DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 29th June 2016
Report Subject	Member Development Strategy Annual Review
Report Author	Member Engagement Manager

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the current Member Development Strategy; how it has supported Member training and development during 2015/16 and what training and development will be offered in the current, final year of this Council prior to the elections on 4th May 2017.

Within the report it has been identified that

- Arrangements are in place for induction training following whole Council and by-elections (the development of Induction arrangements for 2017 is the subject of a separate report on this agenda). Induction after by-elections is offered on a bespoke rather than generic basis and concentrates on focussed one-to-one sessions;
- That an annual Development Programme is agreed annually by the committee;
- That the committee receives regular feedback on Member development events;
- That ongoing training is provided to Members of the Planning, Licensing, Audit and Pensions committees;
- That Member role descriptions and other information is available to members on a dedicated part of the Infonet and in the Members' Library.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
1	That the current Member Development Strategy be recognised as good practice.

2	That the Member Development Strategy be supported as the basis to ensure adequate provision for member development and support for the new Council to be elected in 2017.
3	That the committee agree that the emphasis, in the last year of the current Council should be on the provision of training where there is a perceived need, rather than seeking to provide a full programme

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	**The Member Development Strategy**
1.01	We have had a Member Development Strategy (MDS) for a number of years. The last major update to it was in March 2015, when changes to reflect legislation requiring Authorities to provide an opportunity for all Members to have personal development meetings was included.
1.02	This committee carried out a review of the Member Development Strategy (MDS) at its 1st July meeting last year. At that meeting, it was agreed to include the following within the MDS -
1.03	*The strategy's objectives will also be achieved in the following ways:* • *Holding short information/training sessions immediately prior to scheduled committee meetings;* • *Producing briefing papers/guides on emerging topics;* • *Holding briefing workshops on important topics;* • *Providing specialist training for Members of the Planning, Licensing, Audit and Pensions committees* • *Ensuring that reports to overview & scrutiny committees are purposeful.*
1.04	It was also agreed that opportunities for training and development should be offered both during and outside the normal working day, where possible, to accommodate those Members who are in employment or who have other day time responsibilities.
1.05	In addition to updating the wording of the MDS, the committee has previously reviewed the delivery of the strategy to ensure that: • Arrangements are in place for induction training following whole Council and by-elections (the development of Induction arrangements for 2017 is the subject of a separate report on this agenda). Induction after by-elections is offered on a bespoke rather than generic basis and concentrates on focussed one-to-one sessions; • That an annual Development Programme is agreed annually by the committee; • That the committee receives regular feedback on Member development events; • That ongoing training is provided to Members of the Planning, Licensing, Audit and Pensions committees;

	• That Member role descriptions and other information is available to members on a dedicated part of the Infonet and in the Members' Library.
1.06	It should be noted that the MDS is generally robust. However, whilst the above aims have been largely fulfilled, there is one area which the committee may feel requires further attention in the future. This is the holding of annual personal development reviews for Members. Whilst this is recognised as good practice, and was identified as an area for improvement in the 2015 Wales Audit Office Corporate Assessment (paragraph 50 refers) there has been little activity. It is suggested that at this stage in the Council's life it may not be beneficial to devote resources to this, but it should be recognised as a good practice for Members within the post 2017 elections Authority.
1.07	The core Member Development Programme for 2015/16 which was approved by the Democratic Services committee last July included the following core topics:- • Various planning issues • Equalities and Welsh Language • Budget Preparation • Social Media These topics had been identified following correspondence between the Democracy & Governance Manager and Members.
1.08	During the last year, a more flexible approach to training and development has been introduced, recognising that shorter more focussed sessions with smaller groups can be more effective. Sometimes, it is as beneficial for a one to one session to be held. This approach also recognises that people have a number of different learning styles. Whilst group discussions are clearly an important part of how some people assimilate information, there are others who do not find such an approach beneficial. We will endeavour to provide a range of engagement opportunities for Members. The greater flexibility which we have espoused will also inform the Induction training for 2017.
1.09	In addition to the core topics which had been identified, we have provided a number of Information, development and consultation workshops. These have been held as and when required. These have included: • Improvement Plan consultation; • Bus subsidy and the development of an Integrated Transport Unit; • Corporate Parenting; • Overview & Scrutiny work planning; • Alternative Delivery Models; • Medium Term Financial Strategy (two sessions); • Social services & Well-being Act:, • Budget preparation (three sessions, including an evening).

1.10	The use of Ipads instead of issuing committee papers has been rolled out across the Council, with the majority of Members now using them. This has meant a significant reduction in printing and postage costs. A number of 'how to' sessions have been held before committee meetings.
1.11	Allied to this, a new report format has also been introduced. This is intended to be more I pad friendly and more focussed, with an emphasis on an executive summary and recommendations on the front page.
1.12	During the year, greater use has been made of bespoke briefings on specific topics for political group leaders and also for Overview and Scrutiny committee chairs: during a period of change as we respond to reducing budgets it is considered vital that key members are kept fully informed. Thus they are better equipped to guide and to support the organisation from their respective roles.
1.13	We recognise that at this stage in the Council's life, there may not be demand for any further formal development sessions. However, the information sessions are regarded as being an important part of how we ensure that members are equipped to carry out their varied roles.
1.14	There is also the need to ensure that members of regulatory committees (Audit, licensing and Planning & Development Control) are provided with training as is deemed necessary for them to properly discharge their respective roles. It is suggested that apart from those we do not seek to put on a full programme of formal events in this last year.
1.15	However, where there is a perceived need, we will seek to cater for that. A good example of such a need is Chairing skills, especially for new incumbents. Even those committee chairs who have had a lot of experience in that role may benefit from a short knowledge and skills refreshments session. To that end, a highly experienced colleague from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to been booked to deliver a focussed two hour refresher session for us on Friday 15th July at 10.00.
1.16	We have previously provided feedback reports, giving an analysis of feedback sheets completed by Members after formal training events. It is suggested that in future, this should only deal with specific instances where members have indicated that they were unhappy with aspects of training. This will be incorporated into a programme review report (such as this) at the end of one year and looking to the next.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There is adequate budget provision for Member Development

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	This report is published for consultation.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	Offering adequate Member development and support opportunities significantly reduces risk

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	**Contact Officer:** Robert Robins, Member Engagement Manager **Telephone:** 01352 702320 **E-mail:** Robert.robins@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Member Development Strategy (MDS): how we seek to ensure that our Members are offered sufficient opportunities for development and training to enable them to function effectively and efficiently within their respective roles as community advocate and leader and as a Council member in our meetings.