

COMMITTEE	County Council
DATE	14 th September, 2010
TITLE	Member Development Strategy and Role descriptors for Elected Members
PURPOSE	To support member development
REPORT BY	Director of Legal and Committee Services/Monitoring Officer
ACTION	That each individual member commits to sign up to the relevant role descriptor and that the Isle of Anglesey County Council formally adopts the full range of role descriptors for the various elected member roles with immediate effect.

The recently established Member development Workgroup ,supported by the WLGA has developed a Member Development Strategy as an underpinning foundation on the ultimate destination of achieving Charter status but also gives the workgroup a reference point and clear focus.

At its core the strategy is about understanding the needs of members so that they can be better supported in their roles through the provision of appropriate development which is constantly monitored, evaluated and reviewed to ensure that it is both “fit for purpose” and of the right quality.

One of the key elements, and cornerstones of the strategy, are the role descriptors. Role descriptors or the more familiar term job description, supported by a person specification, is a well proven and familiar concept in the world of work. The role descriptor like the job description is intended to set out the responsibilities and functions of the role of the elected member. They provide members with clarity on their roles but also can be useful evidence for the electorate that members are doing a clearly defined professional job.

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), in consultation with elected members across Wales has created a set of generic role descriptions and person specifications across a range of roles. These role descriptors form a cornerstone of the Member Development Charter which has been developed to give structure and impetus to the growing body of support services for elected members within Welsh local government. Authorities who attain Charter status are seen as committed to improving standards and developing good practices.

Every member has an individual role descriptor and, which they will need to sign up to and agree. Where members undertake more than one role it is anticipated that role descriptions would be combined. For example Overview and Scrutiny committee chairs would be expected to undertake the role descriptors for

- Elected member
- Overview and scrutiny member
- Overview and scrutiny chair.

Agreeing to move forward with role descriptors and person specifications is seen very much as the kind of good practice expected from a forward thinking local authority and takes very positive steps to help members address development needs that they require to support them in their role. It will certainly support future development work on gaining the Member Charter but It will also confirm to the Recovery Board a real intent to change the approach by members themselves to their role.

Recommendation: That each individual member commits to sign up to the relevant role descriptor and that the Isle of Anglesey County Council formally adopts the full range of role descriptors for the various elected member roles with immediate effect.

A Member Development Strategy for the Isle of Anglesey County Council

Introduction

The Isle of Anglesey Council recognises the importance of providing opportunities for development for all councillors. Continuing development is vital if members are to understand their changing and developing role, meet the greater expectations placed on them by the electorate, shape the authority's mission, vision and plans for continuous improvement.

By offering members the opportunity for member development the authority aims to equip members with the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to enable them to undertake their role effectively in a rapidly changing environment.

Leadership

Member development is led by the Member Development Champion, Member Development Working group and senior officers including the Human Resource Services Manager, Monitoring Officer and Senior Development Officer.

The role of the champion is to chair the MDWG and "champion" the cause of member development among the wider member body, representing the needs of all members for development and representing the Authority on networks outside the Authority where relevant and appropriate.

The role of the member development working group is to ensure the effective and continuous development of members whilst also pursuing the principles of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. Members of the group will represent the needs of all members, undertaking the practical development of plans and strategies, championing member development throughout the authority and monitoring the action in relation to member development.

The Standards Committee will oversee member development including the monitoring of attendance data.

All members have a responsibility to develop the skills they need to do the job. The authority will support them to do this by helping them identify their needs and participate in the development opportunities.

Understanding the needs of members

The authority believes that it is important that the development of members is based upon their expressed needs both as individuals and committee members, and the needs of the authority for members to work effectively within the council and in communities. To this end we will

For example:

Provide all members with a role description, developed collaboratively with members, to provide clarity in respect of their roles and support for identifying development needs.

Ask all members at least annually about their training needs either by questionnaire or discussion with officers or in the case of members in receipt of a special responsibility allowance, through an annual member to member personal development discussion. This will be established prior to April 2011.

Encourage members to identify a personal development plan after the needs assessments have been undertaken.

Providing Development Opportunities

In response to the research we undertake with members in identifying their development needs we will:

Develop in consultation with members an annual programme of development activities which is provided with sufficient notice of dates and themes. (See appendix 1)

Deliver development activities in a style which matches members' requirements for type of activity as well as subject. This could include briefings, information papers, coaching and/or mentoring, visits, e learning, informal workshops or conferences.

Create a "members handbook" of essential information for every member

Set aside resources specifically for member development

Ensure the quality of member development by selectively commissioning internal and external facilitators

Provide a comprehensive induction for newly elected members

Monitoring and evaluation

The Authority through the Member Development Working Group and Standards Committee will evaluate the training provided to members and use this evaluation to influence the annual development programme. Evaluation will be undertaken initially by participants, training managers, facilitators and by members. After a period of practice and reflection this could be as part of the personal development interviews.

Recognition

The authority will seek recognition of our success in member development by making a submission for the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development by the end 2011.

Appendix 1

A Member Development Programme

Content for the induction and ongoing development programmes will be based on the emerging needs of members. The Member Development working group has made the following suggestions for inclusion:

How the Council Works, who can help

Policy and Strategy Development

ICT Skills and Research

Local Government Finance and Budget setting

Current Leadership themes such as Systems thinking, Lean Management

Citizen engagement

Community Leadership

Planning

Licensing

Chairing

Scrutiny