**Caerphilly Town Council**

**Training Plan**

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 introduced a statutory requirement for town and community councils to have a training plan for Members and staff (section 67). The intention behind this requirement is to support councillors with the relevant training to carry out their role. It is recognised that this should be carried out in a proportionate way, taking into account factors such as the activities undertaken by the council, and the current expertise of councillors and the clerk. The Town Council performs a limited range of functions and owns no land or buildings but notwithstanding Members need to be equipped to undertake their responsibilities which are set down in law. Training can take many forms and includes in person or remote access courses, webinars, attendance at conferences and seminars, in house briefings from the Town Clerk or representatives from other organisations, personal reading and research.

There are essential skills and knowledge that all councillors should have and to this end therefore all should attend the basic provision:

* Induction
* Code of Conduct
* Financial Management and Governance

Beyond these basics and to assess other priorities a self assessment questionnaire was issued to Members in May 2022. The purpose was to assess the skills and knowledge together with the coverage and depth. There was a limited response which has meant it has not been possible to build a complete picture. However the council benefits from Members who have extensive local government experience over many years, and experience gained from their respective careers in public and private roles, and one third of the Members are also Caerphilly County Borough Councillors which brings added benefits from a training perspective. Members who did respond to the self assessment questionnaire identified topics where they would like the opportunity of additional training.

Welcome packs were provided to all Members following the election in May 2022. Included in the packs were copies of the Register of Members Interests, the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and the self assessment questionnaire.

The Town Clerk arranged an induction for all Members on 23rd May 2022 which was attended by 10 Members of the Town Council. This included an introduction to the council as a legal entity and to the governance provided through the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

Caerphilly County Borough Council will offer Code of Conduct training for town and community councils in October 2022. Any Member who hasn’t attended training on the Code of Conduct within the last 12 months will be encouraged to attend.

Feedback from Members suggests that the following are areas where Members would welcome training opportunities:

* Planning policies / planning applications
* Council as employer (HR policy and procedures)
* Local Government Law
* Local Government Finance
* Community engagement
* Climate change / biodiversity duty
* Governance
* Town/Community Councils Functions

The above topic areas can all be addressed either through the modules offered by One Voice Wales which are open to non member councils, or Planning Aid Wales.

Staff Training

The Town Clerk maintains up to date knowledge through membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks. From time to time remote access courses or webinars may be identified as an opportunity to get more detailed information. This could relate to topical issues that affect the running of the Town Council such as cyber security or legislation that imposes new duties on the sector.

Training for the Administrative Assistant is on the job.

When any new staff are recruited any training needs should be identified through a formal induction process.

Volunteer Training

The Town Council does not employ any regular volunteers. Volunteer stewards are appointed for the fireworks display and are briefed on the day and deployed in pairs to specific locations.

Budget

The estimates for 2022/23 financial year do not include any budget provision for training. Circumstances have changed with the new duty imposed by Welsh Government through the LGE(Wales) Act 2021. It is anticipated that savings may arise during 2022/23 and £1000 was approved by the Town Council (minute 39.7.2 26.9.22) in order to progress the specific training needs identified above in the current financial year. For future years a separate budget head will be established. Modules offered by One Voice Wales which are delivered remotely are charged at £55 for non members. Planning Aid Wales have an online session “An Introduction to Planning” specifically focused on the role of town and community councils in the planning system which costs £35 per place.

Review

The LGE (Wales) Act 2021 imposes a duty to review the training plan from time to time and as a minimum within 3 months of every ordinary election. However a more frequent review may be necessary if there is a change in circumstances such as following a by election or taking on new responsibilities.

Setting aside the formal review requirements a flexible approach will be maintained such that at any time Members can request support to pursue additional training where it can be demonstrated this will be a benefit to the management and governance of the council.

Approved October 2022