Non-Executive Report of the: **Standards Advisory Committee** Thursday, 10 February 2022	TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	**Classification:** Open (Unrestricted)
Member Induction Programme 2022 - update	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services
Wards affected	(All Wards);

Executive Summary

In readiness for the May 2022 local elections, the Council is preparing a Member Induction Programme for all Members (both new and returning).

The draft plan is undergoing extensive consultation with officers and Members and has been worked up in reference to plans at other London authorities.

Following the earlier presentation of the draft Induction Plan, the Standards Advisory Committee is invited to review the current version and make any final comments before the Plan is presented to the Corporate Leadership Team and the General Purposes Committee for final sign-off.

Recommendations:

The Standards Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. Review and comment on the report and attached final draft Induction Plan and propose any amendments as required.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

1.1 The Standards Advisory Committee's role in supporting Member Learning and Development includes a role in reviewing plans for the Member Induction Programme for after the 2022 local elections.

1.2 The Member Induction programme plays a vital part in ensuring that Members are able to undertake their roles under the constitution and it is therefore important to ensure that Members have a say in its development.

2. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

2.1 The Committee are welcome to make any suggestions as to the content and nature of the Member Induction Programme.

3. **DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

3.1 Planning is well underway for the Member Induction Programme 2022, with a cross directorate working group set up to identify the areas that need to be covered. Councillors, officers and the Standards Advisory and General Purposes Committees have also been consulted for their feedback and suggestions.

3.2 Key criteria for developing the plan include:

- Ensuring statutory requirements are met quickly.
- Giving directorates an opportunity to introduce themselves and their services to Members.
- Creating a timetable that provides information efficiently without overloading Members with too much information too early.
- Ensuring the exercise is valuable to Members and isn't just about the Council passing on data/information.
- Considering how new technology can help support the programme in ways that were not possible in 2018.

3.3 The key elements of the 2018 programme and current good practice around member induction will inform the programme for this year.

3.4 In general, feedback from 2018 was good and it is intended to use the 2018 plan as the basis for this year. The plan will though be updated and the following have already been highlighted as beneficial changes:

- Discussions and training with the London Member Development Network has highlighted that best practice is to not rush to include all the seminars and briefings in the first few weeks as it is very difficult for new Councillors to take in all that information so quickly. It is seen as much better to provide the absolute essentials straight away and then gradually work through the rest of the content over the next few months.
- New technology not available in 2018 means that it will now be possible to run briefings and seminars virtually through Teams rather than always requiring attendance at the town hall. This should help to encourage attendance and better fit in with the Councillors' other commitments.
- The plan considers those sessions which would be relevant for co-opted Members.
- The introduction of sessions led by Members is being looked at, including an 'introduction to being a councillor' seminar run by

experienced councillors as well as a 'meet the Mayor' opportunity for new Members to talk to the Mayor and gain a better understanding of how they engage with the Elected Mayor position.

Covid-19 Pandemic

3.5 Any potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is being monitored but for the moment the plans work on the basis that key parts of the programme will be able to take place in person at the town hall.

Preparing the plan / consultation

3.6 A cross-directorate working group of officers is leading the review of the Induction Plan. This groups is meeting regularly and is currently working through different aspects of the plan until everything is covered.

3.7 In addition, feedback has been sought from Member and reports are being presented to DLTs and CLT. CLT in particular play an important role in reviewing and signing off the Induction Plan.

3.8 Feedback from the Member Seminars and Standards Advisory Committee: a lot of useful feedback was provided at the Member seminars which will be incorporated into the final plan. Highlights include:

- Strong support for spacing out the seminar programme. There was also some support for holding a weekend of sessions but overall the preference was to spread out the programme.
- Important that some functional training (e.g. in how to submit Member Enquiries) is provided straight away.
- Think about the information made available in advance of the election such as a rough guide to being a councillor. Think about expectation management.
- Think about running basic 'how to' sessions early and then follow up with 'how to do it well' type sessions later. A session on Councillor safety should also be planned for early in the programme.
- Ensure Public Health and Adult Services are properly covered.
- Hybrid training may be the most useful option
- How to best keep Members in touch with how services operate, maybe include 'shopfloor' visits to help them understand how services operate as opposed to just seeing outcomes.
- Think about how to use Members to help present sessions.

3.9 Feedback from Directorates and Members has been particularly useful in refreshing the series of seminars planned as the main part of the programme.

Elements of the Induction Plan

3.10 The Induction Plan has a number of elements:

- Admin and setup – IDs cards, laptops, emails, website, forms, etc

- Statutory – Register of Interests, Code of Conduct, certain committee training, Acceptance of Office etc.
- Orientation and Introductions – welcome evening, meet CLT, Mayor etc
- Training and Seminars – the largest section involves the seminar programme and training on topics such as ICT and using the Member Enquiries portal. This programme will run from May through to November.

3.11 The Appendix to this report sets out the current draft Induction plan covering the seminar programme and the main administrative actions required.

Training and Seminars

3.12 The Induction Plan includes three broad types of training and seminar sessions:

Statutory Training	Member-focussed development	Information Gathering
Training required under our statutory and constitutional requirements. Also includes sessions to fill in Register of Interest and similar forms.	Training looking at how Members can best perform their many roles.	Sessions set up to help Members learn how the Council operates its key services and the main goals/issues faced by those services.
Examples include Ethics and Probity training and committee specific sessions	Examples include How decisions are taken, Member Enquiries, ICT (including collection of equipment), Communications & Social Media	Examples include Housing, Social Care, Health.
Training led by relevant officers. External trainers used where useful.	A focus on ensuring a variety of training leads including external experts, senior Councillors, etc.	Sessions supported by the relevant services. Where relevant the Cabinet Member will also be asked to be present.
Mandatory for all Members (or Mandatory for all Members of the specific Committee)	Mandatory for new Members – other Members encouraged to attend.	All Members encouraged to attend.
Full List: • How democracy works (committee procedures, decision making, interests etc)	Full List: • ICT and collecting equipment (plus additional training if required) • Session to sign	Full List: • Public Health • Planning and Infrastructure • Schools and

• Ethics and Probity • Committee Specific Training • Corporate Parenting and Prevent • Safeguarding Adults • Promoting Equalities and Diversity	forms, get ID cards etc. • So…you've become a Councillor (and follow up session) • MEs, Information Governance etc. (and follow-up session) • How policy is developed / what Members can and can't do • Chair's Training (mandatory for Chairs) • What is Scrutiny (and follow up good scrutiny sessions) • Council Finance (two sessions) • Media, Communications and Social Media (including online safety) • Outside Bodies	Education • Performance and Partnerships • Housing • Waste and Street Cleaning • Civil Contingencies • Customer Services • Regeneration • Adult Social Care and Community Safety • Employment Support • Highways, Transport and Parking • Climate Emergency • Community Buildings and Capital Programme • Workforce • Culture and Sport

3.13 Timings – the timetable has been established with the aim that, at least after the initial training, two topics are chosen each week with them both being available during the day and evening. For example, during the day on Tuesday and in the evening on Thursday. A different course would then operate the reverse (i.e. evening Tuesday, daytime Thursday). This gives Members some flexibility on when to attend and also means that a member can complete the training programme whilst only devoting one day a week to training.

3.14 For the second half of the programme most of the training is 'information gathering' so Members could choose to only attend the courses that were of interest to them. This will help balance workload as committee and other responsibilities start to increase.

3.15 Committee Calendar – the new Committee calendar begins following the Annual Meeting on 25 May. However, where possible, first meetings of committees have been moved to later June/July to allow Members time to familiarise themselves with their new role before committee responsibilities fully take over. The calendar is being prepared alongside the Member Induction planning to try and avoid difficult clashes we possible.

Guides, Member Hub and Member Bulletin

3.16 The Members Hub is being updated ready for the elections and will perform the role of an electronic 'Handbook' to all Members. It will include key information on how the Council operates, contact details, guidance on surgeries and similar.

3.17 The weekly Member Bulletin email will include reminders about upcoming seminars as well as highlighting key areas of information on the Hub and other useful notes. The content in the bulletin can easily be adjusted depending on feedback and to react to any issues that arise.

Feedback and next steps

3.18 Having reviewed the content of this report and appendices, the Committee are asked to comment on the plans set out. Reports will then be presented to the Corporate Leadership Team and the General Purposes Committee to complete the process.

3.19 In advance of the elections, all candidates will be written to and given information on how the induction programme will take place as well as links to relevant web-based information on the role of Councillor.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 A strong Member Induction programme is important in helping to ensure that Members from all communities and backgrounds are able to undertake their role effectively.

4.2 Specific training will also be included to help Members consider equalities issues whilst undertaking their roles including when taking decisions or dealing with constituents.

4.3 Following the election, Democratic Services will work with the political groups to ensure appropriate attendance at all the relevant sessions.

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   There is a Best Value risk to the Council and a risk to its decision making and leadership capabilities if the Member Induction plan is not effectively.

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

6.1   Any associated costs will be minimal and accommodated within existing budgets.

7.   **COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES**

7.1   Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits local authorities to do anything which is calculated to facilitate the discharge of any of their functions. The matters referred to in this report comply with the above legislation.

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Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report
- None

Appendices
- Appendix 1 – Draft Seminar Programme 2022

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