

Report to	Democratic Services Committee
Date of meeting	9 June 2023
Lead Member	Councillor Julie Matthews, Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities
Head of Service	Lisa Jones, Interim Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Report author	Steve Price, Democratic Services Manager
Title	Council Policy on Member Training

1. What is the report about?

1.1. This report provides information on member training and development issues.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. The purpose of this report is to obtain the views and recommendations of the Democratic Services Committee, prior to consideration of member training by full Council.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That the Democratic Services Committee:

- 3.1. Notes the report and highlights member training topics to be covered in future.
- 3.2. Makes appropriate recommendations to full Council on mandatory member training requirements.

4. Report details

Introduction

- 4.1. A programme of member inductions, training and development commenced immediately after the Council elections in May 2022. The sessions delivered as part of the initial induction for new and returning members included training on the Council's Code of Conduct, members' ICT provision, familiarisation with services, equalities and diversity, safeguarding, and an introduction to Scrutiny. Training was also provided for undertaking certain roles as members (for example, for members of the Planning or Governance and Audit Committees, and acting as a 'corporate parent'). Training opportunities have continued with sessions for Licensing Committee members, Revisiting Scrutiny and Treasury Management.
- 4.2. The regular all-member Council Workshops have provided a forum for training and information sharing on a varied range of topics such as climate change and ecological issues; the Council's budget setting process; the Council's operational structure; and strategic regional public services work. Further Council Workshops are planned.
- 4.3. Individual departments of the Council routinely provide training for members in a variety of forms for the services they deliver. The training provided by the Council's own officers and departments contributes by far the biggest portion of member training, though external training and facilitators are also used when appropriate.

E-Learning

- 4.4. The development of e-learning resources for members has been coordinated nationally by a Member Support Officer Network in conjunction with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA); and a national e-learning platform for members is now available.
- 4.5. A draft Guide to accessing the e-learning modules was circulated to members of the Democratic Services Committee in March 2023, for the purpose of checking the functionality of the Guide and the e-learning site. The draft Guide is attached as appendix 1.

Welsh Local Government Association

- 4.6. The WLGA provides a range of support to members including guidance materials and training programmes. The Council has previously worked with the WLGA, particularly on training for Scrutiny and Cabinet roles, for example with Scrutiny chairing and questioning skills sessions. The Council also participates in the WLGA's 'Leadership Programme for Councillors', in conjunction with Academi Wales and the Welsh Government. The Leadership Programme is for councillors in leadership positions, to equip them with the latest thinking in political leadership and the knowledge and skills they need to undertake their roles. Where the WLGA has the expertise, it will also consider requests for bespoke training.

Co-opted Members

- 4.7. A co-opted member or lay member is a person who is not a councillor (having not been elected to the Council), but in line with statutory requirements, sits on one of the Council's committees. The Council has co-opted members on the three Scrutiny committees for education business; on the Standards Committee; and on the Governance and Audit Committee. It is a legal requirement for the chairs of the Governance and Audit and Standards Committees to be lay members.
- 4.8. The Council's Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Group recently asked that the education Scrutiny and Governance and Audit co-opted members be invited to Scrutiny training events. Scrutiny and Governance and Audit co-opted members attended the 'Scrutiny Revisited' training session with councillors in April 2023, and further Scrutiny training is planned on Scrutiny Chairing Skills; Scrutiny Questioning Skills; and Effective Scrutiny for Better Outcomes.

Mandatory and Discretionary Training

- 4.9. The Council may wish to identify certain training as being mandatory for all members, or for members undertaking certain roles. Attending at least one training session on the Members' Code of Conduct during each full term of office is mandatory, as a result of the requirement being included within the Council's Code of Conduct. The Council has mandatory training for members of the Planning Committee by agreeing to the principle of committee members only voting on planning matters if they have

undertaken sufficient, recent planning training. This is set at two planning training sessions in a twelve-month period.

4.10. To enable members to fulfil their obligations, any mandatory training would need to be offered at appropriate times and frequencies, and over a realistic timeframe. The line-management and training policy arrangements for staff are not appropriate for members as they are elected office-holders rather than employees. However, Council could decide to enforce a mandatory training policy for members, for example by:

- The provision of training records to the group leaders
- Reporting on mandatory training records to the Democratic Services Committee
- Publishing training attendance and non-compliance with mandatory requirements
- Groups considering training issues in their allocation of roles to their members.

4.11. The former Council in 2018 decided that the following would be mandatory training courses:

- Code of Conduct - once a term.
- Planning – two training events each year (for Planning Committee Members).
- Licensing - two training events each year (for Licensing Committee Members).
- Data Protection and GDPR – annual training but subsequently amended to once a term.
- Local Government Finance - once a term.
- Safeguarding - once a term.
- Corporate Parenting – once a term.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

5.1. This report does not directly contribute to the Corporate Priorities but appropriately trained and supported elected members will contribute to the Council's performance at strategic, policy development and decision-taking levels.

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

6.1. Most of the training plan is provided by the Council's officers. This does not require extra funding but does require officer time and that is an important factor in the size and complexity of the training programme that can be delivered. For some training external facilitation may be required which would need to be contained within the member training budget.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

7.1. A well-being impact assessment is not required for this report.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

8.1. Member training and development issues are reported to the Democratic Services Committee and full Council.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. A Chief Finance Officer Statement is not required for this report.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

10.1. Training and development are intended to equip members and co-opted members with the skills and knowledge required for the different roles of the modern councillor and lay member. Without appropriate training and development there is also a greater risk of successful challenges to decisions and of complaints. As mentioned in section 6 above, to a large extent the provision of member training relies on the capacity of Council staff to provide training on their areas of work and expertise.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.