

MEETING	Democratic Services Committee
DATE	9 December, 2014
SUBJECT	On-line training provision
PURPOSE	Report on the provision and seeking further guidance
AUTHOR	Carey Cartwright, Learning and Development Manager, Human Resources

1. Background

A request was received from the Democratic Services Committee for an update on the online training provision following a discussion in the Members' annual reports.

2. Introduction

The Council acknowledges the importance of appropriate training to support Members to fulfil their roles effectively, and adopted the comprehensive Learning and Development Strategy, before being awarded the Members Charter in 2009.

The strategy emphasises personal development as part of every member's role, and the duty of individuals to take responsibility for identifying the most relevant training for them and to develop themselves. The 'interviews' procedure to draw up a Personal Development Plan supports this.

Due to the varying nature of the Elected Members' role and duties, a range of development fields and training titles needed to be provided, while seeking to ensure access to appropriate learning for every member. This includes a combination of 'information sharing' sessions and 'developing understanding and skills' sessions.

It must be acknowledged that there are a number of practical issues to overcome i.e. travel distance due to the size and geography of the County, and in particular the lack of time that makes it difficult for some Members to attend formal sessions.

It is important to note that every Member has unique development needs, and that people have different ways of learning - 'traditional' sessions don't suit everyone. To this end, the Learning and Development service is committed to developing a range of innovative learning methods that includes e-learning (Learning through Technology):

- Use all types of technology for learning i.e. video, modules, internet research etc.
 - 'Online Learning' comes under this heading
- Use different devices i.e. i-pad, Smartphone, Laptops, PC's
- Access to learning opportunities any time and any place (if internet access is available)
- Let individuals choose the appropriate developing and learning method, and to learn at their own pace

There are unquestionable advantages to e-learning, and it is recognised as an effective and innovative learning method, particularly when combined with other learning methods (this is often referred to as 'Blended Learning').

To this end, e-learning could be used to:

- Replace some face to face 'information sharing' sessions.
- Maximise the effect of 'traditional' learning sessions by
 - Adding details and developing understanding
 - Reminding individuals of the learning's main points

In addition to this, the technology is available to:

- Enable organisations to create interesting, attractive and high quality learning materials.
- Offer convenient and flexible provision that is easy to use.

And of course, by avoiding travel costs, e-learning offers more value for money.

3. Where we are now

3.1 e-learning Strategy

The Learning and Development Team has developed and is implementing an e-learning strategy for the Council. This strategy addresses the need to develop an appropriate learning culture, by noting that offering high quality e-learning material is not enough in itself - the individual needs to choose this type of learning.

3.2 e-learning Officer

E-learning will be key in the development of Learning and Development over the coming years, and an investment has been made through procuring an e-learning 'platform' from the Learning Pool company and employing an e-learning Officer to develop an e-learning site for Gwynedd Council. This enables us to:

- Create our own bilingual learning materials (including modules, video, webinars etc.)
- Effective quality assurance
- Adapt and tailor the material for different groups i.e. Members, managers, front line staff

3.3 e-Gwynedd

An e-Gwynedd site has been developed and is now fully operational and is accessible from anywhere that has internet connection.

Many materials that have already been developed include Health and Safety, Child Protection, Equality and Data Protection modules – that can be accessed by using an i-pad, Smartphone or computer.

In addition,

- Discussion forums
- Learning materials (e.g. slides, leaflets)
- Connections to articles, video clips etc.

- Access to 'additional' (personal development) modules through the Learning Pool system i.e. Emotional Intelligence

3.5 Joint Working

The collaboration agenda is active Regionally (North Wales) and Nationally, particularly in terms of Learning Pool users.

An attempt was made (through WLGA) to draw up a National resource for Members in Wales and to adapt resources that had already been developed in England. Though Gwynedd Council is committed to this, it has not happened thus far, but we continue to consider the matter.

3.6 Access to Learning

The emphasis in Gwynedd thus far has been on developing the system and materials, with a schedule for organizing access to staff and Members to the learning on e-Gwynedd.

4. The Next Steps

1. Develop an e-learning culture in the Council by raising awareness about the opportunities and advantages associated with this kind of learning.
2. Extend staff and Members' access to the e-Gwynedd site.
 - In relation to Members, it is intended that the following steps be taken from December 2014:
 - i. Raise awareness about the e-Gwynedd resource
 - ii. Give Members support with learning how to use it
 - iii. Start by referring Members to the Health and Safety module
3. Extend the range of methods and learning resources on the e-Gwynedd site.
 - Articles, documents, video clips, webinars, discussion forms, news etc.
 - Collaborate with a number of departments within the Council to develop more resources i.e. safeguarding adults, Fire etc.
4. Contribute towards the 'All Wales Academy for Local Government' National project that works towards establishing a site for the 22 Welsh Councils in order to develop and share e-learning resources to staff and Members.