

**FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:**           **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**DATE:**               **WEDNESDAY, 1 JULY 2015**

**REPORT BY:**       **CHIEF OFFICER (GOVERNANCE)**

**SUBJECT:**           **REVIEW OF MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

**1.00   PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01   For the Committee to review the Member Development Strategy

**2.00   BACKGROUND**

2.01   Flintshire was one of the first Councils in Wales to be awarded the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) Charter for member support and development in October 2008. One of the requirements of the Charter was for the Council to have a Member Development Strategy and arrangements in place to monitor and review that Strategy. A copy of the recently updated Strategy is attached as Appendix 1. This was updated in March 2015 to reflect recent legislation requiring Authorities to provide an opportunity for all Members to have personal development meetings and to have Democratic Services Committees. The update also reflected changes to the Council's Senior Management Structure and Budget provision for Member Training and Development. Paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 set out the role of the Democratic Services Committee in monitoring and reviewing the Strategy.

2.02   In 2013/14 the Wales Audit Office (WAO) began a new four year cycle of corporate assessments of Authorities in Wales. Flintshire's first corporate assessment was conducted in late 2014 and included comments on Member Development. The relevant parts of the WAO report are attached as Appendix 2.

2.03   At a subsequent meeting between Senior Officers and Sarah Titcombe of the WLGA it was agreed there was a need to refresh the Member Development Strategy to address the points made by the WAO. The recommendation in the WAO report was also considered at the Group Leaders meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> April. The approved Action Plan in response to the various recommendations in the WAO report was reported to the Audit Committee meeting of the 18<sup>th</sup> March. The agreed action in relation to this recommendation stated "a review of the Member Development Programme is underway with the aim of having a broader offer for Members in partnership with the Welsh

Local Government Association. Group Leaders are being requested to promote take up of training opportunities amongst their respective Groups”.

### **3.00 CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01 The review of the Member Development Strategy provides the opportunity to refresh its provisions to reflect initiatives that have recently been introduced. This can be reflected in a new paragraph being added to the Member Development Strategy after paragraph 3.4 along the following lines:-

“3.5 In addition to complying with the requirements of the Charter as detailed in Section 4 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 issues
- Holding briefing workshops on important topics
- Providing specialist training for Members of the Planning, Licensing, Audit and Pensions Committees
- Ensuring reports to Overview & Scrutiny Committees are purposeful”

3.02 As part of the Review of the Member Development Strategy all Members were consulted on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015 for any suggested amendments to be made to the Strategy. Councillor Ian Smith responded to say that the Strategy looked fine in principle but raised a concern about those Members who work full time having access to development events. Whilst training events are wherever practical offered at alternative times evening sessions have attracted poor attendance. Councillor Smith’s point could be accommodated by adding to the last bullet point of paragraph 5.3 the words “suitable for all Members”.

3.03 In addition to updating and amending the wording of the Strategy the Committee should review the delivery of the Strategy and in particular the points listed in paragraphs 5.2 and 3.3.

3.04 It is considered that the majority of these purposes are being met including the following:-

- Arrangements are in place for induction training following Elections and By Elections
- That an Annual Development Programme is agreed each year 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 support is provided through the Member and Civic Support Team including assistance with member development events.
- That various Member role descriptions and other information is available to Members on a dedicated part of the Infonet and in the Members' Library.

3.05 The one aspect of the Strategy's main objectives detailed in paragraph 3.3 that the Committee may consider needs improvement is in providing support tailored to the needs of individual Members based on individual training needs analysis. Whilst arrangements are in place for each Member to have the opportunity of having an annual personal development meeting with a Senior Member to identify their training and development needs take up of this has been low. This was identified as an issue in the recent report from the Wales Audit Office (paragraph 50).

#### **4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 The Committee is recommended as part of the review to consider :-

- (i) Any alterations it believes appropriate to the Member Development Strategy such as those indicated in paragraphs 3.01 and 3.02 above.
- (ii) Any work that should be undertaken to improve the delivery of the Strategy such as that indicated in paragraph 3.05 above.

#### **5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 There is adequate budget provision for the costs of member support and development

#### **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 With all Members of the Council

**11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

11.01 With all Members of the Council

**12.00 APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Member Development Strategy

Appendix 2 – Relevant parts of the WAO Report

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

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