

Meeting of:	<b>Democratic Services Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Monday, 02 March 2026</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Report Title:	Member Development Programme – Phase 4 Progress Report
Purpose of Report:	To provide Members with an update arising from the Member Development Programme – Phase 4, following agreement at the Democratic Services Committee Meeting held on 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2025.
Report Owner:	James Langridge-Thomas, Head of Democratic Services.
Responsible Officer:	Amy Rudman, Principal Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Members of the Democratic Services Committee Head of Democratic Services
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This report provides an update on Phase 4 of the Member Development Programme, which has been shaped by Member feedback from the Learning Needs Analysis Self-Assessment Survey and Annual Scrutiny Impact Surveys. Since the Programme’s endorsement in February 2025, a wide range of priority Development Sessions and Member Briefings have been delivered, covering topics such as Reshaping Scrutiny, the Code of Conduct and Rules of Debate, Public Participation, and key strategic areas including Tackling Poverty, Placemaking, Finance, Risk, and the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.</li> <li>• MemberNet has been strengthened as the central platform for training materials and briefings, improving access to learning resources. Work also continues to develop sessions planned for 2026 covering topics such as Libraries and Culture, Neurodiversity, Additional Learning Needs, and Money Laundering. Personal Development Reviews have been offered to all Members to support tailored learning needs.</li> </ul>	

- Overall, the Programme remains on track, with continued focus on delivering responsive, Member-led development opportunities aligned with the Council's Member Development Strategy and statutory responsibilities.

## **Recommendations**

1. T H A T the progress made to date in delivering Phase 4 of the Member Development Programme be noted.
2. T H A T the Committee reflect upon areas outstanding to consider if still relevant, or if there are other areas which should be considered.

## **Reason for Recommendations**

- 1&2.** To support the continued scheduling and dissemination of the Member Development Programme, ensuring that development topics identified by Elected and Co-opted Members are addressed in advance of the 2027 Local Government Election.

### **1. Background**

- 1.1** Elected Members bring a variety of skills, knowledge, and life experience to their position.
- 1.2** On 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022, the Committee was presented with a Draft Learning Needs Analysis Self-Assessment Survey (LNASAS) for its consideration. The draft was based upon a framework which outlined the skills and knowledge widely accepted to be required by Local Authority Councillors in Wales. The framework was developed by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and was designed to help new and existing Councillors identify aspects of their role where development might be helpful.
- 1.3** The framework was also designed as part of the Wales Approach to Continuing Professional Development for Councillors and fitted with the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development.
- 1.4** At the same meeting, on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022, the Committee approved the draft and subsequently resolved that the Survey be emailed to all Elected Members electronically as well as uploaded to MemberNet in January 2023.
- 1.5** On 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023, the electronic LNASAS was emailed to all Elected Members together with the Elected Member role description at Section 25.1 of the Council's Constitution. Members were requested to complete the Survey by Monday, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023 (two-week response window) in order that the results could be analysed in preparation for presentation to the committee. Members were also asked to prioritise any identified development needs as well as their preferred method of learning for each of their identified development needs.
- 1.6** On 11<sup>th</sup> April 2023, the Committee was presented with a breakdown of the feedback received from the LNASAS to date alongside a general update on the corporate Member Induction and Development Programme. A total of 32 responses were received in

response to the LNASAS giving a 59% response rate and Members were requested to provide their views and interpretation of the findings.

- 1.7** After the LNASAS was disseminated, Members were also requested to complete two editions of the Annual Scrutiny Impact Survey (ASIS) on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024 respectively, that also asked Members to highlight any aspects of their Scrutiny Member role that they required further training and/or information on. The feedback gathered from both surveys directly informed the design and delivery of the Member Development Programme, which aimed to address identified learning priorities and support Members in fulfilling their roles effectively.
- 1.8** On the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2025 the Committee were presented with the comments raised by Members in response to the 2023 Learning Needs Analysis Self-Assessment Survey and Annual Scrutiny Impact Surveys 2023 and 2024, as well as associated commentary from Officers. Members were also provided with a list of proposed development topics and associated delivery timescales. After which, the Committee noted the feedback data provided and endorsed the development topic proposal subject to the topics of Community Cohesion and Child Exploitation being provided earlier in the schedule during the 2025 calendar year.
- 1.9** As such, all Elected and Co-opted Members were advised of the Committee's decision and provided with a copy of the Phase 4 Development Programme going forward **(Appendix A)**.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** Since the Democratic Services Committee endorsed the Phase 4 Member Development Programme on 10 February 2025, several key development activities have been delivered, with further sessions scheduled or in planning. The programme has been shaped by Member feedback from the Learning Needs Analysis Self-Assessment Survey (LNASAS) and previous Annual Scrutiny Impact Surveys (ASIS), ensuring alignment with Member's identified priorities.
  - 2.2** The Head of Democratic Services has also introduced Member briefing sessions, designed in conjunction with the Council's Senior Leadership Team, to provide further learning opportunities to Members, a key element of the Council's Reshaping Scrutiny arrangements around a range of strategic initiatives aligned to Vale 2030, the Council's new Corporate Plan.
- 2.3 Progress to Date**
- Progress has been made in delivering Phase 4 of the Member Development Programme, including:

Session	Delivered	Description
Tackling Poverty – Citizens Advice	October 2025	Remote session delivered with Citizens Advice providing Members with insight into poverty-related issues affecting communities and available support mechanisms.
Public Participation Strategy	November 2025	Remote session covering how the Council engages with residents.
Placemaking	November 2025	Remote session on the principles of placemaking and how future development in the Vale is shaped.
Mid-Term Code of Conduct	December 2025	A mandatory refresher session on the Elected Member Code of Conduct.
Council Risk Register	December 2025	Remote session providing insight into the Council’s strategic risks, how risks are identified and monitored
Budget Update	December 2025	Remote session providing an update on the Council’s budget cycle.
Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation	January 2026	An introduction to the WIMD helping Members to understand deprivation levels and interpret local need and inequalities.
Glamorgan Voluntary Service	February 2026	A session delivered with GVS offering an overview of voluntary sector support and partnership working.

#### 2.4 Upcoming Sessions

- A session has been scheduled with the Regional Housing and resettlement Co-ordinator regarding Community Cohesion for 11th March 2026 at the Civic Offices. This session will explore the experiences of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.
- A Microsoft Teams session on Child Exploitation has been scheduled for 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026. This session will aim to raise awareness of child exploitation, a complex form of abuse involving grooming and criminal activity.

#### 2.5 In Progress / Pending Scheduling for 2026

- The following development topics were identified as part of Phase 4 of the Member Development Programme. Each topic reflects feedback received through the Learning

Needs Analysis Self-Assessment Survey (LNASAS) and Annual Scrutiny Impact Surveys (ASIS). These sessions are in early planning stages and are scheduled for delivery by the end of 2026.

<b>Session</b>	<b>Delivery</b>	<b>Description</b>
Community Cohesion	Q3	Focusing specifically on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
Libraries and Culture – Brave New Worlds	Q3	Overview of Libraries and Culture’s strategic review and strategy.
Understanding Neurodiversity	Q3	This session will promote awareness and inclusion of neurodiverse individuals.
Money Laundering	Q4	This session will outline the process of money laundering and how it enables organised criminal activity, including gang operations and human trafficking.

## **2.6 Personal Development Reviews (PDRs)**

- Following the Democratic Services Committee meeting on 10 February 2025, Personal Development Reviews (PDRs) were to be offered to all Members by the newly appointed Head of Democratic Services by September 2025.
- A limited number of Members completed their PDRs directly with the Head of Democratic Services, with the remaining reviews undertaken within their respective political groups.

## **2.7 MemberNet Platform**

- The MemberNet SharePoint site now serves as the central platform for Member Development resources and corporate briefings, having replaced the former Committee Hub.
- Members can easily access historic training materials, supporting those unable to attend sessions live, including recordings of sessions and any supporting presentations.
- The platform also includes a news section where ad-hoc resources and updates are shared via Teams and email.
- The platform features an events section providing details of forthcoming internal and external development opportunities, supporting proactive engagement and continuous learning.

## **2.8 Monitoring and Review of the Member Development Programme**

- All Members who attend the opportunities outlined above have their attendance recorded by Democratic Services officers.

**Attendance at training during the year is as below:**

<b>Session</b>	<b>Number of Attendees</b>
Tackling Poverty – Citizens Advice	11
Public Participation Strategy	15
Placemaking	16
Mid-term Code of Conduct	21
Budget Update	19
Council Risk Register	16
Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation	23
Glamorgan Voluntary Service	19

- Members are reminded of upcoming training opportunities via MemberNet posts, Outlook calendar invites and SMS reminders to their Council devices ahead of any sessions.
- Due to circumstances and potential competing commitments, it is understandable that not all Members are able to attend. Following training sessions, the link to a recording of a session and supporting materials are shared with all Members. It is not possible currently to accurately advise how many are accessing training via this medium.
- Alongside this, a Microsoft Forms is shared with Members following training to gain high level feedback; with all generally identifying usefulness, format and materials as very good or excellent. However, work is planned to be undertaken to encourage further feedback surrounding training as the number of responses are disproportionate to the number of attendees

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

- 3.1** The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act sets out a duty for the Council to ensure the Sustainable Development Principle underpins all of the work undertaken by the Authority, requiring us to demonstrate how decisions are formulated, taken and scrutinised via five ways of working, the Act underpins the Council's Corporate Plan. The approach to managing and developing the Member Induction and Development Programme is collaborative and involving and the contents of the Act will be used to inform the development of both new and refresher sessions within the Member Development Programme over the coming years.
- 3.2** The Council is committed to an ongoing programme of Member Development to support Councillors to meet their responsibilities and undertake their various Council role(s) throughout their entire 5-year term. Programme sits under the Member Development Strategy as previously considered by the Committee on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2021 and subsequently approved by Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

## **4. Climate Change and Nature Implications**

- 4.1 The use of electronic surveys is an approach taken to minimise printing and postage costs however, a hard copy of all surveys were available on request. This approach is aligned to the Council's response to the climate emergency; Project Zero, and its intention to use new technologies and digital practices.

## **5. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 5.1 Future Member Development provision will continue to comprise a mixture of delivery which, whilst largely delivered internally, will also include external facilitators where considered appropriate and beneficial. Any expenditure incurred on external facilitators will be met from within the existing budget.

### **Employment**

- 5.2 The main implication will be in terms of Officer time to co-ordinate and/or facilitate development 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.
- 5.5 A determination within the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru's 2026-2027 Annual Report 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**

[Minutes of Democratic Services Committee – 30<sup>th</sup> June](#)  
[Member Development Programme - Phase 4.xlsx](#)