

Non-Executive Report of the: Standards Advisory Committee Thursday, 23 June 2022	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Open (Unrestricted)
Member Attendance Update 2021-22	

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

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on Member and co-optee attendance at formal Council and Committee meetings.

Recommendations:

The Standards Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. Review and comment on the report.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 This is a noting report to enable the Committee to undertake its role monitoring Member behaviour in relation to the Code of Conduct.
- 1.2 Determine whether to introduce an attendance expectation for Co-opted Members.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 This is a noting report.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

- 3.1 Councillors and Co-optees will attend a number of formal Council and Committee meetings as part of their different roles. The number of meetings will vary significantly depending on the role of each Member with some required to attend many Committees, whilst others may only be on Council.

- 3.2 Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 requires a Member of a Local Authority to attend at least one meeting of that Authority within a six month period, in order to avoid being disqualified as a Councillor.
- 3.3 This requirement can be overcome through a report to Council which can agree an extension for one or more Councillors for any appropriate reasons. Over the last year, one such extension has been granted.
- 3.4 Member attendance details are set out in the minutes to the meeting. They are also listed on the website under each meeting as well as being available through individual stats reports for each Councillor/Mayor/Co-optee.
- 3.5 As a result of the introduction of hybrid meetings, new attendance statuses have been set up to indicate someone has joined a meeting remotely. Remote attendance is included in the statistics in Appendix 1 for Committee Members for 2021-22 due to the impact of Covid but it should be noted that joining virtually does not qualify as formal attendance and they would not have been able to vote. It is proposed to split virtual attendance out in this summary appendix for 2022-23 when Covid will no longer be a factor.
- 3.6 A number of status indicators are used in relation to Member attendance.:
- Expected – the Member is expected to attend this meeting (usually a meeting which has not yet taken place)
 - Present as Expected – the Member attended the meeting
 - Present as Expected, virtual – the Member attended the meeting virtually
 - Present as Substitute – the Member attended as a substitute for the regular attendee
 - In Attendance – the Member has attended a meeting where they are not on the Committee itself. This could be to give evidence/make a submission or simply to observe.
 - In Attendance, virtually – the Member has attended virtually a meeting where they are not on the Committee itself. This could be to give evidence/make a submission or simply to observe.
 - Apologies – apologies for absence were received on behalf of the Member either in advance or at the meeting
 - Absent – the Member did not attend and no apologies were received

Attendance Recording 2021-22

- 3.7 The appendices attached to this report set out the summary attendance of councillors and co-optees (Appendix 1) and more detailed analysis (Appendix 2) for the period May 2021 to May 2022. The data reflects how many times individuals have been expected and on how many of those occasions they have been present (this is also expressed as a percentage). This period was chosen as it fits with the normal municipal year of a local authority.
- 3.8 Throughout this period the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel

Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 were no longer in operation having expired on 7 May 2021. The Regulations had effectively allowed a committee member to be considered present without being physically present, as long as they could hear and be heard.

- 3.9 For the 2021-22 municipal year meetings at LBTH were held in 'hybrid' form. In this form, members of committees can participate remotely in a committee meeting but cannot be considered present (so for example they do not count towards quorum requirements and they cannot vote). Whilst both physical and remote committee members may play a full and active role in any given meeting, only those in physical attendance were able to vote and the different attendance types were noted in the minutes of the meeting.

Co-optee Attendance

- 3.10 It has been noted that, whilst it is expected that Co-opted Members should attend all meetings of their Committees, there are no expectations set out. The Committee are asked to consider whether they would like to formally consult the other Committees that contain Co-opted Members to see if they would support an expectation threshold. For example, that where a Co-opted Member fails to attend at least half the meetings of their Committee in a municipal year the Committee review their continuing Membership.
- 3.11 This expectation could be set out in the Code of Conduct, the Constitution or somewhere else appropriate.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None specifically arising from this noting report.

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 None specifically arising from this report although monitoring by the Standards Advisory Committee helps ensure statutory rules are being effectively followed.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

- 6.1 This report recommends that the Standards Advisory Committee note Member attendance for the period May 2021 to May 2022 as reported in Appendix 1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The Localism Act 2011 introduced arrangements to govern the Standards of Conduct for local authority members and co-optees. Seven guiding principles of conduct are set out:- selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty and leadership.
- 7.1 The information in this report supports these guiding principles and, in particular, enhances performance and openness in relation to members' performance of their Council duties.
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Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- None

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Summary Attendance (Mayor, Councillors, Co-Optees) – Co-opted Member details to follow
- Appendix 2 – Detailed Member Attendance (Mayor, Councillors)

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