



Brent Member Learning and Development Charter Plus

December 2021

Background

Any council that is serious about meeting the needs of its community must be committed to developing its councillors. Most authorities have some form of support programme in place. However, the approach and levels of commitment and effectiveness vary.

The Charter provides a robust, structured framework designed to help the authority enhance and hone member development. This is available for councils across London, Northern Ireland and the south-east and east regions of England.

The London Borough of Brent was the first London Borough to achieve Charter Plus status in 2015, then again in 2018 and 2021!

Assessors' Comments

Following Brent Council's Charter Plus Interim Assessment on the 9 October 2020, Brent Council continues to meet the standard of the Councillor Development Charter Plus, the highest award. Following the December 2018 Assessment an interim Assessment was undertaken on the 9 October 2020 to ensure that the Council was continuing to make progress. There continues to be strong support for councillor development across the organisation and a key political lead led by the high profile Member Development Steering Group (MDSG).

The Council has responded quickly to the Covid-19 pandemic with regard to how it supports and delivers training and development on a virtual basis. Virtual training has seen an increase in the numbers of councillors participating (average 30 councillors) and in the recent Members Survey virtual training or a hybrid model had the overwhelming support of the councillors responding.

The interim review submission and recent meeting identified the following key strengths:

- Leadership development. There is a high profile commitment to leadership development to support a commitment to political succession planning. Eight cabinet members have undertaken leadership development via the LGA and six have completed the Leadership Academy. The leadership has proactively brought forward new talent as part of the cabinet and three cabinet members will be undertaking the Leadership Academy in January 2021.
- Cabinet members have been supported with 1-1 mentoring via the LGA in addition to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.
- The council has further developed its collaborative working with partner organisations and partners have been directly involved in councillor development delivery.



- The Council has promoted and supported its approach to Councillor Development. The Leader was engaged in a support for LB Barking and Dagenham and the key officers actively engage in the London Member Development Network.

Strengths:

- Strong, top level commitment from officers and members
- A strategic approach by the steering group which has good profile and good representation
- An agile programme which is flexed to take on board current issues and risks
- Very strong feedback from partners who mentioned that Brent is not afraid to tackle difficult issues such as migration and race
- A culture which is passionate about learning
- A mature, developed offer

Improvements to consider:

- Keep going in the same direction
- Plan the induction programme to include some face to face training to encourage networking; include the partners in the training
- Ensure that the needs of ward Cllrs are adequately reflected
- PDPs – prioritise new Cllrs and those with new responsibilities
- The mentoring programme needs to be corporately owned
- Consider tailoring sessions for different groups of Cllrs (e.g. new vs more experienced)
- Consider an individual accreditation for Cllrs