



Standards Committee

Thursday 7 January 2016 at 7.00 pm

Boardroom - Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way,
Wembley, HA9 0FJ

Membership:

Members

Councillors:

Dixon (Chair)
Kabir (Vice-Chair)
Collier
Krupa Sheth
Warren

Substitute Members

Councillors:

Khan, Mahmood, McLeish and Tatler

Co-opted Member:

Sheila Darr

Independents:

Vacancy

For further information contact: Anne Reid, Principal Democratic Services Officer
020 8937 1359, anne.reid@brent.gov.uk

For electronic copies of minutes, reports and agendas, and to be alerted when the minutes of this meeting have been published visit:
democracy.brent.gov.uk

The press and public are welcome to attend this meeting

Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members

Item	Page
------	------

1	Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests	
----------	---	--

Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, any relevant financial or other interest in the items on this agenda.

2	Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 4
----------	--	-------

3	Matters arising	
----------	------------------------	--

4	Review of Member Development Programme and Members' Expenses	5 - 22
----------	---	--------

The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Standards Committee with a summary of the Member Development Programme and information regarding the Members' Expenses Scheme. This report outlines the member learning and development sessions delivered for members since December 2014, and also the upcoming quarter of the member learning and development programme (January-March 2016).

Ward Affected:	All Wards	Contact Officer: Thomas Cattermole, Head of Member Services Tel: 020 8937 5446 thomas.cattermole@brent.gov.uk
-----------------------	-----------	---

5	Annual Report to the Standards Committee 2014 - 2015	23 - 26
----------	---	---------

This is the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report to the Standards Committee for the period December 2014 to December 2015 and provides an update on member conduct issues, and the work of the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer during that period.

Ward Affected:	All Wards	Contact Officer: Fiona Alderman, Chief Legal Officer Tel: 020 8937 4101 fiona.alderman@brent.gov.uk
-----------------------	-----------	---

6	Date of Next Meeting	
----------	-----------------------------	--

The next meeting of the committee is scheduled to take place on 21

March 2016.

7 Any other urgent business

Notice of items to be raised under this heading must be given in writing to the Head of Executive and Member Services or his representative before the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 64.



Please remember to switch your mobile phone to silent during the meeting.

- The meeting room is accessible by lift and seats will be provided for members of the public.

This page is intentionally left blank



LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE Thursday 1 October 2015 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Dixon (Chair), Councillor Kabir (Vice-Chair) and, Councillors Collier, Krupa Sheth and Warren together with coopted member Sheila Darr.

1. **Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests**

None made.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 March 2015 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. **Matters arising**

Members were pleased to hear that the council had been successfully accredited with the London Councils Member Development Charter Plus award, the first London borough to have achieved accreditation and requested an update on member training at a future meeting.

It was noted that all members would have the opportunity to debate improvements to the format of Full Council meetings at the next Full Council meeting in November and that the Annual Governance Report of the Monitoring Officer would come to the January meeting of this committee.

4. **Members' Code of Conduct and Members' Gifts and Hospitality Protocol**

Fiona Alderman (Chief Legal Officer) introduced her report which set out proposed changes to the Members' Code of Conduct and a draft Members' Gifts and Hospitality Protocol for consideration and referral to Full Council for approval. She drew attention to the history of the Code of Conduct and the recent review and audit of gifts and hospitality which highlighted a need for greater clarity. Looqman Desai (Senior Lawyer) explained the substantive changes proposed as set out in the report including the requirement for mandatory training on the Code of Conduct, bringing the new code into line with legislation requiring registration of interests within 28 days of election, extending personal interests to include close associates and, where members disclosed pecuniary interests in a meeting, the requirement to leave the meeting. On gifts and hospitality, best practice had been adopted now to include a series of gifts from one person in a year.

Members questioned possible sanctions for failing to attend mandatory training and heard that breaches of the code could form the basis of a complaint. The Chief Legal Officer advised that a final 'wrap up' training session would be arranged which would be extended to co-opted members.

The committee discussed the general obligations of members under the Code of Conduct. It was noted that under the current arrangements, the Chief Legal Officers in her capacity of Monitoring Officer, considered all complaints from members a number of which were rejected as not disclosing a potential breach of the code or because enforcing the code was not in the public interest, without penalty or reference to this committee. The committee considered and agreed a proposal to add an additional obligation preventing members from using their position to make repeated, frivolous or vexatious complaints.

The Chief Legal Officer responded that such an obligation could be covered by the existing obligations of respect and not bringing the office into disrepute and also reminded members that freedom of expression rights under Article 10 of the Human Rights Act 1988 may have a bearing on what was considered frivolous or vexatious. Members acknowledged that the bar was set high but felt that the obligation was important enough to be expressly mentioned in the code.

Regarding the other changes to the Code of Conduct, the committee felt that it should be emphasised to members that non-compliance of the requirements relating to interests for elected members was a criminal offence. This sanction did not apply to co-opted members. It was also felt that members' obligations relating to the use of council resources, including photocopying and phone calls, should be emphasised.

The committee then considered the new Members' Gifts and Hospitality Protocol and the Chief Legal Officer advised that training was being devised that would draw attention to the related criminal offences. Members welcomed the new protocol which they felt was very clear and allowed a practical approach to be adopted.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that approval be given to the proposed changes to the Members' Code of Conduct and the draft Members' Gifts and Hospitality Protocol;
- (ii) that it be noted that the Licensing and Planning Codes of Practice would be revised to reflect the proposed changes to the Members' Code of Conduct;
- (iii) that Full Council be recommended to approve the revised Members' Code of Conduct and the draft Members' Gifts and Hospitality Protocol subject to the inclusion of an additional obligation (e) under the Members' Code of Conduct paragraph 4. (2) as follows:

You must not –

- (e) make frivolous, vexatious or repeated complaints against another member or an officer of the council."

5. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 7 January 2016.


6. **Any other urgent business**

Reference was made to allegations of misconduct that had been recently emailed to councillors by a member of the public. The Monitoring Officer advised that under the procedure, she would be considering the complaint with the Chief Executive and the independent person. If necessary, there would be a referral to a special meeting of the Standards Committee.

The meeting closed at 7.40 pm

L DIXON
Chair

This page is intentionally left blank

 Brent	<p>Standards Committee 7 January 2016</p> <p>Report from the Chief Operating Officer</p>
For Information	Wards Affected: ALL
Review of the Member Development Programme and Members' Expenses	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Standards Committee with a summary of the Member Development Programme and information regarding the Members' Expenses Scheme.
- 1.2 This report outlines the member learning and development sessions delivered for members since December 2014, and also the upcoming quarter of the member learning and development programme (January-March 2016).

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report.

3.0 Detail – Member Development

- 3.1 The Member Development Programme was last reviewed by this Committee on 8 December 2014; that review covered the period May 2014 to December 2014. In addition to review by members of the Standards Committee, the member learning and development programme is monitored quarterly by the Member Learning and Development Steering Group on a quarterly basis. The Steering Group is now chaired by the Leader of the Council.
- 3.2 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 attendance at the training, and consider and discuss any implications with regards maintaining high standards of conduct and good practice.

Development events January 2015 – December 2015:

3.3 A significant number of member development events have been held during the course of this calendar year. These have been delivered mostly by internal officers and partners, with some external facilitators:

- Clinical Commissioning Group – 15 January 2015
- Individual Electoral Registration – 4 February 2015
- Intermediate iPad training – 17 February 2015
- Changes to council's over-subscription criteria/Social Media Protocol – 25 February 2015
- Brent Housing Partnership – 3 March 2015
- Immigration session – 10 March 2015
- Regeneration tour of the borough (repeat) – 14 March 2015
- Consultation event Alperton school – 19 March 2015
- Challenging Prejudice – 30 March 2015
- Council's London Living Wage incentives scheme – 9 April 2015
- Special Educational Needs – 20 April 2015
- Review of Brent's Council Tax Support scheme – 27 May 2015
- Alcohol and Entertainment Licensing training – 28 May 2015
- Planning Committee training – 2 June 2015
- Scrutiny development session part one – 9 June 2015
- BHP stock investment programme – 17 June 2015
- Community Access Programme – 1 July 2015
- Mandatory Children and Young People's Safeguarding session – 15 July 2015
- Mandatory Standards and the Code of Conduct session – 21 July 2015
- Introduction to Benefits and Council Tax – 28 July 2015
- Mandatory Children and Young People's Safeguarding session (repeat) – 3 September 2015
- Licensing Policy Review consultation – 10 September 2015
- Mandatory Standards and the Code of Conduct session (repeat) – 17 September 2015
- Mandatory Children and Young People's Safeguarding session (afternoon repeat) – 3 September 2015
- Launch event: LGA 'Modern Councillor' programme – 16 November 2015
- Audit Committee development session – 19 November 2015
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults – 24 November 2015
- LGA 'Modern Councillor' programme session 1: Meeting the Challenge – 3 December 2015
- 'Prevent' Ideology and Radicalisation In Depth – 22 December 2015.

Further scheduled sessions:

- LGA 'Modern Councillor' programme session 2: Community Leadership – 21 January 2016
- Social Values in Procurement session – 28 January 2016
- Scrutiny development session part two – 11 February 2016
- LGA 'Modern Councillor' programme session 3: Effective Neighbourhood and Community Engagement – 18 February 2016
- School Admissions session – 25 February 2016
- LGA 'Modern Councillor' programme session 4: Connecting with Communities: using social media effectively – 24 March 2016.

Attendance at internal training events

- 3.4 Member attendance at internal learning and development sessions has varied for each session during the current municipal year. Overall, member attendance has been encouraging. Of the 17 sessions delivered during the May-November period, 6 sessions were attended by 20 members or more; 12 sessions were attended by 10 members or more.
- 3.5 The best attended sessions were the 'Safeguarding Vulnerable Children' sessions and the 'Standards and the Code of Conduct' sessions, which were mandatory. Encouragingly, the LGA 'Modern Councillor' launch event, which was not mandatory, was attended by 29 members.

Members of the Standards Committee may wish to note that the Member Learning and Development Steering Group will, in January 2016, consider the frequency and content of Councillor mandatory training.

- 3.6 The first trial of a 'breakfast' session, held at 8.00am, was well received by members as feedback demonstrated. 13 members attended this session.
- 3.7 Understandably, sessions with the lowest attendance tended to be those aimed at specific committee membership.
- 3.8 There do not appear to be any other particular trends relating to subject matter or the timing of the courses which would assist in identifying further why some members choose not to attend training sessions.
- 3.9 Currently the Member Development Programme is advertised to all members via the weekly Members' Information Bulletin. Reminders are issued on a weekly basis, also via the Members' Information Bulletin. A system of sending invites to the sessions electronically via Outlook was launched in January and feedback has been very positive.

Attendance at external events January 2015 – December 2015:

- 3.10 A number of external events have been attended by members since January 2015. The organisers have included the Local Government Association (LGA), London Councils, and the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU). Programme content has included the local government finance; commissioning, procurement and contract management; licensing conferences; and the LGiU Prevent conference.

Feedback from members regarding the member development programme

- 3.11 Feedback is sought from members following each training event attended; however the use of an electronic link intended to allow members to provide information without the use of paper has not proven as successful as hoped. Levels of feedback submitted dropped dramatically, and as a result, paper copies of feedback forms have been re-introduced.

Organisational and political support

- 3.12 The Steering Group has consistently provided constructive input and evaluation during previous terms of office and it is anticipated this support will continue given the Chair of the group is now the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive attends. A strong political lead on member development from all groups is essential to ensure member ownership of the programme.

Member Development Charter Award

- 3.13 In September 2015, Brent Council became the first London Borough to achieve the 'gold standard' Charter Plus Award for Elected Member Development.
- 3.14 The Charter Plus Award is given to councils in recognition of their ongoing commitment and strategic approach to Elected Member learning and development. The assessment featured a rigorous paper-based process and the assessors met a number of councillors and key officers involved in Elected Member learning and development.
- 3.15 Members of the assessment panel commended examples of learning and development on offer to Brent councillors including:
- a tailored programme of sessions to support members in their role as a 'modern councillor' with topics including effective engagement with communities and neighbourhoods, use of social media, influencing skills, facilitation and conflict resolution, and providing strong community leadership;

- sessions designed to further develop relationships with partner agencies, including CVS Brent, Veolia, the Clinical Commissioning Group and Brent Housing Partnership;
 - sessions promoting the well being and safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- 3.16 The assessment team was made up of Cllr Darren Rowell, Leader of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Ann Moore, Head of Democratic Services and Registrars at Bracknell Forest Council, and Mark Palmer, Development Director, South East Employers.
- 3.14 Feedback from the Charter assessors indicated that Brent stands out as an excellent performer in the field of member development.
- 3.15 The full assessment report is attached for information at Appendix A.

4.0 Detail – Members’ Expenses

- 4.1 Changes to the Members’ Allowances Scheme were agreed at the meeting of Full Council in September 2014 and included the provision for members to claim a Dependent Carer’s Allowance. To date, no payment has been made.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The costs of the member learning and development programme are met from a budget of £17,352 annually and have included the services of an external consultant to deliver the Members’ Needs Analysis (MNA) project.
- 5.2 A package of LGA member development sessions tailored exclusively to the requirements of Brent councillors has been purchased and will be delivered during the remainder of the current municipal year, however the costs will be met from the wider Executive and Member Services.

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 None for the Member Development Programme.
- 6.2 The Local Government (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, as amended, requires the council to have the records available for public inspection. During the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015 no member of the public came to inspect the records.

7.0 Diversity Implications

7.1 This report contains no specific diversity implications.

For further information please contact:

Thomas Cattermole, Head of Executive and Member Services,
thomas.cattermore@brent.gov.uk, 020 8937 5446

LORRAINE LANGHAM
Chief Operating Officer

London Charter Plus for Elected Member Development

Brent Council

Assessment Date: 10 September 2015



Brent Council

London Charter Plus for Elected Member Development

Assessment Date: 10 September 2015

Contents	Page
Recommendation of the assessment team	1
Assessment	2
Background	4
Evidence presented and demonstrated to support the application	6
Continuous improvement and direction of travel	9

Recommendation of the Assessment Team

Brent Council has achieved the Charter Plus standard of the London Charter for Elected Member Development and is the first authority in London to do so. The council has been awarded Charter Plus status for three years from 10 September 2015. The council has also committed to a process of continuous improvement over the next three years.

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.

Assessment team

- Councillor Darren Rodwell, London Borough of Barking & Dagenham
- Mark Palmer, Development Director, SEE (Lead Assessor)
- Ann Moore, Head of Democratic & Registration Services, Bracknell Forest Council

Charter standards

- Commitment to councillor development
- Strategic approach to councillor development
- Learning and development is effective in building capacity
- Supporting councillors in their role as leaders of their local communities

Assessment

The assessment against the Charter Plus standard took place on 10 September 2015. The purpose of the assessment visit was to determine whether or not the authority met the Charter Plus standard.

The assessment was based on an analysis of a portfolio of evidence submitted in advance by the council, plus a number of interviews with key councillors, officers and partner organisations. The evidence presented in the portfolio was drawn from a wide range of sources and gave a good overview of the council's member development activities. The self-assessment was linked to the four Charter standards, with each section having some introductory text to set the context, before highlighting specific examples of where different elements of the Charter Plus standard were met.

The assessment team was satisfied that the portfolio met the Charter Plus criteria and sought examples of how the information provided could be validated and brought to life through a number of interviews.

During the assessment visit, interviews were held with the following:

- ◆ Councillors
 - Councillor Amer Agha, PDP Pilot Group
 - Councillor Muhammed Butt, Leader of the Council & Member Development Steering Group Chair
 - Councillor Reg Colwill, Conservative Group Deputy Leader (telephone interview)
 - Councillor Liz Dixon, PDP Pilot Group
 - Councillor Patricia Harrison, PDP Pilot Group
 - Councillor Sandra Kabir, Member Development Steering Group and Chief Whip
 - Councillor Arshad Mahmood, PDP Pilot Group
 - Councillor Michael Pavey, PDP Pilot Group
- ◆ Officers
 - Tom Cattermole, Head of Executive & Member Services
 - Peter Goss, Democratic Services Manager
 - Rhiannon Leary, Mayor's Office & Member Development Manager
 - Christine Gilbert, Chief Executive
- ◆ Partner Organisations
 - Tessa Awe, Council for Voluntary Service Brent (CVS Brent)
 - Peta Caine, Brent Housing Partnership
 - Dr Melanie Smith, Director of Public Health

Rhiannon Leary, Mayor's Office & Member Development Manager, managed the Charter Plus project in addition to supporting the Member Development Steering

Group. Arrangements for the assessment day were good and the assessment visit was well structured, enabling the assessment team to acquire the information needed for the assessment to be thorough and representative. Everyone interviewed demonstrated a clear commitment to elected member development and were open in the sharing of information. All councillors interviewed as part of the assessment process spoke of how much they recognised and valued the officer support available to them.

Background

Brent Council originally achieved Charter recognition in October 2010. The council was re-accredited on 8 January 2014 and committed to a process of continuous improvement over the next three years. Subsequent to achieving Charter standard re-accreditation, the council undertook to apply for Charter Plus status.

The report from the assessment team in 2014 contained a preliminary indication of additional evidence that the council needed to put in place in order to achieve Charter Plus status. These are set out below.

Commitment to councillor development:

- Examples can be provided of how learning is shared with other authorities across the tiers of local government.
- Member development / support staff have access to their own ongoing professional development.
- Member development and support staff are involved in regional and national learning networks.

Strategic approach to councillor development:

- Robust evaluation process is in place and can be evidenced.
- Evidence that evaluation feedback contributes to review and further development of strategy.
- Evidence that a review and discussion takes place with Executive and CMT at least once per year (to ensure ongoing linkage to corporate plan).
- Member role descriptions exist and are maintained for all key roles including ward councillor, and those role descriptions are used to help identify development needs.
- Evidence that members are clear about the role of partner bodies (e.g. LSPs), other stakeholder bodies (e.g. Primary Care Trust), their own role on partner bodies and their own role in relation to other stakeholder bodies.
- Council has successfully piloted a 360° diagnostic and 60% of Member's have a Personal Development Plan in place that is regularly reviewed.
- Evidence that briefing sessions and materials are provided and publicised on emerging issues (e.g. legislative changes, government white papers).
- At least 90% of all councillors feel they have adequate access to development opportunities.
- External partners are involved in relevant development sessions.
- Evidence of a programme to develop the next generation of leaders and to support succession planning.
- Some form of impact assessment at the community level exists and is used (e.g. by asking for feedback from partners).

Learning and development is effective in building capacity:

- Clear process showing how end of event evaluation feeds into impact evaluation and to review development of the training programme.
- Evidence of post event follow-up evaluation to assess performance change (e.g. through PDP process).
- Members report back to group on conferences and external development opportunities.

Supporting Councillors:

- Evidence that council reviews its arrangements and timings of meetings and the way it conducts its business to take account of cultural, faith, travel needs and family commitments of Councillors and open up the role to as many people as possible including those in employment.
- Council is building links with local businesses and employers to promote the role of councillor.
- Council is building links with young people's groups to promote the role of Councillor.
- Councillors are a source of knowledge, both internally and externally, and share their perspectives on new initiatives and Government policies to update others.

The portfolio of evidence supported the council's self-assessment, documenting the work that had been undertaken in response to the previous assessment, and demonstrated that the principles of the Charter Plus standard had been met.

Evidence presented and demonstrated to support the application

▪ Commitment to councillor development

The assessment team was pleased to see that there continued to be strong political and organisational support for member development.

At the elections in May 2014, 50% of the council were newly elected and it was recognised that learning and development needed to be effectively prioritised. A comprehensive induction programme was put in place, supported by the corporate management team. A key strength of the programme was the establishment of a panel of experienced cross party councillors who provided practical advice and guidance to new members. The Chief Executive set the tone for the importance placed on member support by writing to all elected councillors immediately after the election to invite them to early induction sessions.

Comments that we heard:

“We have redesigned how we work with councillors and have a high commitment to member development since 2010.”

“Now we must work to keep the momentum going until 2018.”

“The budget for member development is not huge but it is used well.”

▪ Strategic approach to councillor development

A more strategic approach was used to develop the induction programme for new councillors, which sought input from more stakeholders and took account of the changing council environment to provide a programme that would equip members with the knowledge and skills for the 2014-18 council term. The induction programme was supported by Corporate Management Team, and the Member Development Steering Group shaped and agreed both the induction and wider member development programmes.

Since the previous assessment visit, work has been undertaken to raise the profile of the Steering Group and member development in general. However the council is not complacent and realises that there are still a number of councillors who do not engage. The Labour Group Chief Whip actively works to address this issue and to embed a culture of development and continuous improvement within the Labour Group. However there is a challenge in channelling group activity into a more corporate approach.

Members clearly valued the induction programme highly and felt well equipped to hit the ground running in their new roles. They were particularly pleased to

receive appropriate ICT access to the council's network immediately after the election in the form of iPads and iPhones.

The council has maintained its approach to identifying councillors' learning needs through a voluntary individual Personal Development Planning process. The Charter assessment team felt that a 70% completion rate would be a realistic target following the May 2014 elections. Whilst evidence was not produced to demonstrate that this target had been achieved, there had been significant take-up, particularly within the Labour Group. This was driven by the Leader and Chief Whip.

Members have a strong understanding of their roles and articulated the value of collecting information from their casework, and work within their community, to inform the council's policies and priorities. There is an expectation that the introduction of Community Action Groups will provide a vehicle to achieve this.

The council previously recognised that members needed to be more outward looking and to take networking opportunities when they arose. The Leader of the Council actively supports this approach and encourages members to engage with colleagues in other authorities. The council is also part of the pan London member development network.

Comments that we heard:

"The PDP process was fantastic and supported me as a new member."

"The elections were a catalyst for change as we had so many new members."

"The Member Development Steering Group has a high profile, including group leaders, the Chief Executive and Labour Chief Whip."

▪ **Learning and development is effective in building capacity**

The demands placed on councillors continue to increase and the need for robust support for member development is vital. The council's officers and members are clear that member development has improved the performance of individual members and functions.

The representatives from partner organisations told the assessment team that they had seen an improvement in the skills and knowledge of Brent councillors and could link this clearly to the development programme. They felt that the programme was effectively tailored and targeted to the community's needs and were pleased to report that the council was receptive to their input and ideas.

The council had refocused their evaluation of development activities. The opinions of attendees are sought on the sessions they attend and an effective response is provided. This was evidenced by moving the emphasis away from a PowerPoint slide delivery model to a more interactive approach.

Comments that we heard:

“I can see the level of improved member understanding from the questions they ask me.”

“We seek feedback from sessions and feed this into the Member Development Steering Group.”

“We are evaluating and adapting all the time.”

“We encourage attendance at external seminars to better understand the national picture and maximise opportunities to engage with councillors from other authorities.”

“We identify and use the skills that members already have.”

“All members should understand legislative changes that impact the council’s work.”

- **Supporting councillors in their role as leaders of their local communities**

The council recognises the importance of supporting councillors in their role as community leaders. The council’s approach ensures that there is effective support to the members responsible for promoting and leading improvement in member development.

Comments that we heard:

“The focus is on community leadership.”

“We support a systematic approach to casework.”

“The Area Forums had become stale so we are introducing Community Action Groups.”

“We must ensure that councillors are empowered to deliver key messages and that they have the tools to engage with their communities to take things forward.”

“We must have the information we need to do our job – forewarned is forearmed.”

“Members need to understand how to engage more effectively with residents and how to help residents to become more engaged themselves.”

Continuous improvement and direction of travel

Brent Council has been successful in achieving the Charter Plus standard and is well placed to demonstrate continuous improvement over the next three years.

Strengths identified by the assessors

The following areas were felt by the assessors to be particular strengths:

- There is top political and management commitment to member development. The Leader clearly demonstrated an enthusiasm for and commitment to member development, which was echoed by all the members we met. The Member Development Steering Group continues to show the strength of its commitment to and enthusiasm for member development, and to enjoy a high level of influence as a result.
- The comments from partner organisations that they see a positive difference in partnership working were particularly impressive.
- There was a high quality, comprehensive and structured induction programme developed for new Councillors following the May 2014 elections.
- There is a Personal Development Plan (PDP) process in place which helps to identify and prioritise member development needs. This is supported by a comprehensive member development programme which responds to individual needs and demonstrates clear links to strategic priorities.
- Focus on community leadership has increased, evidenced by the development of Community Action Groups.
- The council has a group mentoring programme in place.

Assessors' suggested improvement areas

The following were identified by the assessors as areas that the council should work on over the next three years. They will act as a focus for the direction of travel to take forward member development.

- The council should have a process in place to review PDPs mid-term and to set new individual development priorities for councillors. The council should continue to work towards a target of 70% participation in the PDP process.

- The development of Community Action Groups will be key to delivering some areas of improvement that were raised during the assessment. The Council should ensure that councillors are provided with the support and development to realise the potential of the Community Action Groups
- The council should ensure that it continues to support and build on, leadership development both for Cabinet members and for all councillors as community leaders, so that they can enhance engagement with their communities.
- The Council should continue to seek opportunities to learn from good practice from other authorities and external organisations. This could include encouraging members to take on some peer to peer mentoring or assessor roles.
- The Member Development Steering Group is encouraged to draw together examples of best practice and provide a vehicle to share this learning with all councillors.

The council may identify further key areas for improvement as a consequence of this assessment or any ongoing review of the development programme as a whole.

South East Employers would like to meet with the council in eighteen months to evaluate the programme of continuous improvement and direction of travel; and in three years for a reassessment.

The assessment process may be subject to a quality assurance review by the Local Government Association.

We look forward to the council supporting South East Employers in promoting the benefits of Charter Plus to councils across the London region.

The Council may now use the national elected member development Charter Plus logo.

Congratulations in achieving the London Charter Plus standard!

**Mark Palmer
Development Director
South East Employers for and on behalf of the Assessment Team**

30th September 2015

 Brent	Standards Committee 7 January 2016 Report from the Chief Legal Officer
For Action Wards Affected: ALL	
Annual Report to the Standards Committee 2014 – 2015	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This is the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report to the Standards Committee for the period December 2014 to December 2015 and provides an update on member conduct issues, and the work of the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer during that period.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee note the report.

3.0 Detail

Members of the Standards Committee

- 3.1. The membership of the Standards Committee is now based on the political balance of the membership of the Council. The Council continues to recognise the value of an Independent Member on the committee, even though since the coming into force of the Localism Act 2011, that person is no longer able to vote. The composition of the Committee is 4 Labour and 1 Brent Conservative and Shelia Darr remains as the Independent Member.

Appointment of the Independent Persons

- 3.2. Under the Localism Act 2011, the Council is required to appoint at least one Independent Person whose views must or can be sought at various

key stages of a complaint against a member. This role is different from the role of Shelia Darr as an Independent Member of the committee.

- 3.3 The Council is in the process of recruiting Independent Persons to fulfil the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 in addition to a new role in relation to the dismissal of certain statutory officers, set out in the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015. This new role relates entirely to statutory officers and was considered by Full Council on 22 June 2015. The report is on the Council's website. The recruitment process will start in January 2016.

The Committee's work during December 2014 - December 2015

- 3.4 The Committee has three pre-arranged dates during the Municipal Year to discuss and decide on matters of policy and procedure. The Committee also meets on additional dates as and when required to consider complaints against councillors.
- 3.5 There has been one meeting in the review period on 21st September 2015. The March meeting was cancelled due to lack of business. This is the Committee's third meeting.
- 3.6 The September 2015 meeting considered revisions and improvements to the Members' Code of Conduct and the introduction of a Gifts and Hospitality Protocol. On 23rd November 2015 Full Council approved changes to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct and approved a gifts and hospitality protocol for members. Changes to the Code came into effect on 30th November 2015. Full Council also approved a change to Standing Orders to confirm the action members must take if they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.

Complaints against Members

- 3.7 Under the previous legislation, all complaints made under the Code of Conduct had to be referred to the Standards Committee. One of the criticisms of the previous arrangement was the time spent and cost wasted on matters that need not be considered under the Code, or which could be resolved other than through a formal process. Under the new law, the Council is permitted to set out its own processes for dealing with complaints and it has adopted a system whereby the Monitoring Officer is delegated some discretion as to how some matters be dealt with. There are clear parameters for this and these are set out in the procedure that was adopted by this Committee in January 2013.
- 3.8 For the period December 2014 to December 2015, the Monitoring Officer received sixteen complaints. Nine complaints were from five different members of the public. One complaint resulted in an apology. Five complaints did not disclose a potential breach of the code and the other three complaints received in mid-December are still being dealt with. Two complaints were made by members of staff against members. One of these was resolved informally after an apology was given and the

other did not disclose a potential breach of the code. Five complaints were made by members against other members of the Council. Two of these complaints are still being dealt with. The remaining three complaints either did not disclose a potential breach of the code or it was not appropriate or in the public interest to pursue the complaints. On one occasion however the Monitoring Officer wrote to the member reaffirming expected standards of behaviour.

Monitoring Officer Advice Notes and Training

- 3.9 During the period December 2014 to December 2015, the Monitoring Officer continued to issue Advice Notes to members as required. An Advice Note sent out in August 2015 provided guidance to members on declarations of interest, in particular disclosable pecuniary interests, avoiding conflicts of interest and initial advice on how to approach disclosure of gifts and hospitality. A further Advice Note was circulated on 27th November 2015 reminding members of the key requirements of the code and the revisions approved by full council and specifying the criminal offences created by the Localism Act.
- 3.10 Members had the choice of three separate training events on the standards regime. Full details are contained in the separate report on Member Training and Development.

Review of the Register of Members' Interests

- 3.11 All members have completed a Declaration of Interests form. All forms have been reviewed and Members have been advised of any necessary corrective action which it is their responsibility to take.

Review of gifts and hospitality

- 3.12 The Members' code of conduct requires members to register gifts and hospitality. Up until 29th November 2015, Members were required to register gifts and hospitality of over £50. As from 30th November 2015, Members are also required to register a series of gifts and hospitality from the same person that add up to an estimated value of at least £50 in the same municipal year.
- 3.13 In the past 12 months the following gifts and hospitality have been registered by members:
- Cllr Ahmed – rugby world cup tickets from England rugby 2015 Ltd estimated at more than £50
 - Cllr Butt – 10/2/15 - Blue de Chanel (aftershave) from local resident - donated to Mayor's charity - value £75; 17/9/15 - rugby world cup tickets from England rugby 2015 Ltd estimated over £50; 17/11/15 England v. France (x2 tickets) from Melvin Benn, Chairman, Wembley Stadium - value unknown; 15/12/15 - 1 bottle of Prosecco and 1 box of chocolates from BDO local government team - gift donated - value unknown

- Cllr Carr – 7/1/15 - British kebab awards – reception/dinner for two - value unknown
- Cllr Collier – 19/4/15 - 3 tickets to FA cup semi final – Aston Villa v Liverpool - value estimated over £50
- Cllr Crane – 9/9/15 - dinner x2 at Celtic Manor from Capital International Ltd. LGC Pension Fund Conference - value £200
- Cllr Jones – M&S voucher from local resident - monetary value donated to Mayor's charity - value £20

3.14 Invitations accepted by the previous and current mayors in the exercise of their civic role are recorded separately.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 This report contains no specific financial implications.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 The legal requirements relating to members' Code of Conduct and the Standards regime are set out in the Localism Act 2011.

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 This report contains no specific diversity implications.

7.0 Staffing Implications

7.1 This report contains no specific staff implications.

Background papers

None

Contact

Should any person require any further information about the issues addressed in this report, please contact Looqman Desai, Locum Senior Corporate Lawyer, on telephone number 020 8937 1366.

Fiona Alderman
Chief Legal Officer