

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

DATE: **WEDNESDAY, 9 JULY 2014**

REPORT BY: **DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE MANAGER**

SUBJECT: **ATTENDANCE AT MEMBER TRAINING**

1.00 **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To provide feedback on the results of the Member questionnaire on attendance at Member development events.

2.00 **BACKGROUND**

2.00 At each meeting of the committee it receives a report giving Member feedback on development events held since the previous committee meeting. At the committee's last meeting on the 26 March 2014 there was concern at the low attendance level at some Member development events. The committee resolved that a questionnaire should be sent to all Members seeking reasons for this.

2.01 Attached as Appendix 1 is a copy of the short questionnaire sent to Members and as Appendix 2 the responses received from the 19 Members who completed and returned the questionnaire.

3.00 **CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01 The number of Members completing the questionnaire represents over 25% of the Council membership and in statistical terms is a representative sample. Those Members who have not yet responded to the questionnaire are being chased and a verbal update will be given at the meeting on any further responses received by that time.

3.02 One consideration in relation to attendance at Member training is whether more such training should be made mandatory insofar as the Council can make any training mandatory. At present those Members who serve on the Planning Committee, Licensing Committee, Audit Committee or Pensions Committee are required to attend training relating to the work of such committees. Where a Member of such a committee fails to attend the training it is then drawn to the attention to that Member's Group Leader with a view to that Member's place being allocated to another group member. It is only through Group Leaders that any mandatory training can be enforced.

3.03 The answers in Appendix 2 to each question are mixed but the committee may consider the following points would assist in improving Member attendance at development events:-

1. To continue to offer training on the same topic at differing times.
2. To hold training in the evening even if fewer than 6 Members wish to attend.
3. To require at least a month's advance notice of training events.

3.04 Members answers in Appendix 2 identified the following topics for Member training:-

1. Planning training for non committee members.
2. More on finance.
3. Contact officers and management structures.
4. Value for money.
5. Use of iPads (to be provided).

These topics will be considered in preparing the Member development programme for 2014/15 which is a separate report to the meeting.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 The committee is recommended to consider the results of the consultation with Members and identify improvements to the existing arrangements for Member development events.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 The budget for Member training is £21,122. This budget has been underspent in recent years and it is proposed to offer up £10K as budget savings for future years.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 None as a result of this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None as a result of this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None as a result of this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None as a result of this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None as a result of this report.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 None as a result of this report.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 Appendix 1 – Member Development Questionnaire
Appendix 2 – Questionnaire responses

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None

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**MEMBER DEVELOPMENT EVENTS
QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. How often do you attend Member development events?
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2. Would you wish to attend more Member development events?
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3. Are there any changes to existing arrangements that would encourage your attendance?
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4. Are there any skills or topics that you would wish to have training on?
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5. Are there any particular days or times that you would prefer for development events?
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6. Any other comments
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.....

Name: (Optional)

Please return to Member Services by the 9 June 2014

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

1. How often do you attend Member development events?

- Almost never
- As often as I can
- I attend every event notified to me whatever the subject. I sometimes find that another appointment clashes, say to attend an outside body meeting or a meeting within County Hall which is not in the diary of meetings e.g. the Schools Monitoring Group.
- As often as I can – other commitments permitting. I am a Cabinet member.
- As frequently as I can – approx 70% events
- As often as possible
- I attend most development events regularly
- Occasionally
- Attend what looks to help me
- Frequently
- As often as they coincide with free time
- Attended them all in the first four years as a Councillor, but not had as much time since then with being Vice Chair and then Chair. I believe I have attended most of them.
- Very rarely
- The events that update and inform – approx. 4 or 5 per year

2. Would you wish to attend more Member development events?

- Yes
- I will always try to attend all such events
- Only if they are relevant and I have a free slot in my busy day to day commitments
- No
- It depends if they are useful
- Go to what I like
- I think the number is good
- Yes. Conditional on topic
- Would attend if they do not clash with other engagements and if learning something new or need to refresh.

3. Are there any changes to existing arrangements that would encourage your attendance?

- Holding Members training/development events in the evening
- None
- No I think officers do their best to schedule & duplicate training sessions & workshops to suit most Members
- As I work, evening sessions are preferable but unfortunately they are infrequent.

- Due to work I cannot attend too many events but if there is an alternative date/day, it makes the opportunity more likely.
- Looking at feedback from previous events the attendance is quite poor at some events. I would suggest that is because they are less relevant to specific functions Members need to engage in. Planning training has reasonable attendance largely because it is required and directly relevant.
- Early evening meetings.
- Morning or evenings due to child care commitments.
- Better facilities for the hard of hearing.

4. Are there any skills or topics that you would wish to have training on?

- Planning
- Ask Scrutiny for their comments and views
- You seem to select useful and relevant training so I will leave it to you
- Chain of command:- who should you contact in the first instance - an overview of Council structure and protocol. Planning training for non-committee members from very simple guidance to more complicated matters.
- More on finance
- Possibly tuition with i-pad when I actually receive one
- Value for Money
- Supervisory structures
- Planning & Environment; possibly Social Services & Housing
- Anything that will make my job as a County Councillor more efficient.
- ICT
- Handling stress and frustration.

5. Are there any particular days or times that you would prefer for development events?

- I like it when you offer a selection - 5.00 pm is good
- After 4.00 pm / evening
- Morning time would be better for me and my work commitments
- Any, as long as clashes are avoided.
- Thursdays/Fridays are usually less busy for me.
- After 5.00 pm any day
- 10.00 am or 2.00 pm any working day.
- I am able to fit most events in as long as plenty of notice is given.
- Friday afternoons
- Any time will have pros and cons, although most Members appear to dislike evening events.
- Non working hours.
- Day time is best for me personally but I know some Councillors work so perhaps an option of evening training would be useful.
- Weekdays after 4.00, including Full Council meetings and Scrutiny. Possibly occasional Saturday morning.
- Morning or evening due to child care commitments.

6. Any other comments?

- As a Member who works full time I feel disadvantaged to Members who are retired.
- I have a feeling that we are providing training sessions/workshops for the sake of it. There needs to be a proven need for them if we expect Members to attend.
- I do my best to attend all that I can but sometimes I cannot rearrange work at short notice. Bad planning sometimes. Two events can be on at the same time so better communication would be welcome.
- Greatly appreciate the quality and range of training events provided. More Councillors should attend.
- I feel that current arrangements are adequate and it is up to individual Councillors to make more effort to attend the events organised.
- It has been hard recently for me to attend extra events. I like to attend planning training when I can. As for other events I think there may be an argument to consider a bit more carefully the content as attendance is not that good. Perhaps there is not as much requirement as is imagined for training events.
- Alternative time slots are appreciated.
- Busy with other commitments to attend training.
- When I was a new Councillor I found the training extremely useful. I guess a lot of the newly elected Councillors in 2012 were experienced Councillors that got re-elected and others are busy with work commitments.
- As covered on previous occasions by a variety of people, meetings tend to be arranged for times that are not really convenient for working people. If more meetings were held after 4.00, especially full Council and Scrutiny, the problem of getting off work would be lessened by being two hours later.