

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL

Meeting:	Standards Committee
Date:	31 st October 2012
Title:	Report on Member Training
Report by:	Solicitor to the Monitoring Officer
Purpose of Report:	To consider the issue of training for Members on the Code of Conduct and other aspects, including the question of compulsory training in respect of the Code and undertaking and recording continuous professional development on an annual basis.
Contact Officer:	Meirion Jones, Solicitor to the Monitoring Officer (ext 2563)

1. The issue of the training of Councillors is important and is of growing significance. This is reflected in the WLGA's Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. Group Leaders have committed to the Council signing up to the Charter, fully supporting its objectives, including appointing a Member Development Champion and securing individual Member commitment to training and keeping this under review. This commitment is contained in the Protocol for Self-Regulation which also includes as one of its general principles "Members will commit to training and development in support of this Protocol". The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has also indicated his expectation that all Members are to take advantage of training.

2. The WLGA introduces its Charter under the heading "What is the Charter?" as "Elected Members today face increasing challenges. Under the modernisation agenda, there are heightened expectations on them to undertake a diversity of roles, ranging from that of community leader, to their special responsibilities within the Council. Throughout Wales, authorities are striving to provide the best possible support to their members to enable them to meet these challenges. This takes the form of skill and knowledge development, support facilities, and support services. The Welsh Local Government Association is working with authorities to help them develop these activities..."

3. The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has recently, (September 2012) issued revised Guidance on the Code of Conduct for Members of Local Authorities in Wales. In his preface he states inter alia "As a Member you will be offered training on the Code whether by a Monitoring Officer or from a representative body. I expect all Members to take advantage of such training, including the refresher courses, to ensure that they are fully aware of the provisions of the Code and its interpretations." Therefore the Ombudsman expects Councillors to attend training courses; it is not optional.

4. Denbighshire has recognised this. Its Standards Committee, earlier this year, recommended to its full Council that the Code of Conduct be amended to make training on the Code of Conduct mandatory for Members to attend one training session per annum. It will be appreciated that the model Code of Conduct can be added to (provided

additions are not inconsistent) and Denbighshire has added the following clause to its Code for Members –

“4. You must –

(d) attend at least one training session during each full term of office on the Members Code of Conduct as provided by your Authority’s Monitoring Officer or person nominated on their behalf.”

5. Scotland has introduced the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Framework for Elected Members in Scottish local government. It was introduced two years ago and provides Councillors “with professional and personal development opportunities and is designed to generate comprehensive, constructive feedback and how they exercise a wide range of critically important political skills.” Individual Councils have to sign up to implement the Framework. A number of Councils have adopted the Framework including Glasgow City Council (the largest local authority in Scotland) and Aberdeenshire.

6. Aberdeenshire Council “will provide a range of training opportunities including induction, democratic process skills, the rights and responsibilities of Councillors, local government finance and media communication skills.” To play his or her full part as a Councillor requires a Councillor to be diligent in accepting the opportunities for training which are provided. As part of the Framework “It is agreed that Aberdeenshire Council Councillors will undertake and record at least five days (36.25 hours) of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) per annum”.

7. No direct means of compulsion / enforcement can be used regarding training but it is significant if a complaint is made under the Self-Regulation Protocol or the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales’ Complaints procedure, and it is in the best interests for the Council when it comes to its reputation and the judgements of the Council regulators. It is hoped that Members will agree with the spirit of the proposals. It is therefore proposed that the recommendations made by the Standards Committee are communicated to the Members and that they are consulted on the proposals.

8. It is proposed to take amendments to the Constitution to the meeting of the Council in March 2013.

9. The Standards Committee is requested to consider the following options:-

9.1 Status quo, and therefore make no recommendations for any changes

9.2 The Standards Committee recommends to full Council that the Code of Conduct be amended to make training on the Code of Conduct mandatory for Members to attend one training session per annum and to amend the Constitution to include the following clause

“You must –

(d) attend at least one training session during each full term of office on the Members Code of Conduct as provided by your Authority’s Monitoring Officer or person nominated on their behalf.”

"Each Councillor will undertake and record at least days (hours) of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) per annum".

9.3.1 The Standards Committee recommends to full Council that the Code of Conduct be amended to make training on the Code of Conduct mandatory for Members to attend one training session per annum and to amended the Constitution to include the following clause

"You must –

(d) attend at least one training session during each full term of office on the Members Code of Conduct as provided by your Authority's Monitoring Officer or person nominated on their behalf."

and

9.3.2 That the Standards Committee recommends to the full Council that the Council's Constitution be amended to include the following clause

"Each Councillor will undertake and record at least ? days (? hours) of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) per annum".

9.4 That the Standards Committee recommends to the full Council that the Council's Constitution be amended to include the following clause

"Each Councillor will undertake and record at least ? days (? hours) of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) per annum".

9.5 The Standards Committee will need to take steps to review whichever option it proposes.

RECOMMENDATION

The Standards Committee is requested to make a recommendation from the options listed in paragraph 9 and for the recommendations by the Standards Committee to be communicated to the Members and that they are consulted on those proposals.