

3 March 2017

Continuous Professional Development for Committees

Dear Committee Chairs

One of the items on the agenda at the 7 December Chairs' Forum was the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) support in place to support Committees and Chairs, which includes the strategic planning sessions which all Committees held during the Autumn, questioning techniques and coaching for Chairs.

At the meeting Chairs were keen for more support in asking questions and gathering evidence to be made available to Members, to ensure that time spent questioning witnesses in committee was as effective as possible. Such support has been taken up by some Committees. Alternatively, Members may wish to attend a series of questioning Masterclasses, the first of which will take place on **9 March, 12.30 – 13.30**. The Masterclasses will be followed by one-to-one surgeries for personalised advice.

Chairs discussed the experience of the Public Accounts Committee, which had received feedback on scrutiny sessions that had been held since receiving support on questioning. Chairs requested that more information be shared in writing.

PAC experience

In early September 2016, PAC held a strategy session with Kate Faragher of Bespoke Skills. The session had been designed by the integrated Committee team, the CPD team and our external facilitator with the needs and preferences of the Committee in mind. The Committee discussed:

- ways of working;
- purpose;



- potential legacy;
- communication; and
- questioning techniques.

The Committee agreed to hold a follow up session to monitor the implementation of the agreed actions from the session. That review took place in November 2016 using footage of the Committee in session to provide specific feedback on questioning techniques. Additional questioning techniques were introduced at this time.

Feedback suggested that Members found the session challenging but very useful. Further follow up sessions were requested, to be delivered on a regular basis to help the Committee integrate the best practice they had identified into their work, and to continue to strive for excellence in their scrutiny role. Several other Committees have also taken the opportunity to build and reflect on their discussions during their strategic planning sessions, integrating this into their ways of working in the future.

Bespoke support

We have access to a range of experts that can deliver a wide variety of support in accordance with the requirements of the Chair and Committee:

- Committee Strategic Approach: identifying purpose and methodologies;
- Evidence Gathering: identifying the information gap and finding and weighing the key facts or opinions;
- Questioning: getting the best out of witnesses, asking the right questions and getting the answers you need;
- Legislative Scrutiny: from the general to the specific, principles to procedure, bespoke support dependent on the Bill and Committee experience and preferences.

The support being delivered is designed to meet the needs and preferences of each Committee. For example, as part of this programme, the Finance Committee received briefing on the Landfill Tax (Wales) Bill from Daniel Greenberg, a lawyer specialising in legislation with extensive drafting experience.



The Petitions Committee held a session on media strategy and some Committee Chairs have received coaching on personal impact, media presence and speech delivery.

Officials work closely with suppliers to ensure that they understand the Welsh political context, the Committee's experience and ways of working before developing options for the Chair and wider committee to consider. The training is delivered in a way and time that best suits the Committee.

If you would like further information on the support that could be delivered to your Committee, please contact your Clerk or myself on 0300 200 6332.

Yours sincerely

Abigail Phillips

Professional Development Project Manager

Cc: Jayne Bryant AM, Russell George AM, John Griffiths AM, Mike Hedges AM, Huw Irranca-Davies AM, Bethan Jenkins AM, Dai Lloyd AM, Lynne Neagle AM, Nick Ramsay AM, Mark Reckless AM, David Rees AM, Simon Thomas AM

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

