

<p>Non-Executive Report of the:</p> <p><b>Standards Advisory Committee</b></p> <p>Thursday, 15 October 2020</p>	 <p><b>TOWER HAMLETS</b></p>
<p><b>Report of:</b> Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer</p>	<p><b>Classification:</b> Open (Unrestricted)</p>
<p><b>Member Learning and Development Update</b></p>	

<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services Patricia Attawia, Democratic Services Team Leader (Civic and Members)
<b>Wards affected</b>	(All Wards);

### **Reasons Justifying Urgent Consideration**

This report was not ready for publication with the agenda as it took longer than anticipated to pull together the relevant data. It is still considered important to bring it to this meeting because it is a noting report and allows the Committee to view the information in a timely fashion.

### **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 regular 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.

The Committee are asked to review and comment on this update report which follows on from their last report presented on 17 October 2019.

### **Recommendations:**

The Standards Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. To review and comment on the attached report and appendices including recent and planned Member Learning and Development options.

## 1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

- 1.1 Member Learning and Development is provided to enhance 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 Further to the development of the induction programme from the election in May 2018, the Council continues to provide ongoing Member Learning and Development opportunities.
- 3.2 This generally consists of:
  - **Committee or Specific** training - targeted at specific groups of councillors such as developments around pensions (for Pensions Committee/Board Members) or Scrutiny.
  - **Training and Development Sessions** offered to most/all Members.
  - **Member Briefing Sessions** on policy areas/developments usually offered to all Members. These are provided ad-hoc when required.
- 3.3 Members are invited to sessions using calendar invites which set out the details of the session. A range of methods are used to ensure Members are aware of the sessions including, direct phone contact, information on the Member Bulletin, publicity via groups and reminders via text message closer to the date of the training.
- 3.4 Training is also designed for specific groups of Councillors, such as all those on a committee such as Licensing or Planning. Members will be canvassed and informed in advance of the proposed date and times of training. Where training is mandatory 'mop-up' sessions will be organised where applicable.
- 3.5 Appendix 1 to the report sets out the training and briefing sessions, and Member attendance from the period of October 2019 (when the Committee received its last report).

**Member Learning and Development 2019-20** – including the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

- 3.6 The 17 October 2019 committee meeting was provided with an expected workplan for the 2019-20 Learning and Development programme. Some of this training did successfully take place however some was delayed due to Covid. The table below sets out in summary the training sessions:

<b>Title</b>	<b>Date took place</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Resilient Groups, Interpersonal and Group Cohesion	October 2019	As planned
Local Government Finance	January 2020	Delayed from November due to the general election
Social Media Policy	January 2020	Delayed from December due to the general election
Ethics and Probity	September 2020	Delayed due to pandemic
Strengthening Local Democracy	N/A	Cancelled – to be included in the 2020-21 schedule
Commissioning Model	N/A	Cancelled – to be rescheduled as part of the 2020-21 plan (see below).
Directorate Induction – Re-run	N/A	Cancelled – to be scheduled for 2020-21 (see below).

- 3.7 The training planned for October on Resilient Groups, Interpersonal and Group Cohesion took place as planned.
- 3.8 The first sessions delayed were the Council’s Social Media Policy and Local Government Finance. These were scheduled for November and December 2019 but delayed due to the announced general election which meant Members did not have time to attend. The sessions subsequently took place in January 2020.
- 3.9 The Election and COVID has meant that the Members L&D programme has been extensively paused and Council priorities have been focused elsewhere.
- 3.10 The team has explored alternatives to provide online training and virtual training sessions on Ethics and Probity which have run successfully in September. Feedback from these sessions and recent virtual briefing sessions have suggested that overall Members are in favour of the greater flexibility created by holding training online although it is recognised that there will be occasions when physical attendance is preferable when that is possible.

- 3.11 During the year, two training courses were supported by external providers. The costs are set out below.

Course	Provider	Cost
Resilient Groups, Interpersonal and Group Cohesion	LGiU	£1776.19
Ethics and Probity	ADSO / Paul Hoey Ainscough	£1000

### Member Briefings – 2019-20

- 3.12 As in previous years, a good range of topics were covered through Member Briefings on areas as diverse as youth service consultation, safer neighbourhood panels and the Council's Community Plan. However, no Member briefings took place between March to June 2020 due to the pandemic. New 'virtual' briefings have been introduced and have been running successfully.

### Attendance at Training Sessions

- 3.13 Levels of attendance can vary depending on the topic of the training session, notice period of date (in relation to Member Briefing sessions) and other factors. Appendix 1 provides full details, some highlights below:

Attendance at 'virtual' or physical Member Briefings – comparison during 2019-20:

	Physical	Virtual
Number of Sessions	Isle of Dogs Feasibility Study – 7 Regeneration Delivery Plan – 7 Community Cohesion Plan – 4 Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panels – 9 Youth Consultation Task and Finish Group - 10	Climate Change – 24 Covid Preparedness – 20 Engagement & Consultation – 15 Housing Allocations Scheme - 19
	Total of 37 at 5 sessions	Total of 78 at 4 sessions
Average Attendance	7.4	18.9

Notes:

- Where two sessions were offered on the same topic the attendance figures have been combined.
- For virtual briefings it can be difficult to check whether Members remain in the briefing for the whole session. For the first two virtual sessions, the services running the sessions were not able to confirm attendance lists and so those figures are not included.
- An equivalent comparison is not possible with L&D sessions as the only virtual one has been mandatory which would skew the figures

although it is worth noting that some of the physical L&D sessions were particularly poorly attended.

- 3.14 Virtual sessions appear to be significantly more popular than the previous physical sessions. This would indicate that going forward further consideration will be applied to maintaining a hybrid of virtual and physical training programme.

### **Learning and Development Plan 2020-21**

- 3.15 The programme is flexible and continues to develop based on feedback from Members, officers and topics arising of interests.
- 3.16 The programme lists training sessions prepared or overseen by Democratic Services. Further Member Briefings/Sessions are arranged following requests from officers and Members.
- 3.17 The current pandemic has caused the deferral of a number of training sessions and the ongoing pandemic has meant a reprioritisation of work and less focus on the programme. Nevertheless, a number of sessions are planned for the coming year:
- Social Media policy (re-run of previous session) – November 2020
  - Strengthening Local Democracy – workshop – date tbc
  - The Corporate Parent and Working with Schools – date tbc
  - Elections – February 2021
  - Information Governance – April 2021
  - The Commissioning Model – date tbc
  - Directorate Meet and Greet – date tbc
  - Ethics and Probity Training – yearly update – July 2021

- 3.18 Based on feedback from Members it is planned that one course will run approximately every two months.

### **Externally Provided Training**

- 3.19 A current specific development is to increase the visibility of the many courses available to Members through organisations such as the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Local Government Information Unit. The LGA for example has a growing number of online resources for Councillors set out in their website <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/highlighting-political-leadership> - the Council will not duplicate training where it is available with external sources unless there is a specific requirement to do so.
- 3.20 These courses are promoted in the Member Bulletin and the Members Hub.

## **Member Induction 2022**

- 3.21 Planning will also begin during 2021 on the Member Induction programme for 2022. This will involve consulting with SAC and Members on what they would like to see. An update on this project will be provided in the 2021 report.

## **Personal Development Plans / Member Survey**

- 3.22 In January 2020, Personal Development Plan (PDP) forms were provided to the Mayor/Councillors. Only 3 responses were received before the pandemic impact. A similar low response level was seen in 2019 when six were returned.
- 3.23 Due to the low engagement in this method of consultation, it is proposed to instead use the new Office 365 forms tool to create a learning and development survey for Members which will be easier and quicker to complete with the aim of encouraging greater participation.
- 3.24 This survey will be issued later in 2020 and the results will be reported back to the Committee and used to help guide the development of priority training for Members.

## **4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 A strong Learning and Development programme has an important role to play in supporting equality and diversity both in ensuring all Members are undertake their role effectively but also in giving them the tools to support all members of the community.

## **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 Individual training sessions and briefings will look to cover individual areas of risk as appropriate.

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

- 6.1 Any costs associated with the delivery of the Member Learning and Development programme will be met from the appropriate Democratic Services budget.

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

- 7.1 The Localism Act 2011 Act provides that the Council must promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co-opted Members of the authority. In discharging this duty the Council is required by section 27(2) of the 2011 Act to adopt a Code of Conduct which applies to all Members and Co-opted Members when acting in an official capacity.
- 7.2 The successful provision of the Member Learning and Development Programme will assist the authority in discharging this statutory responsibility and contribute to improving the Council's governance arrangements.
- 

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

### **Linked Report**

- Previous report on this topic – 17 October 2019
- Impact of COVID-19 on Support for Members – 30 July 2020

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Member Development sessions 2019-20 – attendance log

### **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:**

None