



**Audit and Standards Advisory
Committee**
20 January 2020

**Report from the Assistant Chief
Executive**

**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:	Open
No. of Appendices:	Six: Appx 1 - List of sessions 2019/2020 Appx 2 - Attendance at internal training events Appx 3 - Attendance at external training events Appx 4 – Induction training for the Newly elected Members Appx 5 - LB Brent Charter Plus Action Plan Appx 6 - Member Expenses, 2018-2019
Background Papers:	N/A
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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 information regarding the Members' Expenses Scheme.
- 1.2 This report provides information about the member learning and development sessions delivered since March 2019, and provides, for information, an overview of upcoming member learning and development sessions.
- 1.3 The report also provides an outline of the Member induction programme to be delivered after the by elections on 23 January 2020.

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 Audit and Standards Advisory Committee on 20 March 2019. A report on Mandatory training was considered by that Committee on 10 July 2019. That review covered the period May 2018 to October 2019.
- 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 rolling programme. The scope of that Group is to consider the type of training provided and review attendance at each session, and 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 provides constructive input and evaluation of the programme. A strong political lead on member development from all groups is essential to ensure member ownership of the programme.
- 3.5 The Council has organised and delivered twenty Member learning and development sessions since March 2019. Nine of the twenty sessions provided have been mandatory. Members who were unable to attend the original mandatory training sessions were required to attend a repeat session. **The data is attached at Appendix 1.**
- 3.6 Member attendance at internal learning and development sessions has varied for each session during the current municipal year. Reminders are issued on a weekly basis via text message and email. Since the introduction of the electronic calendar invitations text messaging service, attendance has improved significantly.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 Attendance at training sessions has been encouraging. Sessions have been well attended. Of the twenty sessions delivered since March 2019, not including the mandatory sessions, fifteen members or more have attended 5 sessions.
- 3.9 Since May 2018, attendance at internal training sessions has been published on the Council's Website and on individual Member profile pages.
- 3.10 The most attended session was the Equalities and Relationship training. The next most attended session, which were not mandatory were the Presentation

and Public Speaking training and Prevention Matters - Home Office and Elected Members, Prevent Strategy Roundtable, Nineteen Members attended both the sessions. **Attendance data at each session is attached for information as Appendix 2.**

- 3.11 Understandably, sessions with the lowest attendance tend to be those aimed at specific committee membership.

Public Speaking and Presentation skills

- 3.12 In response to requests from a number of Councillors, the Member Learning and Development Working Group agreed to offer a Public Speaking and Presentation skills course again for all Members in March 2019. This course was last offered in March 2017.

The purpose of the course was to improve Members' ability to present and communicate more effectively and dynamically.

The course comprised different exercises for Members to discover more about what works and what could be improved in their ability to present. Nineteen Members attended. This course was followed by a 1-1 session for each Member with the trainer. The feedback received from Members after the course was very positive.

External Training Events March 2019 – January 2020

- 3.13 Since March 2019, Members have attended a number of external events delivered by organisations including the Local Government Association (LGA), London Councils, Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) and the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU).
- 3.14 The Member Learning and Development working group considers all attendance at external sessions. **Attendance data is attached as Appendix 3.**
- 3.15 Feedback has been crucial to shaping and developing the member development programme. The Council has developed an electronic feedback form to collate Member feedback on each Member Learning and Development session delivered since February 2019.
- 3.16 The purpose of this survey is to get Members' views about the quality of the training, to identify future needs.

Induction for Newly Elected Members in January 2020

- 3.17 The core Induction process for the four Councillors (23 January 2020) will provide the key information, support, resources and training for the new members. In order to ensure that information is made available to members at a steady pace, the new Members will be given a welcome pack of basic information, IT equipment at the Induction day on 27 January.

Induction Training

- 3.18 Access to comprehensive induction arrangements are vital to ensure that the newly elected members are fully conversant with all aspects of the various roles within the council as soon as possible after their election. Member induction covers key corporate themes, initiatives and departmental overviews and introductions including Mandatory trainings. **The induction training programmed is attached as Appendix 4.**

Members' Handbook

- 3.19 The 'Members' Handbook' is being updated. This will be launched in January 2020. Members can currently access the current Handbook from the Council's intranet site or via the new Members' Portal.

Member Development Charter Award – Gold Standard

- 3.20 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.
- 3.21 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 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.
- 3.22 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.
- 3.23 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

3.24 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.

3.25 In response to the assessment, an action plan to address the suggested areas for improvement has been drafted. The action plan will be monitored by the Member Development Steering Group. **The Action Plan is attached as Appendix 5.** An interim assessment visit will take place in 18 months.

4.0 Members' expenses

4.1 The Council's Allowance scheme for Members, 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 Manager 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 A total of £1,348.95 was claimed. The majority of these claims were for travel to and from Warwick and Coventry for LGA training/conferences. In addition to travel, there were also two claims for hotel accommodation for the LGA conference in July and one Member submitted some childcare claims. **Member Expenses for 2018 -2019 is attached at Appendix 6.**

4.4 To date the Member Expenses claimed 2019 – 2020 are £1,362.93 and again the majority of this is for training related travel.

5.0 Financial Implications - Expenses

5.1 The costs of the member learning and development programme are met from a budget of £17,000. The majority of training sessions are delivered by council officers thus keeping costs down. There was an overspend of approximately £2,213.58 which was mainly due to the additional cost of the Charter Plus.

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:

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