

Un Llais Cymru



One Voice Wales

# **THREE YEAR TRAINING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN**

**2012 to 2015**

**FINAL VERSION SEPTEMBER 2011**

## FOREWORD

One Voice Wales is the nationally recognised membership and support body representing the interests of 735 community and town councils and their 8,000 local Councillors in Wales. Community and Town Councils are statutory bodies and are the first tier of local government in Wales. They serve electorates ranging from small communities to towns; all are independently elected and together they can be identified as among the nation's most influential grouping of grassroots opinion-formers.

All Councils work towards improving community well-being and providing better services at a local level. Their activities fall into three main categories: representing the local community; delivering services to meet local needs; striving to improve quality of life and community well-being.

Through an extensive range of discretionary powers, community and town councils provide and maintain a variety of important and visible local services including allotments, bridleways, burial grounds, bus shelters, car parks, commons and open spaces, community transport schemes, community safety and crime reduction measures, events and festivals, footpaths, leisure and sports facilities, litter bins, public toilets, planning, street cleansing and lighting, tourism activities, traffic calming measures, village greens and youth projects. These existing powers were recently strengthened by the extension of the power of well-being to eligible Councils.

In essence, a community or town council has a wide range of discretionary powers that can be used to enhance the quality of life within its community area but for the powers to be understood and effectively exercised it is vital that Clerks and Councillors in Wales have the necessary knowledge base and understanding to be able to manage the complex processes of governance that are required to support the effective use of these powers. With a greater focus by the Welsh Government on the role that local Councils can play in the community integration and cohesion agenda, the need for training of Councillors and Clerks is now more important than ever.

One Voice Wales has been successful in delivering a number of core training modules that are detailed below. These core modules have been supplemented by the availability of training in 'Planning' available through Planning Aid Wales in partnership with One Voice Wales. The feedback from all training events that have been provided at locations in all parts of Wales has been extremely positive and to date over 1000 Councillors have been trained in some of the training modules. Although this is an achievement in itself, it has to be acknowledged that the numbers trained represent only one eighth of the target audience.

The core training modules that are currently available are as follows:

**The Role of the Council** - *Understanding the legal responsibilities of the Council, its role and understanding of partnership working.*

**The Role of the Councillor** – *Exploring the role, expectations and ethical behaviour required of Councillors including the rules for debating and making decisions to represent electors.*

**The Council as an Employer** – *Providing an outline understanding of employer responsibilities, highlighting employment law and best practice.*

**Understanding the Law** – *Providing a general outline of the range of legislative and legal duties affecting local councils.*

**The Council Meeting** – *An exploration of the governance arrangements for meetings.*

**Local Government Finance** – *A general outline of the financial environment in which Councils operate.*

**Community Engagement** – *Using an interactive approach, to explore how to improve engagement with the communities served by Councils.*

The Strategy for the next three year period 2012-15 seeks to build upon the significant achievements made to date and considers the position of:

- a) Where we are now.
- b) Where we want to be.
- c) What actions are needed to get us there?
- d) The Strategy is divided in to the following key components:

**Leadership**

**Policy**

**People**

**Processes**

**Partnerships and Resources**

**Key Performance Results**

## GENERAL BACKGROUND

1. The management of the training function of One Voice Wales is vested in the Development Officer for the South East Wales region. The Development Officer is accountable to the Chief Executive for the effective delivery of training and reports to the National Training and Development Committee on policy and strategic issues relating to the training agenda.
2. Although the delivery of the core training modules has been welcomed by Councils and feedback from participants has generally been very positive there has been a major issue relating to the often poor take-up of some courses that has resulted in a high level of cancellations.
3. The level of cancellations is unsustainable given that there are often costs involved in cancelling venue bookings and the level of individual trainer motivation has been adversely affected.
4. We clearly need to move to a position where the majority of courses are well subscribed so that the investment being made is reflected in high levels of attendance at all events contained in the training calendar.
5. That is the position we currently find ourselves in and we need to move to a position over the period of this Strategy that depicts a different state of affairs.
6. The desired position we need to achieve can be summarised as follows:
  - Delivery of high quality training by proficient trainers which can be demonstrated by high levels of participant satisfaction
  - A high level of participation in training events ensuring a higher level of knowledge and understanding in the sector
  - Widened leadership on the part of all key individuals and groups ensuring that a greater level of encouragement is given to Councillors becoming trained in core subject areas
  - A targeted approach to the selection of training venues ensuring not only their suitability but that the amount of travelling required to attend events is reduced and wherever possible that accommodation owned by local Councils is used to ensure that hiring fees are retained in the sector
  - An increase in the number of trainers facilitating the delivery of training programmes in all sub-regions of Wales
  - Of the total number of trainers, an increase of at least one trainer who can deliver training programmes through the medium of Welsh
  - An increase in the range of training modules available to reflect the ever-changing needs of the sector
  - The availability of a greater range of bespoke training arrangements that can be made available to Councils whose needs may vary from the standard norm

- The possible design of training programmes that can be delivered through other methods such as e-learning or blended learning
  - In the light of the likely requirement for Councils to become accredited with 'quality' status to be able to deliver a wider range of functions, a focus to be given to the accreditation of Councillor training. (The Quality Status scheme applying in England requires a Council to show that it is representative of the whole community; communicates with its residents and is properly managed and responsible. Training is a key element of meeting two out of the three criterion).
7. Under each of the sections of the Strategy that follow, a range of actions will be pursued designed to deliver the desired position outlined in Paragraph 6 above.

## LEADERSHIP

1. The core leaders that have been identified as having a prominent role in the leadership of the Strategy are:

**Chief Executive**

**Training and Communications Committee**

**National Training Advisory Group**

**Development Officers**

**Training Champions (Appointed in each member Council)**

**The Trainers**

**Local Council Clerks**

2. Each of the core leaders will have a specific role designed to support the delivery of the Strategy.

**a) Chief Executive**

His role will be to heighten the importance of training as a means of enhancing the effective delivery of services at the local level. This will be achieved by including appropriate references in member communications and presentations and inclusion of relevant articles in 'The Voice.' He will also arrange for a heightened focus to be given on the OVW website and encourage the use of the member's section of the website including the opportunity available for course participants to share their experience of training. In planning for the Annual Conference, he will endeavour to ensure that the training stand is in a prominent location.

**b) Training and Communications Committee**

In addition to the scrutiny and accountability role of the Committee, members will act as a sounding board for initiatives and developments being proposed and identified members with a background in Human Resources will assist the Development Officer (Training) in support of technical developments.

**c) National Training Advisory Group**

The Group is chaired by the Chief Executive with membership comprising of NALC, SLCC and the Welsh Government Policy team representatives. A small budget is available from the Welsh Government for the purpose of supporting the development of training programmes. Having regard to the importance of joint partnership working, the Group has an important role in co-ordinating the leadership of joint training initiatives.

**d) Development Officers**

It is vital that Development Officers encourage member Councils within their sub-region to support training programmes. This can be achieved through targeted communications with Councils at appropriate intervals as well as highlighting up and coming events at meetings of Area Committees. The Development Officer (Training) can support this leadership function through the provision of scripts and letters for use by his colleagues.

**e) Training Champions**

The importance of having a 'champion' in each Council cannot be under-stated. This is an initiative that has been introduced by the WLGA for principal Councils and it appears to have had some success in increasing the numbers of

Councillors being trained. The Chief Executive and the Development Officer (Training) will write to each member Council Chair (on a Confidential basis) requesting that they appoint a 'Training Champion'. A role descriptor will be prepared to be included in this communication. 'Training Champions' who will need to have e-mailing facilities will receive relevant communications which they will be expected to share with their colleague Councillors. They will also be provided with the password for the member's section of the OVW website.

**f) The Trainers**

Trainers will be expected to articulate the ongoing benefits of training to all course participants and generally to market the opportunities available including bespoke training options. Some of the trainers along with staff from One Voice Wales will be available at every Annual Conference to market the training services and will offer a taster session at an appropriate interval during the day of the Conference. There will also be a 10 minute slot on the Conference Programme for the Development Officer (Training) and selected Trainers to highlight the forthcoming training opportunities. Trainers who are members of the SLCC will market OVW training opportunities at SLCC Branch Conferences.

**g) Local Council Clerks**

Clerks will receive all training publications including course programmes and will be expected to ensure that they are included on the agenda for Council meetings. It is an expectation that Clerks will articulate the benefits of Councillors receiving appropriate training.

## TRAINING POLICY

1. It is important that the needs of Councils are reflected in the development of future training programmes and to this end, a training needs analysis will be conducted in early 2012 in order to collect the relevant information needed to support forward planning. The current model of delivering training has been designed based on the information collected from a previous training needs analysis but it is important that the position is now reviewed as needs can change over time.
2. The seven core modules supplemented by the 'Planning' training available from Planning Aid Wales meet most of the basis needs of Councils but it is opportune to consider possible additions that account for the issues being faced by Councils in the delivery of services. Furthermore, the timing of the elections in May 2012 means that there is an urgent requirement to develop an 'induction' module for Councillors. This could be achieved by combining Core Module 1/2 with an encouragement for new Councillors to take part in the remaining core modules. The location of induction programmes would need to be reviewed in the light of locations of new Councillors.
3. Emerging topics that might require the development of new programmes include health and safety; Equality Act 2010; and the regulatory framework (encompassing data protection, freedom of information and Code of Conduct). Other possibilities include 'The Power of Well-Being' and further developing the community engagement agenda through the use of a training package known as 'GOAT, Getting our Act Together.'
4. During the first quarter of 2012, it would be opportune for OVW to seek the support of the Welsh Government in funding a possible joint partnership with WVCS to deliver training/briefing sessions on 'Being a Councillor 2012' as a means of enhancing the democratic process in the local council sector. Key messages that could be used to encourage participation in such events would be opportunities to develop skills that could be useful in people's lives; career enhancement and the notion of 'transferable skills.'
5. Turning to the policy of venue selection, timing of sessions, modes of delivery and course charging, it is considered that a full review should be undertaken during the early part of the Autumn 2011 period with a view to:

### *Venue Selection*

- a) All accommodation used must be 'trainer friendly,' accessible for those with a disability; and at locations throughout Wales.
- b) They need to be at locations that are within 30-45 minutes travel distance one way for all participants.
- c) Wherever possible they should be at the premises of local Councils ensuring that hiring fees are retained within the sector.

### *Timing of Sessions*

Pending the results of the training needs analysis referenced above, programmes will continue to be provided during evening periods as at present.

### *Modes of Delivery*

During 2012 the prime focus will be on delivering the current core training packages. Bespoke training options will also be considered when requested and alternative modes of delivery will be examined depending on the needs of the Council concerned. There will be an encouragement given for Councils to consider linking with neighbour Councils when 'cluster' training options will be considered. During 2012, a thorough investigation of an e-learning package will be considered with the results reported to the Training and Communications Committee for consideration.

### *Charging Policy*

The charge for member and non-member Councils will be increased from January 2012 as follows:

Members - £30 for one core module session

Non-Members - £40 for one core module session.

Member Councils with an annual turnover of less than £40k will continue to be eligible for the 50% training bursary (subject to conditions) although its continuation for the future will depend on the support of the Welsh Government. In order to encourage increased participation, consideration will be given to introducing a discount scheme for Councils who subscribe to a significant number of advance training bookings. A voucher will also be provided to each Council which they can use to claim their training bursary discount.

## PEOPLE

1. The current training team as at 31 August, 2011, comprises of the following individuals:  
  
Ken Burton  
Liz Court  
Tina Earley  
Paul Egan  
Hazel Evans (Bi-Lingual)  
Jim Griffiths  
Kathryn Owen (Bi-Lingual)  
Gwilym Rippon (Recent Recruit requiring train the trainer training)
2. It is considered that an additional two trainers are required to deliver the Strategy with one of them being based in North East Wales, who is preferably bi-lingual. Accounting for the recent recruitment of Gwilym Rippon, it is important that a 'Train the Trainer' event is arranged as soon as all three new recruits are in place. It will be necessary to seek funding from the Welsh Government for this training provision.
3. It is acknowledged by the trainers that there is a need for a training contract to be signed by all trainers which essentially describes their expectations of OVW and their responsibilities as a trainer. In summary, these are considered to be as follows:

### **Expectations of OVW**

- *Provision of suitable accommodation for training*
- *Good quality IT equipment for training use*
- *Need for continued trainer development and support (possibly by way of twice annual Train the Trainer events and peer group support)*
- *Provision of a hard copy of the training materials as well as memory stick of stored materials.*

### **Responsibilities to OVW**

*Commitment, professionalism and reliability*

- *Flexibility*
- *Providing good interaction skills*
- *Marketing OVW and not themselves*
- *To return all equipment if resigning as a trainer*

4. In support of the trainer, the Development Officer (Training) will take the lead on developing new programmes and ensuring that all material is kept up to date.

## PROCESSES

1. The identification of training needs and the ongoing marketing of course availability is essential to the success of the Strategy. Likewise, developments in the accreditation of training undertaken is equally important given the likely future introduction of a 'quality status' scheme for Councils wishing to expand its services through the use of the power of well-being.

### 2. **Marketing**

The annual timetable for training courses will be published in November each year supported by a well designed brochure which will provide a professional image of OVW. The training timetable will be sent to Chairs and Clerks and will be e-mailed to Training Champions. The timetable and brochure will also be sent to non-member Councils. Vacant places on courses will be e-mailed to Clerks and Training Champions on a monthly basis throughout each year.

There will be a regular section on training in 'The Voice,' and selected feedback from Councillors attending courses will be included in the articles.

Marketing and the development of new programmes and modes of delivery of existing modules will be informed by a Training needs survey to be undertaken in November 2011 possibly using the Survey Monkey software (dependent on costs). Information gleaned from the survey as well as individual Council take-up of courses will be recorded in a database which subject to funding will be written using Access software.

An investigation of the possible use of Facebook and Twitter to market courses will be undertaken in January 2012.

### 3. **Accreditation of Training**

During 2012, investigations will be undertaken to assess the feasibility and costs of developing accredited status for training programmes attended by Councillors. Accreditation will serve to enhance the status of training and support the introduction of the likely 'quality status' Council scheme.

In the interim, a certificate of attendance will be issued to all Councillors who have attended any of the courses provided by OVW. Investigations will be undertaken to identify suitable sponsors who might fund the cost involved in return for advertising rights.

It is understood that Community Development Cymru might be prepared to develop an accreditation scheme for community development training modules and this possibility will be investigated in 2012.

## **PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES**

1. The key external partners in relation to the training agenda are SLCC, WLGA, Welsh Government and providers of specialist training on behalf of OVW.

### **SLCC**

There is currently a protocol in place that reflects that SLCC will provide training and development opportunities for Clerks and OVW will focus on provision for Councillors. It is considered that this separation of responsibilities needs to be honoured. There is however a commitment to organise a joint day symposium for Clerks and Councillors during 2012.

### **WLGA**

The WLGA provide training and development for Councillors in principal councils but some of their agendas overlap with those of OVW. Following recent discussions with WLGA, it is considered that the focus of the partnership should be related to the provision of development materials by OVW on the role and functions of town and community councils which can be built into WLGA programmes and the sharing of materials that can be used in the training programmes of both organisations.

### **Welsh Government**

The Welsh Government is fully committed to the work of OVW in providing training and development opportunities for Councillors. A small budget has been allocated which can be accessed by OVW to fund development in this field. The possible funding of a train the trainer event in early 2012 should be explored as well as possible funding for research into e-learning options and an accreditation scheme. The continued availability of the bursary scheme benefitting smaller Councils should be pursued and in order to encourage high take-up of training, the Welsh Government should be encouraged to include a training requirement in the wording of the declaration of acceptance of office for Councillors.

### **Providers of Training**

A partnership has already been developed with Planning Aid Wales and based on this experience, investigations will be undertaken into the availability of other specialist training suppliers to meet additional needs identified in the training needs survey that will be undertaken.

## **2. Resources**

It is considered that in order to fully achieve the strategy objectives, Councillors should attend a minimum of two courses per annum (until all modules have been completed). This will require Councils to budget £60 per Councillor pa for training (£30 for those Councils who benefit from the bursary).

For Councils wishing to procure bespoke training, the charge for a training session for the Council be set at £350 plus trainer's expenses to be reviewed annually.

## KEY PERFORMANCE RESULTS

1. The results of the strategy need to be based on a measure of inputs, outputs and outcomes. Initially, the key performance results will focus on inputs and outputs given that there will need to be research undertaken to determine how outcome measures may be monitored and assessed.
2. The key performance results to be used will be as follows:

***To have achieved a 75% training satisfaction rate***

***To have reduced the number of cancelled training courses by 50% in year 1, by 70% in year 2 and by 90% in year 3 (excluding courses cancelled due to adverse weather conditions)***

***To have demonstrated that 100% of the bursary funds have been utilised in each year of the Strategy.***

***To have recruited a minimum of 100 Training Champions by 31 March, 2012***

3. In order to collect the data needed to measure these objectives, the following actions will be needed:
  - Evaluation forms will need to be amended to capture the information needed for monitoring
  - Councils eligible for the bursary will need to be identified so that they can be appropriately targeted with a view to ensuring maximum take-up.

## CONCLUSION

1. The action plan contained in the Appendix to this Strategy has been designed to support the delivery of the Strategy and help OVW move to its desired position at the end of the three year period.
2. At the end of each of the years covered, an Annual Report of achievements and areas for improvement will be prepared for submission to the Training and Development Committee.
3. Based on discussions in the Committee, the action plan will be amended as appropriate in order to learn from experience and address identified areas for improvement or new issues that may arise during the period.

## ACTION PLAN

### Leadership

Ref No	Action	Responsibility	Target Date
L1	To heighten the importance of training by including appropriate references in member communications, presentations and articles in 'The Voice'	Chief Executive	Ongoing
L2	Heightened focus for training on the website and encouragement of the use of the member's section for sharing experiences of training	Chief Executive	Ongoing
L3	To ensure that the training stand is prominent at Annual Conference	Chief Executive	Annually
L4	Members of the Training and Communications Committee to act as a sounding board for initiatives and developments being proposed	Training and Communications Committee	Ongoing
L5	Members of the Training and Communications Committee with a background in HR to assist the Development Officer (Training) in support of technical developments	Designated Members of the Committee	Ongoing
L6	Targeting communications with Councils at appropriate intervals as well as highlighting up and coming events at Area Committee meetings	Development Officers	Ongoing
L7	To provide scripts and letters for use by Development Officers in relation to Action L7	Development Officer (Training)	Ongoing
L8	To write to each member Council inviting Councils to nominate a Training Champion (Role descriptor to be provided)	Chief Executive/ Development (Training)	By end September 2011
L9	Training Champions to be provided with the password for the member's section of the website	Office Manager	By end December 2011
L10	To articulate the ongoing benefits of training to all course participants and generally to market the opportunities available for bespoke training options	Trainers	Ongoing
L11	To market training services at Annual Conference and offer a taster session during the interval break.	Selected Trainers	Annually
L12	To deliver a 10 minute slot at Annual Conference on delivery of the Training Strategy	Development Officer (Training)	Annually
L13	To market OVW training opportunities at SLCC Branch Conferences	Appropriate Trainers	Ongoing
L14	To place an expectation on Clerks that they articulate the benefits of Councillors receiving appropriate training	Chairs of Member Councils	Ongoing

## Training Policy

Ref No	Action	Responsibility	Target Date
T1	To undertake a training needs survey to collect relevant information needed to support forward planning (Subject to costs the use of Survey Monkey be applied)	Development Officer (Training)	By 31 March 2012
T2	To design an induction module for new Councillors delivered at venues throughout Wales	Development Officer (Training)	By 31 January 2012
T3	To develop a proposal for the delivery of new modules (as referenced in Para 3 of the Training Policy section of the Strategy)	Development Officer (Training)	By 30 April 2012
T4	To seek the support of the Welsh Government in funding a possible partnership with WCVA to deliver training/briefing sessions on 'Being a Councillor 2012'	Chief Executive/ Development Officer (Training)	31 December 2011
T5	To prepare a schedule of suitable accommodation for training events that satisfies the requirements defined in Para 5 of the Training Policy section of this strategy	Development Officer (Training)/Office Manager	By 31 October 2011
T6	To encourage Councils to consider linking with neighbour Councils for the provision of cluster unit delivery	Development Officers	Ongoing
T7	To investigate and report on the options available for the provision of an e-learning package for member Councils	Development Officer (Training)	30 June 2012
T8	Charges for training courses to be increased with effect from 1 January 2012 (as detailed in Para 5 of the Training Policy section of the Strategy)	Office Manager	From 1 January 2012
T9	A proposal be developed for the introduction of a training course discount based on levels of nominations by individual Councils	Development Officer (Training)	By 30 November 2011
T10	Reclaimable vouchers for use of the training bursary be issued to eligible member Councils	Office Manager	From 1 January 2012

## People

Ref No	Action	Responsibility	Target Date
P1	To recruit an additional two trainers with one of them residing in NE Wales who is bi-lingual (This is in addition to the recent recruitment of Gwilym Rippon)	Development Officer (Training)	By 30 November 2011
P2	Subject to the success of a funding bid to the Welsh Government, a train the trainer event be arranged for the three new recruits as well as existing trainers who may require additional support.	Chief Executive/Dev elopment Officer (Training)	By 31 December 2011
P3	To prepare a training contract for all trainers to sign	Development Officer (Training)	By 30 November 2011
P4	To ensure that the core training modules are regularly reviewed and maintained up to date	Development Officer (Training)	Ongoing

## Processes

Ref No	Action	Responsibility	Target Date
PR1	The annual timetable of training courses with a training brochure to be circulated in November each year	Development Officer (Training)/Office Manager	By 30 November each year
PR2	The training timetable to be circulated to Chairs/Clerks/Training Champions and to non-member Councils by this deadline	Office Manager	By 30 November each year
PR3	Vacant places to be e-mailed to Clerks on a monthly basis throughout the year	Office Manager	Monthly
PR4	A regular section on training including feedback from participants be included in 'The Voice'	Development Officer (Training)	Ongoing
PR5	Subject to funding a database be written in ACCESS for recording training information	Chief Executive	No target date
PR6	An investigation into the possible use of Face book and Twitter to market courses be undertaken	Development Officer (Training)	31 January 2012
PR7	An investigation be undertaken into the possible accreditation of training programmes with a report to the Training and Communications Committee on the findings	Development Officer (Training)	30 June 2012
PR8	A certificate of attendance be devised with possible funding by a sponsor in return for advertising rights.	Development Officer (Training)	31 December 2011
PR9	The possibility of Community Development Cymru developing an accreditation scheme for community development training be investigated with a report back to the Training and Communications Committee.	Development Officer (Training)	30 September 2012

## Partnership and Resources

Ref No	Action	Responsibility	Target Date
PAR 1	To organise a joint symposium with SLCC during 2012	Development Officer (Training)	By 31 December 2012
PAR 2	To provide development materials to WLGA on the role and functions of Town and Community Councils.	Development Officer (Training)	30 November 2011
PAR 3	To explore with the Welsh Government the possibility of funding being made available for a Train the Trainer event and for research into the possible use of e-learning and the introduction of a training accreditation scheme	Chief Executive/ Development Officer (Training)	31 December 2011
PAR 4	To encourage the Welsh Government to continue the bursary scheme over the period of the Strategy and beyond.	Chief Executive	Ongoing

## Key Performance Results

Ref No	Action	Responsibility	Target Date
KPR 1	The key performance results highlighted in Para 2 of the KPR section of this strategy be used as the basis upon which the success of the strategy will be assessed	Development Officer (Training)	Ongoing
KPR 2	Research be undertaken to assess how outcomes of the investment in training may be measured	Development Officer (Training)	By 31 March 2012
KPR 3	Evaluation forms to be amended so that they capture the data needed to measure the KPRs	Development Officer (Training)	31 December 2011
KPR 4	Councils eligible for the bursary to be identified so that they can be appropriately targeted with a view to ensuring maximum take-up	Development Officer (Training)	31 December 2011