

Report of the Chair

Scrutiny Programme Committee – 8 August 2016

SCRUTINY COUNCILLOR SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Purpose	This report invites the committee to discuss and consider support and development needs for scrutiny councillors.
Content	The report provides information on: a) feedback from the annual councillor survey on training and development needs b) the agreed Council Training and Development Programme 2016/17 c) possible assistance from the Welsh Local Government Association on councillor support and development services
Councillors are being asked to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss and consider support and development needs for scrutiny councillors including specific expectations and actions necessary to deliver planned activities
Lead Councillor(s)	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Continuing importance is being placed on scrutiny as an essential element of local democracy and good governance, but this means increased demands on scrutiny councillors.
- 1.2 Over the course of the year scrutiny councillors and officers will be involved in ad hoc development and improvement events in order to support and deliver effective scrutiny. This will include opportunities to attend scrutiny events at a regional and national level, such as those organised by the Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association and Centre for Public Scrutiny. Feedback is provided to the committee to ensure learning from such events can be disseminated.
- 1.3 The views of the Committee are invited to steer the approach to scrutiny training and development for the remainder of this municipal year as well as induction during May / June 2017, so that it is focused on the things that matter most. The committee should note:

- a) feedback from the annual councillor survey on training and development needs;
- b) the agreed Council Training and Development 2016-17 Programme which incorporates scrutiny; and
- c) possible assistance from the Welsh Local Government Association on councillor support and development

2. **Annual Councillor Survey**

- 2.1 One of the questions the annual councillor scrutiny survey asked was about training and development needs. The results of survey are presented below:

Training & Development

Q 13. Do you have any training and development needs that you feel would assist you in your role? Please tick ONE box

<i>Yes I do have training and development needs</i>	- 21.4% (9)
<i>I am ok at the moment but I would like to receive information on any future opportunities</i>	- 61.9% (26)
<i>No I do not have any training and development needs</i>	- 16.7% (7)

Q 14. If you do have any training and development needs? Please give further detail below.

- 2.2 From the comments received for Q.14 the following can be identified:

- opportunity to shadow a more experienced councillor
- ensuring co-opted members have the same access to induction, training and development opportunities
- education specific training e.g. national good practice,
- training about how the Council works and good governance
- I.T. training

Some responders noted that training for all councillors was paramount and should be ongoing.

- 2.3 The committee should consider this feedback in identifying areas where support and development is necessary.

3. **Councillor Training and Development Programme 2016-17**

- 3.1 In January 2016 Council agreed a Councillor Training and Development Programme to help them to progress, improve and carry out their role effectively. The Programme was informed by the results of a training needs analysis and incorporates training and development for scrutiny.

3.2 Key principles within the Programme:

- Training is divided into three categories: Compulsory, Recommended, and Councillor / Co-opted Member Requested. Some are identified as priority areas e.g. safeguarding, corporate parenting.
- Amongst the 14 training sessions identified as 'Compulsory' is a requirement for training on Scrutiny Questioning Skills. This would be for Councillors and Co-opted Members on the Scrutiny Programme Committee and relevant Panels (at least once per electoral term or more frequently should content change significantly due to legislation / guidance etc.).
- Additionally, although not compulsory, a session on the Council Budget / Financial Scrutiny has been included in the Programme following requests by councillors.
- There be a greater use of e-learning (training sessions should be adapted into e-learning programmes wherever possible).
- Training sessions, where possible, be timetabled with both a daytime and an evening session in order to encourage better attendance.

3.3 The Committee will of course be interested in the delivery of planned training and may wish to discuss expectations and actions necessary to ensure the success of training and development sessions.

3.4 The need for a session on questioning skills has already been discussed with officers and this is being developed. The starting point will be to revisit the previously agreed 'Effective Questioning for Scrutiny Checklist' developed by scrutiny a few years ago.

4. **WLGA Services / Councillor Induction**

4.1 There have been discussions within Scrutiny Practitioners Networks / Head of Democratic Services / Members Networks and agreement that an introduction to scrutiny for all members as part of a mandatory induction programme would be a good thing.

4.2 Whilst each council will be arranging induction sessions after the council elections in May 2017 the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) has offered to develop an e-learning module to support individual efforts across Wales. Scrutiny Practitioners have been supportive of this proposal.

4.3 This e-learning module would be based on recognised good practice in Wales, recent legislation and research, and the Characteristics of Effective Scrutiny, Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and elements of WLGA workshops that seem to have worked well with members. An outline of the e-learning module is currently being drafted which the WLGA will be sending out for comments in the next couple of weeks.

- 4.4 As reported previously to the committee the WLGA also has an offer to authorities in relation to councillor support and development. The WLGA will continue to coordinate and provide strategic national guidance and support to local authorities but will offer a more focused range of bespoke in-house training and support packages to councils and councillors. The WLGA will charge for some services (e.g. member training workshops). More details are on the WLGA website: (www.wlga.gov.uk/councillor-development-and-support-services-from-the-wlga/) See leaflet attached for details – **Appendix 1**.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific financial implications raised by this report.

Background Papers: None

Legal Officer: Wendy Parkin

Finance Officer: Carl Billingsley