

Meeting of:	Democratic Services Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 17 November 2025
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	All Scrutiny Committees
Report Title:	Update from Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) Heads of Democratic Services Network
Purpose of Report:	To provide Members with an update of key activities being undertaken nationally, co-ordinated by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), within the Heads of Democratic Services' Network.
Report Owner:	James Langridge-Thomas, Head of Democratic Services
Responsible Officer:	James Langridge-Thomas, Head of Democratic Services
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	All Elected Members will be circulated a copy of this information only item.
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive Decision.
Executive Summary: - The Heads of Democratic Services Network is a WLGA group which is convened on a quarterly basis. This group consists of officers from WLGA, alongside officers delegated Heads of Democratic Services from across all Councils in Wales, which aims to share tools, resources and develop policy to support Council's in discharging their democratic functions. - The purpose of this report is to provide an update from their last meeting held during September 2025 and provide an overview to Committee of areas of work which are being explored nationally in supporting the Democratic Services function. - A number of areas will be explored in further detail within this report; including an update from the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru surrounding remuneration, preparation for the upcoming Senedd elections and Councillor Induction Survey report.	

Recommendation

1. T H A T the Committee notes the contents within the report and agrees for it to be disseminated to all Members to make them aware of various areas of work being undertaken by WLGA Heads of Democratic Services Network.

Reason for Recommendation

1. To ensure that the Committee and all Members are aware of the work being undertaken on a national basis to support the Council in discharging its Democratic Services function.

1. Background

1.1 Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC) update

The DBCC has taken over the responsibilities and functions of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales and provided an overview of their approach to the annual report surrounding Members remuneration, including the want to maintain a similar report to maintain continuity.

1.2 Councillor Induction Survey

WLGA conducted an independent survey with Councillors to seek their views on the induction process to inform how they develop their future programme, and how this intelligence could shape future local programmes.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

2.1 Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru Update

2.2 Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC) presented their first annual report since taking up the responsibilities of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW).

2.3 The draft report follows the same format as previous iterations to maintain a degree of continuity and will be published on 23rd September, 2025.

2.4 The deadline for responses is 26th November, 2025, and seeking views via Council's Democratic Services Committee accordingly.

2.5 WLGA Councillor Induction Survey

2.5.1 WLGA undertook an independent survey of all Councillors in Wales to understand their views surrounding their local experiences of Member induction. A full summary of results is available in Appendix A.

2.5.2 The purpose of the survey is to inform the design of future Member induction programmes, and has been shared now for consideration ahead of the Senedd elections, where there may be a need to do a number of mid term inductions following potential by-elections.

- 2.5.3 The overall response rate was 11% (with Vale of Glamorgan's contribution slightly higher at 13%). Local results have also been shared with the Head of Democratic Services.
- 2.5.4 Key messages include:
 - 2.5.4.1 Still room for improvement in terms of quality and volume of information provided
 - 2.5.4.2 The need to elongate the induction process
 - 2.5.4.3 Consider the roles of mentoring
 - 2.5.4.4 Reducing technical components of induction from the offset
 - 2.5.4.5 Role of ongoing Member development
 - 2.5.4.6 Involvement of Members in shaping the learning programme
- 2.5.5 The findings from this report will be used to inform the development of the next Member induction programme, and are tabled for a more detailed discussion at Democratic Services Committee in the Spring (as outlined within the updated Forward Work Programme).

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1 The Council's involvement in this network allows it to take a longer-term view of the Democratic Services landscape and its improvement journey and seeks to collectively prevent challenges. The use of shared, collaborative resources allows for the Council to consider how they can work with other bodies in an integrated manner to improve the discharging of its duties.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct Climate Change and Nature implications to this report. However, this has been considered when reflecting upon the mediums used to participate and facilitate activities, such as using digital technology.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1 The update outlines a range of opportunities available to the Council, which will incur no additional cost as they have been included as part of the Council's annual membership fees to WLGA. Any additional activities and related expenditure identified because of any of the areas included in the above will be subject to the Council's usual finance processes.

Employment

- 5.2** The main implication will be in terms of Officer time to co-ordinate and/or facilitate sessions and/or resources.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3** Member Training and development is required by the Local Government Act 2000 and Local Government Measure (Wales) 2011.
- 5.4** The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places new duties on Local Government in relation to Member knowledge and development.

A determination within the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) Annual Report 2024-2025 states that " Each authority, through its Democratic Services Committee or other appropriate committee, must ensure that all its elected members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively."

6. Background Papers

[WLGA – Local Democratic and Member Development](#)

[Statutory and non-statutory guidance on democracy within principal councils](#)

[Multi Location Meetings Policy](#)

Induction Survey Results

- 11% response rate overall but at least one response from every council
 - 53% of responders elected 2022 or later
 - 20% 2017 or later
 - 26% before 2017
- Many similar messages across councils
- A clear picture of opinions and suggestions
- Councillors appreciate the support provided but room for improvement

62% responders said they had the right amount of induction

34% too little

4% too much

Optimum balance achieved in 2017 when 75% said right amount

Headline messages

- Reduce the quantity of induction overall and spread it over several weeks.
- Focus on the **practical** skills and essential basic information councillors need to know to do the job
- Provide competent member mentors and clarify mentor roles and mentee expectations
- Keep the more technical, detailed, policy and legislative information for ongoing development after induction
- Provide information to councillors as and when they need it, make it available centrally
- Involve councillors more in planning and delivering learning

What practical information did councillors say they need to know to do the job? 1

- Who's who? What do they do? how can I reach them? Help me meet them informally. Give me a meaningful organisational chart
- Where is everything? give me a tour. Give me a plan of the buildings.
- Please clarify what is expected of me, what's the job?
- Tell me about the council structure, what do all the committees and Full Council do?
- How does party politics work in the council?
- How do I attend Full Council, how do I speak and submit a motion?
- How do I work with the public, lead communities and do casework?
- How can I access support for casework?

What practical information did councillors say they need to know to do the job? 2

- I need help with communication skills, public speaking and using social media.
- How do I stay safe, in person and online?
- How do I use the IT and attend meetings remotely? where do I get technical support when I need it?
- How do I act ethically within the Code of Conduct?
- How do I act respectfully and take account of equalities, diversity and inclusion?
- Help me meet other councillors

After Induction?

- Check in with councillors to discover what else they need to know
- Keep the ongoing training programme light but provide opportunities for individual councillors to independently access people and resources to meet their needs for learning and support.
- Councillors said these should be prioritised:

- Data handling/management FOI GDPR
- Safeguarding adults and children and corporate parenting
- Finance
- Planning for planning and non planning members
- Scrutiny
- Leadership
- Personal safety, self care and wellbeing
- Main policy and service legislation, priorities and standards
- More about the code of conduct and refresher training
- Licensing
- More practical meeting skills, chairing
- Wellbeing impact assessments

What induction and ongoing activities did councillors prefer?



Face to face in person workshops at the council

Remote attendance workshops

Mentoring



E learning programmes

Written workbooks

What does this mean for us?

A lighter and more spaced-out induction process?

A focus on more practical skills and essential knowledge?

More opportunities for councillors to network with each other and officers

What should national collaboration look like?