



Member Learning & Development Programme 2022

February 2023

Aim

This PowerPoint aims to look at feedback received on:

1. The timing of Member Learning and Development (MLD) sessions
2. Mode of learning
3. Requests for future training
4. Support received from officers (Member Services and political offices)
5. Member Services

This also includes feedback collated by “South East Employers” as part of Member external Personal Development Plans (PDPs).

1. The timing of MLD sessions

31 out of 57 (54%) Brent Councillors undertook a one-to-one session and the completion of Councillor Personal Development Plan (PDP) in late 2022. This built on the 25% who participated in 2020 and the 45% that participated in the programme following the 2018 elections.

Members were asked when they preferred development activities to be arranged. The majority (21 Members) preferred an 'evening (6pm start)', followed by 13 votes for 'during the working week'. The former was preferred by members in full- or part-time work, whereas the latter was supported by those not in full time employment, were retired or had shift patterns of work.

Councillors in full time employment stated that they often found it difficult to get to a session by 6pm and there was a desire for the Council to offer hybrid sessions. However, it was recognised that the hybrid approach can be difficult to co-ordinate and facilitate.

2. Mode of learning

The majority of members surveyed expressed a slight preference for virtual learning via Teams or Zoom (23 votes) or internal briefings and workshops (22 votes). 15 votes were received for external seminars/conferences.

There was limited support for e-learning as a preferred method of learning delivery. Councillors saw it as an approach to complement rather than replace in-person or virtual sessions.

3. Feedback from training

Feedback is requested at the end of every session. Unfortunately we don't get very much of it (since September 2022, anything between 1-4 members have given feedback per training session), but more generally, we tend to find we get feedback where sessions went exceptionally well or exceptionally badly!

The good news is since September, we have received a scoring of at least 4/5 for the question "how do you rate this session overall".

We generally use feedback to gauge if members found sessions useful, and if they found external presenters helpful. If we did get poor feedback for a presenter, we would not use them again.

From 2023, the plan is solicit more feedback from online sessions by posting a request in Teams Chat at the end of every meeting.

Feedback from mandatory training sessions (May - June 2022)

Please take account of members who have jobs!	This was only appropriate for new Cllrs	Did not learn a huge amount sadly - we have done this training many times and know the area well	Trainer was excellent - engaging, clear,, concise, fielded questions well
Can we have handouts?	I work 9-5 – the timing of this session is very poor		Lorna delivered the session professionally and ensured participation from all
This was an excellent presentation		Can we have refreshments?	Should not be necessary to have a full session IMO. A document would do the job especially for returning members
Please provide food – ran out of biscuits!	This could have been held online	Would like training in spotting signs of various forms of abuse	

Requests for future training

We regularly get requests from Members for training (both individual training, group sessions and general feedback). However, not all requests may be granted, especially if seen as superfluous or not relevant to their councillorship – for instance “how to adjust to reality after councillorship is over” or “project management training” – but they will certainly be considered. We have listed training requests received below:

- Social model of disability and the cultural model of deafness
 - Working with colleagues with sight loss
 - Member session on NHS / Social Care / Public Health related issues
 - Public Speaking – Specialist training
 - Dementia training
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Future training (PDP results)

PDP results

Councillors were asked to prioritise their key development areas, and these are:

Skills

- Chairing skills and the ability to facilitate discussions (13 Councillors)
- Confidence in public speaking and making speeches (11 Councillors)
- Time Management (10 Councillors)

Knowledge

- Local Government Finance (12 Councillors)
 - Cabinet and Leadership development (10 Councillors)
 - Overview and scrutiny (8 Councillors)
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4. Support Received from officers (Member Services and political offices)

We surveyed all 21 newly elected Members in November 2022 on their thoughts about Member Services and their Group admin/political assistants. Comments were overwhelmingly positive, and the general consensus was that officers in the political offices and Member Services were all regarded as helpful and supportive. A few comments can be seen below:

Don't tend to use them. I tend to use the political/admin assts for all my queries.

I don't use Member Services at all. I just use the admin/political asst for all my queries as they just deal with it.

Extremely supportive. Michelle is very helpful and always gives me the answers I need.

I'm just in awe of all Brent staff. I'm always so impressed with all of you.

Everyone is very helpful – from Member Services to Committee staffers.

5. Member Services - feedback

The below is feedback received from all members in **2021/22**, and comments in green show how we have progressed this feedback.

Invite newly retired Cllrs the chance to mentor incoming Cllrs – they can pass their (recent) knowledge on, and new Cllrs have an extra level of support. **Since the May 2022 elections, we have offered to pair up all newly elected members with a re-elected or newly stood councillor, to act in a role of Buddy. The vast majority of new members have taken us up on this offer.**

Providing more specific training on topics such as budget, housing or innovative issues e.g. things that are thought-provoking or different to the norm. **We do provide training that is member-requested, and in late 2022, we sent out a request via the political offices to ask if members wanted very specific training on issues such as housing – we had no response. However, we remain open to specific asks as and when they come in.**

We need to consider how we work in future i.e. post pandemic **We can see the value in offering more sessions online, and we have continued to offer online sessions this as it remains popular and better attended than face-to-face sessions**

Offer mentoring from Cllrs in other Councils **We have reached out to other councils across London numerous times, but unfortunately there has been no take-up in offering a cross-Council Buddy/mentoring system.**

Provide press and comms training on dealing with interviews, social media, radio and TV. **We provided this for Cabinet members in autumn 2022, and are looking to schedule an all-member session in early Spring 2023**

What should Member Services start doing in 2023? (Page 1)

Feedback from newly elected members is as follows:

Would be useful to have a small pack of useful hints and tips e.g. using your calendar to manage your casework and when to chase things

Need pictures to go with the organogram otherwise they're just names on a page. Six months on, I'm still figuring this out.

We could trial out a no-phones policy in FTF meetings

Would be good if we can have a briefing pack which specifically covers how we do things e.g. if you have a housing issue raised by a resident – here is the problem, here is how you escalate it, here are helpful support in the borough, here are solutions etc. if you can include some useful anonymised actual cases, that would be useful too. Ideally both straightforward cases but also complex cases or cases with no solutions.

Can depts. provide a six-monthly update on things they have achieved e.g. 500 trees planted, 676 new homes built, introduced new green waste collection. Helpful to Cllrs as can help them share Brent's successes to residents, but also useful to know what depts are focusing on

I would like to have a list of Cabinet Members and their responsibilities

It would be good to get specific guidance or training on the rights of private renters e.g. on s21 or private renters rights etc.

I wish we could talk to an adviser in each key department e.g. housing just to understand how things work, and options.

What should Member Services start doing in 2023? (Page 2)

Each member should be issued with a practical induction list e.g. how do you work the printers, where are the toilets, how do you find IT, what can I ask the admin/political assistant to do etc

Can we get some best practice sharing amongst Members? So if someone is really good at social media or Yammer or presenting, can they offer to present their skills to other Members? This could complement existing officer and external training.

Can we ensure Committee and other meetings start at a time that is also convenient for those who work F/T? In an ideal world, FTF meetings should not start earlier than 6.30pm. We have FTF meetings that start at 6pm, and pre-meetings that start at 5pm – I don't understand how I'm supposed to attend these meetings, and get here on time when I finish at work at 5pm.

I don't understand the reasoning behind why decisions are and are not made. I would like to work with Directors to improve Brent, but don't feel like I can do this.

Would like an officer allocated to each Ward to support Members.

The dynamics of certain things confuse me e.g. with Housing and ASBOs. If we can have something in writing from each of these teams on how to resolve certain very specific things and how get things done, that would be helpful.

Training is useful, but it tends to be quite general. Would appreciate a short session on granular details too for key issues in each Dept.

What should Member Services start doing in 2023? (Page 3)

I can't do any sessions during the day - especially lunchtime sessions, as I work. Why can't all sessions be held in the evening?

Can we record all sessions and put them on a central repository somewhere? It's useful to refer back to training especially if you're forgotten or unsure.

As a sub for committees, you often get papers the night before and don't have time to read or absorb them, so you just sit quietly in meetings. This is not useful or helpful to anyone, and more notice should be given.

I'm a member of a Committee and it's very paper-heavy, but often I don't get papers until two days before the meeting. Can we have papers a week earlier? There's a lot to digest, so this would make life easier.

Rather than have mandatory sessions here and there, it would have been more effective to do all the mandatory sessions over two weekdays. Lock the date, tell Members well in advance, and from an admin p.o.v. it's great as you just get to tick people off for vast chunks of training all at once. I'd much rather take two days of A/L than give up multiple evenings.

I don't like the larger meetings as it doesn't give Members the chance to ask questions or speak freely - we should have training in smaller groups

It's still a grey area for me about which events and training I need to attend. Is it all compulsory? Do I need to attend everything? I'm not quite sure.

Can we build in networking when we have FTF sessions? Sometimes it feels you come in, do a session, and then everyone rushes off. Would be nice to chat and connect with colleagues too.