

## **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Wrexham County Borough Council recognises that there are ever increasing demands on, and expectations of Members, given the pace of legislative change and constantly changing environment. There is therefore a requirement to ensure that effective development and support is in place to enable them to fulfil the demands of their roles.
- 1.2 The Council is operating in a constantly changing environment, having to respond to changes in legislation (e.g. Local Government (Wales) Act 2015, Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014), reducing budgets while taking on new responsibilities. This requires elected Members and a workforce that are flexible and responsive to change. The Council is faced with an extremely challenging and demanding programme which includes:-
- Collaborating with other local authorities and agencies to improve service delivery.
  - Responding to budget cuts year on year.
  - New, challenging and changing roles for elected Members.
  - New political management arrangements and responsibility for the scrutiny of other public service providers.
  - An emphasis on continuous improvement.
  - Corporate Governance.
- 1.3 In embracing these challenges, the Council must continue to develop its Members so that they:-
- Are responsive to change.
  - Maximise the use of all available resources.
  - Can challenge the Council and other organisations fairly and identify best practice.
  - Are focussed on maximising the outcomes provided by public services within the challenging climate of diminishing financial resources.
  - Are influential community leaders.

### **2. Purpose of the Strategy**

- 2.1 To enable Councillors to operate efficiently and effectively in fulfilling their various roles it is the Council's policy to identify the learning and development needs of all Councillors.
- 2.2 This requires a proactive approach towards Member Development and support in the form of internally and externally facilitated presentations, seminars and workshops as well as through specific training courses. The

Council has supported Member development through the allocation of a specific budget and applied its policy on an equal basis to all 52 Members, as well as supporting co-opted members of the Standards, Audit and scrutiny committees. This system was formalised in 2008 when the Council was awarded the WLGA's Charter for Member Support and Development. **We will re-apply for Charter status in 2018/19.**

- 2.3 The Council recognises the need to further improve opportunities and support for Members and their learning and development needs. Charter status underlines the continuing importance of training and development for Members and ensures future provision will be based on need, provided by professionals where the quality of training is monitored for quality and provided to all Members on an equal basis.

### **3. Member Development Strategy – Aims and Objectives**

- 3.1 Member Development refers to any development activities or training programmes specifically designed to improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of elected Members in their varied roles.

- 3.2 This strategy aims to equip Members with the skills and knowledge they need in their current (as set out in their role descriptions) and future roles. To ensure that this strategy meets the needs of Members and the Council, activities will be properly planned, resourced within current budget limits, monitored and evaluated.

#### **3.3 The strategy's main objectives are:-**

- **To achieve a clear and shared understanding of the various Member roles.**
- **To improve the performance of senior post holders aided by annual Personal Support and Development Interviews.**
- **To provide an integrated induction and ongoing role, skills and knowledge programme of development opportunities for all Members.**
- **To provide support tailored to the needs of Members based on individual training needs analysis.**
- **To monitor the impact of the strategy and use feedback to improve over time and celebrate success.**

- 3.4 The Council will provide elected Members with flexible and responsive training and development that is based on individual and organisational needs. This will maximise the effectiveness of Members in their various roles to ensure that Wrexham County Borough Council will be regarded as a leader in the provision of support to elected Members and deserving of Charter status.

#### **4. Implementing the Charter Requirements**

- 4.1 It is fundamental to its success that Members take a leading role in its development, will oversee its implementation, willingly participate with the requirements of the Charter and play a full role in evaluating and monitoring its progress and effectiveness.
- 4.2 The Wales Charter for Member Support and Development sets out a rigorous and structured approach for Member development. Set out below are the Charter's main requirements and the Council's approach to their implementation:-
- 4.2.1 Members are supported with role descriptions** – Job descriptions exist or will be developed for all Member roles.
- 4.2.2 Members are supported in undertaking their duties according to high standards of conduct** – Code of Conduct training has been identified as a core element of the Member Development Programme and training will be provided as need is identified.
- 4.2.3 Members are supported in understanding their roles and responsibilities as set out in the Constitution** – Appropriate training will be provided on the various roles of both Members and committees.
- 4.2.4 A Member learning and development strategy has been adopted** – This document has been adopted by Council as its Member Development Strategy.
- 4.2.5 Arrangements are in place for all Members to be offered a Development Interview** – The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires that local authorities provide the **opportunity** to every Member to have an annual review of his/her training needs. Members will be reminded of this opportunity on an annual basis. The WLGA Charter further requires that all Members who receive a Senior Salary must undergo such an interview.
- 4.2.6** In order to ensure that the training and development needs cover as wide a range of Member requirements as possible, where individual Members do not take up this option they will be given the opportunity to respond either directly to the Head of Democratic Services and/or Lead for Workforce Development by telephone, e-mail or in writing.
- 4.2.7 Identification of the Authority's Needs** – In order to ensure the programme addresses the Authority's overall needs in addition to that of individual Members the Authority's Strategic Management Team will be asked on an annual basis to submit any potential Member development and training needs for his/her area of responsibility.

- 4.2.8 Individual Development Plans** – The outcome from the above will be an individual Member Development Plan for each Member who undertakes an interview or provides details of his /her training needs to the Head of Democratic Services (within the constraints of available budgets and other resources).
- 4.2.9 e-Learning** – A series of e-Learning modules will be developed and utilised as a key element of Member development.
- 4.2.10 A development programme for councillors is in place with a mechanism for its annual review** – A Member Development Programme will be agreed by Council annually, taking account an evaluation of the previous year's plan, individual Member development reviews, feedback from Members who respond to the Head of Democratic Services and feedback from officers and the Authority's Strategic Management Team.
- 4.2.11 All councillors are made aware of, guided to and are able to access the development activities equally** – A programme of training events will be circulated to all Members.
- 4.2.12 Prospective candidates, candidates and new Members are informed of their role and responsibilities** – Prospective candidates will be provided with appropriate information, events and support during the period leading up to an election.
- 4.2.13 Development activities are relevant and of high quality** – A range of both in-house and external provision will be utilised as appropriate and an evaluation of each session undertaken.
- 4.2.14 There is a clear responsibility for leading the programme, driving the strategy and monitoring the outcomes** – The Democratic Services Committee, supported by the Head of Democratic Services, will be responsible for both this strategy and the programme.
- 4.2.15 Resources are identified and provided for Member development** – An annual training budget will exist to meet Member development requirements, the level of which being subject to the financial constraints of the authority.
- 4.2.16 Members are offered the opportunity to be mentored by Member peers** – All Members will be offered the opportunity to request mentoring, with mentors having received appropriate training.
- 4.2.17 Officer support is provided for Member development, support and scrutiny** – The Democratic Services Committee, supported by the Head of Democratic Services, will have responsibility for ensuring that adequate support exists.

**4.2.18 Arrangements made for the business of the Council are flexible and enable Members to participate fully regardless of personal circumstances** – An annual report will be presented to Council to consider the dates and times of meetings for the coming year, taking account of the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

**4.2.19 Contact management and communication** – Members will be supplied with appropriate information as part of an induction pack and on the Council's intranet to support them in undertaking their duties.

The authority will maintain standards for response times to e-mails, telephone calls and written correspondence

**4.2.20 Annual Reports** – All Members will be offered the opportunity of producing an Annual Report in line with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

**4.2.21 Personal support for Members** – Relevant information will be included in the Council's Constitution and on the intranet.

**4.2.22 All Members are provided with adequate access to ICT** – Appropriate equipment, support and training will be provided to Members.

**4.2.23 Information resources are provided** – Appropriate resources and information are available to Members in an appropriate format.

**4.2.24 Facilities for Members to work in the Council are available** – The Democratic Services Committee, supported by the head of Democratic Services, will periodically review that accommodation, ICT and other related resources are adequate to meet Member needs.

## **5. Strategy Delivery**

5.1 The Chair of the Democratic Services Committee, as the Member Development Champion will lead on this, supported by the Head of Democratic Services. The Democratic Services Committee will oversee the implementation of this strategy and, through a report to Council, agree and review training and development activities for elected Members.

5.2 The purpose of the Committee's work in this respect will be:-

- To establish a comprehensive and robust Member Training and Development process using the principles of the WLGA Charter for Member Development and Support.
- To ensure that Member Development becomes part of the overall mainstream organisational activity.

- To make recommendations to Council, as appropriate, on Member Support, particularly Member Development.
- The co-ordination and evaluation of the Member Development Programme.
- To monitor progress against the Strategy's objectives.

5.3 All Member training and development activities provided as a result of this Strategy will:-

- Be secured from the most effective and appropriate training providers or facilitators from within or outside the authority.
- Respond to the needs of Members for method and style of delivery.
- Be provided taking into account the principles of relevant Council policies.
- Be arranged at times and locations most convenient for Members.

## **6. Evaluation of the Strategy**

6.1 Progress will be monitored and evaluated by the Democratic Services Committee and the Head of Democratic Services.

6.2 The development of Members as a result of the activities will be assessed by themselves with support of appropriate senior Members and Officers if participating in the Personal Support and Development Interviews.

## **7. Resources**

7.1 A sum will be included annually in the Council's overall budget for Member Training and Development activities. The Head of Democratic Services has overall responsibility for Member Development and is supported in this on a practical day- to-day basis by the Committee staff. Other Officers will be expected to support this Strategy by providing in-house development activities.