



## Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Democratic Services Committee - 18 March 2024

### Councillor Development Strategy

<b>Purpose:</b>	To adopt a Councillor Development Strategy to complement the Councillors Training Programme.
<b>Policy Framework:</b>	None.
<b>Consultation:</b>	Access to Services, Finance, Legal.
<b>Recommendation(s):</b>	It is recommended that:  1) The draft Councillor Development Strategy be approved and recommended to Council for adoption.
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<b>Legal Officer:</b>	Debbie Smith
<b>Access to Services Officer:</b>	Rhian Millar

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Councillors Induction & Training Programme was adopted by Council on 4 November 2021 in readiness for the Local Government Elections of 5 May 2022. The Programme was reviewed by the Democratic Services Committee on 11 July 2022.
- 1.2 Councillor Training & Development is essential for Councillors to continuously add to their range of skills and knowledge to ensure they can meet new challenges, opportunities, risks and feel confident in discharging their duties.

#### 2. Councillor Development Strategy

- 2.1 The Councillor Development Strategy seeks to complement the Councillors Training Programme. The Strategy places an expectation that development opportunities will be provided for Councillors to enable them to undertake their role effectively.

2.2 The Strategy aims to:

- i) Equip Councillors, with a wide variety of skills and knowledge and competencies to fulfil their various roles.
- ii) Encourage Councillors in their own development, as a Councillor and take up opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills, and expertise during their term of office.
- iii) Ensure Political Groups and Political Group Leaders are committed to the Councillors Training Programme 2022-2027.

2.3 The draft Councillor Development Strategy is outlined in Appendix A of the report.

### **3. Financial Implications**

3.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Costs of delivery of training and development will be met from existing budgets or existing internal resources.

### **4. Legal Implications**

4.1 There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

### **5. Integrated Assessment Implications**

5.1 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.

5.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2005 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'.

- 5.3 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also considers 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.
- 5.4 An IIA screening has been undertaken and no adverse implications have been noted.
- 5.5 The impact will be positive for all Councillors as training and development opportunities will be identified and promoted.

**Background papers:** None

**Appendices:**

Appendix A Draft Councillor Development Strategy

**Draft - Councillor Development Strategy 2024-2027**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and other legislative changes means that the role of Councillors faces continuous challenges. Councillors will need to adapt, change, and develop to:
- i) Keep abreast of these changes.
  - ii) Meet the needs of their Communities.
  - iii) Work in partnership with other Organisations.
  - iv) Work within the future financial constraints on the Authority.
- 1.2 These changes are making it more important than ever for Councillors to continuously develop their range of skills and knowledge to ensure they can meet these challenges, opportunities and risks and feel confident in discharging their duties. Therefore, as with the expectations of an employee of an Organisation, there is an expectation that development opportunities will be provided for Councillors to enable them to undertake their role effectively.

**2. Aims of the Strategy**

- 2.1 The Strategy aims to:
- i) Equip Councillors, with a wide variety of skills and knowledge and competencies to fulfil their various roles.
  - ii) Encourage Councillors in their own development, as a Councillor and take up opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills, and expertise during their term of office.
  - iii) Ensure Political Groups and Political Group Leaders are committed to the Councillors Training Programme 2022-2027.

**3. Supporting Members in their roles**

- 3.1 Councillors are required to undertake demanding and varied roles and consequently their development needs are equally challenging and numerous. Councillors bring knowledge, skills, and experience to their role. These need to be acknowledged and used, where appropriate, to benefit other Councillors and / or the work of any Committees.
- 3.2 Experience has shown that “development” needs will vary during a Councillors term of office and are also dependent on the specific roles undertaken within the Council. These needs can be divided into the following:
- i) Core (essential) Knowledge and Skills.
  - ii) Corporate Development.
  - iii) Service Specific Issues.
  - iv) Specific Committee Issues.

3.3 In the past some Councillors have indicated that they do not need any “development or training”. It is important to recognise that “development” can not only provide Councillors with new skills but also knowledge about services etc. The Councillors Training Programme 2022-2207 consists of:

- i) Mandatory Development
  - a) Sessions which all Councillors must complete and may be either provided on two occasions per annum or be available on eLearning.
  - b) Committee specific sessions, which all Members of such Committees must complete.
  - c) Ad hoc mandatory development in response to changes in legislation and/or in response to issues raised within the Council.
- ii) Councillor Development. Opportunities to develop skills such as Chiring meetings, Understanding Financial information, Leadership etc.
- iii) Councillor Briefing Sessions. Briefings which will develop Councillors understanding of issues, new policies, legislation, ways of providing services, role of voluntary and other organisations etc.

3.4 Councillor Development opportunities will where possible be arranged to avoid clashes with Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings. Meeting invites will be distributed via MS Outlook / MS 365.

3.5 The Head of Democratic Services will develop a rolling Councillor Training Programme and details of topics will be promoted to Councillors. Training shall be delivered in a variety of ways including Briefing, Seminars, Workshops, eLearning etc. The Council is committed to utilise eLearning & digital technologies for providing the Councillor Training Programme.

3.6 Councillors will also be encouraged to participate in development / briefing sessions held across Wales, such as those organised by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and where feasible joint sessions will be developed by Swansea Council with other Authorities.

#### **4. How the Councillors Training Programme is created**

4.1 The involvement of Councillors, Officers, Political Groups, Committees, and others is detailed below:

- i) **Councillors.** It is important that Councillors take responsibility for their development and commit to continually develop and update their knowledge and skills. They are expected to:
  - a) Identify their own development needs, with support from peers or Officers, either by completing a Training Needs

- Analysis (TNA) or undertaking a Personal Development Review (PDR).
  - b) Complete all Mandatory Councillor Development, where required.
  - c) Attend Member Development and Briefing Sessions to support them in their various roles.
  - d) Evaluate the Councillor Development Programme and identify areas for possible future provision so that Councillors needs are met.
  - e) Use their new knowledge and skills within their various roles.
  - f) Share knowledge, skills, and information with other Councillors.
  
- ii) **Democratic Services Committee (DSC).** The DSC will provide direction in respect of the development and support requirements of Councillors. The Head of Democratic Services & DSC:
  - a) Oversees the development of the Councillors Training Programme.
  - b) Reviews the evaluation of sessions.
  - c) Ensures that Councillors individual needs are met.
  - d) Develops guidance to support Councillor development.
  
- iii) **Political Groups.** Should promote Councillor Development opportunities and encourage and support Councillor participation. Political Groups should forward their views on Councillor development to the Head of Democratic Services.
  
- iv) **Political Group Leaders.** Should manage Councillors attendance at Mandatory Development and monitor Councillors attendance at other Councillor sessions. The Head of Democratic Services & the Democratic Services Team will advise Political Group Leaders of the non-attendance or non-completion of Mandatory Development and attendance at other sessions. The Head of Democratic Services will ask Political Group Leaders for their assistance in ensuring any non-compliant Councillors complete the required mandatory development and find out why they have not attended other development sessions.
  
- v) **Cabinet Portfolio Holders, Directorates & Departments.** Should identify issues for Councillor development and Councillor Briefing sessions. This information will then be considered by the Head of Democratic Services.
  
- vi) **Head of Democratic Services.** Will ensure that the Councillors Training Programme is produced and that it includes opportunities for Councillor development. The Head of Democratic Services will consider good practice in other Authorities etc. when arranging development and briefing activities.

- vii) **Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)**. Guidance, support, and expertise will be used throughout the development of the Councillor Training Programme.

## **5. Evaluating effectiveness**

- 5.1 Evaluating the effectiveness of the Councillors Training Programme will be continuous and be undertaken by the Democratic Services Committee to enable it to inform and strengthen the future Councillor Training Programme.
- 5.2 Evidence on the effectiveness of Councillor development will be gathered in a variety of ways including:
  - i) Councillor comment forms and feedback after individual events.
  - ii) Survey of the Councillor Training & Induction Programme.