THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

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BRO MORGANNWG

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

February 2016

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THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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Foreword

The Vale of Glamorgan Council is continuing to seek to meet the major challenges brought about by ongoing continuing budgetary reductions and the need to make significant associated financial savings. Alongside this we need to ensure that important local services continue to be delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible. This requires us to prioritise and to also work with a variety of partners in delivering essential services. To succeed in meeting these challenges elected Members and officers need to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible. We can only do this if we have the right tools (including the relevant skills and knowledge) at our disposal.

To this end the Council is committed to the ongoing development of our elected Members. We have a track record of delivering regular member development sessions and such an approach will continue. However, we cannot afford to be complacent. Public expectations of the Council, its elected members and officers are high. There is ever-increasing interest in the way in which decisions are taken and how these decisions are scrutinised. This and the fact that we will need to continue to work very differently in delivering key services means that the training and development of our members is vital.

This updated Member Development Strategy seeks to reaffirm the principles by which future Member Development will be determined and delivered.

Rob Thomas
Managing Director

Nic Hodges
Chairman,
Democratic Services Committee

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

1. The government's ongoing Modernising Local Government agenda means Members have had to embrace, and adapt to, many different roles and responsibilities. The Leader and Cabinet model of governance, introduced in May 2002, has had a major impact on Members' roles. Executive Members play a key role in policy and decision-making, with the non-Executive Members on the Council's five Scrutiny Committees providing a valuable means of challenge ("critical friend") and assisting the Executive in areas such as policy development.

2. The Wales Programme for Improvement places a responsibility on the Council to maintain continuous improvement in service delivery, emphasising the need to develop new and innovative ways of working to improve service outcomes. All Members have a key role in the process of challenging established patterns of service delivery.

3. Various statutory responsibilities are placed on the Council to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the community and to lead and co-ordinate the preparation of the Community Strategy in partnership with the Council's public, private, voluntary and community sector partners. Within this area, all Members have a key role in providing leadership and front-line representation to the local community.

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The Current Context

4. This Strategy has been developed in the context of ongoing changes in Local Government and with a view to enabling Members to meet the challenges and opportunities presented to them, both through legislative changes and drivers in the County Council's organisation, the way it delivers services and the way it works with its communities. It does not set out to specify in detail the training that will be undertaken, when it will happen and who will facilitate it. Rather, it seeks to reaffirm the principles that will govern the Council's approach to Member Development and to set out in broad terms how the aims and objectives of Member Development will be met.

5. To provide the context in which the Strategy sits, the document begins by setting out the Council's Vision and Values. It then explains the overall objectives of Member Development within that context, before setting out the role of the Democratic Services Committee and supporting officers. Finally, the Strategy outlines the structure for Member Development.

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The Council's Vision

6. A clear, agreed and owned vision of where we want to be is critical if resources are to be used effectively and performance is to be maximised. The vision of the Council is communicated in the Corporate Plan as follows:

"Strong communities with a bright future"

7. To shape the attitude and behaviour needed to deliver our vision and further develop the performance culture, the Council has identified a set of values. Our Values set out what the Council expects of its managers and staff in relation to how they do their work and how they will be treated:

- *Ambitious* - Forward thinking, embracing new ways of working and investing in our future
- *Open* – Open to different ideas and being accountable for the decisions we take
- *Together* – Working together as a team that engages with our customers and partners, respects diversity and is committed to quality services
- *Proud* – proud of the Vale of Glamorgan: proud to serve our communities and to be part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council

8. Members have a vital role in the delivery of the Council's vision. As such, it is essential that all Members possess the correct skills and knowledge. It is not enough for Members to have an interest in, and understanding of, one or two key disciplines. People and communities expect them to be able to work for them across a range of subjects, using skills and expertise that match the increasingly complex nature of those topics.

9. Good quality Member Development arrangements enhance Members' ability to do this by:

- developing Members' knowledge of particular issues or legislation
- developing Members' awareness of local and national issues
- developing Members' skills and capabilities across a range of areas, including personal development, leadership skills, communication skills and ICT competencies
- developing Members' understanding of key issues, for example community
- development and equalities and diversity
- giving Members the opportunity to network with each other, other Authorities, other partners and the community.

10. The prime purpose of the Strategy is to provide a clear framework for Member Development, building on the previous Strategy, existing initiatives and practices, all of which are designed to enhance the Council's support for, and development of, Members.

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The Strategy

11. The Member Development Strategy seeks to provide a framework for supporting Members in the numerous roles which they are required to undertake both within, and outside, the Council. The Strategy recognises the diverse roles of Members, which range from that of a front-line Councillor representing and leading a community ("Community Leadership"), through to shapers of regional strategies and, on occasions, influencers of national policy. In tandem with key corporate documents such as the Corporate Plan and Community Strategy, the Member Development Strategy is designed to assist Members in becoming fully equipped with the necessary skills, qualities and knowledge to enhance the work of the Council, the quality of its services and achieve the best outcomes for the community within the Vale of Glamorgan. The Strategy recognises the need for different forms of development, both in content and delivery.

12. The Member Development Strategy was last updated in 2013. Given the continuous programme of change facing local authorities, the opportunity has been taken to again update the Strategy. In doing so, particular regard has been given to the following areas:

- the ongoing implications of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011
- Role Descriptions and Person Specifications for Members
- providing a clear framework for the undertaking of Personal Support and Development Interviews for Members
- ensuring arrangements exist for monitoring / reviewing and delivering the overall Member Development Programme.

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Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

13. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 requires Local Authorities to secure the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for its Members. The Measure does not define what constitutes reasonable training and development. However, Welsh Government guidance recommends that Local Authorities provide opportunities for what is essential for a Member to perform their role effectively. Areas in which the Welsh Government suggests Local Authorities may wish to consider providing training for their Members include :

- Induction
- Role and Function of the Executive, the Council and its Officers
- Overview and Scrutiny
- Information Technology
- Code of Conduct
- Role of a Councillor as a Local Member
- Public Engagement
- Equality and Diversity Training

14. Every Member (other than an Executive Leader – see ** below) must be offered the opportunity to have their training and development needs reviewed on an annual basis. It is recommended that much of the training and development needs of Members are identified by such reviews.

The review must include an opportunity for a pre-planned interview between the Member and a suitably qualified person. A Member may well wish to publicise in his or her Annual Report any training and development undertaken.

15. On an annual basis, the Head of Democratic Services will afford all Members the opportunity of having a Personal Development Interview. As far as Members in receipt of a Senior Salary are concerned, there will be an expectation on them to have such an interview.

16. As part of a comprehensive review of the Council's Constitution, the latest version (issued in December 2015) contains an enhanced set of Role Descriptions and Person Specifications covering the wide range of roles undertaken by Members. These include the posts of Leader, Deputy Leader, Executive Member, Scrutiny Member, Chairmen of Scrutiny Committees and Chairmen of statutory committees.

(** Section 7 of the Measure does not apply to the Executive Leader. However, the Measure/ guidance acknowledges that there may, of course, be occasions where the Leader wishes to receive training or development and there is no suggestion that, by excluding them from the provisions of the Measure, they should not be able to receive training, nor, indeed, an annual review or an interview.

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Roles and Responsibilities

17. The Member Development Programme should seek to encompass all aspects of the ambitions and vision of the Council. The aim of Member Development is to ensure that Members are not only able to access the training they require, but also that they undertake it. In order to facilitate this, it is necessary for everyone involved in Member Development to play their part to the best of their ability. The key players in this are:

- The Democratic Services Committee
- All Members
- Senior Officers (e.g. Directors and Heads of Service)
- Head of Democratic Services

18. This section sets out the roles and responsibilities of these individuals and groups.

Democratic Services Committee

The role of the Committee Group is to oversee, drive and "champion" Member Development and ensure Members themselves are fully engaged in the drawing up and delivery of the Council's Member Development programme. As part of this the Committee will monitor the delivery of the programme and periodically assess its effectiveness.

All Members

All members should:

- Identify their own development needs and proactively seek out development opportunities to meet them.
- Attend initial induction and follow-up training in core areas such as Code of Conduct, Finance, Planning, Licensing and Equalities.
- Help others to develop through sharing of learning and so encourage the development of a culture whereby learning and development is regarded as a component of the ongoing success of the Council.

Members should have regard to the Various Member Role Descriptions and Person Specifications which have been agreed by the Council and which can be found in and can be found at http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/Documents/_Committee%20Reports/Committee%20Information/Constitution/May-2016/Section-24.pdf

Political Group Leaders have a particular responsibility to ensure that their Members engage fully in the Member Development process; recognising shortcomings and proactively seeking out training opportunities.

Directors and Heads of Service

Strategic Directors and Heads of Service will:

- Identify key strategic activities that require Member Development
- Provide briefings to members on key areas of service delivery and development and on emerging themes and Council priorities

Head of Democratic Services

The Head of Democratic Services will:

- Afford all members the opportunity of undertaking, on an annual basis, a Personal Development and Review interview
- Ensure Personal Development and Review interviews are undertaken in respect of all Members who are in receipt of a Senior Salary
- Identify Member Development requirements and draw up and facilitate / deliver a Member Development Programme accordingly
- Promote Member Development throughout the organisation, including identification of joint Member and officer activities
- Work collaboratively with Directors and Heads of Service and with other partners in the identification and delivery of activities
- Keep under review the Member Development Strategy and ongoing Member Development Programme, including periodic reports to the Democratic Services Committee

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Member Development Programme

19. Activities will be developed and delivered through the following channels:

- Induction programme for new Members

- Specific sessions on core areas (e.g. Code of Conduct, Finance,
- Planning, Licensing and equalities) for all Members following Council elections and subsequently, as appropriate in the light of any major changes (e.g. as the result of significant new legislation).
- Mentoring programme offered for new Members
- Personal support for Members in developing their individual action plan and identifying priorities for their development
- Member Development Programme of knowledge and skills development activities.

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Core Principles

20. The following principles will govern the Council's approach to Member Development:

- in order for Member Development to meet the needs of Members, the process needs to be approved, championed, owned and led by Members themselves;
- Member Development must be considered as a continuous and evolving process;
- the Strategy will be informed by the offering / undertaking of annual Personal Support and Development Interviews for all Members and the production of associated Training Needs Analyses;
- all newly elected Members will be properly inducted into the Council and their roles and also be afforded access to Member Mentors and Officer "Buddies";
- all Members will have the opportunity to benefit from Information Communications Technology (ICT) to assist them in their role and development;
- the provision of training and development will balance the needs of the Council itself, its stated corporate priorities and the individual and group needs of Members;
- the learning programme will take into account individual and group needs and Members' preferred learning styles;
- where possible, active consideration will be given to the delivery of training on a collaborative basis.

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Key Themes

21. Some learning and development is relevant to all Members, for example new, or changing, legislation, core knowledge and skills and major Council priorities and policies. Other elements will be relevant to smaller groups such as those sharing a particular role (for example Committee Chairmen) or sitting on a particular committee. Members will also have their own individual learning needs.

22. There are five key themes running through the Member Development Programme -

(i) Core Knowledge and Skills

Areas covered will include :

- Democracy and Governance, i.e. how Council decision-making works and organisational awareness

- Code of Conduct and Probity
- the legal / constitutional framework
- Diversity and Equality
- IT Skills
- the Role of Councillors, including as a corporate parent
- Local Government Finance and Financial Responsibilities.

(ii) Corporate Development

This element of the Programme can include issues such as:

- Community Leadership and Partnership Working
- Community Engagement
- Strategic Planning
- Risk Management
- Performance Management
- Data Protection and Freedom of Information
- Dealing with Complaints.

(iii) Service Specific Issues

This includes briefings/seminars on the work of individual departments and issues emerging affecting specific service delivery.

(iv) uncil and Committee Issues

There will be a number of issues relevant to Councillors as Members of specific Committees, e.g.:

- Planning matters
- Licensing matters
- Standards Committee issues
- Audit Committee Responsibilities
- Development Skills - Scrutiny
- Development Skills - Executive
- Sitting on Appeals
- Chairing
- Questioning
- Media Skills.

(v) Individual Needs

These will be identified predominantly through Personal Support and Development Interviews and Plans. Where there is sufficient demand, relevant sessions will be built into the Member Development Programme and, unless considered impractical, all individual identified development needs will also be addressed. E-learning will also be offered / utilised.

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Delivering the Member Development Programme

23. Whilst the Member Development Strategy aims to provide the foundation for long term Member Development and training, particular regard has been given to ensuring arrangements are in place to fully support Members (particularly those new to the Council) following each local government election. The Strategy's overarching aim remains "**to ensure that all Members have access to training and development opportunities to enable them to fully meet the demands of office and, in particular, to undertake the Executive, Scrutiny, Regulatory, community leadership and representative roles to the highest standards of competence and effectiveness**". Ongoing Member Development is considered fundamental for both new, and returning, Members.

24. The aim is for the Member Development Programme to cover the full term of office for Members following election. Sessions will be programmed in advance to minimise the risk of them clashing with committee meetings and to enable Members to diarise, well in advance, those sessions they are interested in attending, maximising their ability to attend. It is recognised that, given the pressures on their time, Members will not be able to take advantage of every learning opportunity. It is, therefore, important that it is clear what each session will cover so that Members can make an informed decision whether or not to attend, based on their own identified learning needs analysis and their particular roles on the Council. Where possible, development sessions will be offered and / or repeated at different times of the day.

25. A comprehensive induction process will be provided for new Members during their first six months in office, with "refresher" sessions offered to Members who are re-elected. Induction will comprise a series of training modules specifically designed to give an overview of Member roles in today's changing world of local government, together with an insight into the structure and service delivery and the corporate priorities of the Council.

26. **ICT** - All Members are provided with laptops if required. The Members' Rooms in the Civic Offices are wired for connection to the Council's network and "docking stations" have been provided in each room to allow access to the network and to provide access to CD-Rom drives. The major Council buildings all have wireless access to allow members to connect to the network via their laptop. Printers have been installed in the Members' Rooms and provided for use at Members' homes if required. All Members' homes are linked via broadband or the best available alternative. Members have been offered comprehensive training tailored to their individual requirements. An ongoing training programme will exist, designed to maintain Members' familiarity with their personal computing facilities, accessing training opportunities and more effective ways of working for Members. This could include, for example, accessing intranet information, communication between Members and Council departments from home and whilst away on business or conferences and the use of personal devices. ICT provision for members will be reviewed on a regular basis and especially before a new intake of Members following an election

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Implementing and Monitoring the Strategy

27. **Officer Support** - Member Development and support will be co-ordinated by the Managing Director, in liaison with the Head of Democratic Services. Specific support will also be provided

by Directors and Heads of Service and the Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer. The Member Development Programme will be monitored by means of reports to the Democratic Services Committee.

28. **Evaluation** - After each course or training event, Members will be asked to complete an evaluation form.

29. **Accountability** - As indicated in the core principles outlined above, **"In order for Member Development to meet the needs of Members the process needs to be championed, owned and led by Members themselves."** The Leader's portfolio includes responsibility for Member Development. The Democratic Services Committee has overall responsibility for Member Development, with the Chairman of the Committee designated the Council's Member Development Champion.

    The Committee will:

    - review this Strategy and the Member Development Programme on an annual basis
    - evaluate the member Development Programme, including the effective alignment of events with the Council's vision and corporate objectives, timeliness of events, take-up, and feedback from Members

    Directors / Heads of Service will be required to issue members with an evaluation form for any Member Development session held within their respective service area.

    Members are expected to

    - complete evaluation forms for events and activities and to complete any associated survey/questionnaires as required from time to time.
    - review their training and development requirement on an ongoing basis.

    The Chairman of the Democratic Services Committee, together with relevant officers, will also attend meetings of the all-Wales Member Support Officers' / Members' Network.

    February 2016