

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF  
COUNCIL**

**ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT  
STRATEGY  
–2017 - 2021**

## **Elected Member Development Strategy**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The responsibility for driving improvements in the quality of life for our communities and all the challenges this entails, falls to elected Members. The development afforded to elected Members plays an essential part in equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet these challenges.

### **2. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this strategy is to outline the commitments and proposed activities of the Council in the field of elected Member Development and to specify the responsibilities for defining, scoping and agreeing learning and development activities.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

The actions and decisions of our elected Members are the driving force in helping the Council deliver on its priorities of:-

- Economy - Building a strong economy;
- People - Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone;
- Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work.

In order to ensure that all Members play a full and active role within their constituencies and contribute effectively to the running of the Council, they will need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively participate in all arenas.

In order to equip Members with relevant and timely development opportunities, a range of learning and development opportunities will be made available based on individual needs and Council priorities.

Member development is a term that is taken to include the acquisition of knowledge and skills by Members through a range of learning opportunities and styles; from seminars, briefings and training modules to exchange visits and mentoring. The needs of new, developing and experienced Members, due to the commonality of the demand made upon them through their roles, will be similar across all political groups.

### **4. APPROACH**

With national agencies such as the WLGA supporting a drive to improve the range and provision of Member development, a cohesive framework for elected Member development within the Council will ensure that full advantage is taken of these initiatives

whilst supported by a rolling programme of development delivered in-house and with partners. This framework will benefit from several components:-

- An overt commitment from the Council to Member development
- A robust induction programme, where all Members have a thorough induction into their roles and the Council, which ensures that Members are aware of the training and development opportunities available to them, and which is structured to offer members a high degree of flexibility in terms of availability and approach.
- An internal process to facilitate the identification of individual development needs, that recognises the diversity of the target group.
- An ongoing programme of learning and development opportunities that ensure Members can fulfil their responsibilities to the local community and provide clear leadership, and effective scrutiny of local Council functions.

## **5. A WALES CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Wales Charter for Member Support and Development was created to give structure and impetus to the growing body of support services for elected Members within Welsh Local Government. These services take the form of personal and role, skill and knowledge, development, support facilities, and support services.

A key indication of the Councils commitment to the concept of Member development was the achievement and reaccreditation of the advance level of the "Wales Charter For Member Support and Development".

In achievement of the Charter, the Council has demonstrated commitment to:-

- a development strategy for all Councillors based on the Council's key aims and priorities
- establishing an annual development programme for Councillors which recognises new roles and responsibilities, identifies individual learning needs, and is based on principles of good practice
- examining the way its business is conducted to facilitate the involvement of people with family and work commitments as Councillors

## **6. INDIVIDUAL REVIEW**

Under the executive constitutional arrangements, office-holding Members have clear roles and responsibilities, are held individually accountable for governance and performance under their constitutions, and are highly visible in the media. Although Local Authorities remain corporate bodies with members acting with collective responsibility, individual members, most particularly those holding office, have more acute levels of individual accountability than ever before.

The Council has embedded a process of Member Development Reviews which were initially made available to those members in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) in line with the "Wales Charter For Member Support and Development" requirements. The MDR process has been developed and extended to be available for all members on request.

The process will be reviewed in line with the guidance provided by the WLGA and the emerging needs of elected Members to ensure that a robust process is in place to assist members in the identification of learning and development opportunities to enhance their performance. In line with WLGA recommendations the process will now be referred to as Personal Development Reviews (PDR's)

The results of the PDR process will be utilised to further inform the programme of Member development and used to support and address the development needs of Members.

## **7. THE ROLE OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

The Democratic Services Committee will be the decision making body in relation to all processes relating to Member development. The process for the flow of information is highlighted in **Appendix 1**.

- 7.1** Members Training and Development needs will be primarily determined through the PDR process or through the need for the Council to ensure that Members are furnished with up to date information with regards to legislative or business changes. It is acknowledged, however, that in the case of newly elected members, a training needs and learning styles analysis will be necessary prior to them entering into the PDR process. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Democratic Services Committee will agree the timescales and communication of the PDR and any other process related to identifying the training needs of Members
- 7.2** The results of the PDR and Training needs and learning styles analysis will be provided to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Democratic Services Committee on, at least, an annual basis for consideration and inclusion into an annual training programme. In addition the Chair and Vice Chair Democratic Services Committee will determine additional learning and development needs where it is identified that Members will need to be briefed on changes within the business or external factors (including changes in legislation) that will impact on their role.
- 7.3** The outcomes of the all identified needs will then be provided to the Democratic Services committee for consideration and the methodology to meet the needs identified
- 7.4** Democratic Services and Human Resources will collate all agreed learning into an annual training plan and source and deliver training in line with 7.3 above and will provide statistics on attendance and evaluation to the democratic services committee on a quarterly basis.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

The approaches outlined within this strategy are by no means an exhaustive or restrictive. The essence of the strategy is to ensure that Members have the option to determine their own unique path of learning throughout their terms of office, by ensuring continual dialogue between the officers responsible for delivering and facilitating learning opportunities.

