

Committee:	Standards Committee
Date:	12 March 2018
Title:	Community Councils Training
Author:	Monitoring Officer
Purpose:	To introduce an alternative procedure for providing training to Town and Community Councils

Background

The Standards Committee holds the following functions

- promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by the Authority's Councillors and Co-opted Members;
- assisting the Councillors and Co-opted Members to adhere to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- advising the Council regarding adopting or amending the Members' Code of Conduct;
- monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct;
- advising, training or arranging training for Councillors and Co-opted Members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.

In accordance with section 56 of the Local Government Act 2000, these functions extend to Gwynedd's Town and Community Councils. There are 64 such councils in Gwynedd that fall within the remit of the Standards Committee. Across Wales, the number of Town and Community Councils per County Council vary from one in Merthyr to 111 in Powys. As a large rural area, Gwynedd has amongst the highest number.

Training Procedure

There are practical implications to the above from the perspective of maintaining attendance and contact with these Councils. We make relatively regular contact if

changes are made to the Code or regarding matters such as the internal resolution process of UNLLAIS. In addition, there is a general message under the guidance of the Ombudsman and from us in the office stating that we are available to provide advice and support. Various clerks take advantage of the support available from time to time.

We also provide training occasionally. The numbers who attend, considering the total number of community councillors in Gwynedd, means that we do not reach the vast majority of the members. The last time an exercise took place, sessions were held in Caernarfon, Bala, Pwllheli and Dolgellau. The content had also been created after consulting with clerks. The presentations were well received and moderate numbers attended. However, arranging a course at a particular location and at a set time is subject to a number of factors that could influence who is able to attend.

After holding discussions with other Monitoring Officers in similar areas, a different approach was tabled, namely to offer to provide a trainer for a locally-arranged session. In simple terms, should the Committee support this, the proposal would be to send a letter to clerks offering to provide a trainer to come and hold a 90-minute session for their area at a nominal cost. The content could be tailored to respond to local need but there would be a basic course on the Code and a scenario exercise. The local Council would arrange the course.

There would be a need to be aware that it would not be possible to hold numerous sessions within a year and councils would be strongly encouraged to collaborate. On the other hand, it appears practical in my opinion to provide training that meets the Community Council function but is also flexible enough to respond to local requirements.

Recommendation

That a pilot is held for a year on the training system of providing a trainer on the Code of Conduct to Town and Community Councils, in accordance with the report.