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## **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

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### **REVIEW OF THE ELECTED MEMBER LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

#### **Reason for this Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to enable the Democratic Services Committee to consider a draft of the revised Elected Member Learning & Development Strategy 2024-29 as attached at **Appendix A**.

#### **Background**

2. The role of a Councillor is complex and challenging and the political, legislative and local landscape in which they work is changing constantly. Communities have high expectations of their elected representatives from the day of their election throughout their period of office. Both new and experienced Councillors need appropriate support, information and professional development to undertake their complex and evolving roles.
3. An Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy sets out the approach that an Authority via its Democratic Services Committee takes regarding the development and support of its Elected Members.
4. The previous Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy was initially approved by Council on 28 March 2019 and a revised version which reflected changes to the arrangements for mandatory training was subsequently approved by Council on 30 November 2023, when it was also noted that a review of the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy would be undertaken in 2024 and the revised strategy would be submitted to Council for approval.

#### **Issues**

##### Review of the Strategy

5. The Head of Democratic Services has carried out an initial desktop review the existing Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy. The following are the proposed changes to the strategy that have been identified:
  - a. Integrated the changes to the strategy approved by Council on 30 November 2023.

- b. Added Cabinet Members to the responsibilities section due to them being responsible for identifying the need for Member Briefings and to inform Members of changing or new policy arrangements.
  - c. Phase 1 – Administration
    - Revised the title to reflect the inclusion of an in-person introductory workshop to the administration phase.
    - Added a proposed timescale for Phase 1 (Week 1)
    - Removed references to the Cardiff Undertaking which is currently planned to be reviewed by the Standards and Ethics Committee but this could be restored following the review.
    - Added the requirement for ICT facilities and email addresses to be provided. Access to ICT facilities and email addresses will support subsequent phases of the strategy.
  - d. Phase 2 – The Essentials
    - Added a proposed timescale for Phase 2 (Week 1 – Week 4))
  - e. Phase 3 – The Core Functions
    - added a proposed timescale for Phase 3 (Week 4 – Week 26)
    - Added Appointments Committee which requires a recruitment and appointment session to be undertaken with Cardiff Academy before being able to sit as a member of the Committee.
    - Revised Audit Committee to Governance and Audit Committee.
    - Added “Required Training” for those committees which must attend the required training before being able to sit as a member of the committee.
    - added an expected outcome for All mandatory Training to be complete. This aligns to the requirements in the Members’ Code of Conduct for all mandatory training to be completed within 6 months.
  - f. Updated the allocation table for the WLGA Leadership Academy.
  - g. Updated Figure 1 to reflect the changes listed above.
  - h. Added paragraph for Online sessions and Conference Attendance to the methods of learning and development.
  - i. Revised the information for the Member development programme to include a provisional annual member development programme.
  - j. Updated the details for the review of the strategy.
  - k. Removed member role descriptions and Learning and Development Support for Community Councils from the Enhancing the current arrangements section.
5. A revised Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy is attached at **Appendix A**.

#### Next Steps

6. The Democratic Services Committee are requested to:

- a. Confirm that the proposed changes outlined in Paragraph 4 above are appropriate.
  - b. Identify any additional changes that should be made to the revised strategy.
7. Once the proposed changes have been agreed, a copy of the revised strategy will be shared with:
- a. Group Whips who will be able to seek the views of their groups and identify any additional changes that may be proposed by their group.
  - b. Senior Management Team to ensure that the proposed changes to the Strategy relating to the Directorates are deliverable.
8. The Head of Democratic will co-ordinate these consultation responses and liaise with all group whips to consider their views of the proposed changes made by other groups. The agreed changes will be included in the report presented to a subsequent meeting of the Democratic Services Committee.

#### Approval and Adoption

9. Following endorsement by the Democratic Services Committee the updated Learning and Development Strategy will be formatted and appropriate graphics and layouts will be added.
10. It is anticipated that the report from the Democratic Services Committee will be submitted to Council in September 2024 requesting approval and adoption of the revised Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy 2024-2029, in line with the Council decision of November 2023 (referenced in paragraph 4 above).
11. Following approval and adoption the Strategy will be translated into Welsh and uploaded to the Modern.gov Library and made publicly available on the internet.

#### Review of the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy

12. To ensure that the Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy remains an effective tool for Elected Members increase their knowledge, it will be necessary to plan a review of the strategy. It is anticipated that the strategy will be reviewed in 2026, at the request of the Democratic Services Committee and in response to any relevant changes to legislation or to the Authority.

#### **Financial Implications**

13. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The updated Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy includes a section on 'Resources', which outlines how learning and development, in-house training and attendance at relevant conferences and events are to be resourced within existing budgets.

#### **Legal Implications**

14. Section 7 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires local authorities to secure the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for its members. Each member must also be given the opportunity to have a review of their training and development needs on an annual basis. If a member decides to have an annual review of their training and development needs, the authority must ensure that the review includes an opportunity for an interview with someone who the authority considers to be “suitably qualified” to provide advice about the training and development needs of a member of a local authority.
15. In considering these requirements, regard must be had to the statutory guidance on Training, Development and Support for Local Authority Members, issued by the Welsh Ministers within Part 2 of the Statutory and Non-Statutory Guidance on Democracy within Principal Councils: [Statutory and non-statutory guidance on democracy within principal councils: members’ support, training and development \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#) . The guidance recommends that the Democratic Services Committee (DSC) has overall responsibility for deciding what should be regarded as reasonable training and development opportunities as part of its function of providing support to members to carry out their functions and provides a list of potential subjects for an on-going training programme. The statutory guidance also notes that ‘The agreed, training and development opportunities could be contained within a published development strategy which should include how the development will be provided and the process for commissioning external training and development. The Welsh Local Government Association’s Charter for Member Support and Development (“the Charter”) could be used for guidance purposes by local authorities in developing their strategies. Local authorities may wish to consider the requirements to achieve the Charter when developing their strategies and programmes.’
16. The Democratic Services Committee has responsibility for overseeing the support services provided to Members, ensuring they are adequately resourced and reporting any recommendations to Council.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

17. The Democratic Services Committee is recommended to:
  - a. Note the report and the revised draft Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy at Appendix A.
  - b. Confirm that the proposed changes outlined in Paragraph 5 of the report are appropriate and identify any additional changes to the draft strategy.
  - c. Note the proposed arrangements for the consultation, approval and adoption of the Strategy.
  - d. Receive a further report on this matter in due course.

**GP JONES**  
**HEAD of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**  
09 April 2024

Appendix A - Revised Draft Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy

Background Papers:

- [Revision of Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy](#) report to Council dated 30 November 2023.
- [Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy](#) report to Council dated 28 March 2019.
- [Elected Member Learning and Development Strategy](#) report to Democratic Services Committee dated 14 January 2019.