

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

29TH JULY 2014

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY AND
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – K.JONES**

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PART 1, SECTION A, ITEM 1

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Purpose of Report

To update the Democratic Services Committee on the progress made in relation to Member Development and to discuss and agree the priority areas for the remainder of the Civic Year 214/15.

Background

A report on Strengthening and Modernising Democratic Arrangements in Neath Port Talbot was taken to Modernisation Group on April 25th 2014, was the focus of an All-Member Seminar on May 20th 2014 and was endorsed by full Council on 2nd July 2014. The report recognised the Council's track record of providing a range of opportunities for Members to improve their knowledge and understanding of issues that affect their roles and responsibilities. However, it recognised that there is scope for these arrangements to be better co-ordinated; better aligned to forward work programmes and for Members to have greater involvement in setting the programme.

Progress

Following the endorsement by full Council of the proposals to strengthen arrangements, Member Development will be placed on a stronger footing in a phased approach.

It is proposed that phase 1 will concentrate on our priorities for the remainder of this civic year and will include:

- Carrying out the second round of Annual Development Reviews for Members in line with the scheme as revised by the Democratic Services Committee in 2013/14;
- Identifying priority needs linked to the development of the Scrutiny and Cabinet Forward Work Programmes;
- Selected elements from the WLGA Member Development programme;
- Providing brief training for Members on Committee Procedure as decided at the last meeting of the Democratic Services Committee (this is scheduled for Autumn 2014);
- Undertake a full training needs analysis of Members' current ICT training needs; and
- Putting Member seminars on an improved footing.

The details will be articulated in a Member Development Programme (early draft attached at Appendix 1). In time we would expect the programme to become more holistic. The development of this work would be owned by the Democratic Services Committee with input from key stakeholders (such as the Leadership and the Chairs and Vice Chairs of Scrutiny forum.)

It would be of assistance if the Committee could provide a steer on the way in which its members would wish to be involved in the development work going forward.

To support the above activities, work has been re allocated within Democratic Services so that there is dedicated capacity to take forward the work on a more robust footing.

Recommendation

That Members of the Democratic Services Committee considers the proposed priorities for Member Development over the remainder of the civic year and comments thereon.

That Members of the Democratic Services Committee discuss the way in which the Committees Members would wish to be involved in taking Member Development forward beyond this civic year.

List of Background Papers

Democratic Process- Strengthening and Modernising Arrangements in Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. Council. July 2014.

Appendix 1- Draft Member Development Programme Model.

Wards Affected

All

Contact Officer

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APPENDIX 1

(DRAFT- NO STATUS) Member Development Programme
2014/15

Before August Recess

Topic:	Objective:	Method:	Date:	Venue:
Forward Financial Plan	Understand the size of the projected funding gap for the period 2015-18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Understand the basis of those projections (ie the financial assumptions built into the projections) •Understand the timetable and process that will be established to achieve a balanced budget over the period. 	All Member Seminar	3pm, 14 th July 2014	Council Chamber, Port Talbot Civic Centre.
Forward Financial Plan	Understand the size of the projected funding gap for the period 2015-18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Understand the basis of those 	All Member Seminar	5.30pm, 17 th July 2014	Council Chamber, Port Talbot Civic Centre.

	<p>projections (ie the financial assumptions built into the projections)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Understand the timetable and process that will be established to achieve a balanced budget over the period. 			
Individual Electoral Registration	<p>Have an understanding of how IER works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Outline what will change and when •Provide information on how IER is funded and how electors will find out about the change 	All Member Seminar	10am, 18 th July 2014	Council Chamber, Port Talbot Civic Centre.
Planning (Wales) Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •To consider the proposed changes defined within the Planning (Wales) Bill •To consider how these changes will impact upon the structure and operation of the 	All Member Seminar	9am, 22 nd July 2014	Council Chamber, Port Talbot Civic Centre.

	Planning and Development Control Committee within Neath Port Talbot			
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RECESS- AUGUST 2014

Annual Member Development Reviews		Consideration of Development Review Process	Summer 2014	
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September- December 2014

Community Funds		All Member Seminar	TBC	
Children's Services- Referrals, Complaints and understanding the process of taking a child into care.		All Member Briefing	3 rd September 2014	
Forward Financial Plan		All Member Seminar	25 th September 2014	
Strengthening Democratic Services		All Member Seminar	30 th September 2014	
Code of Conduct		All Member Seminar	September/October 2014	
Committee		All Member	September/October	

Procedure		Briefings (x3)	2014	
Children's Services- Children in Care; Responsibilities and the Process.		All Member Briefing	15 th October 2014	

January- April 2015

Safeguarding Training (including the sexual exploitation of children.)		Training	TBC	
ANY WLGA TRAINING WE MAY CHOOSE TO SCHEDULE IN		TBC	TBC	
Learning & Development needs identified from ADRs		TBC	TBC	
ICT Training Needs		TBC	TBC	
Learning & Development needs related to FFP		TBC	TBC	

PART 1, SECTION A, ITEM 2

COMMITTEE/DECISION MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE SYSTEM 'MODERN.GOV' – PROGRESS UPDATE

Purpose of Report

To provide Members with an update in relation to the progress made with the installation and migration onto a new Software solution (modern.gov) to assist in modernising the Council's decision management processes.

Background

Following the organisational re-structure of the Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services Department in 2013, one of the first tasks undertaken within the newly formed Democratic Service team was to begin a review of the administrative procedures and practices utilised in servicing the decision management mechanisms of the Council.

As part of the review research was carried out to examine what innovations in modern technology were currently available within this specialist field of work to aid the Council in modernising its democratic arrangements.

In carrying out this research it became clear that the 'modern.gov' software package offered a dynamic software solution with a robust track record providing an effective tool to improve the efficiency and transparency of the Council's corporate governance systems.

Progress

The modern.gov system was purchased in October 2013 and the initial installation and set-up on the Council's servers took place between November 2013 and February 2014. Training for Members of the Democratic Services team on using the new system began on 19-20 March with further training taking place on 17-18 June.

Due to the requirements of the system certain minor alterations will be required to the current standard agenda template creating a single 'all-in-one' covering agenda rather than utilising an agenda index front sheet with supplementary sub-agendas as is the case at present.

In addition, as modern.gov will allow for the creation of committee packs and auto-pagination the use of colour paper and colour-headed agenda front sheets will no longer need to be utilised realising a considerable cost saving to the local authority.

A further four days of training is scheduled to take place during August and September for core staff with a 'Go-Live' date for switch over to the new system set for Friday, 19 September. This will be 'Phase 1' of the implementation of the new system. The design of the Authority's 'Your Council' web pages will also be significantly improved and simplified with better 'search' functionality making it far easier for any interested individual in locating individual reports or pin-pointing a particular Council decision.

Following the implementation of Phase 1 whereby the Democratic Services Unit will be utilising the new system, significant additional functionality of the system can be explored to ascertain what advantages can be offered to Members. In the early stages, some areas include:

- An online repository of resources for Members
- Automatic notification to Members including electronic versions of their Committee Papers (which will allow them to be viewed as soon as they are available rather than waiting for delivery via the Courier run)
- Automatic notifications to Members informing them of the decisions taken throughout the Councils decision making process (including setting personal alerts for topics that may particularly interest a Member or their Ward)
- An 'at a glance' calendar of meetings
- Notifications of meetings which may result in 'clashing' availability of members
- Members pages (including information on Declarations of Interest and other useful information)

In order to fully consider how this additional functionality can be implemented to suit Members needs it is recommended that Members of the Democratic Services Committee consider the establishment of a Member Reference Group in relation to Modern.Gov so that 'Phase 2' of the systems implementation can be planned in accordance with Members' needs.

Recommendation

That Members of the Democratic Services Committee note the progress made in the installation and development of the modern.gov decision management Software Solution and agree the creation of a Member Reference Group to aid in consultation as the roll-out of the new software system progresses.

List of Background Papers

Modern.Gov – Local Government Decision Management Software Solution
<http://www.modern.gov.co.uk>

Wards Affected

All

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