Item: 4

Policy and Resources Committee: 18 April 2023.

Elected Members – Political Skills Framework.

Report by Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the Political Skills Framework, a self-assessment process for supporting the identification of learning and development needs for Elected Members.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That the Continuous Professional Development Framework for Elected Members, including a 360-degree feedback process, adopted by the Council in April 2015, is no longer available.

2.2.

That the Political Skills Framework, developed by the Improvement Service, provides a structured self-assessment process to assist individual members in identifying their learning and development needs forming their Personal Development Plan.

2.3.

That the People Plan – Empowering Our People 2022 - 2026, adopted by the Council in July 2022, acknowledges the role of Political Leaders and the importance of collaborative leadership with officers and ensures their access to development through professional organisations.

2.4.

That it is not mandatory for Elected Members to sign up to the Political Skills Framework and participation will be on a voluntary basis.

It is recommended:

2.5.

That the Political Skills Framework, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved as a self-assessment process for Elected Members who may wish to use it.

3. Background

3.1.

In 2015, the Council adopted the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Framework for Elected Members, launched by the Improvement Service in 2010. That framework, which included a 360-degree feedback process, is no longer available.

3.2.

The Improvement Service has developed a revised self-assessment process for Elected Members around six key roles undertaken by them. Under each role are key responsibilities and indicators of effective practice which a participant would self-assess against. An individual Member would normally choose a maximum of two roles at any one time for assessment purposes. Further information is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.3.

The recommendation from the Improvement Service is that the self-assessment works best if Elected Members have some experience in their role which assists them to identify their development needs.

3.4.

The People Plan – Empowering Our People 2022 - 2026, adopted by the Council in July 2022, acknowledges the role of Political Leaders and the importance of collaborative leadership with officers and ensures their access to development through professional organisations.

4. Political Skills Framework

4.1.

The self-assessment is based on six key roles which is further broken down into key responsibilities that Elected Members may wish to undertake when carrying out that role. The framework is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

4.2.

Each responsibility has several indicators of effective practice to help identify areas where their practice needs further development. It is recommended that for assessment purposes a limited number of roles should be chosen, (ideally only two). These roles are detailed in Appendix 2 of this report.

- Community Leadership.
- Strategy and Policy Development.
- Decision-making.
- Scrutiny.
- Partnership Working.

- Regulatory.

4.3.

In addition to the above there is further guidance on Interpersonal Skills with indicators provided, attached as Appendix 3 to this report. Interpersonal Skills included are:

- Political Nous.
- Digital literacy.
- Effective communication.
- Integrity.
- Self-awareness.
- Resilience.

4.4.

An assessment template will be made available in both electronic and hard copy format to support Elected Members who wish to use this process to support the completion of their personal development plans. Following the completion of the assessment, individual discussions with a member of the Council's Organisational Development team will be arranged and learning and development activities will be identified and progressed as appropriate.

5. Human Resource Implications

5.1.

Input from officers within the Council's Organisational Development team will be necessary in relation to one to one assessment interviews with participating Elected Members, the development of Personal Development Plans and the identification of learning and development opportunities to meet their needs.

5.2.

Officers in the Democratic Services team will co-ordinate and set up these assessment interviews for Elected Members.

5.3.

If approved, the timescale planned for launching the process is May and June 2023, which provides new Elected Members with a full year of experience from their election in May 2022 to help identify their development needs.

6. Equalities Impact

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 4 to this report.

7. Island Communities Impact

The strategy being developed in terms of this report is unlikely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities) in Orkney. Therefore, no Island Communities Impact Assessment is required.

8. Corporate Governance

This report relates to the Council complying with governance and procedural issues and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

9. Financial Implications

Costs for the Learning and Development activities, which meet the needs identified from the self-assessment process, will be met from within existing Democratic Services budgets.

10. Legal Aspects

There are no significant legal implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

11. Contact Officers

Karen Greaves, Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions, extension 2202, Email karen.greaves@orkney.gov.uk

Andrew Groundwater, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, extension 2253, Email andrew.groundwater@orkney.gov.uk

Alison Skea, Service Manager (Organisational Development), extension 2257, Email alison.skea@orkney.gov.uk

12. Appendices

Appendix 1: Political Skills Framework.

Appendix 2: Roles and Responsibilities.

Appendix 3: Interpersonal Skills

Appendix 4: Equality Impact Assessment.

Elected Members' Political Skills Framework

1. The Political Skills Assessment

The Political Skills assessment has been developed to support Elected Members to consider how they take up and carry out different roles and responsibilities. It has been designed to form part of a structured process for councils to help them put in place appropriate Elected Member development arrangements.

It is a self-assessment and not a test with an objective score. The sole purpose of the assessment is to help members reflect on changes they want to make, to better carry out their roles and responsibilities.

The assessment uses Six Key Roles for Elected Members, and from which a limited number should be chosen (ideally only two). Roles chosen will be dependent on what the individual elected member considers is most important and prominent at the time of assessment.

- Community Leadership.
- Strategy and Policy Development.
- Decision-making.
- Scrutiny.
- Partnership Working.
- Regulatory.

The six key roles are broken down into **responsibilities** and then further into **indicators of effective practice** which will aid learning and reflection.

Six Key Interpersonal Skills have also been identified with effective behaviours/ indicators detailed against each skill. This provides further guidance which can be used in this reflective process and will support elected members identify areas where further learning and development support are required.

The following documents outline the roles, responsibilities and indicators of effective practice which form the basis of the assessment, as well as the list of key interpersonal skills. They are also attached in hard copy (Appendices 2 and 3).

Roles, responsibilities and indicators of effective practice

Key interpersonal skills

2. The Process

We propose that the Assessment will be launched in April / May 2023 which allows new Elected Members to be familiar with their roles.

Elected Members who wish to complete the assessment should contact Democratic Services who will provide them with a link to the electronic assessment form or a hard copy form which needs to be completed and submitted prior to a face to face interview arranged by Democratic Services with officers within the Council's Organisational Development (OD) team.

The face to face interview will involve discussion around the assessment form, possible areas of development and how best these learning needs can be met.

3. Learning and Development Activities

A learning and development programme for individuals will be arranged and were appropriate some learning events may be open to other Elected Members.

Examples of learning activities might include mentoring by an appropriate experienced Elected Member, support from an officer with expertise on a specific subject e.g., Finance, Planning, Audit etc. Briefings or workshops by external providers, or guidance documents available online or hard copy.

The Improvement Service offer briefings and webinars on topical issues and can arrange bespoke support and training on request.

Elected Members in a senior role can access Coaching offered through the Improvement Service.

Please note that Elected Members can access these opportunities whether or not they are signed up to the Political Skills Framework.

4. Review

The Elected Member will agree a review period with officers within the OD team which allows the learning and development activity to take place and the impact assessed by the participant.

Review periods agreed are likely to be approximately 12 months depending on the circumstances. At these reviews Elected Members can choose to identify an additional key role as appropriate and go through the process again.

Political Skills Assessment

Roles, Responsibilities and Indicators of Effective Practice

The Political Skills Assessment consists of six key roles for elected members, some of which will be more prominent and important for you. You should choose which of the roles to complete an assessment of so you can focus on becoming more effective at the roles that matter most to you.

Each role has been broken down into key responsibilities that elected members may wish to undertake when carrying out that role.

To aid your understanding of what effective practice would look like if you are carrying out a responsibility effectively, we have identified 'indicators' to help you.

Please note, the responsibilities and indicators of effective practice are not exhaustive, and you do not have to do all these things in order to be effective at that role. They are there to help you reflect on whether there are actions you can take to become more effective at the role and whether you want to undertake any development to enhance your effectiveness in a particular role.

ROLE - COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP	
Responsibilities	**Indicators of Effective Practice**
Undertake casework and represents constituents' needs effectively	• Engages with constituents and undertake case work on behalf of individuals • Ensures operational issues are being dealt with appropriately by officers, while taking care not to overpromise on what the council can do • Considers the underlying cause of a casework issue and whether actions can be taken to prevent it from happening in future • Represents the community within the Council and to other agencies • Campaigns on local issues • Wins resources for the ward • Represents all sections of the community, irrespective of how they vote • Is highly visible in the ward
Have detailed working knowledge of the geography, character of ward and of key public services and contacts in ward	• Knows and analyses social, geographic, economic and population information for the ward, to enable a good understanding of the ward area and its challenges • Knows where to get information about services and who to contact within key services • Has established relationships with important groups, community leaders, public service contacts and businesses within the ward
Reconcile differing needs between people and groups within local communities	• Mediates fairly and constructively between people and groups with conflicting needs • Works effectively with all sections of the community – e.g. young, elderly, people with disabilities, minority ethnic communities, parents, local business owners etc. • Engages with local community activists, such as action groups, community group leaders etc.
Encourage and enable local people to play an active role in their communities	• Leads the community in developing a vision for the area. • Keeps local people informed about important local issues or council policies and seeks their views (e.g. on spending priorities) • Helps local people develop a range of solutions to problems • Represents the community's views to the council and Community Planning Partners • Encourages local people to play an active role in the community by contributing to community councils, community groups, voluntary organisations etc. • Ensures the council has effective community engagement and participation processes (that meet the National Standards for Community Engagement) that empowers local people to get involved in shaping decisions that affect them.
Work effectively with other members in the multi-member ward to offer improved representation to the community	• Works collaboratively with other members in the multi-member ward to share caseload, knowledge and information to support citizens • Puts the interests of the ward before political competition, including members of your own political group

ROLE - STRATEGY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT	
Responsibilities	**Indicators of Effective Practice**
Take part in the policy development process in the council	• Understands what the policy development process is in the council • Is able to sufficiently influence policy development, within any limitations of the political environment • Knows when and how to intervene in the council to influence the development of policy
Identify where policy change is required and is necessary to positively influence outcomes	• Understands what outcomes are and why policy should be aligned to outcomes • Understands the limitations of policy levers on achieving outcomes • Understands the interdependencies of policies and the potential for unintended consequences, and ensures consideration of unintended consequences have been considered during the policy development process • Considers whether the necessary conditions exist for policies to be successful • Ensures policy is focused on making positive contributions to priorities identified in key strategic plans
Take part in the development of key strategic plans	• Takes part in the planning process for the development of key strategic plans for the council (i.e. Council Plan, Community Plan etc.) • Understands the importance of prioritisation when developing strategic plans, to ensure officers have a clear understanding of what they need to focus on. • Ensures the voices of communities and those affected by the plans (for example other public services such as the Police or NHS) are included and fed into the development of plans • Ensures strategic plans are informed by evidence of what the key issues are for the local area
Provide officers with a clear sense of strategic direction	• Has a clear understanding of the councils priorities • Ensures officers are working to those priorities with clear forward planning • Understands their manifesto and how it links to and informs key strategies the council is working towards

ROLE – DECISION-MAKING	
Responsibilities	**Indicators of Effective Practice**
Take part in the formal decision-making processes in the council	- Knows the decision-making structures in place in the council - Attends and contributes at full council - Sits on one or more decision-making committees/bodies and contributes to their collective decisions - Knows when and where to intervene to influence a decision - Works effectively with key players within the decision-making process - Understands decisions are taken
Use evidence to support effective decision-making	- Ensures officers have a strong evidence base for recommendations for a decision - Assesses what is known and what additional information is required to make a decision - Identifies where and how to access information that is required for a decision - Avoids being rushed into making a hasty decision - Considers all relevant factors, different options and viewpoints prior to making a decision - Identifies the best option based on the evidence that is provided and the knowledge of the situation
Make decisions for the benefit of the whole council area	- Isn't afraid to make tough or unpopular choices where necessary - Skilfully navigates the tensions between doing what is best for the ward and what is best for the wider council area - Knows when to make decisions that will benefit citizens and local communities but which may not be popular with employees (e.g. re-configuring services) - Prioritises the delivery of some services over others and accepts that this may lead to criticism - Understands when decisions taken in the council will impact on other public services (such as the Police, NHS) and takes into account the impact this will have
Ensure robust decision-making processes are in place to conduct council business	- Encourages open discussion amongst those involved in the decision-making process - Ensures that relevant individuals and groups are involved in the decision-making process, both from within and outwith the council - Seeks further information and challenges the views of others in a supportive manner
Accept responsibility and explain rationale for decisions	- Stands by a decision and is accountable for its implementation - Justifies why one course of action was taken over others - Ensures a decision is transparent and the public can scrutinise the evidence base and rationale for decisions

ROLE - SCRUTINY	
Responsibilities	**Indicators of Effective Practice**
Read papers and prepare for formal and informal meetings	• Summarises and identifies the key issues in council papers, committee papers, board papers etc. easily and accurately • Identifies key issues from reading statistical information in performance reports • Understands financial information and in particular, the reasons behind any budget variances • Prepares questions ahead on formal and informal meetings • Knows when to seek clarification from an officer prior to a formal meeting, to ensure the meeting focuses on important matters of detail.
Critically evaluate arguments rather than taking them at face value	• Looks at the strengths and weaknesses of arguments that are presented by others and to challenge them where appropriate • Delves beneath the surface of an issue or an argument • Understands own bias when scrutinising arguments and seeks to be as objective as possible
Ensure decisions of the council have been implemented and are contributing positively to outcomes	• Checks that business case plans being delivered as scheduled and are aligned to key strategic plans • Checks infrastructure projects being delivered as scheduled and are aligned to key strategic plans • Checks change projects being delivered as scheduled and are aligned to key strategic plans • Ensures implementation of decisions is in line with agreed policy • Evaluates whether decisions have had their intended impact or whether unintended consequences have occurred which were not anticipated
Ask constructive questions about council and public service partners' policies and service delivery	• Understands the impact that different questioning techniques can have on the responding person • Asks effective questions that aid learning and understanding about the topic at hand • Uses the appropriate tone that doesn't evoke a defensive reaction • Knows when to ask a question in an informal setting as opposed to a formal meeting
Encourage and support honest self-assessment and learning that drives improvement in the council	• Ensures that a comprehensive approach to performance management and self-evaluation is being implemented consistently across the council • Monitors improvement plans arising from self-evaluation exercises to track progress • Supports services to be honest and critical about their performance during a self-assessment exercise, and refrains from 'holding services to account' for issues outwith their control

ROLE – PARTNERSHIP WORKING	
Responsibilities	**Indicators of Effective Practice**
Build effective working relationships with a wide range of stakeholders	• Is clear about the purpose of working relationships with different stakeholders and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of these relationships • Resolves any issues which may impact on the effectiveness of working relationships • Openly shares information and knowledge with stakeholders
Work with others to help achieve local outcomes	• Shares ideas and information with officers, outside bodies, community councils, constituents and help guide their thinking
Identify and nurture partnerships that help deliver better outcomes	• Secures access to key people in other agencies (e.g. public organisations, third sector organisations, local businesses) that deliver services in the community • Considers arrangements with key partners for joint working and or coordinated service delivery in support of the delivery of local outcomes
Ensure partners have a shared sense of vision and priorities for local communities	• Ensures partners have, through the Community Planning process, a common understanding of the outcomes they are aiming to achieve • Scrutinises partners' decision-making and contribution to shared priorities • Ensures partners are actively working towards those shared priorities i.e. walking the walk and not just talking the talk
Show sensitivity to the values held by partners and the context in which they are working	• Recognises how the different environments in which partners work and the different challenges they face, impact upon joint working and coordinated service delivery
Keep informed of partner organisations' work and likely consequences to the communities you represent	• Has working relationships with key leads for partner organisations • Knows how to obtain updates from partner organisations regarding their work • Considers the likely impact of partner organisations work on outcomes identified in community/council plans

ROLE - REGULATOR	
Responsibilities	**Indicators of Effective Practice**
Abide by Councillors Code of Conduct with regard to regulatory matters	• Understands what is and isn't appropriate behaviour in relation to the boundaries outlined in the code of conduct • Understands the areas of ambiguity in the code of conduct and doesn't seek to exploit them for short-term gain at the expense of longer term benefits such as being seen to demonstrate integrity, respect and trust
Ensure the audit function is effective	• Understands how the audit function works and where it fits within the governance arrangements of the council • Understands the local code of governance • Understands the national standards for audit the council has to meet • Understands the financial statements and asks for regular assurance and evidence that financial regulations are being adhered to • Asks for regular assurance and evidence that budget targets are being delivered • Examines reports by external auditors and ensures improvement actions are being addressed.
Ensures the Planning function is effective	• Contributes to the Local Development Plan (LDP) • Understands the Local Development Plan (LDP) and ensures it is being adhered to • Understands national planning policy and the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) • Ensures the views of local communities inform the Local Development Plan (LDP) • Ensures the Local Development Plan (LDP) aligns with the strategic aims of key council/community plans • Understands the Development Management and Enforcement functions of the Planning Authority • Aware of what good performance is for the Planning Authority and how elected members role in decision-making impacts that • Understands the statutory role of the Chief Planning Officer and has an effective working relationship with that officer
Ensure the licensing function is effective	• Understands the licensing regulations and whether they are being adhered to • Understand the legislative context for licensing in Scotland • Has completed mandatory training on licensing • Understands the importance of adhering to the Councillors Code of Conduct when taking part in the licensing function

POLITICAL SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Interpersonal Skills

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	INDICATORS
Political Nous	Demonstrates an awareness of how political dynamics work in the council
	Scans the environment and identifies threats and opportunities
	Has a good understanding of how the council works
	Has a good knowledge of UK and Scottish Government policies and their impact on local communities
	Works effectively across political affiliations
	Skilled in picking up on the agendas and issues that other people face
	Is able to persuade and influence others to adapt their position by explaining the benefits of a different position or idea
	Knows when to stick to a position and when to seek an alternative way forward
	Is effective at identifying and building relationships and alliances with key players
Digital literacy	Is effective at using digital mediums to communicate and engage with people
	Skilled in using Information and Communication Technologies to find and access reliable sources information
	Uses technology to play a full and active part in virtual meetings, either formal or informal
Effective communication	Is aware and skilled with questioning techniques, tailoring questions to get the desired outcome
	Is an effective listener, picking up not just what is being said, but on the emotion and energy behind what is being said
	Determines what messages need to be communicated, the nature of the audience and how to communicate with that audience for optimal effect
	Skilled in getting points across clearly and concisely, both verbally and in writing
	Is adept at public speaking and holds the attention of the audience
	Skilled in handling and building positive working relationships with the media, dealing with media enquiries effectively and convincingly

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	INDICATORS
Integrity	Demonstrates honesty and openness in dealing with people fairly and impartially
	Shows consistency between words and actions, following through on commitments
	Takes appropriate action if others lack integrity in their approach
Self-awareness	Demonstrates good self-awareness and understands the impact of behaviour on others
	Understands own values and beliefs, recognising how this impacts their judgements and decision-making
	Is aware of their emotions, and uses this awareness to act in professional manner in challenging situations
	Encourages and makes time for own self-development activity and that of others
Resilience	Copes with pressure effectively
	Understands when personal resilience is low and takes necessary steps to resolve, including drawing on support where necessary

ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a function, policy or plan by anticipating the consequences, and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

1. Identification of Function, Policy or Plan

Name of function / policy / plan to be assessed.	Elected Members Political Skills Framework.
Service / service area responsible.	Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions.
Name of person carrying out the assessment and contact details.	Alison M Skea ext. 2257 alison.skea@orkney.gov.uk.
Date of assessment.	18/01/2023.
Is the function / policy / plan new or existing? (Please indicate also if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	New.

2. Initial Screening

What are the intended outcomes of the function / policy / plan?	A process has been updated and simplified by the Improvement Service.
Is the function / policy / plan strategically important?	No.
State who is, or may be affected by this function / policy / plan, and how.	Elected Members can choose to undertake this self-assessment to help identify learning needs and to build their Personal Development Plans.
How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this function / policy / plan?	Yes, they were given a presentation by the Improvement Service detailing the process on the 15th November 2022.

Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking (see equalities resources on OIC information portal).	No.
Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See The Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance for Public Bodies for further information.	(Please complete this section for proposals relating to strategic decisions).
Could the function / policy have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?	The process will be carried out and any Learning and Development provided will meet and be in line with Equality legislation.
1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.	No differential impact identified. Translation services are available for anyone who has English as a second language as required.
2. Sex: a man or a woman.	No differential impact identified stage.
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	No differential impact identified at this stage.
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.	No differential impact identified at this stage.
5. Pregnancy and maternity.	As an Elected Member can work through this at own pace there is flexibility within the programme to suit this situation
6. Age: people of different ages.	No differential impact identified at this stage.
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	No differential impact identified at this stage.
8. Caring responsibilities.	Events can be arranged at times to accommodate

	caring responsibilities.
9. Care experienced.	No differential impact identified.
10. Marriage and Civil Partnerships.	No differential impact identified at this stage.
11. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	(Includes physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, mental health). Attendees at learning events will be asked to let us know if they need any adjustments to accommodate their specific needs.
12. Socio-economic disadvantage.	No differential impact identified at this stage.

3. Impact Assessment	
Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	No.
How could you minimise or remove any potential negative impacts?	Face to face events will be held in premises which are accessible to any participant with a physical disability.
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	Attendees at learning events will be asked to let us know if they need any adjustments to accommodate their specific needs.

4. Conclusions and Planned Action	
Is further work required?	Yes.
What action is to be taken?	Officers will ensure that the specific needs of attendees are identified and are met.
Who will undertake it?	Officers from OD and Democratic Services.
When will it be done?	Prior to training events.
How will it be monitored? (e.g. through service plans).	Through feedback from those taking part in the process.

Signature: █████████   Date: 20 January 2023
Name: ALISON M SKEA   (BLOCK CAPITALS).

Please sign and date this form, keep one copy and send a copy to HR and Performance. A Word version should also be emailed to HR and OD at hrsupport@orkney.gov.uk.