
DEMOCRACY SERVICES COMMITTEE, 18/02/2025

PRESENT:

Councillors:

Anne Lloyd-Jones (Chair), Stephen Churchman, Annwen Hughes, Eryl Jones-Williams, Dewi Owen, Ioan Thomas, Edgar Wyn Owen, Beca Roberts, Sian Williams, Cai Larsen and Anwen Jane Davies

Officers present:

Vera Jones (Democracy and Language Service Manager), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Sioned Mai Jones (Democracy Team Leader), Catrin Love (Assistant Head of Corporate Services), Mari Edwards (Learning and Development Manager), Cara Williams (Member Development Officer) and Iwan Edwards (Democracy Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Arwyn Herald Roberts and Llio Elenid Owen and Ian Jones, Head of Democracy Services.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declarations of personal interest were received.

3. URGENT ITEMS

No urgent matters were raised.

4. MINUTES

The Chair accepted the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 12 November 2024, as a true record.

5. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROVISION FOR MEMBERS

Submitted – a report by the Learning and Development Manager presenting an update of the provision by the Learning and Development service to Members. It was explained that seven core training areas had been identified for Members with these core titles the minimum required for all Members to be able to carry out their work effectively. It was highlighted that these seven core titles related to statutory areas that all Members needed to be aware of when scrutinising or making decisions.

Reference was made to a table in the report showing the percentage of Members who had completed the seven core areas of training. It was mentioned that the target

of having all members complete the seven core titles had not yet been reached, but that an increase could be seen in the numbers that had completed the titles over the past year. It was noted that supporting Members to complete the core courses was a priority and in an effort to facilitate this, recordings of the seven core titles were now available on the members' intranet. It was explained that it was hoped that this would make things easier for Members to access to complete the core titles at a time that was convenient for them.

Members were thanked for their responses to the questionnaire sent to them in September 2024. It was explained that the responses from the questionnaire had been helpful to officers in responding to the self-assessment framework for Councillors giving an overview of Members' wishes and priorities in relation to training.

It was noted that a training programme had already been presented to Members and further work would take place over the coming months to further populate it in line with the results of the questionnaire and what the departments wished to include in the programme.

Reference was also made to the VAWDASV (Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) training as important for Members to complete. It was noted that discussions were underway for this topic to be a core area to reflect the statutory requirement and that a number of neighbouring Councils had already followed this path. Members were asked to consider the request to add this training as additional core training.

Discussion:

- A Member noted that there were examples of women abusing men and therefore, in fairness, this needed to be taken into account in the VAWDASV training. In response, it was explained that women were the percentage most targeted by domestic abuse and sexual violence, but it was agreed with the point that men were also victims. It was noted that the training addressed this in its entirety.
- A request was made to note clearly which areas were the core training and to consider sending an e-mail reminding members who had not attended these. In response, the Member was thanked for his comments, and it was explained that work was being done to establish clear systems for publishing the information about what training Members had completed. It was noted that the new procedure for publishing information on the numbers of members who had completed the core training would commence in April 2025.
- A Member stated that he agreed with the request to make the VAWDASV training one of the additional core areas and that was formally seconded. A request was made to include a note explaining that it applied to violence against men as well.

DECISION

To accept the report.

To recommend adding 'Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence' training, which includes violence against men, as a core training area.

6. AN UPDATE ON THE WORK OF RATIONALISING THE PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION TO COUNCILLORS

Submitted - a report providing an update on the rationalisation of the presentation of information to Councillors by the Democracy and Language Manager. It was noted that a number of members had expressed that they were overwhelmed with all the training requests and briefings, and that they found it difficult to prioritise what was important. It was explained that work had taken place internally to establish specific arrangements for the submission of requests for briefings and the presentation of information to Members.

In addition, it was explained that work was underway on rationalising the Learning and Member Development programme and developing the training programme. It was noted that there would be a clear definition for what the seven core training were and the expectation for all Councillors to undertake these, and what the additional training was, which was the training outside the seven core areas.

It was noted that information sessions were also available to Members with the intention of holding sessions that were relevant to all Cyngor Gwynedd Councillors.

It was explained that work was underway to try to make better use of the Area Forums. It was explained that some issues would be referred to the Area Forums to allow discussion on local issues relevant to specific areas. This would give members the opportunity to ask questions and explore topics more intensely.

It was highlighted that the committee calendar was quite full and that identifying a free date where no other meeting had been scheduled had been a challenge. It was noted that the department had decided to pilot a new procedure of scheduling one date per month for holding briefings and one date per month for conducting the training programme. It was noted that these dates would be noted in the committee calendar so that members were aware of them in advance.

Discussion:

- It was noted that the Dwyfor Area Forum had struggled with the agenda schedule at a recent meeting, with one item running over the allotted time so there was not enough time to complete the discussion on the final item. It was recognised that it was difficult to measure how much time each item was going to take and to consider including fewer items on the agenda in future.

DECISION

To note the comments and accept the report

7. COMMITTEES CALENDAR 2025/26

A calendar of Council committee dates for 2025/26 was submitted for members' observations before being submitted to the Full Council meeting on 6 March 2025. It was noted that the purpose of the Calendar was to assist the Council, its Members and the public in planning ahead for the dates and times of the Council's main meetings. Reference was made to appendix 1 which showed the dates currently scheduled, noting that other meetings may be added as needed.

In addition, the calendar also specified the date of each monthly Member Briefing as well as a monthly Training Day, so that Councillors were given sufficient notice of the dates.

Discussion:

- It was asked if it was possible to note on all the items in the calendar what the options were in terms of attending the meeting, i.e., whether the meeting was a virtual or hybrid meeting. It had been suggested that initials could be added to indicate the type of meeting. In response, it was noted that the Democracy team would look into the possibilities and the Member was thanked for the suggestion.

DECISION

To accept the report and recommend the 2025/26 Committee Calendar to the Full Council meeting for its adoption.

8. SUPPORT FOR COUNCILLORS

DECISION

To note the observations and accept the report.

Submitted - a report exploring how the Democracy Team provided support to Councillors and how they ensured that the support provided met the needs of Councillors. It was noted that a satisfaction questionnaire had been sent to members in December 2024 requesting feedback on the service being provided by the Democracy team. It was explained that 36 replies had been received, which was an increase on last year's numbers. It was reported that 97% had noted that the service was 'good' or 'very good' and one reported that it was 'acceptable' but had not commented further.

It was reported that a few comments had been received such as the desire to receive paper copies of each committee's agendas. It was explained that this was not currently possible following the Full Council's decision to seek a reduction on paper as part of the savings. However, it was noted that the Democracy team was ready to help any member who had vision problems and therefore had to receive a paper copy. It was also noted that another comment had been made about wanting to hear about information internally in the Council first, before reading about it in the newspapers.

In addition, it was reported that there were plans to re-start arrangements to hold one-to-one conversations with 2 or 3 Councillors each month to discuss the support offered and to gain a better understanding of the barriers for Councillors.

Discussion:

- A member noted that she had recently attended a session on the members' intranet stating that the session was an interesting one and had been very beneficial.
- Gratitude was expressed for the report and that it was very positive. One comment noted was that councillors should have access to press releases. In response, it was stated that this was a good idea and would be something the team would explore in future

9. NOTICES OF MOTION SYSTEM

DECISION

To accept the report.

Submitted - a report by the Monitoring Officer with the aim of summarising the Council's arrangements to deal with Notices of Motion and specifically their appropriateness. It was noted that it explained the relevant legal context, the arrangements in place and the guidance available to members.

It was noted that any notice of motion had the force of a decision if adopted. It was explained that this therefore meant that it was difficult for the Council to adopt a notice due to content. It was explained, however, that he was not trying to create the impression that all notices of motion would be rejected; if a notice of motion was received where there was a question of its appropriateness, the Monitoring Officer would speak to the Member and seek to agree on amending the motion. The Monitoring Officer stated that he had provided guidance to assist with this procedure.

Discussion:

- It was asked if there was an intention to circulate the report to all Council members. In response, it was explained that the guidance had been circulated to Members, and if it was beneficial, he could also circulate the report to them for information.

The meeting commenced at 1.00pm and concluded at 2.00pm.