

Report



Democratic Services Committee

Information only

Date: 18th March 2024

Subject Update on Member Training

Purpose To inform the committee concerning the curriculum of training provided to Members, and levels of attendance at training since May 2022.
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 Democratic Services Committee is required to ensure that members have access to a reasonable level of training and development.

The draft Induction Curriculum set by the WLGA to support Members following the May 2022 local elections was considered by the 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.

Whilst there are a number of sessions planned for the final quarter of 2023/24, Committee Members are also asked to note training and development planned for elected members in 2024/25.

Proposal To note the report summarising training delivered in 2023/24 and consider the planned approach to Member training for 2024/25.

Action by Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Timetable Training is ongoing throughout the 5-year term to ensure that members are provided with support to fulfil their duties.

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 initial curriculum considered the topics recommended by 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 underpin the schedule of training re;

- **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 is flexible, allowing for changes as and when required to meet changing requirements.

The first year of training focussed on core training and induction and preparing Members for their relevant committees, so that members were supported to commence their roles and duties.

There were sessions on key legislation and policy supporting their decision making, such as the Equalities Act, Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and Safeguarding. In order to further enhance the awareness and understanding of Members on equality and diversity issues, further in-depth sessions were offered that focussed on other equality topics. These included sessions on fairness, violence against women and anti-racism. The sessions aimed to provide Members with practical guidance on how to promote equality and inclusion in their roles, and to challenge stereotypes and discrimination. The feedback from the sessions was very positive, and Members expressed interest in attending more sessions on similar topics in the future.

One of the key aspects of a councillor's role is to deal with the issues and concerns of their constituents. To help councillors manage their casework effectively, training on the functions and operations of the Council, was offered, supported by Heads of Service. The Heads of Service 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.

Throughout the year, Councillors were offered the opportunity to complete a qualification on carbon literacy facilitated by an external provider, which aimed to equip councillors with the knowledge and skills to tackle climate change and reduce their carbon footprint. The qualification consisted of two half-day sessions and a short assessment, and covered topics such as the science of climate change, the impact of carbon emissions, and the actions that can be taken at individual and organisational levels.

Data protection and information management are essential skills for councillors, who handle personal and sensitive data on a regular basis. To ensure that councillors are aware of their obligations and responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), three opportunities to attend training were arranged in the second year of term. The training covered the principles and rights of data protection, the lawful bases for processing data, the role of the Information Commissioner's Office, and the best practices for managing and storing data securely. The training also included case studies and scenarios relevant to councillors' casework and communications. Councillors who attended appreciated the clarity and relevance of the information provided.

Councillors received training on the introduction of the 20mph speed limit in residential and urban areas, ahead of the new legislation coming into effect in Wales in September 2023. The training was delivered by the Council's Environment and Sustainability team, who provided updates on the progress and plans for the rollout of the 20mph zones across the city to support councillors in engaging with their communities on this topic.

Another important topic that councillors received training on was the Llais arrangement between health and social services, which is a partnership agreement between the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and the five local authorities in Gwent. The training covered the vision and principles of the Llais arrangement.

Another key area of training for councillors was on scrutiny, including the purpose, principles, and methods of effective scrutiny, as well as the roles and responsibilities of chairs, councillors and officers involved in scrutiny committees. The training also included practical tips and examples of how to ask constructive and probing questions, how to analyse complex information, and how to make evidence-based recommendations. The interactive and engaging sessions were facilitated by the WLGA and gave councillors the opportunity to share their experiences and challenges with scrutiny.

One of the most relevant and timely training sessions for councillors was regarding education, specifically on attendance, inclusion, poverty and wellbeing topics. The session was delivered by the Council's Education service, who explained the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the learning and wellbeing of pupils in Newport, as well as the strategies and interventions that have been implemented to support them. The session also covered the statutory duties and responsibilities of the Council and schools regarding attendance and inclusion, and the challenges and opportunities of addressing poverty and inequality in education. Councillors had the chance to ask questions and discuss the issues with the Education officers and learn more about the best practices and innovations in this sector.

Another topic that councillors received more detailed training on was housing, specifically on the housing register, bidding and allocation procedures. The session was delivered by the Council's Housing service, who explained the criteria and process for applying for social housing in Newport, as well as the challenges and opportunities in meeting the demand and providing quality homes for residents. Councillors had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the issues with the Housing officers and learn more about the policies and practices in this sector.

Towards the end of 2023, elected members were provided with an update on South Wales Fire and Rescue Budgets and Service Priorities for 2024/25, and the opportunity to attend a refresher session on Treasury, Capital, Revenue and Budget Monitoring ahead of the budget setting process.

A session on the strategic economic partnerships the Council has with Cardiff Capital Region and the Western Gateway highlighted the priorities for both partnerships and forthcoming changes to the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal as the arrangement transitioned to the South East Wales Corporate Joint Committee.

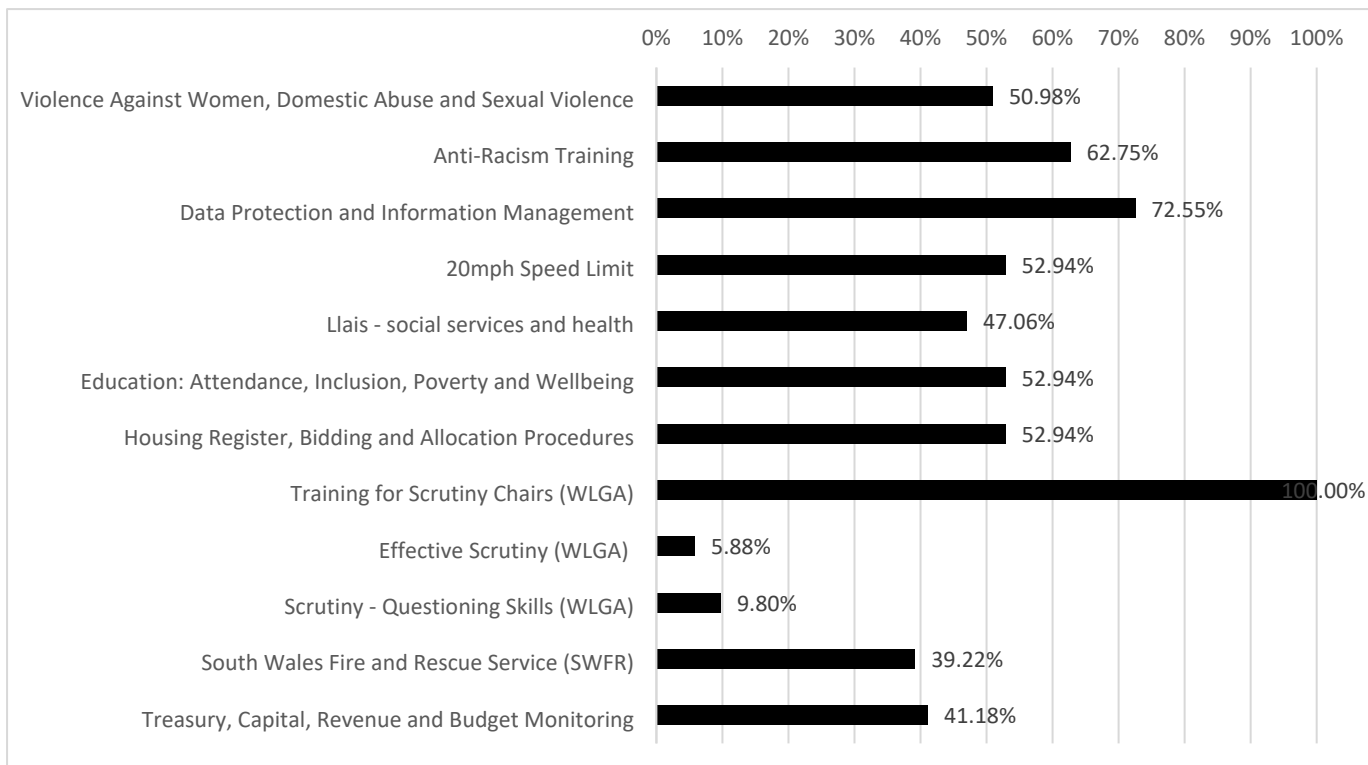
The Council arranged a training session on personal safety matters delivered jointly by the Council's Civil Contingencies team and the police outlining the practical steps and precautions that councillors can take to protect themselves and others from harm. The session covered topics such as lone working, online safety, risk assessments, and incident reporting. Councillors had the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the resources and support available to them.

Summary of Training by Quarter

	2022/23			
	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Quarter 1	Code of Conduct Training (3 x sessions throughout the year)	Wellbeing of Future Generations Act	Taking Fairness Seriously - with Newport Fairness Commission	Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence
	Introduction to the Role	Resident Enquiries and Requests - Environment, Public Protection and City Services	Carbon Literacy (3 x cohorts)	Anti-Racism Training
	General Meeting Participation	Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting	Supporting Councillors with Abuse and Intimidation – LGA Webinar	
	Licensing Training	Equality and Diversity. Welsh Language Duties	Housing Services	
	Scrutiny Training		Finance and Treasury Management	

			Councillor Personal Safety – LGA Webinar	
	2023/24			
	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
	Data Protection and Information Management (3 x sessions throughout the year)	Llais - social services and health	Effective Scrutiny (WLGA) (Scrutiny Members)	Partnerships - CCR and Western Gateway, SEW CJC
	20mph Speed Limit	Education: Attendance, Inclusion, Poverty and Wellbeing	Scrutiny - Questioning Skills (WLGA) (Scrutiny Members)	Mi Hub and Corporate Risk Register (Governance and Audit Committee Members)
		Housing Register, Bidding and Allocation Procedures	South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFR)	
		Training for Scrutiny Chairs (WLGA) (Scrutiny Chairs)	Treasury, Capital, Revenue and Budget Monitoring	
			Personal Safety	

Attendance at Training – 2023



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.

Attendance at the Scrutiny Chairs training was attended by all four chairs. However, there were low attendance levels at the wider scrutiny sessions for all committee members.

The attendance over the three sessions concerning information management was high at 72.55%.

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;

- Elections Act 2022 – Changes to voting
- Admissions and Transport (Education)
- Attainment, Curriculum for Wales and Estyn (Education)
- Code of Conduct (refresher)
- Planning
- Welsh Language Awareness
- Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty
- Complaints Handling
- Performance Management

Member Survey

The Democratic Services Committee recommended that a survey was developed to engage all members and request feedback from as wide a group as possible.

The survey results are presented in Appendix A. There was a low response rate, with 9 members (17%) completing the survey.

The survey sought feedback on engagement with previous training sessions and how useful members felt they were in supporting them to carry out their duties.

The survey also sought feedback on the method of delivery for the training and suggestions for topics for future seminars.

The feedback collated from the survey will be incorporated into the programme of training for 2024/25. Priorities include;

- Refresher training on sessions that provide guidance on the key roles, responsibilities and duties of members, for example;
 - Code of Conduct
 - Planning
 - Governance and decision-making
- Services and support provided to residents
- Making provision to include e-learning options for training
- Trialling different times and methods of delivery to support higher levels of engagement

Appendices

Appendix A



Survey Results
Training for elected r