



WLGA • CLILC



A Development Framework for Councillors in Wales

Contact

Welsh Local Government Association

The WLGA's primary purposes are to promote a better local government, its reputation and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public service and democracy.

It represents the 22 local authorities in Wales with the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities as associate members.

Welsh Local Government Association

Local Government House
Drake Walk
Cardiff
CF10 4LG

Tel: 029 2046 8600

Fax: 029 2046 8601

www.wlga.gov.uk

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WLGA Continuing Professional Development for Councillors

A Development Framework for Councillors in Wales

This framework outlines the skills and knowledge widely accepted to be required by local authority councillors in Wales. It is intended to provide guidance for councillors about their roles, and help them identify their priorities for continuing personal and professional development. It is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive, but to help new and existing councillors identify the aspects of their role where support or training might be helpful. The Framework can also be used as a prompt for councillors undertaking personal development reviews and by officers and members devising development programmes. It can also be locally adapted to reflect the priorities of different councils.

The Framework has been designed as part of the Wales approach to continuing professional development for councillors which has been created by councils working with the WLGA. It therefore fits with the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. The Charter provides councils with a structure for local self-assessment and action in member development, this framework provides a suggested content for that development. The framework also fits with the WLGA model role descriptions and person specifications for members.

Using the Framework

The Framework includes a range of generic competencies required by all councillors and separate sections for specific roles on the Council. Part One (sections one to five) will be useful for all councillors. Part Two (the remaining sections) should be used selectively depending on additional specialist roles.

Part One – Relevant to All Councillors

1. Fundamentals: A range of generic skills required by all members

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Understanding of the role of the Councillor	The extent and limits of a councillor's individual responsibilities and the powers and responsibilities required to undertake corporate governance. Also corporate responsibilities such as corporate parenting and safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.	Undertakes their role effectively in the council, the community and with partner agencies. Understands when it is and is not appropriate to act for the electoral division or in the interests of the area as a whole. Acts proactively to deliver outcomes Ensures that both the authority's corporate responsibilities and the member's personal role are undertaken in for example protecting children and vulnerable adults and supporting looked after children.
Understanding the role of the Local Authority	Understanding of the services delivered, both statutory and discretionary and the policies, procedures, plans and strategies which underpin them.	Is able to describe the work of the Council to the public and where these responsibilities lie with other agencies such as community and town councils, voluntary sector or the Welsh Government. Contributes to the development of council plans and strategies and takes decisions in the light of these.
Conduct	Understanding of the ethical framework governing the work of councillors, specifically the Code of Conduct. Understanding of the role of the Monitoring Officer. Appreciation of the importance of accountability, integrity and transparency for good governance.	Abides by the Code of Conduct at all times. Always declares and defines interests when appropriate. Seeks advice from the monitoring officer when appropriate. Treats others with respect in all settings. Demonstrates integrity. Values others. Listens. Stays calm in difficult situations.
Equalities and respect	Personal skills in demonstrating respect for others regardless of sex, race, religion, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or sexual orientation. Understanding Equalities and Diversity law relating to the work of the Council and the role of the Councillor. Understanding of the need for and what constitutes respectful behaviour towards others.	Demonstrates equalities values in personal behaviour and council decisions. Applies appropriate equalities legislation and demonstrates equalities values in personal behaviour and council decisions. Treats everyone with respect at all times when acting as a councillor whether in the Council, community, or political group.
Balancing Council and community expectations and responsibilities	Understanding of the distinct responsibilities of a councillor as a member of a corporate body and as a representative of an electoral division or community.	Takes decisions relating to the corporate body or Electoral Division ethically. Manages both community and council expectations through effective communication.

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Audit, Inspection and Regulation	An understanding of the role of the Audit Inspection and Regulatory bodies and associated council processes.	Engages effectively with the audit, inspection and regulatory process within the council, using this information to constructively challenge and support the affected services.
Balancing personal commitments	An understanding of time management principals including prioritisation and delegation.	Maintains an effective work/life balance, managing the time available to concentrate on the issues with the most significant outcomes.
Information Management	Understanding and interpreting information and data. Ability to handle data in the format provided by the council. Understanding of the definition of confidentiality and how to handle confidential information - Understanding of the legal requirements of Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.	Receives information and data from a variety of sources and is able to store share and use it effectively and where possible electronically. Does not keep records about people without seeking their agreement. Responds promptly and appropriately to FOI requests. Does not distribute or share confidential or restricted information.
Using ICT and social media	Skills in all 'Office' applications such as word processing, presentation and spreadsheets. And communication and social media applications including email, tweeting, blogging and personal website management.	Conducts council business electronically. Communicates with the community electronically and through social media where appropriate. Maintains an effective, positive and ethical online presence.
Meeting preparation and participation	Understanding of the Standing Orders, any protocols and rules of debate. Skills in public speaking, debating and asking questions.	Prepares effectively for meetings by reading papers and analysing data. Undertakes personal research and participates in any pre meetings. Contributes to positive meeting outcomes by seeking tangible decisions or actions. Effectively contributes to meetings making points clearly and succinctly. Remains focussed on the business in hand. Understands and applies meeting 'rules'. Seeks guidance from officers and group leaders before meetings as appropriate.
Working with the media	Skills in building relationships with the media and being interviewed on TV, radio and for the press and online media.	Is a recognised source of credible information for the Media. Speaks confidently, authoritatively and appropriately in interviews. Enhances the reputation of the council when appearing on screen or in print.
Self-promotion	The ability to develop a profile in the community through local activities and effective communication and consultation.	Writes an annual report on achievements and activities. Is highly visible in the community. Maintains a high standard in both personal reputation and that of the Council.

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Working with officers	<p>Understanding the role of officers generally and the 'rules' they need to abide by including a deeper understanding of the role of senior officers such as the Chief Executive, Senior Management team, Monitoring Officer and Heads of Finance, Legal and Democratic Services. Skills in acting as a corporate employer.</p> <p>Understanding of the appointments process and interviewing skills.</p>	<p>Maintains professional relationships with officers, recognising appropriate boundaries and abiding by the Member Officer Protocol.</p> <p>Acts as an effective member of an appointment panel, applying sound HR and equality and diversity principles to secure the best candidate.</p>
Health and safety	<p>Understanding of Health and Safety legislation in the work of the Council.</p> <p>Understand how to assess risks and ensure personal safety and that of others.</p>	<p>Promotes and ensures the health and safety of everyone in the council. Ensures personal safety when working in the Council and when in groups or alone in the community.</p>
Continuing professional and personal development	<p>Ability to identify personal development needs and to participate in development activities.</p>	<p>Undertakes regular personal development reviews taking account of role descriptions and competency frameworks. Takes responsibility for developing personal skills and knowledge, attends learning and development activities seeking tangible outcomes.</p>
Financial capability	<p>Understanding of the way councils and services are funded.</p> <p>Understanding and skills in budget setting.</p> <p>Personal financial capability.</p> <p>Understanding the impact of Welfare Reform and the austerity agenda.</p>	<p>Engages effectively in the budget setting process.</p> <p>Is prepared to take hard, Evidence-based decisions.</p> <p>Demonstrates skills in numeracy when interpreting data and asking questions.</p>
Interpersonal skills	<p>Self-awareness, and skills in self-management, "good manners" Emotional Intelligence, listening, negotiation, conflict management and mediation skills.</p>	<p>Acts in a professional and respectful manner to all people and in all places. Is self-aware and able to develop and manage relationships both within and outside the Council.</p> <p>Brokers relationships and manages conflict in the community and Council and between the two.</p>
Sustainable Development	<p>Understanding of issues that impact on future generations such as health and wellbeing, financial security and the environment.</p>	<p>Takes decisions based upon the needs of future generations as well as the current population.</p>
Safeguarding	<p>Understanding of the legal requirements, and the responsibilities, placed on authorities and individual councillors to protect children and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse</p>	<p>Is vigilant and acts to make sure that children and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse, taking appropriate decisions and reporting instances appropriately</p>

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Corporate Parenting	Understanding of the role of the Councillor as a Corporate Parent	Takes appropriate responsibility for the welfare of looked after children, actively seeking appropriate information on their situation and progress.

2. Local Leadership. A range of skills required by all councillors in their role as community leaders

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Working with the community	Knowledge of community groups and leaders. Understanding of community issues and concerns. Ability to seek the views of all relevant parties.	Understands the needs of the local community and secures action from the council on behalf of local people. Communicates with the community, individuals and the council to ensure engagement and understanding of all parties.
Consultation and engagement	Understands the different levels of engagement ranging from communication to co-production set out in the national principles of engagement for Wales. http://www.participationcymru.org.uk/national-principles	Demonstrates positive outcomes as a result of effective engagement. Uses a range of communication and consultation tools such as Social Media to understand the needs and views of the community.
Voluntary sector	Understands the role and responsibilities of the voluntary sector in the area.	Builds effective relationships with the voluntary sector and communicates and works with them when appropriate.
Local issues	Understands the issues of importance to people locally and throughout the council area. Knows which council plans will impact on local issues.	Works with the community and the council to find solutions to local problems. Secures funding for local initiatives.
Working with community and town councils	Understanding of the responsibilities of community councils and their forward work programmes.	Works with community councils to deliver outcomes for the community. Fosters positive relations and active communication with the Community Council and the Clerk.

3. Casework on behalf of the public

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Being accessible to the public	Understanding of and ability to arrange and publicise opportunities to discuss casework with the public.	Makes themselves available through the most appropriate means to connect with the greatest number of people. Uses surgeries, street surgeries, informal settings, home and social media as appropriate. Promises only that which can be delivered.
Managing casework	Ability to use case management techniques and software and to monitor and communicate progress.	Keeps the people on whose behalf they are working informed of progress. Monitors progress of cases after they have been referred to officers or other agencies. Uses the established referral schemes within the council.

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Signposting	Knowledge of sources of information and advice within and outside the council.	Makes links between members of the public and the appropriate source of help in the council or in the community.

4. Partnership and representation

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Work on outside bodies	Understanding of the role of the outside body. Understanding of the role of the councillor on the outside body whether as a Council representative, locality representative, or as an individual.	Reports to and from the Council and outside body as appropriate. Represents the views of the Council, personal views, or that of the community effectively and appropriately according to the setting. Members should engage in relevant briefing and training provided by outside bodies.
Working as a Trustee on other organisations	Understanding of the role of the organisation and your duties and responsibilities as a trustee. Understanding of the potential implications of conflict of interest arising in the dual role of trustee and councillor.	Operates within the standards set in the Code of Conduct. Seeks advice from the Monitoring Officer as appropriate.
Working as a school governor	Understanding of education policy and school organisation.	Oversees the school performance. Challenges the school management as a critical friend. Takes part in governor training.
Working as a member of a Community or Town Council	Understanding of the role of the Community Council and its limits.	Liaises effectively between the Community Council and Unitary Council, acting as a link and Council representative when appropriate. Takes part in community council training.
Working as a Co-optee	Understanding of the role and limits of the role of co-optees on committees.	Shares expertise with the committee impartially.

5. Working in the Political environment

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Party Policy	Awareness of values and manifestos both nationally and locally.	Effectively balances the requirements of people, party, group and council.
Liaison with National Government, Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales.	Understanding of the functions of the Welsh Government and means of engagement.	Liaises with local MPs and AMs. Brings local issues to the attention of the WG when appropriate.
Group membership	Rules and constituency group structure and policies.	

Part Two - relevant to councillors undertaking these specialist roles

6. Scrutiny

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Understand the role and potential of scrutiny for driving improvement	<p>Understanding of the <i>Characteristics of Effective Scrutiny</i> i.e</p> <p>Better outcomes – ensuring democratic accountability succeeds in driving improvement in public services.</p> <p>Better decisions - ensuring democratic decision making is accountable, inclusive and robust.</p> <p>Better engagement- ensuring the public is meaningfully engaged in democratic debate about the current and future delivery of public services.</p> <p>For further information about these characteristics which were identified by the Centre for Public Scrutiny working with the Welsh Scrutiny Officers Network see http://www.cfps.org.uk/characteristics</p>	<p>Contributes to the scrutiny work programme.</p> <p>Acts in a non-political and non-parochial manner when reviewing policy or monitoring performance.</p> <p>Prioritises the areas of work where scrutiny can make a difference.</p> <p>Promotes the work of scrutiny within the council.</p>
Policy development	<p>Understanding of the area of service or council function for which the committee is responsible.</p>	<p>Makes informed and evidence based recommendations for policy development.</p>
Holding the Executive to account	<p>Ability to review and constructively challenge the work and decisions of the Executive.</p> <p>Understanding of the use of the power to call in Cabinet decisions.</p>	<p>Effectively monitors and challenges the work of the Executive in the best interests of the community.</p>
Performance monitoring	<p>Ability to understand complex data, financial information, risk, reports from audit, inspection and regulatory bodies, and other information required for performance measurement.</p>	<p>Identifies and challenges poor performance based on evidence.</p>
Meeting skills	<p>Ability to prepare thoroughly for meetings. Ability to understand and contribute to the questioning strategy.</p> <p>Ability to listen and question effectively throughout the meeting.</p>	<p>Listens actively and effectively.</p> <p>Makes appropriate use of pre-meetings to plan a questioning strategy.</p> <p>Focuses on meeting outcomes, using meeting processes as a means to an end.</p>
Engaging with the public in scrutiny	<p>Ability to engage with appropriate individuals and organisations to contribute to the work of scrutiny, especially those traditionally excluded.</p>	<p>Raises public awareness of the work of scrutiny and work programmes.</p> <p>Encourages the public to become involved in the policy and decision making process through scrutiny.</p>

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Joint scrutiny	<p>Understanding of the role, remit, terms of reference and powers of any joint scrutiny committee and the role of the individual member on that committee.</p> <p>To understand the role, responsibilities and priorities of regional bodies, partnerships and organisations outside the council that the committee may need to scrutinise.</p>	<p>Demonstrates a commitment to working jointly with scrutiny members from other authorities, partnerships and organisations.</p>

7. Chairing

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Meeting management	<p>Understanding of meeting protocols and the rules of debate.</p> <p>Ability to manage the agenda, contributions and time.</p> <p>Ability to engage with the public and press and viewers in the case of webcast meetings.</p>	<p>Chairs clearly and authoritatively, enforcing the rules and encouraging fair participation.</p> <p>Manages the agenda by introducing items, summarising debate, focussing on outcomes and limiting contributions which do not contribute to the outcomes.</p> <p>Ensures that the public feel welcome, understand the meeting purpose and how they can contribute.</p>
Committee leadership	<p>An in depth understanding of the role of the committee and its scope. Ability to liaise with relevant officers, members and agencies.</p> <p>Commitment to enabling all committee members to develop skills and participate effectively in meetings.</p>	<p>Works with the committee outside of meetings to develop its effectiveness and that of participating individuals.</p> <p>Communicates with members and officers with an interest in committee proceedings.</p> <p>Builds relationships with the relevant Heads of service/ directors to ensure that the work of the committee is relevant, well informed and provides the outcomes needed.</p>
Work programme development and management	<p>Understanding of the subjects within the scope of the committee and how these interact with council policies generally and the roles of other committees.</p> <p>Ability to develop a balanced work programme for the committee and clear terms of reference and outcomes for any sub groups.</p>	<p>Works with officers and committee members to develop the work plan taking account of the work of other committees.</p> <p>Ensures that the work programme takes account of national, regional and local plans, policies and the expressed needs of the community for services.</p> <p>Makes sure that the committee also takes account of inspections or reports from audit, inspection and regulation bodies.</p>
Resourcing	<p>Ensuring that the committee has the staffing, information and finances to function effectively.</p>	<p>Negotiates and ensures the support required by the committee.</p>

8. Serving on statutory/regulatory committees

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Planning	<p>Understanding of planning and rights of way law generally.</p> <p>Understanding of how to apply the Code of Conduct to planning issues.</p> <p>Understanding of how the need to declare interests applies to planning matters.</p> <p>Understanding of the Local Development Plan.</p> <p>Understanding of the 'rules' for Development Management.</p> <p>Understanding of Sustainable Development principals and legislation including environmental, welfare and design considerations.</p>	<p>Demonstrates objectivity by taking independent decisions based on evidence and the legal responsibility placed on members acting in a semi-judicial role.</p> <p>Transparently adheres to the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Seeks appropriate professional officer advice, personal development or briefing before taking decisions.</p>
Audit	<p>Ability to scrutinise financial performance. An understanding of Risk Management and internal and external audit arrangements.</p> <p>An understanding of the relative roles of audit and scrutiny.</p>	
Licencing	<p>An understanding of Licencing regulations and Licencing policy.</p> <p>Understanding of local policies which impact in this area such as the Community Plan and wider considerations for sustainability.</p>	
Democratic services	<p>An understanding of the legislative requirements for a Democratic Services committee.</p> <p>Understanding of the national and local requirements for member support and development.</p> <p>Ability to liaise effectively with the Head of Democratic Services and Lead Member for member support and development.</p> <p>Understanding of the need to promote diversity in the Council.</p>	
Standards	<p>Understanding of the law and constitution in relation to conduct.</p> <p>Ability to advise and secure training for members of both principal and community councils in relation to the Code of Conduct.</p>	

9. Cabinet members

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Portfolio lead	<p>A thorough knowledge of local and national policy relating to the relevant service areas.</p> <p>An ability to build relationships with relevant lead officers and scrutiny chairs.</p> <p>Ability to work collaboratively to develop a vision for the service area.</p>	<p>Provides political direction to officers in the portfolio area.</p> <p>Is accountable for communication, policy and performance in the portfolio area.</p> <p>Actively seeks and values the input of scrutiny to policy development and performance monitoring.</p> <p>Works with officers to consider issues, priorities and take decisions.</p>
Collective responsibility	<p>Ability to handle information and take decisions after full consultation and consideration of the issues.</p> <p>Ability to prioritise issues of most importance to the Authority.</p> <p>Ability to work with other authorities and agencies to secure services for the Council.</p>	<p>Takes responsibility as a cabinet member for strategic council decisions.</p>
Taking decisions under delegated responsibilities	<p>Understanding of the scheme of delegation.</p> <p>Ability to take responsibility for decisions taken under the scheme.</p>	<p>Takes decisions after appropriate research and consultation.</p>

10. Council Leadership

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Management of the reputation of the Council	<p>Ability to act as an ambassador for the authority.</p>	<p>Effectively represents the Council at all levels ensuring that information about the Council and its services and citizens is communicated positively and with integrity.</p>
Leadership of area/region/place	<p>Ability to develop a vision for the area/region/locality.</p>	<p>Works with the Council and the public to collaboratively develop and communicate a local vision that is clear, supported by the public and understood by the Council.</p>
Develop, communicate and lead a vision for the Council	<p>Ability to develop a vision for the work of the Council.</p>	<p>Works with the Council to collaboratively deliver the local vision.</p>
Maintain a successful relationship with the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team	<p>Ability to communicate effectively with the Chief Executive and senior officers.</p> <p>Understanding of the performance appraisal process and personal skills in conducting reviews setting objectives and giving feedback.</p>	<p>Meets and communicates openly and regularly.</p> <p>Makes expectations clear and provides political leadership.</p> <p>Undertake performance reviews with senior officers as appropriate.</p>
Leadership of the Council	<p>Ability to ensure individual and collective effective governance.</p>	<p>Promotes and supports good governance in the Council.</p> <p>Manages performance.</p>

11. Civic Leadership

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Chairing Full Council	Advanced chairing skills. In depth understanding of standing orders and rules of engagement.	Effectively chairs meetings of the Full Council demonstrating meeting management and leadership skills.
Representing the Council at civic functions	Ability to manage the Council's reputation. Skills in public speaking. Skills in relationship management.	Demonstrates high level communication, interpersonal and social skills.