are mandatory for some or all members (for example, planning committee members must participate in the planning modules of the induction programme).

The Democratic Services Committee will also review during the term of Council;

- The Elected Member Training and Development Strategy
- Annual Development Programme
- Member Role Descriptions
- Councillor Competency Framework

Political Leaders

Political group leaders should encourage all members from within their group to participate in the learning and development programme and actively support its members in doing so.

Directorates and Departments

All departments within the Council are responsible for identifying and delivering service specific training to elected members. This can be delivered in many forms and examples of services informing members include:

- Formal group training for all members incorporated into the induction programme
- Delivering ad hoc topic specific workshops and seminars to elected members
- Attending committees to inform members about specific services/topics
- Developing information hubs on the Council intranet and directing Councillors to the information
- Circulating newsletters/fact sheets to members and providing regular updates to them.

Elected Members

Elected members are responsible for;

- Identifying their own development needs in conjunction with the supporting self assessment documentation
- Seeking opportunities to improve their effectiveness and increase their potential
- Attending arranged learning and development opportunities

- Participating in the Personal Development Review or Training Needs Assessment process
- Sharing their knowledge and skills with their peers
- Reviewing their learning and development activities

What will we do to support Elected Members?

Pre election process

Induction Programme

Prior to the ordinary election of councillors, Democratic Services Committee will review a draft induction programme for all members to participate in following the election. The induction programme will cover all mandatory processes and training required of members as well as offer less formal information sharing sessions.

The induction programme will always include;

Chief Executive welcome and administration

The initial session of the induction programme will commence with an introduction from the Chief Executive and SLT and will provide members with a brief introduction to the Council and a “who’s who”. The session will inform elected members of the Councils objectives and values and will offer a break out session to meet Chief Officers and Service Managers and gain an understanding of the wide ranging services the Council covers.

This initial session will also include the mandatory signing of the declaration of acceptance of office, register and receive a brief overview of ICT equipment, gather the required payroll information, photographs for the website and be issued security passes to access Council buildings.

Mandatory Training Sessions

In addition to the chief executive welcome above due to the need to sign the declaration of acceptance of office, mandatory induction sessions include;

Code of Conduct & Ethics

All members are required to undertake code of conduct training to be aware of the framework within which they must operate and expected behaviours and actions of being an elected member. Members will receive training on their declaration of interests, the standard committee and local government ombudsman and the role of the monitoring officer.

Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding

All members are required to attend this session covering the legislative framework and legal expectations of elected members in the safeguarding and corporate parenting duties. Members will receive information on the Councils safeguarding policy and steps the authority are taking to help looked after children.

Committee Specific Training

Whilst all induction sessions are open to all members, some of the induction settings are mandatory for certain members depending on the committee that they are a member of. Members sitting on those committees who have not undertaken the mandatory training are able to participate in the meeting of the committees but will not be allowed to vote on an issue at the meeting until the training has been completed.

Local Government Finance and Audit Committee All members of Audit Committee

Planning Committee Training
Licensing Training
Standards Committee Training

All members of Planning Committee
All members of Licensing Committee
All members of Standards Committee

Feedback from new members at previous induction programmes is that there is too much information too soon and that newly elected members were unaware of the expectations placed upon them so soon. To assist members with this, the induction programme at the 2017 election was minimised the face to face training requirements and the Council developed an online library of guidance and training materials for members to self develop in their own time. Additionally, with every valid nomination paper submitted to stand for election, included within the candidate information pack was an overview of the induction programme including a timetable and agendas for all training sessions so that individuals can prepare for the induction programme accordingly.

Candidate Briefing Sessions

Prior to the ordinary election of councillors, a number of briefing sessions will be held for all potential candidates, their agents and political party workers. The sessions will cover the essential processes and expectations of the election as well an overview from the chair of Democratic Services Committee on the expectations and commitment needed to be a Councillor. Draft details regarding the member induction programme, the WLGA be a councillor guide and any other relevant information will be available for attendees at the sessions.

Evaluation of induction programme

Democratic Services Committee will review the effectiveness of the induction programme, make recommendations for any changes to future induction programmes and will also recommend follow up areas for training and development following completion of the induction programme.

Outside Bodies

All elected members that are appointed to outside bodies are provided with contact information and, where available, provided with the induction pack of the outside body. Guidance information packs produced by the outside bodies and WLGA are all saved in the members online library for all members to access.

PDR and Training Needs Assessment

Upon completion of the induction programme members will be offered the opportunity to undertake a Personal Development Review (PDR) or participate in a training needs assessment. [Democratic Services Committee agreed to the PDR process at its meeting in September 2019.](#) The PDR offers all members the opportunity to further training and development in a tailored programme specifically for them. For those members not wishing to undertake a PDR, a training needs assessment will be circulated to all members offering them the opportunity to put forward recommendations for areas of training and development. In assessing the responses to both the PDR and training needs assessment, an annual development programme will be agreed by Democratic Services Committee which will set out the collective development opportunities for all members, whilst individual training needs will be agreed with individual members as part of the PDR process.

Annual reviews of the development programme and PDRs will be conducted by Democratic Services Committee throughout the term of office to assess its effectiveness.

Online Member Guidance Portal

A dedicated area on the Council intranet has been developed as single point of contact for elected members to access to gain information on a wide range of issues. Some of the topics included in the members area are:

- ICT help and assistance
- GDPR/ DBS guidance
- Information on specific projects/initiatives
- Council telephone directory
- Health and Safety guidance for members
- Annual Reports
- Video library of seminars and workshops
- Training and development

Also included in the members area is an online library where guidance documents covering a wide range of topics are stored to allow members to access them in their own time. Documents include:

- Outside bodies guidance and information
- Internal policies and guidance
- WLGA guidance materials
- Payroll information including IRP reports

E-Learning

All authorities in Wales are looking to implement through the All Wales Academy platform. Currently there is accessibility, functionality and content issues with the platform that currently do not lend itself to rolling out to members.

The Council will continue to work with other authorities and the WLGA in introducing e-learning for the next term of Council.

Annual Reports

A dedicated section of the members intranet area supports members producing their annual reports. Democratic Services will pre-populate an annual report template with statistical information (attendance, committee membership, training and development etc) allowing elected members to populate the template with actions/achievements they have completed during the Council year. All members have the opportunity to publish an annual report and those who do so will have their annual report published on the Council website on their councillor page.

Members Workshops/Seminars

Prior to meetings of the Council, all elected members will be offered to attend informal workshops/seminars to receive information from services on topical issues. Examples of workshops held for members include;

- Brexit seminars
- Local Development Plan (LDP) seminars
- Cardiff Capitol Region City Deal
- Gypsy and Traveller Workshop
- Waste
- Universal Credit
- Velothon

Members workshop/seminars will also be held to gather council wide contributions to consultations from outside organisations and discuss the proposals in an informal manner. Consultation responses held this way include;

- Electoral Reform
- Local Government Reform

Forward Work Programmes

The Council will publish forward work programmes for Council, Executive decisions and scrutiny committees. The work programmes will highlight decisions that are to be made by the authority in the coming months.

The forward work programmes will be used to identify any training and development opportunities that members may need to understand the work of the Council and the decisions being taken.

Streaming / Remote Attendance

The Council will live stream all meetings of the Council where the technology is available to do so. In addition to the live stream, recordings of council meetings will be uploaded to the Councils youtube channel to allow anytime access to all Council meetings. Therefore elected members who are unable to attend a committee meeting are able to revisit the recording to keep up to date with topical issues discussed at the committee.

The Council has also amended its constitution and provided the relevant technology to its committee rooms and elected members to enable them to remote attend a meeting and participate in that meeting if they were unable to attend in person.

Mentoring

At the outset of each Council term, group leaders will be asked to nominate mentors from within their groups to support newly elected members establish themselves within the Council and have a single point of contact for information sharing. Both mentors and mentees will be supported by democratic services in co-ordinating and assisting the mentoring process and appropriate training provided to mentors at the outset.

Returning members that do not require the mentoring scheme will be offered personal training and development through the PDR process and training needs assessment.

Recording Activities

Democratic Services will record all training activities, attendance at committees and member workshop attendance for all its elected members. This ensures elected members can review their training and development activities as well as allow democratic services to pre-populate the members annual report.