



Audit and Standards Advisory Committee

20 March 2019

Report from the Director, Performance Policy & Partnerships

Annual Review of the Member Development Programme and Members' Expenses

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	Six: Appendix 1 - List of sessions 2018/2019 Appendix 2 - Attendance at internal training events Appendix 3 - Attendance at external training events Appendix 4 - Member Needs Analysis report Appendix 5 - LB Brent Charter Plus report Appendix 6 - Member Expenses, 2017-2018
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Thomas Cattermole, Head of Executive and Member Services 020 8937 5446 Email: thomas.cattermore@brent.gov.uk Michelle Sylva, Member Support Officer, 020 8937 5447 Email: Michelle.Sylva@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee with a summary of the Member Development Programme since last reported to Committee, and to provide information regarding the Members' Expenses Scheme.
- 1.2 This report provides information about the member learning and development sessions delivered since May 2018, and provides, for information, an overview of upcoming member learning and development sessions.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the work being undertaken by the Member Learning and Development Steering Group in ensuring effective training and development for Brent's elected representatives that responds both to the Council's corporate priorities and councillors' individual training needs.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Member Development Programme was last reviewed by Members of the Standards Committee on 29 June 2017 and by the Audit Advisory Committee on 20 September 2017. That review covered the period May 2016 to July 2017.
- 3.2 In addition to the annual review by members of the Standards and Audit Advisory Committee, the member learning and development programme is monitored quarterly by the cross party Member Learning and Development Steering Group.
- 3.3 The Member Learning and Development Steering Group provides invaluable Member and Chief Officer input into the future programme. The scope of that Group is to consider the type of training provided and review attendance at each session. The Group also consider any requests and suggestions for training from Members, in particular requests for external training with a cost implication.
- 3.4 The Member Learning and Development Steering Group has consistently provided constructive input and evaluation ensuring a strong political lead on member development from all political groups which is essential to ensure member ownership of the programme.
- 3.5 In February 2018, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) reviewed the planned Elected Member Induction Programme to be delivered after the May/June 2018 local elections.
- 3.6 The Council has organised and delivered thirty learning and development sessions since the May/June 2018 local elections (**see Appendix 1**). Ten of the thirty sessions provided were mandatory. Members who were unable to attend the original mandatory training sessions were required to attend the repeat sessions.
- 3.7 Member attendance at internal learning and development sessions has varied for each session during the current municipal year. Reminders are issued via text message and email. Since the introduction of the electronic calendar invitations text messaging service, attendance has improved significantly.
- 3.8 Member learning and development sessions are advertised widely to all members in various ways;
- The weekly Members' Information Bulletin;
 - The Members' Portal;
 - The weekly update of the Council calendar ;
 - Electronic calendar invitations to all Councillors.
- 3.9 Attendance at training sessions has been encouraging. Sessions have been well attended, in particular by newly elected Councillors. Of the 30 sessions

delivered since May 2018, not including the mandatory sessions, 13 sessions have been attended by 20 members or more.

- 3.10 Importantly, since May 2018, attendance is now published on the Council's website.
- 3.11 The most attended sessions were the 'Elected Member Induction Evening' and the 'Code of conduct and related standards issues'. Encouragingly, the 'Emergency Preparedness: The role of Councillors during civil emergencies', which was not mandatory, was attended by 29 members. This was jointly delivered by the Council's Chief Executive and the Emergency Planning College from the Cabinet office. **Attendance data at each session is attached for information as Appendix 2.**
- 3.12 Understandably, sessions with the lowest attendance tend to be those aimed at specific committee membership.
- 3.13 There does not appear to be any other particular trends relating to subject matter or the timing of the courses which would assist in identifying why some members choose not to attend training sessions.
- 3.14 Since May 2018, Members have attended a number of external events delivered by organisations including the Local Government Association (LGA), London Councils, and the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU).
- 3.15 Programme content has included the London Council's New Councillors' Reception, CfPS Annual Conference, BAME Councillors Development Weekender, Inaugural CIPFA and CFPS Councillors' Conference, CIPFA's Introduction to the Knowledge and Skills of the Audit Committee, and the LGA Leadership Academy.
- 3.16 The Member Learning and Development working group considers all attendance at external sessions. **Attendance data is attached as Appendix 3.**
- 3.17 A mentoring scheme is on offer for Councillors in key positions. Through the LGA, the Council sources mentors with the relevant skills and experience to deliver 1:1 mentoring support to a number of members. Six elected Members have now taken advantage of this opportunity including newly appointed Cabinet Members, Chairs of Committees and the Mayoralty.
- 3.18 Feedback has been crucial to shaping and developing the member development programme. The Council carried out a survey in November 2018 of the Member Learning and Development programme delivered since May 2018.
- 3.19 The purpose of this survey was to get Members' views about the quality of the current training and development programme offer and to identify future needs. A third of Members provided feedback. The questionnaire was confidential. The results have provided an invaluable steer for the future member learning and development programme, with a focus of soft skills, such as public speaking and chairing meetings, IT skills, social media and community leadership skills.

- 3.20 The council has also developed an electronic feedback form to collate Member feedback immediately after each session.
- 3.21 A new Members' portal was launched in May 2018 at the Member induction evening. The portal, designed to be a *One-stop shop* for Members has improved Member access to the information and resources considered to be of most use and relevance. The Portal is a secure website and is in addition to the current online support offered to Members.
- 3.22 A new 'Members' Handbook' was also launched in May 2018. Members can currently access the Handbook from the Council's intranet site or via the new Members' Portal. Member Services is currently developing an updated IOS/digital format for launch in May 2019.

Member Needs Analysis Programme – Personal Development Plan

- 3.23 As in 2014, Brent Council provided all Councillors with the opportunity to undertake a review or refresh of the Member Needs Analysis Development Plan. The approach is based on a structured one to one discussion and the completion of a Member Needs Analysis Development Plan, the purpose being to support each Councillor to identify what information and development they required to effectively continue to fulfil their role as a Brent Councillor.
- 3.24 Members took part in the Personal Development Needs Analysis programme in June/July 2018. The councillors that were interviewed identified areas that needed to be concentrated on through our Member Learning and Development programme which we can base our strategy on.
- 3.25 Individual reports were provided to each Councillor after the individual sessions and a detailed overall report was provided to the Council at the end of the sessions. This reports has helped shape the revised Member Learning and Development Strategy and informs the Member Learning and Development Programme. **The report is attached as Appendix 4.**

Member Development Charter Award – Gold Standard

- 3.26 As Members of the Committee are aware, Brent was first awarded the Charter Plus award for Member Learning and Development in September 2015 – the first London Council –to receive that recognition.
- 3.27 As planned, the Council was re-assessed for Charter Plus in December 2018. The assessors confirmed that Brent Council has achieved and continues to meet the Charter Plus standard of the London Charter for Elected Member Development. The council was awarded Charter Plus status – Gold Standard for three years from 10 December 2018.
- 3.28 The assessment was based on an analysis of a portfolio of evidence submitted in advance by the Council, plus a number of interviews with councillors, officers and partner organisations. The evidence presented in the portfolio was drawn from a wide range of sources and gave an overview of the council's member development activities. The self-assessment was linked to the three Charter criteria, highlighting specific examples of where different elements of the Charter Plus standard are met by the Council. **The report is attached as**

Appendix 5. The assessment team confirmed that the Council continues to have a strong strategic commitment to member development that the Council has responded to the recommendations following the September 2015 assessment and has also moved forward with a comprehensive member development programme.

3.29 The assessment team were 'more than satisfied' that the comprehensive portfolio both met and in many areas, exceeded the Charter Plus criteria. The council will be required to present evidence of continuing progress as part of the direction of travel in eighteen months' time and will be re-assessed in full against the Charter Plus standard in three years.

3.30 The assessment team identified the following key strengths:

- The assessment team was pleased to see that there continued to be very strong political and organisational support for member development;
- Partnership working has moved from the rhetorical to the actual;
- The Member Development Steering Group continues to have a high profile and reflects the current two political groups, group leaders and both experienced and newly elected councillors;
- The 'Be A Councillor' programme was highly successful and involved over 100 attendees and supported the promotion of local democracy as well as encouraging individuals to put themselves forward as prospective councillors;
- The Council has a comprehensive member development programme that consists of high quality external facilitators and a particular focus on community leadership and neighbourhood engagement;
- The Council has positively embraced and taken forward the recommendations highlighted in the Members Needs Analysis Report 2017;
- Members have embraced the opportunity provided through the mentoring programme and many external Member mentors are in place to support Lead Members and Committee Chairs.
- Member development is supported by a sustainable budget and the Member Development Steering Group ensure accountability of the use of the budget;
- There is a strong commitment to a structured approach to cabinet succession planning supported by an effective leadership development strategy;
- The Member Development Strategy and Vision Statement and the development programme compliment and support the key strategic priorities of the organisation and ensure councillors have the skills and knowledge to deliver the priorities

3.31 **The assessors' suggested improvement areas:**

- The Member Development Steering Group to focus on "maintaining momentum" and increasing councillor engagement in member development;
- The Member Development Steering Group to have a more proactive focus on evaluation of member development and identifying the

- impact of member development both internally and externally;
- The council should continue to support the strategic approach to leadership development both for Cabinet members and for all councillors as community leaders;
- The Council should further develop the e-learning resources and begin to introduce and look to develop webinars to respond to the different learning styles of councillors;
- The council should consider more effectively differentiating between training and development sessions and more concise member briefings;
- There should be the opportunity to focus development in how to work effectively with and influence external organisations. E.g. Transport for London, Thames Water and Government Departments.

3.32 In response to the assessment, an action plan to address the suggested areas for improvement will be drafted. The action plan will be monitored by the Member Development Steering Group. An interim assessment visit will take place in 18 months.

4.0 Members' expenses

4.1 The Council's Members' Allowance scheme, as detailed in Part 8 of the council's constitution, makes provision for the payment of certain expenses, in accordance with stipulated conditions.

4.2 The Executive Support Team is responsible for administering the Members' Allowance Scheme and therefore oversees the receipt, processing and payment of all appropriate expense claims submitted by members.

4.3 All claims submitted since May 2006 are detailed on the Council's website. All original documentation concerning expense claims is available for inspection upon request.

4.4 Member Expenses for 2017-2018 **are attached at Appendix 6**. In total, £531.53 was claimed. Figures for 2018/19 are expected to be higher given the take up of external training offers by Councillors since the local elections in May / June 2018.

5.0 Financial Implications - Expenses

5.1 The costs of the member learning and development programme are met from a budget of £17,352. The majority of training sessions are delivered by council officers thus keeping costs down. There was an underspend of approximately £3196.00 in 2017/2018 which was used to fund the member needs analysis in 2018.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 None for the Member Development Programme.

6.2 The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 requires the council to keep a record of the payments made by it in accordance with its Members' Allowance Scheme. The record has to be made available

for public inspection and copies can be supplied too on request and on payment of a reasonable fee.

- 6.3 After the end of each year, the total amount paid in that year to each member has to be published in the council's area.

7.0 Equality Implications

- 7.1 This report contains no specific diversity implications.

8.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 8.1 This report has been shared with the Member Learning and Development Steering Group Members.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

- 9.1 N/A

Report sign off:

Peter Gadsdon
Director, Performance Policy & Partnerships