



Guidance for councils planning to implement personal development reviews for members

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Welsh Local Government Association - The Voice of Welsh Councils

We are The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA); a politically led cross-party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level. We represent the interests of local government and promote local democracy in Wales.

The 22 councils in Wales are our members and the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities are associate members.

We believe that the ideas that change people's lives, happen locally.

Communities are at their best when they feel connected to their council through local democracy. By championing, facilitating, and achieving these connections, we can build a vibrant local democracy that allows communities to thrive.

Our ultimate goal is to promote, protect, support and develop democratic local government and the interests of councils in Wales.

We'll achieve our vision by

- Promoting the role and prominence of councillors and council leaders
- Ensuring maximum local discretion in legislation or statutory guidance
- Championing and securing long-term and sustainable funding for councils
- Promoting sector-led improvement
- Encouraging a vibrant local democracy, promoting greater diversity
- Supporting councils to effectively manage their workforce

Introduction

This guidance has been developed by the WLGA working councils who are developing a personal development review scheme for elected members.

The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 placed a requirement on councils to provide all members with an opportunity to have a personal development review to assess their development needs.¹

Welsh Government guidance on the process for the reviews can be viewed at appendix 1. This guidance is currently being updated to incorporate legislative changes stemming from the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 (the 2021 Act). There are no major changes to the substance of the guidance- however it underlines the need for councils to keep the definition of training and development needs flexible, so they evolve their training offer to meet the changing demands placed on councilors- for example the 2021 Act brings in provision enabling executive members to job share executive posts and for there to be assistants to the executive, it amended the remit of Governance and Audit Committees and placed new duties on councils to encourage the public to participate in decision making.

This guidance has been designed to enable authorities to meet the Measure requirements, provides practical guidance for implementing personal development review schemes and provides examples of PDR approaches from WLGA member authorities who have successful schemes in place. It also fits with the requirements for the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development (see appendix 2).

¹ Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

- (1) A local authority must secure the provision of reasonable training and development opportunities for its members.
- (2) A local authority must make available to each member of the authority an annual review of the member's training and development needs.
- (3) The review must include an opportunity for an interview with a person who is, in the opinion of the authority, suitably qualified to provide advice about the training and development needs of a member of a local authority.
- (4) In exercising its functions under this section a local authority must have regard to guidance given by the Welsh Ministers.
- (5) In the case of an authority which operates a leader and cabinet executive (Wales), a reference in this section to a member of a local authority does not include the executive leader.

Definition

Personal Development Review (PDR) is a way for a member and his/her Authority to mutually assess a member's personal development needs. The review should be set within the context of the role of the member, his/her aspirations for what s/he hopes to achieve, the purpose and aspirations of the Authority and the needs of the community.

Purpose

PDR schemes enable members to build confidence, develop skills and knowledge and improve their own performance and contribution to the council and the community. They can provide:

- Clarity for members about the expectations and accountabilities placed upon them.
- Understanding of and support for the individual and collective development needs of members
- Support for members in preparing for new roles (succession planning)
- An understanding and ownership of organisational goals
- Support for improved member performance

Methodology

Authorities implementing a scheme may find it useful to consider the following as a possible approach:

1. Promote the value of the PDR approach, reassuring members that it is not a performance appraisal but a means of supporting and developing members to help them achieve their goals and aspirations. Personal development reviews can be confused with appraisals. The PDR is very much based on the principal of mutual support and peer guidance to help members develop the skills, knowledge and behaviors required to be effective councillors meet their development goals.
2. Secure representative cross-party agreement between members for the creation of the PDR scheme agreeing the:
 - aims (these might include developing a greater understanding of member roles and responsibilities, providing the most appropriate, cost effective and effective

support and development for members which also secure organisational and community objectives.

- scope (such as whether members will discuss their performance and work plans in addition to their training and development and how an evaluation of the members previous training will be reviewed).
 - outcomes for the scheme and ways of measuring its success
3. Engage with internal expertise among members and officers (HR leads, members with experience in this area) to develop the approach.
 4. Link the scheme with existing strategies for member support and development and other appropriate organisational strategies such as organisational development or people strategies.
 5. Link the scheme with existing member development needs analyses and training frameworks. Including:
 - Any internal member development frameworks to help members in their deliberations.
 - Establishing ways of using the emerging training needs to inform member development programmes.
 - The [Councillor Development \(competency\) Framework](#) -which broadly outlines the skills and knowledge required by councillors to perform their different roles and provides an indication of how they might carry them out effectively. It is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive but to provide a prompt for new and existing members to identify areas where they need support.
 6. Establish role descriptions as the basis for the interviews. These should be developed with and endorsed by members prior to the commencement of the PDR process.
 7. Establish a clear methodology for undertaking the annual review, Such as:
 - Agreeing who will undertake the reviews, taking into account the Local Government Measure's requirement for a "suitably qualified" person to undertake the review. If this is to be a member, candidates might include the Leader, Deputy Leader, Group Leaders or Member Development Lead/Chair of Democratic Services. Experience suggests that it is preferable to spread the

responsibility between members as much as possible. If this is to be an officer, candidates might include the Head of Democratic Services, member support officers and HR/training personnel. It may be appropriate to use external expertise in the process such as Leaders from other authorities or trained Member Peers to undertake Leader reviews.

- Agreeing the role of officers in supporting the process and using the emerging information to devise member development strategies and programmes.
 - Establishing rules about confidentiality.
8. Provide training/briefing/written guidance for those taking part (appendices 3/4/5) so that no one takes part without all parties knowing what they are doing, why they are doing it and how.
 9. Evaluate the scheme with all those involved, to ensure aims are being achieved, and to identify areas for improvement.

Further Assistance

Is available from the WLGA in introducing and implementing Personal Development Review Schemes. Training is available for both members and officers in undertaking reviews and for those members who will be receiving reviews in how to get the most out of them.

Appendix 1

Statutory Guidance on Personal Development Review from the Welsh Government

Annual Review

2.12 Every local authority member (other than an executive leader – see paragraph 23) must be offered the opportunity to have their training and development needs reviewed on an annual basis. It is recommended that much of the training and development needs of local authority members are identified by such reviews.

2.13 The review must include an opportunity for a pre-planned interview between the member and a suitably qualified person (see paragraphs 2.17-2.22). The interview could include a review of the training and development received by the member over the last year (or appropriate period if the local authority member has only been recently elected).

2.14 Local authorities may wish to consider detailing the outcome of the interview in an agreed plan which sets out training and development needs, if any, identified for the year ahead. It is recommended that this personal development plan is provided for the member and signed by both member and reviewer. This is a private document which is not expected to be published by the authority or member, although a member is free to publicise in his or her annual report any training and development undertaken if he or she so wishes.

2.15 In achieving the standard required for the Charter, local authorities will need to adopt role descriptions for the posts of leader, deputy leader, executive member, scrutiny member, chair of scrutiny and chairs of statutory and area committees. The descriptions could be used as a guide as to the skills required by the relevant member.

2.16 The review is an assessment of training and development needs. A local authority may wish to consider making it clear to members that the review is not a performance review or an assessment of how well or how badly a member has conducted their duties. That is not a statutory requirement and is a matter for the electorate to judge at the ballot box.

Suitably Qualified

2.17 It is for the local authority to determine who could be considered a suitably qualified person to conduct interviews with local authority members to discuss their training and development needs as part of their annual review. This responsibility could be allocated to the DSC within the authority. In most cases, this may not be a question of naming individuals, but of describing a post or office holder, (but see paragraph 2.22 below). It would probably be neither suitable nor desirable for a single person to be made responsible for conducting all interviews.

2.18 Some local authorities already carry out various practices in relation to the review of the training and development needs of its members. Practices include group leaders conducting interviews with their members or interviews being conducted by the leader and the executive members. Both these practices are perfectly acceptable methods of complying with the requirements of the Measure.

2.19 Authorities may prefer, however, to divest the duty with their human resources officers. If this is the preferred option, local authorities may consider making the Head of Democratic Services (HDS) responsible for co-operating with human resources officers for this part of their work. If the Head of Paid Service was selected as a suitably qualified person to conduct an interview it would not be expected that they would work under the supervision of the HDS.

2.20 Some authorities may prefer to hire external consultants or peers to conduct interviews, which is also acceptable. Local authorities are encouraged to appoint a Member Development Champion from amongst its councillors.

2.21 It is recommended that there should be no surprises in the system and that individual members know who they can expect to conduct their interview. Local authorities may wish to consider including an option in their arrangements for members to make a request to the HDS to arrange for a different person to conduct their interview if there is good reason for so doing.

2.22 Finally, authorities must ensure that anyone conducting an interview must themselves have received suitable training in how to do this and are advised to liaise with the WLGA to ensure the provision of this. Therefore, even if the authority has chosen to allocate the duty

of conducting reviews to a post, rather than an individual, that post holder should have received the necessary training before conducting reviews.

Executive Leader of the Local Authority

2.23 Section 7 of the Measure does not apply to the executive leader (or elected mayor) of an authority. However, there may, of course, be occasions where the leader wishes to receive training or development and there is no suggestion that, by excluding them from the provisions of the Measure, they should not be able to receive training, nor, indeed, an annual review or an interview with a suitably qualified person.

Appendix 2

Criteria from the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development for Personal Development Review

Arrangements are in place for <u>all</u> members to be offered a PDR.	
Charter requirement	<p>Personal support and development reviews which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • based on role descriptions • contribute to personal development plans • are conducted by senior members or other deemed suitably qualified as set out in the Measure guidance • are <u>made available</u> for all members and <u>must</u> be undertaken by members in receipt of a senior salary. <p>Note. The charter requires that all members in receipt of a senior salary (including the Leader) do a PDR. However, the measures legally requires all members (except the Leader) to be offered a PDR.</p>
Advanced Charter	<p>The majority of members undertake PDRs regularly and at least annually according to the requirements set out in the first level. The PDR provides opportunities for members to identify the level at which development is required.</p>

Appendix 3

Example Proforma for a Personal Development Review.

Please complete this pro forma and bring it to the meeting, this form is confidential to you and the person who is conducting your review except for the final sheet which will be used by member support officers for your personal development plan and to prioritise activities for the councils training programme.

- 1. What are my current roles and responsibilities?** (e.g. the council executive/cabinet portfolio, overview and scrutiny member, chair, member of a statutory committee such as planning, licensing etc. In the community, ward member/community leader)
- 2. What specific tasks to I need to achieve this year? What do I plan to do? By when?**
- 3. What do I need to know about and be able to do to undertake my role and deliver my plans?** (Your role description, person specification and the Member Development (competency) Framework will be helpful)
- 4. What aspects of my role am I confident in?**
- 5. Where am I less confident?**
- 6. What might prevent me from undertaking my role effectively?** (consider any personal, organisational or political issues which might be a barrier to success)
- 7. What learning and development have I undertaken this year?**
- 8. What have I learned and been able to achieve as a result of this learning and development?**
- 9. What additional learning and development would be useful, use the table below.**

Example Proforma for a Personal Development Review.

Areas for development	Examples	Preferred method of development (e.g. visits to other authorities, peer networking, practical workshops, e learning etc.)
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meeting preparation, participation, management • questioning techniques and constructive challenge, • media interviews, • methods of engaging with the public 	
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • equalities and diversity, • planning process, • financial planning and budget setting. • role of Audit, Inspection and Regulatory bodies 	
Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internal governance, • ethical standards, • relationships 	

My learning and development needs for the next 12 months

Please discuss this section of your pro forma with your member support officer, it will be used to create development plans and training programmes

Area for Development	Preferred method of development	Priority
example How to Chair scrutiny meetings effectively	I'd like to observe meetings in other authorities A workshop on chairing skills would be handy I'd like to receive some written guidance for scrutiny chairs	1
example Understanding the planning system to answer constituents enquiries	A workshop on all the planning basics A meeting with planning officers on specific issues raised by people in my community about planning permission	2
example Local Government Finance, how do I contribute to the budget setting process	I'd like to have discussions with finance officers and some mentoring from Cabinet member for Finance and Resources as this is an area I'd like to move into.	3
example Training in the use of social media	A meeting with someone who can explain how to use Twitter safely to publicise what I do and encourage the public to contact me.	4

My evaluation of the training I have already received

Training undertaken	What difference has this made to the way I work as a member
example Council induction programme on the work of the council and who's who.	Has given me a good refresher of how the council operates which has enabled me to explain this to people attending my surgeries and know who the appropriate officers are to speak to. It also highlighted areas where I need further training.
example media skills training	Helped me represent the council more effectively at a radio interview last week
example attended the Leadership Academy	Helped me understand my own leadership style and how it differs from other I am now working more effectively with other Cabinet members I also had help on a personal leadership challenge.

Appendix 4

Example Guidance for Members Conducting Reviews (Interviewers)

Before conducting the review(s) you may find it useful to consider the following guidance:

Purpose of the review

The purpose of your meeting will be to provide your interviewee with an opportunity to review their role generally, identify any specific tasks for the year ahead, consider the areas where they feel confident and identify areas where they will be more challenged and may need support and development. Their learning and development needs together with the usefulness or otherwise of previous development will then be fed back to member support officers to create development programmes.

Preparation

You may want to familiarise yourself with the role description of the person whose review you are conducting and consider some of the questions that you will ask to help the interviewee explore their role and needs. Although Member support and training officers will provide full information to all members, you may wish to re-familiarise yourself with the training, development and support that might be available to members in your authority. Your interviewee will contact you to plan a time and place convenient to you both where you can have a confidential undisturbed conversation. The meeting should take no longer than an hour and a half.

Undertaking the review

- Please remember that the conversation you have with your interviewee needs to be kept confidential to yourselves.
- Your role is to help the interviewee consider his/her role/contribution, strengths/weaknesses and training needs. You should act as an objective sounding board in this exploration.
- Use the pro forma as a basis for your discussions
- It is the responsibility of the interviewee to undertake any actions resulting from the conversation, keep any documentation and discuss any emerging development needs with member support officers
- Any additional support required from the authority may also be identified and fed into the organisation as appropriate.

Appendix 5

Guidance for Members Being Interviewed

Before undertaking your review you may find it useful to consider the following guidance:

Purpose of the Review

The purpose of your meeting will be to provide you with an opportunity to review your role generally, consider any specific tasks for the year ahead, consider the areas where you feel confident and identify areas that you might find challenging and may need support and development. You will have an opportunity to identify learning and development needs which you will then be able to feed back to member support officers to organise development programmes. You can also review the usefulness of training that you have already received.

Preparation

Before your meeting you will need to complete the pro forma. This will help you to think about your role, specific tasks for this year and any support that you might need. You'll also find it useful to review your role description, person specification and the member development framework/questionnaire. Make contact with your interviewer and plan a time and place convenient to you both where you can have a confidential undisturbed conversation.

Undertaking the Review

- Please remember that the conversation you have with your interviewer needs to be kept confidential to yourselves.
- Use the pro forma as a basis for your discussions
- Your interviewer will help you consider your role/contribution, strengths/weaknesses and training needs. They will act as an objective sounding board in this conversation.
- Their role is not to give their own feedback on your performance.
- Please note that it is your responsibility to undertake any actions resulting from the conversation, keep any documentation and discuss any emerging development needs with member support officers.
- Any additional support required from the authority may also be identified and fed into the organisation as appropriate.

Appendix 6

Development for members and officers undertaking reviews

Authorities might want to consider the following when providing training for members/officers undertaking reviews

1. Provide training only when the approach and methodology for conducting a PDR has been developed and signed off by the authority.
2. Work with HR and training professionals to identify some aspects of good practice when undertaking reviews bearing in mind the differences between member PDR and staff performance review
3. Work with members individually to identify their requirements for development based on previous experience and levels of confidence.
4. Provide support throughout the process so that members and/or officers have continuing guidance if they need it and opportunities to reflect on how it went

The following might be considered as learning outcomes for the training of members in how to do a PDR

- Members understand the reasons for implementing PDR, the approach taken by the authority and the details of the scheme
- Members fully understand their role and responsibilities as an interviewer
- Members are able to employ interpersonal questioning and listening skills to facilitate the interview and best support the interviewee
- Members are aware of some of the pitfalls inherent in the interview process
- Members are able to identify any further development needs to help them undertake the interviews

The following might be considered as learning outcomes for the training for officers

- Officers understand the reasons for implementing PDR, the approach taken by the authority and the details of the scheme
- Officers understand the difference between member PDR and the staff appraisal process
- Officers have an understanding of the role of members and the skills/knowledge behaviours required to undertake it
- Officers fully understand their role and responsibilities as an interviewer
- Officers are able to employ interpersonal questioning and listening skills to facilitate the interview and best support the interviewee

Appendix 7: Brecon Beacons National Park Authority- PDR approach

The Authority agreed a policy and pro forma for Personal Development Reviews in October 2008 as part of its work towards the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. The first PDRs were carried out in January/February 2009. In the same year the Authority achieved the Basic Charter for Member Support and Development from the WLGA. Since then, the Authority has further improved the scheme to support member skills and knowledge development, including the support facilities and support services. In 2011 the Authority achieved the Advanced Charter for Member Support and Development, and in 2014 successfully achieved its re-assessment for the Advanced Charter.

Eighteen National Park Authority Members undergo a detailed induction programme as part of a 4-5 year framework of development, which includes specific induction for all roles, decision making through committees and delegation to officers, site visits, meeting community representatives and spending time with staff 'on the ground' to develop their understanding of the work carried out across the Park.

The members carrying out the PDRs meet prior to the process each year, to provide consistency of approach, receive any necessary guidance, and review any common outcomes from the previous year's process to share good practice as well as any obstacles that need to be addressed.

In the review members focus on the following areas:

1. Their role within the Authority, any key skills and knowledge areas that need to be developed and any challenges.
2. The most useful learning events attended to date, and why.
3. Key learning outcomes and how they have helped in their discharging their role
4. The effectiveness of the learning methodologies
5. What has gone well /not so well

Training and development needs are identified during the review (captured in the Personal Support Plan at the end of the pro-forma) are shared with Democratic Services to inform future development and improvement plans.

The review is conducted by the following members:

- Chair or Deputy Chair of the Authority
- Chair of Planning, Access and Rights of Way Committee
- Chair of Audit and Scrutiny Committee
- Chair of Governance and Member Development Working Group

The Chair of the Authority has a PDR conducted by either the Chair of Snowdonia or Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authorities To help members prepare for their review, the PDR policy includes guidance and tips on what to expect from the review, and how to prepare to achieve the most from the review.