

25<sup>th</sup> February 2022

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## **WLGA POST-ELECTION ENGAGEMENT AND INDUCTION SUPPORT**

### **Purpose**

- 1 To update and seek members' views on preparations for post-election communication, engagement, induction and support for councillors and new WLGA members.

### **Background**

- 2 The local elections on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022 will inevitably result in changes in local authority and WLGA membership.
- 3 Previous local elections have seen significant change. In 2017, 488 new councillors were elected (39% of all councillors), with 13 new leaders elected and four councils changing control. In 2012, 14 new leaders were elected, with 11 changes in control. Several leaders and 160 councillors stood down in 2017.
- 4 The 2022 local elections will be affected by the electoral reviews which have seen changes to many electoral wards and a reduction in councillors from 1,254 to 1,234. Two leaders, Cllrs Ellen ap Gwynn and Neil Moore OBE, have confirmed they intend to stand down at May's election.
- 5 These local changes are also inevitably reflected within the membership of the WLGA; in 2017, the WLGA welcomed 13 new leaders onto the Executive Board and 40 new Council Members and 14 new leaders and 45 new Council Members (out of 71) in 2012.

### **New and Returning Councillors – Induction Support**

- 6 Local authorities and the WLGA are committed to supporting the development of newly elected and returning councillors following the local elections.
- 7 The WLGA's Improvement Team has been working with Heads of Democratic Services during the past 18 months to develop a national 'Induction Curriculum', which has been informed by the experiences of previous induction programmes including which subjects should be 'mandatory' and prioritised, different approaches to induction, briefing and training delivery and more accessible and flexible scheduling and timetabling of induction arrangements for new members.
- 8 Local authorities are preparing extensive induction plans to be delivered locally, which will be supplemented by WLGA guidance, resources, workbooks and training offers.
- 9 Heads of Democratic Services and the WLGA Improvement team are finalising plans at a network meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, however the WLGA offer includes:

- **Councillor Guide micro-site** – a web-based introductory guide to being a councillor, how councils operate and council's core functions and services.
- **Councillor E-Learning Programme** – a suite of up to 20 e-learning modules are being produced and the content has been developed by lead authorities and tested with groups of councillors and officers. E-learning modules include: An Introduction to Local Government & Corporate Governance, Ethics & Standards, Equality & Diversity, Community Leadership and Casework, Local Government Finance, Effective Scrutiny and How to be an effective Chair.
- **Councillor Workbooks** – a series of self-development workbooks are being updated, including: the effective 'ward' councillor, handling casework, GDPR for councillors, facilitation and conflict resolution; and chairing skills
- **Councillor Guides** – a new Planning Guide for councillors is being produced and the WLGA is working with the LGA, NILGA and COSLA in updating the Councillors guide to handling intimidation, Social Media and Online Abuse Guide and Personal safety for Members Guide.
- **'Template' Induction and Training Sessions** – working with local authorities, 'template' induction and training resources including PowerPoint slides, videos and presentation notes will be available for local adaptation, adoption and delivery. Template sessions will include: Introduction to scrutiny; Effective scrutiny; Scrutiny Chairing; Generic chairing skills; the role of the Governance & Audit Committee; Introduction to Planning; and Planning Committee induction.
- **WLGA Induction and Training** – the WLGA will also commission or deliver on request many of the above induction and training sessions.
- **WLGA Regional/National Induction Event** – the WLGA plans to organise a national/regional induction event for new councillors during the autumn, based on the success of regional induction events organised following the 2012 and 2017 elections. It is proposed that Ministers and national bodies, such as the Future Generations Commissioner and Public Services Ombudsman, are invited to meet with newly elected members. The arrangements for these events are being scoped out and they may be face-to-face, hybrid or virtual, depending on circumstances.
- **New leader Mentoring or Peer Support** – the WLGA will provide confidential guidance and support to newly elected leaders. Leaders' requirements will differ, but support could be delivered through mentoring or support from peers.
- **Cabinet Development Support** – the WLGA will provide support to new cabinets with bespoke development support (which may include wider top-team development with the Senior Management or Leadership Team).
- **Leadership Academy (with Academi Wales)** – the WLGA is working with Academi Wales on commissioning a new programme of the highly-regarded

leadership programme for leaders, senior councillors and aspiring lead councillors. Two programmes of c25 participants are planned for Autumn and Spring 2022-23.

## **New and Returning Councillors – Communication and Engagement**

- 10 As a membership body, it is important that the WLGA proactively communicates and engages with its new members to raise awareness and understanding about the WLGA, its brand, its role and its activities on behalf of local government. The WLGA will need to develop an effective relationship with new members, so they trust and value the WLGA as the representative body of local government.
- 11 Many new members will first encounter and experience the WLGA through induction, training and development materials, resources and support; this activity will help develop awareness, reliance on and trust of the WLGA as an organisation that promotes and supports local democracy and member development.
- 12 The WLGA will also revise its communications strategy to ensure proactive and regular communication with councillors. This will include:
  - **Redesigned website** – the WLGA’s website is currently being redesigned, refocused and streamlined to reflect the WLGA’s new branding, and to ensure the content and functionality meets the needs of its members and organisations it is seeking to influence. User groups are currently feeding into the development and it is intended to be relaunched following May’s elections.
  - **Enhanced social media activity** – including more media rich content, including campaign assets, animation and videos of senior Spokespersons.
  - **Scoping of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System** – the WLGA currently uses a contacts database within Office 365 which includes email contact details of all councillors, officer networks and stakeholders. The LGA and other similar organisations use CRMs to help track and focus engagement with members and stakeholders. The WLGA is exploring the potential of introducing a more sophisticated CRM (possibly with Data Cymru) to help support our communications with members and stakeholders.
  - **Email to all councillors from WLGA Chief Executive (May 2022)** – congratulating and welcoming new and returning councillors and providing a brief introduction to the WLGA, highlighting the initial induction and development support for all councillors, with links to online resources and the WLGA 2017-22 Report.
  - **WLGA 2017-22 Report** – The WLGA is producing an overarching end of term report, which will detail the WLGA’s achievements and added value on behalf of local government during the past term. The report will be presented to WLGA Council in March. The WLGA is also scoping the feasibility of producing 22 bespoke reports, explaining ‘what has the WLGA ever done for council x’ which would include the specific achievements or support, including any additional finance secured, for each council.

- **Email to all councillors from WLGA Leader (June 2022)** – Message to all councillors from new WLGA Leader (or Group Leaders) which would outline priorities and approach of the new Association.
- **Monthly E-bulletin to all councillors** – a new monthly bulletin will be provided to all councillors, based on the success of the COVID E-bulletin. The e-bulletin will include a monthly message from the WLGA Leader, updates from WLGA political meetings, Welsh Government and Senedd activity and wider resources and support for councils.
- **Cabinet Member and Chair Networks** – the WLGA’s cabinet member networks, chaired by WLGA Spokespersons, are key mechanisms for engaging wider members in the work of the WLGA. The WLGA also plans to reinstate the Chairs of Democratic Services Committee Network and establish two new networks for Standards Committee Chairs and Governance and Audit Committee Chairs. Scrutiny chairs will also be supported through bespoke scrutiny seminars and events.
- **WLGA Annual Conference & Thematic seminar/webinars** – the WLGA Annual Conference, proposed to be held on 22 September 2022, will provide a valuable opportunity for new and returning members to network, and to reflect and share learning from the extraordinary experiences of recent years. The newly expanded Communications Team plan to arrange a series of seminars and webinars to offer learning opportunities and to promote local government’s work in key areas.

## **New and Returning WLGA Members**

- 13 Based on the experience of previous elections, the membership of the WLGA Council and Executive Board is likely to change following May’s election. As noted above, the WLGA welcomed 13 new leaders onto the Executive Board and 40 new Council Members in 2017, and 14 new leaders and 45 new Council Members (out of 71) in 2012.
- 14 WLGA officials will therefore seek to ensure new leaders and WLGA members receive early advice and support about their new roles within the WLGA.
- 15 Leaders may wish to reflect on their experiences and any changes the WLGA might introduce around meeting arrangements and guidance and support to senior members during discussions at the informal Leaders’ Away Day on 4<sup>th</sup> March, however, the following approach to engagement and support is proposed:
  - **WLGA Chief Executive meets new leaders on a one-to-one basis (May)**
  - **Introductory Leaders’ meeting (End of May/June)** – this meeting would be informal, to develop relationships, discuss emerging issues and consider any political group arrangements and support and specific support required by some leaders e.g. media training etc.

- **Revision to Spokesperson Role Descriptions** – including expected time commitments and any role specific requirements
- **Email of welcome to all new WLGA Council members from WLGA Chief Executive** (early June) which would include background to the WLGA, the role of Council, links to useful materials such as End of Term report, WLGA constitution, and Spokespersons Role Descriptions etc.
- **Leaders' Meeting (mid-June)** – this meeting would provide an opportunity to discuss any organisational matters in advance of the AGM and to consider any policy matters (given there will not have been any political meetings for nearly 3 months and as the Executive Board would not technically be established until AGM).
- **WLGA Annual General Meeting (24<sup>th</sup> June 2022)**
- **Engagement with/Induction of new Spokespersons/Deputies and setting up bilateral meetings with Ministers (July)** – led by individual WLGA Directors in liaison with Spokespersons.

## Recommendations

### 16 Members are asked to:

- 16.1 **Provide views on the proposed approach to engagement and induction support for new councillors and councils and consider WLGA organisational and member support issues to discuss at the Leaders' Away Day on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022.**

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