

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

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| Date of Meeting | Monday, 4 November 2024 |
| Report Subject | Training Needs for Town and Community Councils |
| Report Author | Chief Officer (Governance) |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to assure the committee about the assistance given to councillors to comply with the code town and community councils were asked what training they provide. They were also asked whether they had any unfulfilled training needs and, in case they had significant needs, their willingness to pool funds in order to commission such training.

It is clear that One Voice Wales is a popular training provider.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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| 1 | That the committee confirms that it is assured on the training provided to town and community councillors. |
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REPORT DETAILS

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| 1.00 | EXPLAINING THE TRAINING PROVIDED TO TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS |
| 1.01 | <p>One of the committee's functions under the Local Government Act 2000 is "54(2) c - advising, training or arranging to train members and co-opted members of the authority on matters relating to the authority's code of conduct."</p> <p>The Committee has received reports on that function with respect to county councillors. Your officers asked the town and community clerks questions about their training plans in order to gain assurance about the training provided to their councillors.</p> |

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| 1.02 | <p>Clerks were asked:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What ethical training (i.e. training on the code and behaviour) needs you have identified within your training plan under s. Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 2) Whether/how you have fulfilled those training needs – for example do you provide training yourself, buy training from external providers such as OVW or rely only on the training provided by the monitoring officer 3) Whether further training or development is needed on the code/acceptable behaviour. For example, is specific training needed on particular parts of the code such as interests. 4) Your council's appetite to commission any further training/development jointly with other town & community councils as a means of sharing the costs. <p>11 responses were received in total which are attached at Appendix 1.</p> |
| 1.03 | <p>It is clear that One Voice Wales (OVW) is a popular provider for training. That is understandable as they are based in Wales and so will be very familiar with our legislative regime, which contrasts with that in England. No doubt the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) is also cognisant of the differences, and they are named as provider as well in some cases. These will be the two main providers to this sector.</p> |
| 1.04 | <p>I was able to use the requests for further training to help tailor two training sessions which I provided jointly with the Legal Services Manager to town and community councillors on 22 and 24 October. Whilst covering the whole of the code a large proportion of each session was devoted to detailed sections on discrimination, respect & freedom of speech and interests. I recorded those sessions and will provide them for use by councillors who were unable to attend.</p> |
| 1.05 | <p>Members will see the final question which posed in case the councils identified specialist training that couldn't be delivered within existing resources. Whilst councils responded positively to the suggestion, I don't believe there is anything that would need to be externally procured.</p> |
| 1.06 | <p>The council has the capacity to produce e-learning modules that are accessed by a web browser. They can include a range of different media such as text, slides and media. Creating such a module would, after the initial investment of time, free up my resource and would enable councillors to undertake training at their convenience and as soon as they are elected following by elections or following co-option. Due to current capacity constraints that won't be developed until the new year.</p> |
| 1.07 | <p>This item is purposefully on the agenda for the joint meeting with town and community councils so they may contribute to the discussion about their own needs.</p> |

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| 2.00 | RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS |
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| 2.01 | Training provided by myself/the Legal Services Manager is limited by our availability and capacity to devote time in the evening. As stated in the report an e-learning module would represent an up front investment of time but that would be repaid by the increased utility of its subsequent availability at all times for councillors. |
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| 3.00 | CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT |
| 3.01 | None required |

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| 4.00 | RISK MANAGEMENT |
| 4.01 | Providing training clearly reduces the risk of accidental non-compliance with the code of conduct. Repeating training also serves to reinforce expected standards. |

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| 5.00 | APPENDICES |
| 5.01 | Appendix 1 – collated responses from town and community councils. |

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| 6.00 | LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS |
| 6.01 | None Contact Officer: Gareth Owens, Chief Officer Governance Telephone: 01352 702344 E-mail: Gareth.legal@flintshire.gov.uk |

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| 7.00 | GLOSSARY OF TERMS |
| 7.01 | None. |