



## Report of the Monitoring Officer

Standards Committee – 22 March 2023

### Community & Town Council Training Plans

|                                    |                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Purpose:</b>                    | To consider how to review community and town council training plans and ensure that appropriate training is being undertaken in community and town councils in Swansea |
| <b>Policy Framework:</b>           | Standards Committee Terms of Reference – Council Constitution.                                                                                                         |
| <b>Consultation:</b>               | Legal, Access to Services and Finance.                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Recommendation(s):</b>          | It is recommended that the Standards Committee:<br><br>1) Consider the next steps for reviewing Community and Town Council training.                                   |
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| <b>Finance Officer:</b>            | Ben Smith                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Legal Officer:</b>              | Tracey Meredith                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Access to Services Officer:</b> | Rhian Millar                                                                                                                                                           |

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee includes assisting members of community/town councils to observe their Authority's Code of Conduct. The Standards Committee has previously voiced some concerns around the level of training available to community/town councillors in complying with the Code particularly when dealing with financial matters. Coinciding with the matter being placed on the Standards Committee workplan last year there was new legislation introduced dealing with training within community/town councils. The Committee should note however that it is a matter for individual community/town councils to approve their training plans and not the Standards Committee.
- 1.2 Section 67 of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 requires community and town councils to make and publish a plan about the training provision for its members and staff. The first training plan was to be ready and published by 5 November 2022. This gave an appropriate period of time between the Act coming into force and publication date for councils to assess

needs, agree its training budget and adopt a plan. There is also a requirement to publish the training plan electronically when approved.

- 1.3 The requirement for a training plan was brought in with a view to Community councils and their staff seeking to equip themselves to be as effective and efficient as possible when exercising functions. Councils should regularly review whether there are opportunities to improve their administration and governance so that they are better able to perform their responsibilities and serve their communities.
- 1.4 Welsh Government have produced draft guidance for community councils as to the contents of a training plan which may include:
  - Reflecting on, and addressing, whether the council collectively has the skills and knowledge it needs to deliver its plans most effectively
  - Identifying areas which all councils should ensure that they have sufficient skills and understanding ie code of conduct training, financial management and governance and basic induction for councillors
  - Broader training ie shadowing more experienced councillors
  - Training needs assessments
- 1.5 Similarly One Voice Wales and the Society of Local Council Clerks have produced Guidance on Preparing a Council's Training Plan including a model plan template.
- 1.6 Last year we wrote to community/town councils asking them to send copies of their training plans when approved by their councils. To date we have received all but one training plan. Many of the plans returned have adopted the model plan either in part or as a whole.
- 1.7 In summarising the training plans returned it is noted that:
  - There is some inconsistency in plans however a large number adopt the One Voice Wales template to some degree.
  - Many councils have undertaken a training needs analysis
  - The majority of training plans indicate that financial training is a priority with many training plans including advanced financial training particularly where members sit on finance committee.
  - All training plans included code of conduct training and many focused on the basic training of basic induction, code of conduct and financial management and governance training.
  - A number had expressly included training around equality and diversity, health and safety, planning.
- 1.8 The Committee is therefore asked as to whether they would wish to follow up what is now a statutory requirement or monitor the position in the forthcoming year to understand the level of uptake on training by community/town councillors.

## **2. Integrated Impact Assessment**

2.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

2.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

2.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

2.4 An IIA Screening Form is not required for this report.

## **3. Financial Implications**

3.1 There are no financial implications associated with the report.

## **4. Legal Implications**

4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

### **Background Papers:**

None

### **Appendices:**

None