

Report to	Council
Date of meeting	10 September 2024
Lead Member	Councillor Julie Matthews, Deputy Leader and 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 March 2024 the Democratic Services Committee considered issues related to member training. This report provides information on a proposed mandatory training policy for members.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. The purpose is to 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 Council adopts, with any appropriate amendments, the draft Council Policy on Member Training, attached as appendix 1 to this report.

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

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is available in Welsh.

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, development and e-learning 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 adopt a mandatory training policy for members with appropriate measures for dealing with any instances of non-compliance with the policy.
- 4.4 The previous Council decided that the following would be mandatory training courses:
- Code of Conduct - once a term for all members
 - 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 for all members
 - Local Government Finance - once a term for all members
 - Safeguarding - once a term for all members
 - Corporate Parenting – once a term for all members
- 4.5 The Democratic Services Committee re-considered member training after full Council had referred member training issues to the group leaders, who requested that a survey be issued to clarify the views of members. The results of the survey, which

was conducted in February and March this year and was open to councillors, senior officers and lay members, are attached as appendix 2.

- 4.6 In March 2024, the Democratic Services Committee recommended the setting of mandatory training requirements for the current Council for certain subjects and roles. The committee supported the involvement of the political groups and group leaders in encouraging compliance with mandatory training requirements. To further this, the committee supported the provision of training records to the group leaders and for the political groups to consider mandatory training issues when allocating seats and roles to their members.

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. The Welsh Local Government Association provides a number of key professional training and development courses.

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 and councillors, lay-members and senior officers have been surveyed for their views.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. As noted in section 6, most of the training is provided by existing staff and it is welcome that there is a commitment to try and keep costs for any external resource required within existing budget.

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.