

Non-Executive Report of the: Standards Advisory Committee Wednesday, 15 February 2023	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Open (Unrestricted)
Member Learning and Development Update	

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

Executive Summary

The Learning and Development Programme is the Council's professional development programme for Members. It provides access to training in relation to personal skills, professional development, council policies and local issues.

The Standards Advisory Committee is provided with annual updates to allow it to review and comment on the programme as part of its role in ensuring Members are able to properly undertake their role as set out in the Member Code of Conduct.

In particular this report looks back at the Member Induction Programme which ran from the May local elections to the autumn and looks forward to plans for the Learning and Development programme over the next year.

The Committee is asked to review and comment on this update report.

Recommendations:

The Standards Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. Review and comment on the report.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 Member Learning and Development is provided to enhance a Councillor's knowledge and skills to ensure they are equipped to undertake their role.
- 1.2 The Council's Constitution notes that the Standards Advisory Committee is responsible for ensuring high standards of Member conduct which is facilitated by the provision of a good quality Member Learning and Development programme.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

2.1 This is a noting report. The committee may wish to propose alternative learning and development programme arrangements.

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 The Council's ongoing Member Learning and Development Programme continues to provide opportunities for Members to expand on their knowledge and keep up to date with changes.

3.2 These opportunities are generally in the form of:

- Committee or specific training targeted at certain councillors such as those on development or licensing committees, or Scrutiny.
- Training and development sessions scheduled as part of the annual learning and development plan, or identified as a training area during the year, offered to most/all Members
- Member briefing sessions on policy areas/developments usually offered to all Members and provided ad-hoc when required.
- Programmes run by the LGA (or other external bodies) for councillors, often free of charge covering a variety of areas. These are advertised in the Members' Bulletin so Members can let us know if they are interested in attending.

3.3 Following the local elections in May 2022, a Member Induction programme was also offered with the particular aim of introducing new Members to their roles and the various services provided by the Council.

3.4 This report looks back at the Member Induction Programme and looks forward at plans for the Learning and Development Programme over the next year.

Member Induction Programme 2022

3.5 The Member Induction Programme, as presented to the Standards Advisory Committee on 10 February 2022, took place from the local elections on 5 May 2022 through to November 2022.

3.6 The first step took place before the election when all candidates were provided with initial Member Induction information and a timetable of early sessions. This was also provided at the count, where successful candidates were provided with a pack which included the new Member Code of Conduct, requests for initial information and a another copy of the timetable for the first part of the Member Induction Programme.

3.7 The programme itself kicked off with a Welcome Evening at the town hall led by the Chief Executive and where Members could meet senior managers from all the Council's directorates.

- 3.8 The training programme then began, starting with key training such as those on 'how democracy works', the Code of Conduct (mandatory training), the Member Enquiry process and how Council meetings worked.
- 3.9 Through June to November the programme then took in sessions on the various council services and potential areas of interest. The full programme is set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

Attendance and engagement

- 3.10 Initial attendance was good with significant numbers of Members coming along to early sessions and good feedback was received. However, as the programme moved on, attendance tended to drop off. For some sessions online training was explored to encourage take-up and in a number of cases in the autumn sessions were cancelled as they did not have a high enough confirmed attendance to make it worth while running a session. However, where possible, information was provided on the Members Hub so that interested Councillors could still read up on the content of the session.
- 3.11 Attendance details for the Induction Programme are set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.12 Feedback forms were available at most sessions and recorded. Initially good numbers of feedback forms were received and a summary of the findings is presented in Appendix 2. Generally, feedback was good with most sessions receiving an average overall score of over 4.5/5. Some Members left specific comments to help improve future sessions and these are also set out in the Appendix.
- 3.13 Later seminars had lower attendances and low/if any survey returns so these have been left out of the summary in the appendix as there are not enough returns to draw conclusions from them.

Previous Member Learning and Development Training Attendance

- 3.14 Appendix 3 sets out attendance data from the previous learning and development and member seminar programmes since the last update to the Committee (October 2021 to May 2022).

Member Induction and Learning and Development Survey

- 3.15 At the conclusion of the induction period, a survey was sent to all Members to collate their views of the induction programme and to help with preparation of the upcoming Learning and Development Programme.
- 3.16 The request to complete the survey was circulated in the Member Bulletin, via the group advisors and direct by Member Support. Twelve responses were received. Details of the responses are set out in Appendix 4 to the report.

- 3.17 Overall feedback was good with an average score of 4.25/5 for ‘how much value has the overall induction programme been to you’.

Conclusions

- 3.18 Feedback from Members and officers generally show that the Induction programme was effective and useful to Members. In particular, Members supported having an extended Induction rather than pushing everything into the early weeks. One area of focus for future learning and development (and Member Seminars) is to expand the options for the types of training delivered to include options such as pre-recorded videos and looking at the best way to mix in person and online training as appropriate.

Learning and Development Programme 2023-24

- 3.19 As the Induction Programme has now concluded it is time to build on that to develop the longer-term Learning and Development Programme.
- 3.20 Whilst the Induction focuses on information that Members need to know straight away, including core statutory training and information about council services and processes, the Learning and Development Programme has a greater focus on development of skills useful to Members.
- 3.21 The programme runs alongside Member Seminar sessions run by the Directorates which highlight service issues and general information as required.
- 3.22 The Learning and Development Programme looks to offer around 6-8 sessions a year and these will often be run by external trainers depending on the topic.
- 3.23 Following the feedback from the survey above, discussions with other councils and looking at what has previously been offered, the proposed list of planned training for the next year is as follows:

Training Name	Notes
Public Speaking	
Chairing Skills	Two sessions will be offered, the first looking at the Constitution, power of the Chair and similar whilst the second will look at more general chairing skills.
Managing Casework / resident issues	This will explore how to manage residents and their issues rather than the specifics of the Council's casework system.
Community Leadership/Engagement/Influencing Skills	
Dealing with abuse and intimidation	

Advance Computer Skills	This may be delivered through the existing online courses or something new developed.
Effective Scrutiny	

3.24 This will also be supplemented by courses aimed at specific Members or groups of Members if/when identified.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 An effective Member Learning and Development Programme is important to support Members from all backgrounds being able to effectively undertake their work.

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 specific to this report.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 Learning and Development for Members is provided within existing budgets and staffing resources.

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 proposed in this report comply with this legislation.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- Previous Member Learning and Development Reports to the Committee (usually in the autumn of each year)

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Member Induction 2022 - Attendance Statistics
- Appendix 2 – Member Induction 2022 – Feedback Forms
- Appendix 3 – Member Learning and Development 2021-22 – Attendance Statistics
- Appendix 4 – Member Learning and Development Survey

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