

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Democratic Services Committee

4th October 2021

Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services – Mr Craig Griffiths

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected:

All wards

Member Induction 2022 and Diversity in Democracy Programme

Purpose of the Report:

Background:

Member Induction 2022

1. Local Government Elections will take place in May 2012 and it is important that prior to this, the Council reviews its Induction Programme that will take place following the election of new members to the Council to accurately reflect the concerns and views of members based on their induction experience when they were elected in 2017.
2. The Democratic Services Committee has within its remit the responsibility 'to review the adequacy of provision by the Council of staff, accommodation, and other resources to discharge democratic services functions' and 'to make reports and recommendations to the Council in relation to such provision'.
3. Work is also being undertaken by the WLGA via their Member/Officer Networks to develop a 'typical induction curriculum' for use by Local Authorities.

4. The Democratic Services Committee previously established a 'Task and Finish' approach to the work so that members may contribute to the work that will be undertaken by officers.
5. Members of the Task and Finish Group have now considered a Member Induction Timetable and this is included at Appendix 1 for further comment by the Democratic Services Committee and onward endorsement to Full Council for information purposes.

Diversity in Democracy

6. Members will be aware the WLGA has recently embarked on an ambitious Diversity and Democracy Programme to ensure council chambers are more representative of their communities following local elections in May 2022. As part of this at a meeting of the WLGA on the 5th March 2021, the WLGA Council agreed:
 - a. to encourage all political parties, through the WLGA Political Groups, to commit to proactive and coordinated activities to improve diversity in local government democracy;
 - b. a formal position calling for the introduction of resettlement grants for all councillors and senior salary holders;
 - c. to encourage all councillors to claim any necessary allowances or expenses;
 - d. to encourage a declaration by July 2021 from councils in Wales, on becoming 'Diverse Councils'; to:
 - i. Provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity;
 - ii. Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all;
 - iii. Consider staggering council meeting times and agreeing recess periods to support councillors with other commitments; and
 - iv. Set out an action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 local elections.
 - e. that councils should set targets to be representative of the communities they serve at the next elections;
 - f. to support the use of voluntary quotas for Welsh local elections; and

- g. the WLGA reviews the impact of voluntary quotas following the next local elections.
7. Accordingly, in light of paragraph 6(d) above, in the Council meeting held on May 26th 2021, members formerly declared that the Council will:
- Provide a clear, public commitment to improving diversity;
 - Demonstrate an open and welcoming culture to all;
 - Consider staggering council meeting times and agreeing recess periods to support councillors with other commitments; and
 - Set out an action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 local elections.
8. In order to establish the best way to implement these requirements, Democratic Services Committee were tasked to consider the same as part of their consideration of the Member Induction Programme for 2022. In its initial meeting on 12th July 2021, this group agreed in its Terms of Reference to consider how the Council can contribute positively to Diversity in Democracy.
9. In response to the task set out in the WLGA requirements and instructed at Council, a draft diversity in democracy action plan of activity ahead of the 2022 elections has been prepared which has now been considered by the Task and Finish Group and is brought back to Democratic Services Committee today for endorsement before being reported to Full Council for approval. A copy of the proposed Diversity in Democracy Action Plan is set out at Appendix 2

Financial Impacts:

10. There are no financial impacts associated with this report as suggested actions will be met within existing budgets.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

11. There is no requirement for an Integrated Impact Assessment as this is a report in respect of governance arrangements only. A well designed Member Induction programme would assist the Council in discharging its duties and responsibilities as set out in the Equalities Act 2010

Valleys Communities Impacts:

12. There are no valley community impacts

Workforce Impacts:

13. There are no workforce impacts associated with this reports.

Legal Impacts:

14. This work is proposed to be undertaken in accordance with the function of the Democratic Services Committee as expressed in the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 and to ensure compliance with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.

Risk Management Impacts:

15. There are no risk management issues associated with this report.

Consultation:

16. There will be no requirement for any consultation.

Recommendations:

17. It is recommended that:

(a) Members of the Democratic Services Committee endorse the Member Induction Timetable for Local Government Elections in 2022 and forward the same to Full Council for information purposes.

(b) Members of the Democratic Services Committee endorse the proposed Diversity in Democracy Action Plan and the same be forwarded to Full Council for approval.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

18. To ensure that Member Induction arrangements in 2022 are fit for purpose and the Council meets its requirements pursuant to its Diversity in Democracy Declaration.

Implementation of Decision:

19. The decision is proposed for implementation immediately.

Appendices:

20. Appendix 1- Member Induction Programme

Appendix 2 – Diversity in Democracy Action Plan

List of Background Papers:

21. None

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