

Report to	Democratic Services Committee
Date of meeting	22 March 2024
Lead Member	Councillor Julie Matthews, Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities
Head of Service	Catrin Roberts, Head of Corporate Support Services: People
Report author	Steve Price, Democratic Services Manager
Title	Council Policy on Member Training

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. In June 2023 the Democratic Services Committee considered member training and reported its views to full Council in July 2023. This report provides information on the unresolved aspects of member training.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to obtain and report to full Council the recommendations of the Democratic Services Committee on a Council policy for mandatory member training.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That the Democratic Services Committee makes appropriate recommendations to full Council on any 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, equality 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 the regular availability of new or repeat training and development sessions for members.

Mandatory and Discretionary Training

4.2. The Council could decide to designate 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 because the requirement is included within the Council's Code of Conduct. The Council has continued to operate mandatory training for members of the Planning Committee, because of the quasi-judicial role being undertaken.

4.3. 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 councillors as they are elected office-holders rather than employees. However, Council could support 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, the Governance and Audit Committee or the Standards Committee.
- Publishing records of non-compliance with mandatory requirements.
- Groups encouraging the completion of mandatory training and considering this in their allocation of roles to their members.

4.4. The previous Council 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.

4.5. In June 2023 the Democratic Services Committee recommended the setting of reasonable mandatory training requirements for appropriate subjects and roles. The committee thought the use of 'once a term' as a timescale for mandatory training to be completed as being unsuitable. The committee supported a role for the political groups and group leaders in encouraging compliance with any mandatory training requirements and supported the use of appropriate sanctions for non-compliance.

4.6 In July 2023 full Council considered member training issues and the committee's recommendations but it was unable to agree a Council policy on mandatory training and associated sanctions. Council therefore referred member training for consideration by the group leaders, who subsequently requested that a survey be issued to clarify the views of members.

4.7 The results of the survey, which was opened in February and closed on the 8 March and was open to councillors, senior officers and lay members, are attached as appendix 1.

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 sessions external facilitation may be required which would need to be contained

within the member training budget. E-learning modules for some topics are also available.

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. The political group leaders have been consulted for their views on member training.

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.