

<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p><b>Standards Advisory Committee</b></p> <p>Thursday, 30 January 2020</p>	
<p><b>Report of:</b> Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Open (Unrestricted)</p>
<p><b>Development of the Members Hub and Members Bulletin</b></p>	

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services, Kerry Middleton, Head of External Communications, Robert Wilson, Internal Communications Officer
<b>Wards affected</b>	(All Wards);

### Executive Summary

The Standards Advisory Committee has a role in reviewing how the Council ensures good standards are maintained in respect of the work of Councillors.

Key tools the Council uses to engage with Members (Mayor, Councillors and Co-optees) include the Members Hub and the Member email Bulletin.

This report presents for comment work being undertaken by officers to continuously review and improve those tools to ensure the best resources are provided to support Members.

### Recommendations:

The Standards Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. Note and comment on the contents of the report.

#### 1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

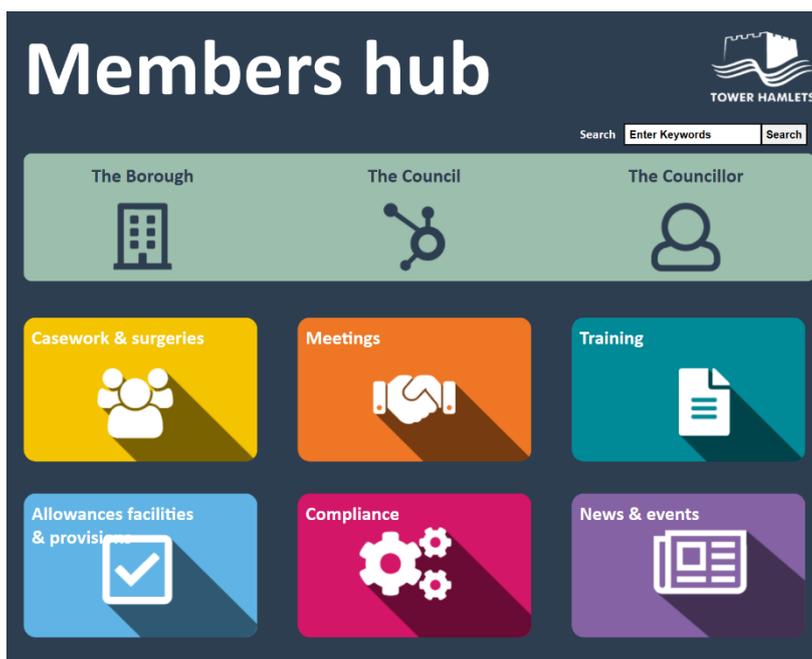
- 1.1 This is a noting report to allow the Standards Advisory Committee the opportunity to discuss ideas around improvements that could be made to the Members Hub and Members Bulletin information tools.

#### 2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Committee are free to propose alternative options to those set out in the report.

### 3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 The Members Hub and Member Bulletin are two of the best methods the Council has to provide information and advice to Members (Mayor/Councillors and Co-Opted Members). The Hub is a website specifically focussed on Members and provides information and guides on the Council, Training notes, Casework and much more.
- 3.2 The Members Hub website was launched for the 2018 intake of Councillors and so is a new service. Tower Hamlets is one of the first Councils in London to offer this kind of bespoke site for Members and officers from a number of authorities have visited or otherwise sought information about how it has been put together.
- 3.3 The intention is to have a space where detailed guidance can be provided which Members have easy access to anytime they need it. The site is split into clear, self-contained sections including on training (providing documents from Member training sessions and briefings), casework and surgeries (for example health and safety at surgeries guides) and the Council (corporate structure and contacts).



- 3.4 The Hub has been specifically designed to work with the iPads distributed to Members and is made up of large icons and simple layouts. A shortcut to the Hub was set up on all iPads.

#### **Review of the Members Hub**

- 3.5 Whilst the Hub was launched well and seen as a good piece of work, it is important to keep it under review and always look for opportunities to improve content and design.

3.6 An initial review of text content has taken place over the summer which has refreshed information and added further content. For example:

- The page that previously held information about the Chief Executive and Corporate Leadership Team was expanded to include the Mayor and Cabinet.
- Photos were added and a link beneath to details of their area of responsibility.
- Pages are being developed to provide information for Co-Opted Members and access to forms they may need.
- Guidance note has been developed to assist members in completing their Register of Interest forms
- Links to information on documents are being replaced with links to websites where possible so that information is kept up to date.
- A 'Helpful Hints & Highlights' guide is being developed to bring different areas of the Hub to councillors' attention, as well as new features
- Factsheets were created on the areas that most member enquiries are raised about such as parking and ASB, and added to the casework tab to help councillors have a quick reference when assisting residents.
- Exploring the best way to provide archive information from the Members Bulletin.

3.7 There are three particular areas of focus for the next stages of this work:

- Site Design – looking at how the site should look on different types of devices and looking at how to highlight new content.
- Active content – how to bring in automatic information updates such as feeds from useful Council and other sources (such as Comms and Committee meetings).
- Partner Content – to what extent can the Council's Partners be engaged with the support content.

#### Site Design

3.8 The Members Hub is designed to work with iPads in particular but will also work ok through any other access tool such as desktop computers or mobile phones but it is not optimised for those hardware options. The software system used does allow for different designs/layouts to be automatically loaded when the site is accessed through different mediums. It is felt this is worth exploring to see if it can improve 'ease of use' for Members.

3.9 Another related issue is that when a Member accesses the site it isn't obvious if there is any new content that is worth exploring. Whilst key additions can be highlighted to Members via the Bulletin it would be helpful if officers were able to highlight important new updates via the front page of the site.

## Active Content

- 3.10 All the information on the current site is added and updated manually. This works fine for content such as Training presentations but it does mean the site is quite static. The Council produces lots of content such as press releases, committee updates, web stories and more and many can potentially be fed into the Hub automatically without officers having to duplicate effort. In theory the same can be done for information from partner websites as well.
- 3.11 A small example of the above is how on the front of the Democratic Services part of the website is an automatically updated list (with links) of the 'latest updates' to that part of the site.

## Partner Content

- 3.12 In general the Hub is focussed on content provided by the Council. Officers are exploring whether partners such as RSLs may have useful information that can also be held on the Hub to provide wider value to Members and to the Partners as they would have a new way of reaching Members.

## Review of the Member Bulletin

- 3.13 The Member Bulletin is a weekly (Friday) email which is sent out to all Members. It sets out communications stories, committee dates and general items of interest to Members.



- 3.14 The above is an example from December and as can be seen from the Issue Number (Issue 540), this is a well-established method of communicating with Members.

3.15 However, opening rates are low which suggests more could be done to make this attractive to Members.

	opens (84)	%		cllrs	%
20-Dec	17	20%		5	11%
13-Dec	21	25%		14	30%
06-Dec	20	24%		6	13%
29-Nov	7	8%		3	7%
22-Nov	8	10%		2	4%
15-Nov	8	10%		4	9%
08-Nov	12	14%		3	7%
01-Nov	14	17%		5	11%

3.16 Officers are exploring a number of options for improving the bulletin including:

- Generally refreshing the look and feel but also seeing if it can include pictures, video and other more immediate media.
- Better linking to the Member Hub so that long/detailed information can be held there with headlines/summaries in the bulletin.
- Looking to broaden the sources of information including using feeds from selected locations.

### **Member Survey**

3.17 An online survey is being prepared which will be circulated to all Members to seek their views on how they would like to see the Hub and Bulletin improved and updated.

### **Conclusion**

3.18 The Standards Advisory Committee are asked to review and comment on the above to help guide this project. Progress on the project can be reported back to the Committee at an appropriate later date.

## **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Providing good quality information to all Members helps enable them to perform their role more effectively.

## **5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,

- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.
- Data Protection / Privacy Impact Assessment.

5.2 Members have an important role to play in supporting residents. This results in a number of potential compliance issues such as around GDPR and data protection. The Member Hub provides information and guidance to all Members on how to manage data to comply with these issues.

## **6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

6.1 This is a noting report to discuss ideas around improvements that could be made to the Members Hub and Members Bulletin information tools. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

## **7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

7.1 There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report .

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## **Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents**

### **Linked Report**

- None

### **Appendices**

- None

### **Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)**

#### **List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report**

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- None

#### **Officer contact details for documents:**

N/A