

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

ACHIEVING THE WELSH LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (WLGA) CHARTER FOR MEMBER SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

Purpose of Report.

1. To consider the requirements necessary to achieve the WLGA Charter for Member Support & Development.

Background.

2. What is the Charter? Elected Members today face increasing challenges. Under the modernisation agenda, there are heightened expectations on them to undertake a diversity of roles ranging from that of community leader to their special responsibilities within the Council. Throughout Wales, authorities are striving to provide the best possible support for their members to enable them to meet these challenges. This takes the form of skill and knowledge development, support facilities, and support services.
3. The Welsh Local Government Association has a long history of working with authorities to help them develop these activities. To provide structure to the national programme of support, the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development was developed collaboratively by the Association, Elected Members representing each of the political groups and member support officers from each authority.
4. The Charter aims to provide a broad framework for local planning, self-assessment, action and review together with networking and comparison amongst authorities and the sharing of good and innovative practice. Its wide adoption has raised the overall amount and standard of support given to members in Wales.
5. There are 2 levels of award with the first level normally requiring to be achieved before progressing to the next level:
 - a. (Standard) Charter Award
 - b. Advanced Charter Award
6. The following local authorities currently hold the Charter and Advanced Charter awards:
 - Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority - Advanced Level
 - Brecon Beacons National Park Authority - Advanced Level (Renewed)
 - Caerphilly County Borough Council (Renewed)
 - Isle of Anglesey County Council (Renewed)

- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (Renewed)
 - Gwynedd Council (Renewed)
 - Powys County Council (Renewed)
7. In addition, there is the Good Practice and Innovation Award for Member Support and Development. This award seeks to recognise and share excellent or innovative practice in member support and development to improve practice in Wales. Assessment of the Good Practice and Innovation Award will be based on a review of the written submission to a WLGA peer panel.
 8. The Charter is awarded for a period of three years after which an authority is able to relinquish, maintain or improve its charter status.
 9. The (Standard) **Charter Award** is a self-assessment undertaken by the Authority, documented and submitted to the WLGA, who will review the submission and determine whether to make the award. The (Standard) Charter Award is designed to establish that an essential range of support and development arrangements are in place, monitored and recorded.
 10. The **Advanced Charter Award** is a further self-assessment, documented and submitted to the WLGA in the same way as the (Standard) Charter Award submission. It is further underpinned by a peer assessment including a site visit undertaken by officers, and member peers from Wales and England. The Advanced Charter is designed to recognise that the arrangements required for the Charter are working effectively.
 11. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 introduced legislative requirements for corporate governance and member support and development. Therefore, the Charter criteria were further developed to enhance and enable these legal requirements. The implementation of the Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021 is likely to drive a further enhancement of the criteria by the WLGA. A copy of the requirements is attached at **Appendix A**.
 12. There are two primary benefits of achieving the WLGA Charter:
 - a. The Auditors, Inspectors, Regulators (AIRs) have acknowledged that a Council which has achieved the Charter has Elected Members who are aware of key topics, are provided with development opportunities to broaden their knowledge and skills, have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are more likely to make more informed decisions.
 - b. That all Elected Members of the Authority have confidence that the support and development provided to them is of a high standard when measured against a nationally recognised standard.

Issues

13. An assessment attached at **Appendix B**, has been undertaken for each of the main criteria which form the standard WLGA Charter award to determine how the support currently provided to Elected Members of this Authority compares with the support and services required to achieve the WLGA Charter for Member Support & Development. Each criteria has been categorised as follows:

- Green - Few or minimal changes from the established processes.
- Amber - Some changes with an element of significant change to existing processes and activities.
- Red - Significant change to existing processes and activities or the introduction of new processes or activities.

14. With the implementation of the Local Government and Elections Act (Wales) 2021 the WLGA has advised that the “Charter” is likely to be reviewed and updated by April 2023 to reflect the changes in this legislation.

Key actions

15. Following the assessment of the WLGA criteria for awarding the WLGA Charter for Member Support and Development, an action plan has been developed of the key actions that will be necessary to be achieved before applying for the WLGA Charter.
16. The key actions are summarised below but detailed actions and target dates are provided at **Appendix C**.
- a. Arrangements are in place for all members to be offered a PDR.
This will include a review of existing arrangements with HR and others with experience of Personal Development Review Process, liaison with Elected Members and Group Leaders and the implementation of a PDR process which must be completed by all Senior Salary holders
 - b. Prospective candidates, candidates and new members are informed of their role and responsibilities.
Whilst existing Elected Members are provided with an Induction Programme which enhances their awareness of their role and responsibilities, potential Councillors may not be fully aware of these roles and responsibilities before they are elected. One option is to provide a public awareness session prior to an election period to ensure that those considering standing for Election are fully informed of their role and responsibilities in the event of their election.
 - c. Members are offered the opportunity to be mentored by Member peers.
The approval of the WLGA Mentors guide has identified an option for an Elected Members Mentoring scheme. Although some Elected Member mentors have been trained and are being engaged to mentor newly elected members this capability is limited. Opportunities to use mentoring training to widen the scheme to include other mentoring and shadowing opportunities for enhancing diverse representation and awareness of the role and responsibilities of Councillors.
 - d. Information resources are provided
Information is provided to elected members in a range of formats and channels. It is planned that a Members Portal on the Council’s intranet be established which would provide a single repository for information and reference. Initial discussions have been held which would enable this portal to be provided which could be quickly updated by officers and easily accessed by Elected Members.
17. The Democratic Services Committee is requested to consider the information contained within the report appendices and to determine any reasonable and

appropriate courses of action to enable Cardiff Council to develop a submission for the WLGA Charter for Member support and development.

Legal Implications

18. 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 should also have 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 they consider to be “suitably qualified” to advise about the training and development needs of a member.
19. In considering these requirements, regard must be had to the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers. The Welsh Government has indicated that it is proposing to revoke the earlier guidance (Statutory Guidance from the Local Government Measure 2011) issued in June 2012 and has issued refreshed draft guidance for consultation (in Chapter 2 of the Consultation Document, Local Government: Guidance for Principal Councils, 17 March 2022): [Guidance for principal councils | GOV.WALES](https://gov.wales/guidance-for-principal-councils) . The revised draft guidance remains substantially unchanged but aims to address the new roles and challenges councillors may face, such as becoming an assistant to the executive or negative social media. It also recognises that different formats are now more readily accessible to support member training and development such as on-line learning and electronic workshops and tutoring.
20. 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. It 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’ (draft Guidance paragraph 2.14).
21. 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.

Financial Implications

22. There are no direct financial implications contained within the report. Any service development work will need to be prioritised and delivered within existing resources.

Recommendations

23. The Democratic Services Committee is requested to consider the information contained within the report and its appendices and to determine any reasonable and appropriate courses of action to enable Cardiff Council to develop a submission for the WLGA Charter for Member support and development.

GARY JONES

Head of Democratic Services

22 November 2022

Appendices:

- Appendix A The Wales Charter for Member Support and Development The Criteria and Assessment Process 2022
- Appendix B WLGA Charter Assessment
- Appendix C Achieving The WLGA Charter - Action Plan

Background Documents:

[Elected Member Learning and Development](#) report to Council dated 25 November 2021.
[Democratic Services Committee](#) held on Monday, 19 July, 2021.
[Support and Services Comparison Against the Welsh Local Government Association \(WLGA\) Charter for Member Support and Development](#) report to Democratic Services Committee on 01 October 2018.