

Report to	Democratic Services Committee
Date of meeting	4 July 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 is about member training and development.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

2.1. The purpose of this report is to seek Council's views and directions on the requirements for member training.

3. What are the Recommendations?

That Council:

- 3.1. Supports the mandatory training requirements for all members in respect of the Members' Code of Conduct and for Planning Committee members.
- 3.2. Confirms whether training on other subjects and roles should be mandatory, and whether the requirement for the training extends to all members, or only to members undertaking specific roles.
- 3.3. Confirms the timescales for the completion of any mandatory training (these may differ according to the training being undertaken).
- 3.4. Clarifies expectations in respect of applying sanctions for non-compliance of any mandatory training.

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

- 3.5. Gives directions on any 'reasonable exemptions' from sanctions for individual members who had not complied with a Council requirement in respect of mandatory training.

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, for example, 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 and further Council Workshops will be held throughout the year.

E-Learning

- 4.3. A draft Guide to accessing e-learning modules for members was previously circulated to members of the Democratic Services Committee, 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

- 4.4. 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-specific 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 and resources, it will also consider requests for bespoke training.

Co-opted Members

- 4.5. 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.
- 4.6. 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 Training

- 4.7. 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 also has continued to operate mandatory training for members of the Planning Committee, because of the quasi-judicial role being undertaken.
- 4.8. 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 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.

4.9. In 2018 the 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.

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 facilitated 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. The Democratic Services Committee considered member training issues in June 2023. The Committee supported:

- The setting of reasonable mandatory training requirements for appropriate subjects and roles. The use of 'once a term' as a timescale for mandatory training to be completed was regarded as being unsuitable by the Committee.
- The engagement of the political groups and the group leaders in encouraging compliance with any mandatory training requirements. To support this, the Committee asked that group leaders be provided with the training records for their members, and any necessary training and assistance to undertake their group leader duties in respect of member training.
- The engagement of officers in developing and promoting member training.
- The clarification of any exemptions from sanctions for individual members for whom it was not reasonable to comply with a Council requirement on mandatory training.
- Group leaders being informed prior to the publication of any non-attendance records.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

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 help 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 can be a greater risk of successful challenges to decisions and of complaints.

11. Power to make the decision?

11.1. Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.