


Non-Executive Report of the: Standards Advisory Committee Wednesday, 26 June 2024	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Linda Walker, Interim Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Open (Unrestricted)
Progress against relevant LGA Peer Review Actions	

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

Executive Summary

During the second half of 2023, the LGA undertook a Peer Review of the Council. The report and the Council's initial action plan in response to the findings were published in December.

At its last meeting, the Standards Advisory Committee requested an update on progress against any actions which were relevant to the work of the Committee. This brief report sets those out for the Committee's information and comment.

Recommendations:

The Standards Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. Note and comment on the update.

1. **REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS**

- 1.1 This report is presented at the request of the Committee in order for them to monitor actions that relate to the Committee's areas of responsibility.

2. **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 None provided as the report is a discussion report presented at the request of the Committee.

3. **DETAILS OF THE REPORT**

- 3.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) were invited in by the Council to conduct a Peer Review in the autumn of 2023. The main review took place in

September and the report, and the Council’s action plan in response were published in December.

3.2 The report had recommendations in a number of areas set out under the following headers:

- Strategic vision
- Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- Performance management
- Workforce strategy
- Mayor’s Office
- Internal governance
- Working with partners
- Grant allocation
- Transfer of property to third parties
- Cabinet Member responsibilities
- Membership of committees
- Member development
- Diversity
- Annual Governance Statement
- Outstanding accounts
- Organisational capacity
- Responsiveness
- ‘People First’

3.3 The full report and the Council’s response are available on the Council website at https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/council_and_democracy/Peer-Review-Feedback-report.aspx.

3.4 Whilst most of the Recommendations (and responses in the Council’s Action Plan) are the responsibility of the Executive or other Council Committees. There are a couple of actions that relate to the work of the Standards Advisory Committee and in particular its role supporting Member Learning and Development.

3.5 The table below shows the two LGA Recommendations with direct relevance to the work of the Standards Advisory Committee. Note that for Recommendation 13 only the actions relevant to this Committee are listed.

Peer Review Recommendation	Proposed Action	Progress/Activity
Recommendation 12: Member Development The existing member training and development	The existing member development programme for those in senior	The Member Learning and Development Programme is being expanded. Council agreed an increased budget in February 2024 to allow for funding to cover mentoring, coaching or other identified needs for individual Councillors. The new Individual Member Training Budgets were launched in May through the Member Bulletin and South-East Employers

<p>offer should be strengthened with support initially focussed on Cabinet members and committee chairs.</p>	<p>positions will be further developed to include opportunities of external mentoring.</p>	<p>recruited to support and manage the process. The groups are being asked to prioritise their key Members for this project.</p> <p>Once the types of mentoring each Member would like is identified through the PDP a potential mentor will be proposed and progressed. [Note - if a Member identifies a need for an alternative such as a coach then that will be progressed instead.]</p>
<p>Recommendation 13: Diversity - Given the composition of the ruling administration, consideration should be given to how the voices of women and those from different backgrounds are directly influencing policy through their lived experience. It is recommended that the council actively promote the LGA's 'Be a Councillor Campaign' to promote the opportunity for women and people from underrepresented groups across the borough.</p>	<p>Action in relation to the Be A Councillor campaign.</p>	<p>Whilst the above is progressing, officers are exploring options for mentors and others who may have particular skills/experience of value to our Members.</p> <p>An initial coaching pilot is now underway and the intention is to being similar mentoring pilots over the summer and build from there.</p> <p>The Council has run initial Be A Councillor information campaigns including creating an initial web page (https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/council_and_democracy/Be-a-councillor.aspx) and advertising it through the website, town hall pop up banners, screens and similar.</p> <p>The council also ran a survey through May asking women to say if they were interested in standing and setting out what barriers may still exist to them working as a councillor. The survey results will be analysed in particular to see if the support the Council offers to Members should be enhanced in any way (for example around childcare, parental leave etc).</p> <p>The Council is also planning two in-person events to encourage people to consider standing for election. The first will be for women during the summer and then a second aimed at ethnic groups with low representation on the council during black history month.</p>

3.6 The Committee are asked to note and comment on the activities as set out above.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Be A Councillor Campaign in particular is looking to encourage a wide range of people to consider standing to be a councillor.

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.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 The report requests that progress against the LGA Peer Review actions is noted. There are no financial implications from noting the report and implementation of the actions are being carried out within existing resources. Should additional resources be required these will need to be approved through the appropriate governance route.

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

7.1 Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members of the authority.

7.2 Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 permits local authorities to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is incidental or conducive to, the discharge of their duties.

7.3 The matters set out in this report comply with the above legislation.

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