

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Democratic Services Committee

10 November 2016

Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Member Induction Programme 2017

Purpose of the Report

1. To further consult Committee on proposed arrangements for the induction of the new Council in May 2017.

Executive Summary and Background

2. The Local Government elections take place in May 2017.
3. As stated in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 the Local Authority is required to ensure the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for its Members (Section 7). A robust induction programme is considered to be an essential element of the Council's approach.
4. The aims and objectives of the Members' Induction Programme are to provide a supportive and structured development framework for all Members, with the objective that, by the end of the Programme, Members will have a better knowledge of:-

- Modern local government, including the Executive and Scrutiny functions;
- the Council's strategic planning arrangements, including the Corporate Improvement Plan, the Council's budgetary and ethical framework;
- the role of Members;
- the Services provided by the Council;
- the responsibilities of specific committees, such as Planning, Licensing and Scrutiny Committees

Democratic Services Committee - Task & Finish Group

5. The Democratic Services Committee established a task and finish group to provide input into the development of the induction programme for the May 2017 Local Government elections.
6. The Group specifically looked at the induction programme utilised for the previous intake of Members in 2012 and provided advice and guidance on how best to streamline, prioritise and enhance the programme structure to make it more sympathetic for the needs and requirements of elected Members.
7. As part of this work Members made it very clear that the previous 2012 programme provided too much information, too quickly and a more focused and phased approach was preferred.
8. It was agreed that having a fresh approach to the Member Induction Programme would better equip newly elected Members with the skills and knowledge to help them undertake their role. It was also agreed that it would be an opportunity for all elected Members to identify additional specific skills they would like to acquire to undertake their role.
9. In previous induction programmes Members have been invited to listen to key issues initially presented by the Chief Executive followed by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services highlighting the financial pressures facing the Council, followed by briefings from the remaining Corporate Directors.

10. The task and finish group suggested that this type of seminar briefing is required and should continue but concentrate solely on the key issues facing the incoming Council.

Market Place Event

11. The task and finish group also suggested that whilst the seminar/briefings are ongoing there should be a market place event in the Princess Royal Theatre whereby Members could get to meet with officers responsible for key service areas that will feature in their constituency work.
12. Democratic Services Officers were tasked with speaking with officers of the contact centre to identify the top 50 contact types. In addition to this elected Members were contacted to ask what are their most frequent resident queries with the Council.
13. Following consideration of the list of contacts the task and finish group recommended that it be officers from these service areas that attend the market place during the induction period so that Members would have a specific point of contact for their term of office.
14. In addition to the list of service areas that should be invited to the market place it was suggested that a number of key external partners also be invited to attend with relevant local information being provided for respective ward members.

Mentoring

15. As part of the remit of the Democratic Services Committee task and finish group it was also suggested that the issue of mentoring for newly elected Members should be considered.
16. Research was undertaken with local authorities across Wales and it was found that generally mentoring does take place but in the main on an informal basis by the relevant political party groups.
17. There was only one Council (City of Cardiff) that had formalised the process and had drawn up a formal contract. The Group felt that this level of formality was not required but a form of mentoring scheme on an informal basis was preferred.

18. Officers were requested to prepare some background information on the role of a mentor along with a letter that would be sent to the Political Groups of the Council suggesting that they may wish to consider mentoring for any newly elected Members following the intake of newly elected Members from May 2017.

Financial Impact

19. The financial impact of the proposed induction programme is included within the budget for Democratic Services.

Equality Impact Assessment

20. It is intended that an equalities screening assessment be undertaken as part of the induction programme to identify those Members who may have specific needs that require support for example for Members with specific disabilities. It is also intended that the equality duties placed on the Council are priorities early in the programme.

Workforce Impacts

21. There are no workforce improvements associated with this report.

Legal Powers

22. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 provides the legal framework for the work covered in this report.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/contents>

Risk Management

23. Without a robust induction programme there is a risk that Members will not be fully equipped with the knowledge and skills required to undertake their role as elected representatives.

Consultation

24. There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

25. That Committee offers its views on the draft Member induction Programme at Appendices 1-3.

Reason for Proposed Decision

26. To inform the Authority's Member Induction Programme for 2017.

List of Background Papers

27. Section 7 - Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/contents>

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