

	<b>Audit and Standards Advisory Committee</b> 3 December 2025
	<b>Report from the Director of Law</b>
	<b>Lead Member - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance &amp; Resources</b> <b>(Councillor Mili Patel)</b>
<b>Standards Report (including Q2 update on gifts and hospitality)</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	Two: Appendix A: Gifts & Hospitality Register (Qtr. 2) Appendix B: Extract of reform measures arising from the Consultation outcome "Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England – consultation results and government response, November 2025"
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	<b>Marsha Henry</b> , Director of Law 020 8937 4078 <a href="mailto:Marsha.henry@brent.gov.uk">Marsha.henry@brent.gov.uk</a> .  <b>Biancia Robinson</b> , Principal Constitutional, Governance & Finance Lawyer 0208 937 1544 <a href="mailto:Biancia.robinson@brent.gov.uk">Biancia.robinson@brent.gov.uk</a> .

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee on gifts and hospitality registered by Members. The report also updates the Committee in respect of the Consultation outcome “Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England and Government’s response.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Committee note the contents of the report.

## **3.0 Detail**

### Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

- 3.1. The reviewing and maintenance of high standards of member conduct supports the delivery of the borough plan by promoting confidence in the operation and good governance of the council.

### Gifts & Hospitality

- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 Gifts and hospitality received by Members are published on the Council’s website and open to inspection at the Brent Civic Centre.
- 3.4 For quarter two of 2025/26, two councillors have declared gifts and hospitality as being received, this is set out in further detail in Appendix A, together with the details of the receiving Councillor. The Committee will recall from its last meeting, that one gift is of low value.
- 3.5 The Committee will recall that hospitality accepted by the Mayor in their civic role are recorded separately and published on the Council’s website.

### Member Training Attendance

- 3.6 At this Committee’s request reports updating it on the attendance records for Member’s in relation to mandatory training sessions has become a standard reporting item. Refresher mandatory training for all members has now completed and were happy to report that all members have completed their Data Protection training.
- 3.7 The Committee will know that:
- 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 ordinarily published and approved in the Council calendar at the May Annual Council meeting.
- c) All internal training sessions attended by Members are published on the Council's Website and on individual Member profile pages.
- d) For face-to-face training sessions, reminders are sent via email, calendar invitations, and text messages and, on some occasions, direct telephone calls to Members. The same reminder process is employed for re-run(s) of sessions, where applicable, to take account of personal circumstances like work commitments and childcare arrangements etc.
- e) During 2025 the Committee will receive regular updates on Members who have not completed the mandatory training sessions.

Government Response to Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England consultation

- 3.8 This Committee will recall considering a draft response to the current Government's consultation on potential changes to the current Standards regime at its meeting in February 2025. The consultation sought views on a reform of the standards and conduct framework for local government by seeking to introduce "a clearer and consistently applied standards and conduct framework for local government in England".
- 3.9 The consultation garnered 2,092 respondents and The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government has now published the consultation results and Governments response. The details of which can be found here [Strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England – consultation results and government response - GOV.UK](#)
- 3.10 The most significant changes appears to be the imposing of sanctions to suspend a councillor found to have breached the code of conduct, withholding of allowances from elected members who commit serious breaches of their code of conduct and the ability to disqualify a councillor who has been subject to two suspensions. This change appears to address the previous "lack of teeth in the standards regime" which was criticised by the Committee on Standards in Public life in its 2012/13 Annual Report that "We do not think these (sanctions) are sufficient" and in its 2019 Report that "this lack of enforcement authority is a weakness in the system, which may also deter genuine concerns being raised". A table summarising the Government's response to the consultation results, the detail likely to be included, and a commentary of the potential implications for the London Borough of Brent has been attached as Appendix B.
- 3.11 The Committee will note, until further detail and legislation are passed by the government there is no further action to be undertaken by the council.

#### **4.0 Financial Considerations**

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

## **5.0 Legal Considerations**

- 5.1 Pursuant to the Localism Act 2011, the Council has to have arrangements in place to deal with any allegations of failure to comply with the code of conduct and must appoint an Independent Person whose views are sought and taken into account by the council before it makes its decision on an allegation that it has decided to investigate.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 The attendance at mandatory training sessions is a means to achieve this and a requirement pursuant to the Brent Members' Code of Conduct as set out in Part 5, of the council's Constitution.

## **6.0 Equity, diversity and inclusion Considerations**

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

## **7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

- 7.1 As set out in the body of the report.

## **8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)**

- 8.1 Not applicable.

## **9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

- 8.1 None.

## **10.0 Communication Considerations**

- 9.1 None.

### **Report sign off:**

**Marsha Henry**  
Director of Law