

**Report To:** County Council

**Date of Meeting:** 9 September 2014

**Lead Member / Officer:** Cllr. Barbara Smith

**Report Author:** Eleri Woolford

**Title:** Member Training

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### **1. What is the report about?**

The report gives an update position on Member Training matters including Mandatory Sessions and Personal Development Plans and Reviews

### **2. What is the reason for making this report?**

A decision is required as to which sessions are to be classed as Mandatory for all Members and which sessions are to be classed as Mandatory for specific roles

To update Members regarding the Personal Development Plan/Review Process

### **3. What are the Recommendations?**

**That Council endorse the recommendations in relation to Generic Mandatory Training and Role Specific Mandatory Training, together with sanctions for non-attendance at 'Mandatory' training.**

**That Council endorse the recommendations relating to Personal Development Plans/Reviews**

### **4. Report details**

4.1 In 2008, new Councillors felt that the training programme was inadequate. An improved Training Programme for the new 2012 Council was devised after extensive consultation with Chief Executive, Leader, Lead Members, CET and SLT, and the new Programme was implemented in May 2012. This prioritised training in first few months so that crucial/mandatory training would be well attended, thus ensuring that Members received the necessary information for appropriate Committees etc.

4.2 Attendance at Training Events has generally been very poor, but feedback on sessions provided has been extremely positive. Several sessions have had to be cancelled due to them being undersubscribed – this has been particularly embarrassing and potentially damaging to the Council's reputation, in particular the cancellation of five of the WLGA's sessions - 2 Chairing Skills, 1 Group Leader Session, 1 Scrutiny Chairs and 1 Scrutiny Questioning skills. Three WLGA Equalities/EQIA sessions have been held this year, with only 13 Members having

now attended. Officer time preparing Training Sessions which are then cancelled due to poor take-up, together with the cancelling of external training, is a poor use of resources.

4.3 A Member Training Workshop was held in April 2013 in order to ascertain:

- \* What the barriers were in relation to Members attending Sessions
- \* What Sessions Members deemed Mandatory and Sanctions for non-attendance
- \* Personal Development Plans/Reviews
- \* 2012/13 and 2013/14 Training Plans

4.4 A further session was arranged in May 2013 but was cancelled due to low attendance figures. A Questionnaire was sent to those Members who did not attend the Workshop in order to capture their views on the issues discussed.

Members attending Workshop	-	16	(34%)
Members completing Questionnaires	-	22	(47%)
Non-responders	-	9	(19%)

4.5 The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 at section 7 requires each local authority to secure the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for its members. Guidance provided by Welsh Government suggests that the following topics should be included. The list is not exhaustive.

- Induction.
- Role and functions of the executive, the council and its officers.
- Overview and scrutiny.
- Information technology.
- Code of conduct.
- The role of a councillor as a local member.
- Public engagement.
- Equality and diversity training.

4.6 Appendix A attached, shows the numbers/% attendance at each of the above Sessions (if held). Appendix B attached, shows numbers/% attendance at all sessions held to date

The Training Sessions which have, since 2012, been deemed as 'Mandatory' are Code of Conduct ( 93.6% att. in 2012), Finance (44.6% att. in 2012), Constitution (48% att in 2012), Safeguarding/Corp Parenting (51% att in 2012), Licensing (for committee members (90% att in 2012), Planning (for committee members (93.1% att in 2012),

4.7 Following the Member Training Workshop and subsequent Questionnaire, Members' views on Mandatory Training are detailed below:

**Mandatory Sessions highlighted/suggested by Members during the Workshop in April**

Chairman skills
Scrutinising (including Corporate Governance)
Code of Conduct (in constitution)
Corporate Parenting
Child Protection
Safeguarding
Planning and Planning Appeals
Equality Impact Assessment
Equalities
Budget Planning / Finance
Committee Specific Training
Media Training
Group Leader Training
Specific training for Cabinet members
Licensing
Confidentiality around child protection
All iPad training

**In addition to the above, completed Questionnaires highlight/suggest that the below sessions should also be Mandatory**

Relevant IT Training
Corporate Plan
Council Structure
Role of a County Councillor
The importance of confidentiality
New Planning Regulations
Welsh language and culture
Introduction as Councillor – What we can do and limitations

4.8 It is proposed that there will be **‘Generic’ Mandatory Training** which must be attended by all Members.

**Proposed Sessions:**

Code of Conduct  
 Safeguarding/Corporate Parenting/Child Protection  
 Finance  
 Equalities  
 Induction (Structure of Council, Constitution, Data Protection)

4.9 It is also proposed that there will be **Role Specific Mandatory Training, over and above Generic Mandatory Training** which must be attended by various committee members, with all Members welcome to attend if of interest.

## Proposed sessions:

Chairing Skills (for Chairs/Vice Chairs of all committees)  
Scrutiny (Chairing)  
Group Leaders  
Cabinet (to include Public Speaking, talking to Media)  
Planning Committee  
Licensing Committee

(Chairs Training to take place in February each year so that prospective new Chairs will be eligible for nomination for future Chairs' role. Further Scrutiny Chairs training will also be held in May)

4.10 The question of Sanctions/Penalties for non-attendance at Mandatory Training was discussed at the Workshop and Members' views ascertained via the Questionnaires. The suggestions received are set out below:

\* Training attendance statistics to be supplied to Group Leaders on a regular basis – Group Leader to follow up with Members - for regular discussion/review at Council Briefing

\* Non-attendance to be referred to Standards Committee/Corporate Governance Committee

4.11 Clearly, if a training session is to be mandatory it must be provided on more than one occasion and at different times or locations to ensure so far as possible that every member has a reasonable opportunity to attend taking into account their work or caring responsibilities. This is true of all training opportunities but is particularly important where training is classed as mandatory. Training will where possible be made available electronically either as an e-learning package or by the filming of training events to be accessed through the intranet.

4.12 Section 7 of the Measure also requires each authority **to make available** to each member, an annual review of the member's training and development needs. The review must include an opportunity for an interview with a person qualified to provide advice about the training needs of a member of a Local Authority. Guidance suggests the creation of Personal Development Plans and Reviews.

Following the Workshop and Questionnaires, 31 Members (66%) are in favour of having a PDR.

Members' preference for persons undertaking reviews are as follows:

4	-	Officers to undertake review
16	-	Officers to undertake review (with option of having Group Leader present)
2	-	Officers with Group Leaders
6	-	Group Leaders
1	-	Group Leader or Leader
2	-	No preference

A Member/Officer PDP/PDR Training Session was held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June, run by Sarah Titcombe of the WLGA. The Session was attended by the relevant Member Support and Development Officers and each of the Group Leaders and one Deputy Group Leader. Appendix D attached provides further guidance in relation to the PDR/PDP Process. Appendix E attached is a copy of the proposed Personal Development Plan Form to be completed by those Members who wish to have PDR. Appendix F details the timetable/process for completion of forms and the holding of reviews, together with a flowchart of the process.

#### **5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?**

Members are at the heart of the decision making process and it is therefore vital that they are fully briefed and trained in the important role they carry out on behalf of their communities. Ensuring that Members receive the correct training for their specific roles is of paramount importance, thus enabling them to make informed choices and decisions which relate to each of the Corporate Priorities.

#### **6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?**

The cost will be contained within existing budget provision. There will be no direct impact on other services.

#### **7. What consultations have been carried out and has an Equality Impact Assessment Screening been undertaken?**

Members have been consulted by means of the Workshop and Questionnaire referred to above. This Member Training Report was also discussed at Cabinet Briefing on the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and at Council Briefing on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014.

#### **8. Chief Finance Officer Statement**

It is important that members are able to make informed decisions. All costs must be contained within available resources.

#### **9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?**

Potentially, there are many risks for Members and the Council if they are not in possession of the relevant and up to date information which informs their decision making. This could result in matters being reported to the Ombudsman. This highlights the importance of Members attending training sessions, especially those deemed as Mandatory.

#### **10. Power to make the Decision**

Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011