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**Dyddiad /Date:**  
**Gofynnwch am/Please ask for:**  
**Llinell uniongyrchol/Direct line:**  
**Ebost/Email:**

23 August 2018  
Sarah Titcombe  
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Bernadette Elias,  
Head of Governance and Partnerships,  
Blaenau Gwent CBC.

Dear Bernadette,

## **Successful Renewal of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development**

The WLGA would like to commend Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council for your excellent submission for the renewal of the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. The information and evidence provided clearly demonstrate that all the required criteria have been met or exceeded, showing that the required arrangements for member support and development are in place.

We were particularly impressed with the following arrangements which we feel demonstrate how members and officers in Blaenau Gwent are working together to deliver a high standard of support for all councillors:

The strategic framework for member support and development appears robust and logical and linked to the corporate planning process. Progress in this area is demonstrated in the 2017 Democratic Arrangements Progress Report, the 2018 Member Development Strategy and the Democratic Arrangements and Scrutiny Action Plan.

The Democratic Arrangements and Scrutiny Action Plan is clearly well thought through and should ensure that these arrangements are future proofed. The Member Development Strategy incorporates the needs of individual members and the organisation and is informed by an evaluation of the training programme by the Democratic Services Committee. It therefore provides a clear framework for delivering relevant member support.

The provision of person specs for all the member roles in addition to role descriptions and beyond the national frameworks mean that members have a clear idea of the expectations for both the role and behaviours placed upon them.

The development of an outside bodies protocol is an excellent way of improving the reporting mechanisms between the bodies and the Council and between members and officers.

Steve Thomas CBE  
Prif Weithredwr  
Chief Executive

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**Croesawn ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg a byddwn yn ymateb i ohebiaeth yn yr un iaith.  
Ni fydd defnyddio'r naill iaith na'r llall yn arwain at oedi.**

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English and will respond to correspondence in the same language.  
Use of either language will not lead to a delay.

The training programme designed for members appears relevant to their needs, activities are timely, and the choice of providers is pragmatic and cost effective. The links between the forward work programmes and the programme of training for members ensures that most value is extracted from training activities. It was interesting to see the link between the strategic approach to member support and development and the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The Code of Conduct Protocol for members included in the constitution which sets out the standards of conduct required for the members beyond the Code of Conduct is a helpful guide to set the tone for members' behaviour in addition to the ethical requirements.

The standing items on Planning and Licensing committees to identify any future needs for training and the matching of briefing sessions to a committee timetable enables attendance and makes sure that the support interventions are delivered at the right time.

The evaluation of scrutiny meetings and the measurement of scrutiny outcomes demonstrates a commitment to ensuring that scrutiny makes an effective contribution to corporate governance and the needs of communities.

The approach to personal development review including the use of a local competency framework is interesting, we would like to hear how this works in practice and how it makes a difference to members' performance. We would also be interested to hear how the member mentoring scheme and the internet pages for members develop.

All of these arrangements provide a very sound basis for member support with evidence of effective approaches and - as would be expected at this time in the democratic cycle - developing practice. We would encourage the authority to apply for the advanced level of the Charter as soon as these approaches have had time to 'bed in'. The breadth and quality of your submission is evidence of a clear corporate and political commitment to member development and support.

A challenge for the authority, as it is for all authorities, is encouraging continuing and active member engagement and participation in the identifying and provision of the training opportunities you make available. Your commitment to ensuring that training is closely aligned to the needs of individual members and the organisation and is delivered as and when required should ensure that members commit to attending.

Once again, we would like to congratulate the authority on your work in this area, particularly the officers and members with a leadership and support role and we are very pleased to confirm that your Charter has been renewed.

Very best regards



Sarah Titcombe  
Policy and Improvement Officer (Democratic Services)

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