



Audit and Standards Advisory Committee

20 January 2020

Report from the Director of Legal, HR, Audit and Investigations

QUARTERLY UPDATE ON STANDARDS (INC. GIFTS & HOSPITALITY)

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Not applicable
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	Two: 1) Appendix A – Gifts & Hospitality register 2) Appendix B - Member mandatory training, non-attendance record.
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee on gifts and hospitality registered by Members, the attendance record for Members in relation to mandatory training sessions and two recent cases reported in the media involving general councillor conduct.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That the Committee note the contents of the report.

2.2 That the Committee considers what further steps could be undertaken to improve the attendance record for Members in relation to mandatory training sessions.

3.0 Detail

Gifts and Hospitality

- 3.1 Members are required to register gifts and hospitality received in an official capacity worth an estimated value of at least £50. This includes a series of gifts and hospitality from the same person that add up to an estimated value of at least £50 in a municipal year.
- 3.2 Gifts and hospitality received by Members are published on the Council's website and open to inspection at Brent Civic Centre. A list of gifts and hospitality registered by Members from 26 June to 20 December 2019 is attached at Appendix A.
- 3.3 Hospitality accepted by the Mayor in her/his civic role is recorded separately and published on the Council's website.

Member Training Attendance

- 3.4 On the 10 July 2019 the Committee received a report updating it on the attendance records for Member's in relation to mandatory training sessions.
- 3.5 The Committee is reminded:
 - a) it is a requirement of the Members' Code of Conduct that all members' *"must attend mandatory training sessions on this Code or Members' standards in general, and in accordance with the Planning Code of Practice and Licensing Code of Practice"*.
 - b) the schedule for all mandatory sessions is published and approved in the Council calendar at the May Annual General meeting. All internal training sessions attended by Members are published on the Council's Website and on individual Member profile pages.
 - c) training sessions reminders are sent via email, calendar invitations, text messages and, on some occasions, direct telephone calls to Members. Re-run(s) of sessions have been scheduled from September 2018 for Members who could not attend the originally listed training session and sessions are scheduled to take account of personal circumstances like work commitments, child care arrangements etc.
 - d) there are four mandatory training sessions provided for all Members and five mandatory sessions provided for Committee Members and, where appropriate, co-opted members. These are both identified in Table 1 below.
 - e) mandatory sessions are provided annually and all committee members and substitutes are required to attend the relevant session. In addition, all other Members are invited to attend the sessions.

Table 1

Mandatory Training	Attendee requirement
1) Standards and the Code of Practice	All Members
2) Corporate Parenting & Safeguarding Children	All Members
3) Safeguarding vulnerable adults	All Members
4) Equalities Training	All Members
5) Planning	Committee Members only
6) Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing	Committee Members only
7) Scrutiny induction	Committee Members only
8) Audit & Standards Committee and the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee induction training	Committee Members only
9) Brent Pensions Fund – Approach to responsible investment	Committee Members only

An overview of the current non-attendance record is set out below.

3.6 Mandatory all member sessions:

- 12 Members need to attend the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults training. This position remains the same as reported in July 2019.
- 12 Members need to attend the Corporate Parenting & Safeguarding Children training. This is a reduction of four against the position reported in July 2019.
- 7 Members need to attend the Equalities Training. This is a reduction of five against the position reported in July 2019.
- 1 Member needs to attend the Standards and the Code of Conduct training. This is a reduction of two against the position reported in July 2019.

Committee Member mandatory sessions:

- 2 Members / substitute members need to attend the Audit & Standards Committee and the Audit & Standards Advisory Committee induction

training. This is a reduction of six against the position reported in July 2019.

- 10 Members need to attend the Scrutiny induction training.
- 6 Members / substitute members need to attend the Brent Pensions Fund – Approach to responsible investment training. This is a reduction of one against the position reported in July 2019.
- All Members / substitute members have attended the Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing training and Planning training.

3.7 A summary setting out the sessions of mandatory training and Members names is attached as Appendix B.

3.8 The Committee is invited to consider what further steps could be undertaken to improve the attendance records of some Members.

3.9 General Councillor Conduct

The Committee will be aware that there are currently four councillor vacancies, three relate to resignations due to the councillors other commitments and location issues.

3.10 The fourth resignation concerns Cllr James Allie, 50. Mr Allie had been appointed the executor of Ruth Ballin's will. Instead of administering the estate for the benefit of Canon Collins Educational and Legal Assistance Trust charity as required, he hid the bequest from the charity for over two years, utilising her assets to buy a £580,000 property in Brent.

3.11 The High Court heard that Mr Allie has been dismissed from his place of employment and a freezing injunction has been obtained over the estate's assets. The police and Solicitor's Regulation Authority have both been informed.

3.12 Judge David Rees QC ordered that Mr Allie vacate the property by January 31 2020 and hand over any remaining money from the estate. The charity and his former employers are seeking their costs.

3.13 Following the High Court decision Mr Allie stood down as a Cllr in the Alperton Ward.

3.14 The Committee are advised that had Cllr Allie not resigned, this would have been a potential standards matter, although it should be noted the Code only specifically applies where there is a criminal conviction of a specified level of seriousness, while this was a civil case.

3.15 The by-elections for Barnhill, Wembley Central and Alperton will be held on the 23 January 2020. The Committee may be familiar with the recent case of Cllr David Pope, 75, of West Norfolk. Mr Pope needed signatures of supporters on his nomination paper for Upwell and Delph, where he stood as an Independent West Norfolk councillor. Candidates seeking selection needed the signatures of eight supporters who were electors in the ward.

- 3.16 The form was due to be, and purportedly, signed by Mr D Gooch. However, Mr Gooch was not home when Mr Pope called and told the court it was not his signature on the nomination form. It transpired the form was signed by Mr Gooch's son who was home when Mr Pope called round. Mr Pope admitted one charge of permitting a false signature on an election nomination paper and was fined £3,300. He has stood down as a Councillor.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising out of this report.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Council, individual Members and co-opted Members are required to promote and maintain high standards of conduct in accordance with s27 of the Localism Act 2011. The attendance at mandatory training sessions is a means to achieve this and a requirement pursuant to the Brent Members' Code of Conduct.

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 There are no equality implications arising out of this report.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

- 8.1 Not applicable.

Report sign off:

Director of Legal, HR, Audit & Investigations