Rhaglen **Welliant**
Improvement Programme

The Wales Councillor Support Self-Evaluation Framework



CLILC
WLGA



Cymdeithas Llywodraeth Leol Cymru
Welsh Local Government Association

Un Rhodfa'r Gamlas Heol
Dumballs Caerdydd
CF10 5BF
Ffôn: 029 2046 8600
wlga.cymru

One Canal Parade Dumballs
Road Cardiff
CF10 5BF
Tel: 029 2046 8600
wlga.wales

The role of a councillor is complex and demanding and becoming increasingly challenging with each new period of office. Councils provide all councillors with the support they require to deliver the outcomes needed by their communities. This includes information, guidance, and development.

Councils have a long history of working together and with the WLGA to share information, good practice, and resources for councillor support and development. This Councillor Support Self Evaluation Framework provides a mechanism for councils to assure themselves that they have all the support possible in place for their councillors. The Framework has been developed by the WLGA, democratic services officers and councillors, and provides an ambitious but pragmatic national framework of good practice in councillor support. It recognises legislative requirements, statutory and other guidance, the expressed needs of councillors and widely accepted examples of what works.

The Framework also reflects the sector-led approach taken with the wider programme for improvement and self-assessment in Wales and enables sharing of good practice between councils.

The Framework covers:

- support and development for councillors in the widest sense to incorporate support provided by the whole council. Including, but not limited to, for example, democratic services, legal, digital, communications, learning and development teams, and directorates in their support for scrutiny, the executive and frontline councillors,
- the needs of all councillors before election, as new members, and as experienced politicians,
- all councillor roles both within the council and in the community,
- the personal and 'professional' support provided to councillors within the influence of councils and also,
- the expectations placed on councils, officers, and councillors themselves.

The Framework is divided into the three broad areas which represent the different aspects of a councillor's work and responsibilities. Democracy, Community and Learning and Development. Each area has a set of outcomes that councils and councillors may be seeking to achieve and some suggested questions that can be asked to help draw out approaches and actions in each area.

The Framework takes account of current legislation and guidance, for example the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, and the Welsh Government Guidance for Principal Councils, which covers the statutory and non-statutory guidance in this area. It also includes the views of councillors as set out in, for example, the WLGA Exit Surveys of Councillors Standing Down Voluntarily taken at each election since 2012 and the WG Local Government Candidates Survey taken at each election since 2017. It also supports UK wide initiatives such as the Civility in Public Life campaign.

Use of the Framework is entirely voluntary. The extent to which councils are able to implement the practice described will depend on local resources and priorities and the needs and priorities of councillors. The suggested questions should be adapted to fit different council approaches and positions.

Councils may wish to use the Framework flexibly in whole or in part over time or as a foundation for peer review. Councils are invited to share notable practice emerging from the use of the Framework with each other through, for example, the Heads of Democratic Services Network.

The Framework will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is still fit for purpose and accurately reflects current legislation.



Democracy	**Outcomes sought:** ○ **People are encouraged and enabled to stand for office.** ○ **Councillors understand their role and undertake it effectively and ethically.** ○ **Councillors can participate equally in council business.** ○ **Councillors are provided with the support, information, and resources they need.** ○ **Councillors represent the diversity of the people they serve.** ○ **Councillors are safe and protected from harm.**
Theme	**Suggested Questions**
Candidates and prospective candidates	Does the council provide comprehensive information to prospective and official candidates about the role of the councillor, the council, and any associated responsibilities and benefits? Are the approaches to the outreach to and information for prospective candidates made according to the need to encourage diversity in candidates? Is this outreach informed by the council's Diversity Declaration or Participation Strategy? Does the council signpost prospective candidates to information provided by the WG, WLGA, Electoral Commission and other organisations providing information for candidates? Do councillors, the council and local parties promote fair and respectful campaigning initiatives? Are prospective candidates informed about support for standing such as the Welsh Government Access to Elected Office fund? Are prospective candidates informed of the expectations placed on them to take part in induction and continuing professional development, some of which will be mandatory?
Councillors understand their role, responsibilities, and accountabilities	Are all councillors, when elected, or when being selected for a specialist position, provided with information and guidance about all aspects of their role? Are all councillors provided with a competency framework to understand the skills and knowledge required of them?

	Have role descriptions (see WLGA models for examples) been formally adopted by the council and agreed by individual councillors? **Have councillors serving on outside bodies been provided with:** ○ guidance on their role and responsibilities, ○ legal information such as their accountabilities and interests, ○ an explanation of the expectations placed on them by their nominating council, ○ requirements for communication with and reporting back from the outside body?
Standards of conduct	Do all councillors understand their responsibilities in adhering to the local code of conduct? Have they received local guidance and any information provided by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales? Do standards committees and chairs understand their particular roles and responsibilities? Do political group leaders promote and maintain high standards of conduct and cooperate with the standards committee? Have all councillors formally committed to undertake all aspects of their role with civility and respect towards each other, the public and officers in all settings and media? Are instances of bullying, harassment and intimidation dealt with quickly and effectively?
The constitution	**Do all councillors understand the constitution, including:** ○ the roles, responsibilities, and limits to the roles of committees, ○ the role of individual councillors and officers, ○ councillor /officer protocols, ○ meeting practice, ○ standing orders, ○ rules of debate, ○ public engagement, ○ roles on the council where councillor training is deemed mandatory?

Officer support	Does every committee, panel, forum etc. have an appropriate level of officer support? Are councillors supported adequately in their collaborative and joint work with other councils or organisations, for example on corporate joint committees? Are councillors supported in their community and case work? Are all councillors provided with the information and research they are entitled to according to the requirements of the statutory guidance issued under section 8 (1A) of the Local Government Wales Measure 2011. i.e. All councillors are proactively and also in response to specific requests, provided with information, data, briefing and training relating to their decision making, committee work and community and casework. **This service is:** ○ provided equitably to all members according to a published protocol which includes standards and response times, ○ exclusive of information for party political use, ○ provided confidentially where necessary and with due regard to data protection and other information law, ○ undertaken by the council or external agencies, ○ proportionate and provided within available resources. Democratic services committees ensure that the service is effective and adequately resourced. Do overview and scrutiny committees have dedicated support from officers who can provide impartial research, support, and advice? Has the nature of any support information including research services has been clearly publicised and explained to all councillors?
Equality of access	Are the arrangements made for the business of the council flexible and do they enable councillors to participate fully regardless of personal circumstances? Do meeting times, modes and venues reflect the expressed needs of councillors as closely as possible? Do councillors have equal access to meetings regardless of any protected characteristics? Do the arrangements for multi-location meetings meet the needs of councillors?

	Are councillors and other meeting participants able to use both Welsh and English in meetings? Do council recess times reflect the needs of councillors with, for example, caring responsibilities? Are job share arrangements for cabinet members supported so that the workload is clear and appropriate? Are occasional physical spaces available for informal meetings on request?
Support for councillors' rights, safety, and wellbeing	Are councillors provided with guidance on their rights and benefits. For example, salaries, family absence, job sharing for members of the executive/cabinet, allowances, tax and benefits, pensions, indemnities, data protection and freedom of information? Are councillors actively encouraged to take up the salaries and allowances they are entitled to and is foregoing allowances and salaries actively discouraged? Does the council have an informal duty of care in place which demonstrates a proactive commitment to protecting councillors' health and wellbeing? Is this recorded and available for members to view? Does it set out the nature of any support available to councillors for example counselling and health checks and those responsible for helping councillors access this support? Are councillors provided with guidance on maintaining their wellbeing and personal safety? For example, lone working, bullying and harassment? Does the council act proactively to support councillors who experience bullying and harassment, including liaison with the police if appropriate?
Diversity	Has the council's Diversity Declaration (or equivalent) been agreed by the Full Council? Is it monitored? Does the Diversity Declaration (or equivalent) set out the actions that the council takes to ensure that councillors from underrepresented groups are actively encouraged to stand and selected for positions of responsibility wherever possible? Are councillors with special access requirements supported in their work in the council and community?

Digital	Have all councillors been provided with the equipment or funding to buy equipment, software, apps, and connectivity required to undertake their role in the council offices, at home and when travelling in the council area? Does this include smart phones and laptops/tablets? Has full training been provided in the use of equipment and packages? Is technical support available? Are councillors sufficiently supported in their attendance at multilocation meetings? Are councillors supported in the use of social media through guidance on its use and online safety?



Community	**Outcomes sought:** ○ **Councillors lead, represent, advocate for, and enable their communities.** ○ **Councillors make sure that local resources are available and maximised.** ○ **Councillors encourage citizen participation and innovation.** ○ **Councillors work with communities to make them sustainable and resilient.**
Theme	**Suggested Questions**
Public awareness	Does the council ensure that the public understand the role and responsibilities of councillors and of local MSs', MPs and community and town councillors? Also which tier of representative should be contacted for different local issues? Does the council publicise and promote the value of councillors to the community?
Communities contacting councillors	Are systems in place for local residents and community groups to contact their local ward councillor, and/or councillors with specific roles, if appropriate? Are these systems and standards for their application clearly articulated and publicised to the public and councillors?
Surgeries and community meetings	Is the support provided by the council for councillors to organise surgeries and community meetings adequate? Do the relevant officers attend community meetings when requested by councillors where appropriate? Is the extent of the support available to councillors clearly articulated to all councillors?
Community engagement, leadership, and co-production	Are councillors informed, supported and resourced to enable their communities to be sustainable and resilient through, for example: ○ formal and informal community consultation, ○ joint working with community leaders to meet needs at a local level, ○ co-production with local people of policies and actions which lead to successful communities? Is this support for councillors clearly articulated to all councillors?

Casework support	Are adequate systems in place to support councillors in their casework? Is this support: ○ provided equitably to all members according to a published protocol, ○ exclusive of party-political activities, ○ provided confidentially where necessary and with due regard to data protection and other information law, ○ proportionate and provided within available resources. Are councillors provided with guidance on managing casework. Through, for example casework management systems?
Oversight and safety	Does the council have clear protocols in place for protecting the personal safety and wellbeing of councillors which are clearly articulated to councillors and the public? Are the expectations of the community and access to councillors managed so that councillors are not contacted inappropriately? Are councillors provided with information and guidance on managing their relationships with the public and maintaining appropriate boundaries?

Learning and Development	**Outcomes sought:** **Councillors have the skills and knowledge to deliver what local people need.**
Theme	**Suggested Questions**
The Councillor Development Strategy	Does the council have an effective and defined approach to councillor learning and development, set out in a published strategy, which includes responding to the expressed needs of every councillor and the needs of the organisation and community?
Personal development reviews	Does the council provide all councillors with useful personal support and development reviews undertaken by people competent to do so?
A learning and development programme	Does the council have an annual learning and development programme fully promoted to councillors? Can all councillors access the programme equally? Is the programme regularly monitored, evaluated, and updated? Are councillors able to identify positive outcomes from the training such as improved understanding and performance and specific outcomes for the community?

Induction	Are all new or returning councillors provided with a comprehensive, prioritised, multi session, programme of induction which enables councillors to participate effectively during their first year of office?
Quality of development	Do councillors believe that the learning activities are sufficiently stimulating, relevant and provided in progressive and appropriate styles? Does the council have a systematic and effective approach to commissioning, developing, delivering, and evaluating its training and development activities?
Participation	Do councillors attend all the development opportunities that are relevant to them? Is any non-participation addressed?
Learning from others	Do councillors participate in shared regional and national development opportunities? Are councillors encouraged and supported to collaborate with other councils and national bodies to act as political peers, mentors and in networks to share approaches to the role of councillor, identify good practice and to contribute to sector led improvement?

