

# CYNGOR GWYNEDD



## Report to a meeting of the Democracy Services Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 18 June 2024  
**Title of Item:** Member Training and Development.  
**Contact Officer:** Catrin Love, Assistant Head of Corporate Support

### 1. DECISION

The Democracy Services Committee is asked to consider the report content, offer comments and accept the proposals within.

### 2. What is the background and relevant considerations?

- 2.1 At the last meeting, it was highlighted that it is more important than ever to rationalise the training provision for elected members.
- 2.2 It was explained that that the training programme for elected members in going forwards would involve three aspects:
  - Core Training
  - Other training
  - Personal Development Reviews
- 2.3 You will remember that in the last meeting, specific attention was given to the Core Training element, which are the most basic and fundamental part of the training programme which all Elected Member require to be able to perform their function effectively.
- 2.4 Over the last few months, there has been follow up on this matter, by way of corresponding with each Group Leader to raise awareness of the matter, and ask that they follow up with Group members where gaps exist in the 7 Core elements.
- 2.5 It's evident that the follow up has happened on their part as some Members have been in contact to ask for further information as to what is required of

them. To date, this hasn't resulted in a significant increase in completion numbers to what we reported on last time.

- 2.6 Our intention now is to arrange a further discussion with the Group Leaders over the coming weeks to further explain the situation and the associated risks as things stand.
- 2.7 Despite there being a number of Members who need to complete Core training elements, it's clear in the current financial climate with us now having entered the third electoral year that the provision will need to change. Some courses are running half empty, which is a significant drain on Officer time. One example of this was the Leading Safety and Personal Safety course held on 21/5/24, which is one of the seven Core titles. 11 members had registered for the Course. This is a Course which requires the Health and Safety Managers time (half a day) along with a translator, and the Member Training Officer. Only 4 members turned up on the day.
- 2.8 The intention in moving forward therefore is that there will be recordings of these Courses available on the Members' Intranet for members to watch at their own convenience with a request that they inform us as they complete the modules.
- 2.9 As we move forward, we will need a decision and clarity on the requirement for refresher training and Members are invited to offer comments on this matter. Course content does change over time in order to keep them current, and some Members do choose to attend a refresher title to keep their knowledge fresh and updated, but to date there is no official requirement on this need.
- 2.10 A number of Courses have been arranged since the last Meeting with highlights including a Best practice in Scrutiny session, which proved very popular attracting very positive feedback. Also, a Skills session for Chairs of Committees, Cost of living support, and several sessions on violence against women.
- 2.11 The WLGA (Welsh Local Government Association) has a comprehensive support package for Elected Members training. It is fair to note however that not all the provision is available bilingually and the Council is proactive in trying to influence that matter in accordance with our own Welsh Language Policy. The recent best practice in Scrutiny session is one such recent example where alternative arrangements were put in place to deliver this session in order to ensure it could be offered in Welsh.

- 2.12 The main activity over the next few months otherwise will focus on WLGA Self Appraisal framework on the support for Elected Members in Wales which sets out clear expectations on Member Learning and Development.
- 2.13 The first step in that process will be conduct a questionnaire over the summer months in order to seek input from Members over their training needs and what they wish to see included in the programme over the next year.
- 2.14 Opinion has already been sought on Welsh language skills and as a result a programme of language refinement sessions have been arranged for September
- 2.15 In keeping with the theme of seeking opinions, an informal session was held for female Councillors to give them the space to discuss and support each other in their role and compare any barriers. Eight Councillors attended the session held at the end of May. The main messages are conveyed in the following bullet points:
- 2.16 Councillors noted their frustration that certain officers were not answering emails/queries. The Councillors noted that they often inquire on behalf of others and that they are accountable to their constituents and have to report that they are 'still waiting for an answer'. On the other hand, Galw Gwynedd was identified as a particularly good asset that assisted them in their work as Councillors.
- 2.17 The Chief Executive had paid considerable attention to this, and Councillors should refer specific examples to him or through the democracy services.
- 2.18 Along the same lines, it was noted that the level of complaints and enquiries they receive seems to be going much higher, with people being less patient and expecting an immediate resolution. It was also noted that there was pressure on the Councillors because of some situations, and that they were trying to do their best in all situations. The current main areas of enquiry were housing, highways and road signs.
- 2.19 It was intended to explore the housing field further as part of the Care Scrutiny Committee programme during 2024/25.
- 2.20 In light of the above, it was pointed out that demands on time and trying to balance work as a Councillor, (in the Council, in the ward), paid work and family life was a huge challenge, and that family life seems to suffer the most. There was room to celebrate the successes that Cyngor Gwynedd had seen as more women were now Councillors and in lead roles.
- 2.21 As a result of the above and the challenge to try and attract more women, young people and women who were raising families to become Councillors, it had been noted that there was scope to raise awareness of Councillors and

prospective Councillors of the right to maternity leave and reclaim childcare costs.

2.22 Another matter discussed was support and assistance to Councillors – it was noted that many were receiving support from their colleagues, particularly their ward 'neighbours'. It was also noted that it was a lonely role, and many missed getting to know their fellow members when attending committees as was the case before the change to the act. Praise was given to the support available from the democracy team and to training sessions, but there was concern about the numbers attending.