

Report



Standards Committee

Information only

Date: 13th April 2023

Subject Code of Conduct and General Member Training Update

Purpose To inform the committee concerning the curriculum of training provided to Members, and levels of attendance at training between May 2022 and December 2022, including mandatory Code of Conduct training.

To note the development of the schedule of training for 2023/24.

Author Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Ward City wide

Summary Under the Council's Constitution, the Standards Committee is required to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by councillors. This includes ensuring that members have access to training regarding the Members' Code of Conduct.

Ensuring that members have access to a reasonable level of training and development. falls under the remit of the Cabinet Member for Education and Early Years, and the Democratic Services Committee. This information only report includes an update on training conducted since local elections in May 2022 until December 2022.

The draft Induction Curriculum set by the WLGA to support Members following the May 2022 local elections was considered by Democratic Services Committee in 2021: a final draft for members at Newport City Council was shared in February 2022.

Initial training and support was designed to support Councillors to meet the challenges of the role, particularly for those beginning their first term as an elected member. Following completion of the essential training, sessions were provided on legislation, services and duties, to increase knowledge and support members to fulfil their duties effectively.

The majority of the training agreed as part of the initial training programme has been delivered, and Committee Members are asked to consider the delivery and uptake of training to date.

Whilst there are a number of sessions that have taken place in the final quarter of 2022/23, Committee Members are also asked to note training and development for elected members in 2023/24.

Proposal To note the report summarising training delivered in 2022/23 and the future schedule of Member training for 2023/24.

Action by Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Timetable First full year of training curriculum to be concluded by June 2023. Further schedule of training for Members to be developed and published by March 2023.

Background

Legislative requirements for members are set out in the Local Government (Wales) measure 2011 and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. These include legislative requirements for corporate governance and member support and development.

The WLGA outlined a suggested curriculum for the induction of members in Wales, and set this framework as a guide for what should be considered when developing local programmes.

This was considered as part of a draft curriculum for Newport, and plans were shared outlining the Members Induction Training for the review and comment of the Democratic Services Committee before a final version was produced.

The key principles that underpinned the schedule of training were;

- **Less is more** – Although there is a lot of information to convey, learning activities should focus on the minimum amount of information at each stage, so that members do not become overloaded.
- **Member centred** – All development activities should be designed with the member role in mind and concentrate on what members really need to know at that time. At induction level this includes the role of the member, what is important to the community and what information is required to take early decisions. Local and national policy and strategy can be introduced later, as and when necessary.
- **Engaging and interactive** – Any development sessions for members should be interactive, with plenty of opportunities for discussions and scenarios.
- **As and when** – Wherever possible members should be provided with learning opportunities at their convenience, at a time when it is needed and relevant and in a medium that is appropriate for the topic and activity.
- **Expertise** – Whenever possible, learning activities should be provided by service providers with relevant knowledge and expertise.

The agreed framework was also designed to be flexible, allowing for changes as and when required to meet changing requirements.

The Committee was advised of key dates particularly the challenge of managing a very tight timescale between the local election results and the Annual General Meeting taking place on 17 May; The main objective was to conduct core training and inductions with the IT equipment so

that new Members could be ready for the AGM, particularly as the Council sessions were hybrid meetings from that date onwards.

Training was provided in the most appropriate format for the subject, but the majority of the sessions were offered remotely to support attendance. Some sessions have been face to face workshops, and others have been offered as a hybrid option,

The curriculum then moved to focus on key legislation and preparing Members for their relevant committees as appropriate, with bespoke sessions for quasi-judicial committees such as Planning and Licensing.

In the Summer and Autumn, Councillors were introduced or refreshed on other key legislation and policy supporting their decision making, such as the Equalities Act and Safeguarding. Councillors were also supported by Heads of Service, who introduced their services and key policies in areas such as Environment, Public Protection, and Housing.

In preparation for the budget setting process, a session on Finance and Treasury Management was arranged for December.

Sessions arranged and provided by Newport City Council were augmented by webinars provided by the Local Government Association on Supporting Councillors with Abuse and Intimidation, and Personal Safety. There were also short online cybersecurity courses were sent directly to email accounts covering password security and phishing activity.

Councillors also had access to e-learning modules on a wide variety of subjects through the Council's online portal.

Summary of Training by Quarter

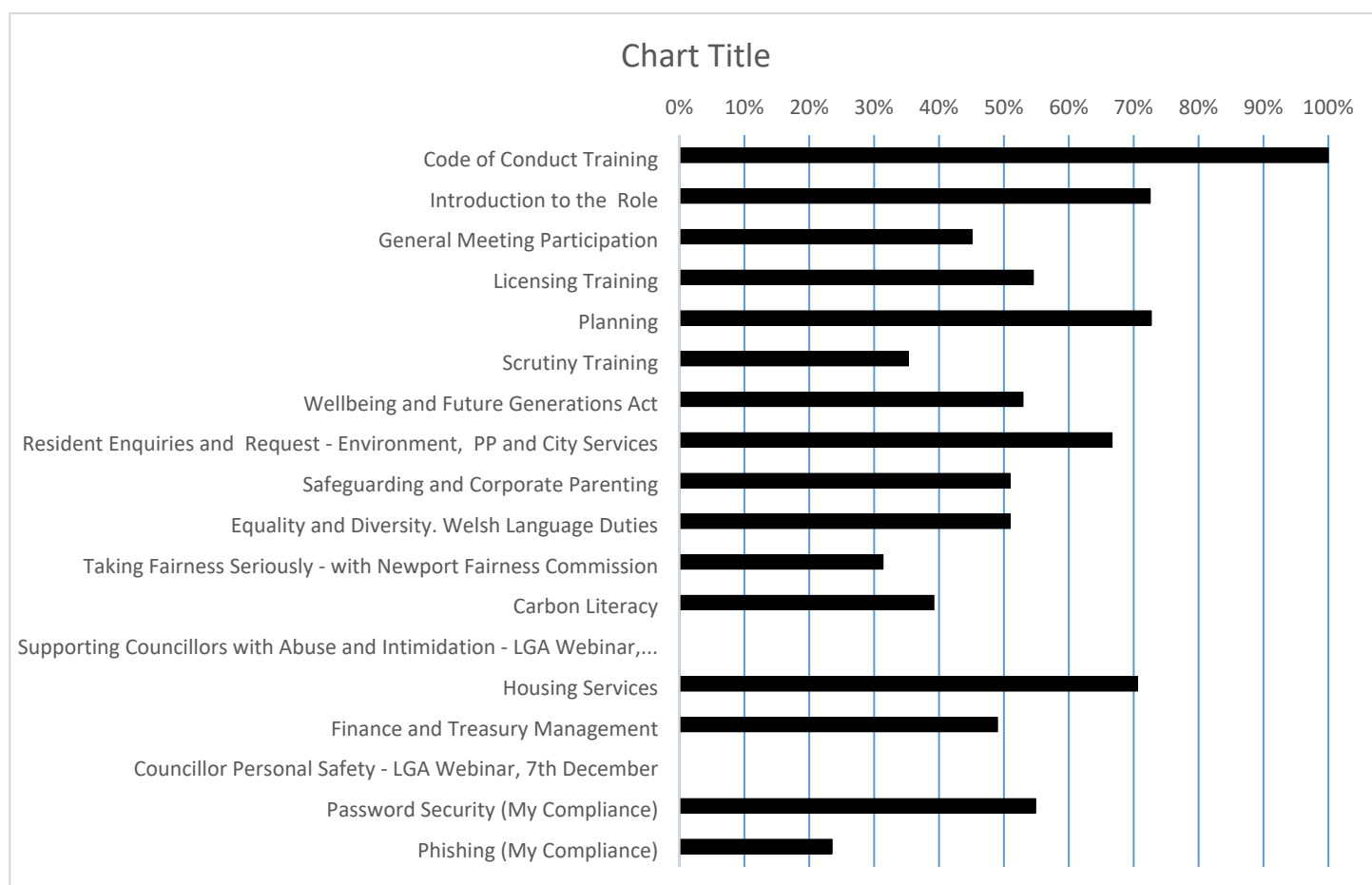
| Quarter 1 | Quarter 2 | Quarter 3 |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Code of Conduct Training | Wellbeing of Future Generations Act | Taking Fairness Seriously - with Newport Fairness Commission |
| Introduction to the Role | Resident Enquiries and Requests - Environment, Public Protection and City Services | |
| General Meeting Participation | Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting | Carbon Literacy |
| Licensing Training | Equality and Diversity. Welsh Language Duties | Supporting Councillors with Abuse and Intimidation – LGA Webinar |
| Planning | Code of Conduct Training? | Housing Services |
| Scrutiny Training | | Finance and Treasury Management |
| | | Councillor Personal Safety – LGA Webinar |

The vast majority of sessions that were hosted and delivered by the Council were also recorded on Teams, and shared in a central Teams folder, so that Councillors could access the recordings and slides at their leisure.

Other useful resources, for example, guides for Councillors produced by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) have also been saved to the same central Teams folder.

Informal training was offered on a drop-in basis to support Members with any IT or communication and technology issues that they may have.

Attendance



Attendance at each session provided by the Council is recorded, and records of attendance are uploaded to central personal development records held for each Member.

The My Compliance courses were issued to Members directly via email addresses, and completion rates were monitored. Data is not available for externally provided courses.

Code of Conduct training is considered a mandatory module of training for all elected members. 100% of Councillors have attended one of the three training sessions provided since May 2022.

Licensing training is only required for Members of the Licensing Committee. Based on this, the percentage of Licensing committee members that attended training is 54%. Similarly, 72% of the Planning Committee Members attended Planning training.

The Council's Climate Change plan places importance on considering positive action to tackle climate change impacts as part of every decision. In order to support this, a programme of training has been developed for elected members to consider their individual contribution to becoming carbon zero by 2030. The aim is for all elected members to have attended carbon literacy training within the first year following local elections. At the end of December 2022, 17.65% of members have attended carbon zero training with further courses scheduled for February and May 2023.

Take up of additional e-learning modules was low during this period, with four units of training completed independently by elected members.

Training planned for 2023/24

There are a number of sessions included in the original curriculum for the first year of training and support that are planned for delivery in the new year. Topics remaining are;

- Chairing skills
- Further Scrutiny Training
- Social Care and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
- Data Management and FOI including GDPR
- Using Social Media
- Overview of Services Areas

There are already some additional sessions scheduled into the diary for;

- Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)
- Carbon Literacy
- WLGA Leadership Programme
- Further drop-in support sessions for IT, communication and support issues

Whilst there has been some ad-hoc feedback on individual training sessions, formal feedback has not been sought from members on training provided to date.

Feedback forms on each individual session would provide insight as to how each session has addressed learning needs. This would provide detailed feedback, but may result in 'feedback fatigue' and low response rates. This would also not offer any insight on training opportunities that have already been provided due to the time lapsed. A survey will be developed to engage all members and request feedback from as wide a group as possible. This could be done retrospectively and at regular intervals going forward. The survey route could also invite members to identify training opportunities and suggest further topics for future sessions.

The Committee is asked to note the report, and the development of an all-member survey that captures feedback on training provided, and opportunities for future learning topics.

Appendices

Appendix A



Member Induction
May 2022 onwards.r