

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2017-2018

**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
COMMITTEE
11TH SEPTEMBER, 2017**

Agenda Item No.5

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**DISCHARGE OF THE DEMOCRATIC
SERVICES FUNCTIONS AND
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To update the Committee on the training and development activities undertaken by Members since the County Borough elections in May, 2017 and the functions of the Democratic Services Committee.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To present for Members consideration to a future meeting of this Committee, reports and recommendations in respect of any proposed changes to the number and grades of staff required to discharge Democratic Services functions, and to note that any proposed changes would need to be reported to Council for approval.
- 2.2 To receive further reports to future meetings of this Committee on the promotion of the role of the authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee(s); as and when felt appropriate.
- 2.3 To adopt the Member Development Strategy (Appendix 1).
- 2.4 To note the training and development activities undertaken by Members since May, 2017 to date, and that further consideration be given to this matter at the next meeting of this Committee.
- 2.5 That in accordance with the requirements of "the Measure" all (75) elected Members be given the opportunity to undergo annual PDRs (including those Members who choose to remain "unallocated").
- 2.6 That the Committee receive update reports on the PDRs highlighting the development needs identified and the take up of such training.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Members may recall that at the meeting of this Committee held on the 3rd December, 2014, I was designated as the Head of Democratic Services. Following the County Borough elections and the Council's annual meeting in May of this year, where newly elected Members have been appointed to this Committee, I felt it appropriate to present a

report to this meeting on the functions of the Committee together with information in respect of training and development.

- 3.2 As Members can see this is an all encompassing report relating to all areas surrounding Democratic Services and I will continue to bring any changes/guidance from the Welsh Government and the WLGA as and when they arise.

3.3 Staff and Resources for Democratic Services

- 3.2.1 One of the functions of the Democratic Services Committee is to keep under review the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources made available to myself as Head of Democratic Services, in order to ensure that it is adequate for the responsibilities of the post.

- 3.2.2 Paragraph 3.23 of the statutory guidance of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (the "Measure") states:

"In some Councils, the scrutiny function has not been part of what has previously been known as "Democratic Services" and these arrangements may well have worked well. It is important to note that the HDS designation created by the Measure will probably not be identical to any previous post with the same or similar name. However, in taking responsibility for promoting the scrutiny function and providing support and advice as indicated in Section 9, it will be important to take care not to dilute the effectiveness of existing arrangements. In particular any arrangement already in place to provide advice in relation to the scrutiny function and research analysis should not be weakened as a result of establishing these new arrangements. The HDS would need to present a report to the DSC describing what s/he feels to be a reasonable level of support for democratic services functions. The DSC, however, could not make the final decision on these matters. It would need to submit its own report to the full Council, arguing the case for necessary resource. It may well be that full Council will modify or reject the DSC's report, in which case it could be advisable for the DSC to consider alternative proposals, which may involve a period of negotiation involving the HDS, Chief Finance Officer and the appropriate executive Councillor"

- 3.2.3 With regard to the promotion of the scrutiny function, I will ensure that Members are updated on any new guidance/initiatives as and when produced by the Welsh Government and/or the WLGA.

- 3.2.4 At this early stage of the appointment of newly elected Members to this Committee, I feel that it would be inappropriate to recommend to Members as to the adequacy of the provision of staff, accommodation and other resources for the exercise of the functions that fall to me and as required within paragraph 3.22 of the statutory guidance.

3.3 **Member Development Strategy**

3.3.1 At the meeting held on the 12th July, 2012, Members received and endorsed the terms of reference of the Committee, which includes the publication of a Member Development Strategy.

3.3.2 The Member Development Strategy comes within the remit of this Committee and was updated and approved at the meeting held on the 2nd October, 2012. It has recently been updated, as shown at Appendix 1, for adoption by this Committee. 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. Together with the criteria as set by the WLGA, the Strategy will also be used as a tool for maintaining the Advanced Charter.

3.4 **Training and Member Development Activities**

3.4.1 Following the elections in May of this year, robust induction training sessions have been delivered on the following:-

- **“How the Council Works”** – 3 sessions were made available -
– Saturday, 13th May, Friday, 19th May and Monday, 22nd May. This event was provided to give Members the opportunity to gain an understanding of the Executive and Scrutiny arrangements within the authority.
- **“Code of Conduct”** – 3 sessions were made available to Members and were delivered on the same dates as “How the Council Works” (as shown above) either before or after those sessions. A further two sessions were held on Friday, 28th July at 3 p.m. and Saturday, 29th July at 10 a.m. specifically for Town/Community Councillors.
- **Welsh Language – “Setting the Standards”** – 3 sessions were made available to Members and were delivered on the same dates as “How the Council Works” and the “Code of Conduct”
- **“The Modern Member”** – This was a half day session held on Tuesday morning, 15th May, 2017 and was delivered by an external facilitator which focussed on Practical Casework and Advocacy Skills to assist Members in managing challenging constituents and difficult situations.
- **“Local Government Pension Scheme”** – this was an opportunity for Members to attend a Briefing Session on Wednesday, 24th May, 2017.

- Meeting with Officers of the Senior Leadership Team – afternoon of Wednesday, 24th May, 2017, where newly elected Members were given the opportunity to meet with the Chief Executive and Senior Officers and received a brief overview of each of their respective areas of responsibility.
- Scrutiny Training –
 - Monday, 5th June, 2017 – All day event, which was delivered by an external facilitator. The morning session focussed on Making a Difference through Scrutiny and the afternoon session focussed on Effective Questioning and Listening Skills.
 - Wednesday, 12th July, 2017 – Achieving Effective Scrutiny of Children’s Services – Delivered to Members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee
 - Monday, 24th July, 2017 – Local Government Finance – Delivered to Members of the Finance & Performance Scrutiny Committee to assist them in undertaking their role on this Committee
- “An Introduction to Local Authority Licensing” – All day session held on the 6th June, 2017 delivered by an external facilitator covering – Taxi Licensing, Licensing Act, 2003 including Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, changes, reviews, offences and appeals. Further in-house sessions are to be held in the near future.
- Chairing Skills – Facilitated by the WLGA to:-
 - Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Planning & Development and Licensing Committees on 7th June, 2017
 - Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees and the Chair of the Democratic Services Committee on the 26th June, 2017

Note: Details including the attendance at the above events and the findings from the evaluation sheets will be provided at the next meeting of this Committee.

3.4.2 **Future Training Events**

- Planning and Development – a training programme has been prepared and will be delivered prior to meetings of the Planning and Development Committee, and will include

topics such as Material Considerations, Highways Matters, Enforcement, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas.

- Elected Member Conferences – to be held prior to Council meetings and will include:
 - Corporate Parenting
 - Domestic Abuse
 - Safeguarding
 - The role of Trivallis
 - Data Protection
 - Overview of Capital and Revenue Finance
 - The role of Citizens Advice
- Code of Conduct – Future sessions to be delivered to those Members that did not attend in May/June, 2017.
- Scrutiny
 - Finance & Performance
 - Understanding the Council's Budgets
 - Treasury Management
 - Children & Young People - Education – overview of School Improvement (Primary & Secondary), 21st Century Schools, Attendance and Children's Services – Early Intervention/Prevention, Children Looked After, Safeguarding
 - Health & Well-Being

3.5 **Personal Development Reviews**

3.5.1 Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) is a way for a Member and/or Officer to mutually assess a Member's personal development needs, which should be set within the context of the role of the Member, his/her aspirations for what s/he hopes to achieve, the purpose and aspirations of the Authority and the needs of the Community.

3.5.2 The purpose of the PDR is to enable Members to build confidence, develop skills and knowledge and improve their own performance and contribution to the Council and the Community.

3.5.3 Since the elections in May of this year, 24 Member Development Reviews have been undertaken by the Cabinet Member for Council Business (her portfolio of which also includes the role of Members Champion) and she is also the Vice-Chair of this Committee. The reviews were undertaken with Members of the majority political group; utilising best practice, which was used as a guide for the "Charter" and subsequently used by other Authorities.

3.5.4 The Authority was awarded the first level of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development in 2007 and the Advanced Charter

in 2010. Since, 2006 all Members within the Authority have been provided with individual Role Descriptions and given the opportunity to undergo personal development reviews, albeit, as part of the criteria, it was only incumbent on an Authority to carry out such reviews with Members who were in receipt of a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA). The Measure now makes it a requirement to include all Members and co-opted Members to other Committees such as Overview and Scrutiny should also be furnished with a Role Description and given the opportunity to undergo a PDR.

3.5.5 It is important to make it clear to Members that PDRs are not performance reviews or appraisals or indeed an assessment of how well or how bad a Member has conducted their duties. It is purely a review of training and development needs and are held in the strictest of confidence between the reviewer and the reviewee.

3.6 **Member Development Network**

3.6.1 Over recent years, the WLGA have introduced the All Wales Members Champions/Officers Network, where Members and Officers (Democratic/Member Services) would attend meetings on a twice yearly basis to discuss matters relating to Democratic Services and training and development. The MSO (Member Services Officers) Network has been running for several years and also meets on a twice yearly basis.

3.6.2 Following the introduction of the statutory guidance on the Measure in relation particularly to Training and Development and Democratic Services, the WLGA still facilitate Member Development Network meetings which are to continue to be held on a twice yearly basis. Invitees to these meetings are the Chairs of Democratic Services Committees, Members Champions and the Heads of Democratic Services.

3.6.3 The next meeting is to be held on the 8th September, 2017 at the Media Resource Centre, Llandrindod Wells and is to be attended by the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee and myself.

3.7 **Wales Charter for Member Support and Development**

3.7.1 In 2005, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) established a Wales Charter for Member Support and Development, which was introduced to develop, recognise and share good practice in the support and development of elected Members, provided by Welsh local authorities.

3.7.2 There are three areas of achievement:

- The Charter
- The Advanced Charter

- The Good Practice and Innovation Award for Member Support and Development (previously the Excellence Award)

3.7.3 As mentioned earlier, the Authority attained the first level of the Charter in 2007 and the Advanced Charter in 2010, being the only local authority in Wales to achieve such a prestigious award. The Authority is robustly reviewed every three years to ensure its compliance and it is hoped that this will be sustained during the coming years through Members and Officers commitment of working together to improve corporate governance, local democracy and local services which will assist in the continued development for Members through the continued monitoring by the Democratic Services Committee

3.7.3 In 2014, the Council achieved the Good Practice and Innovation Award for Member Support and Development, where the Authority was recognised for the excellent and innovative practices that the Council's Occupational Health and Wellbeing Unit undertake with regard to elected Member support. Unlike the Advanced level, this award does not need to be maintained and is not reviewed every three years.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 As Members will appreciate this is a detailed report and covers all aspects surrounding the functions of the Democratic Services Committee and my role as Head of Democratic Services Committee. Further reports will be presented to Members as and when felt appropriate, especially in relation to PDRs and promoting the role of Overview and Scrutiny, the latter of which has lightly been touched upon in this report.

