

Non-Executive Report of the: Standards Advisory Committee Thursday, 1 July 2021	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Janet Fasan, Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Open (Unrestricted)
Member attendance update 2020/21	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services Joel West, Democratic Services Team Leader (Committees)
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.

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 some Committees whilst others may only be on Council.

- 3.2 There is no statutory requirement for Members to attend meetings except that there is a general requirement that a should a Councillor fail to attend at least one qualifying meeting in any six-month period they will automatically cease to be a Member of the local authority.
- 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 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 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.
 - 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 2020-21

- 3.6 The appendices attached to this report set out the attendance of councillors (Appendix 1) and co-optees (Appendix 2) for the period May 2020 to May 2021. 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, noting that due to the pandemic the annual meeting actually took place in September 2020 but matching the attendance statistics to the actual municipal years could be confusing so the normal pattern was maintained.
- 3.7 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 in operation. The Regulations effectively allowed a committee member to be considered present without being physically present, as long as they could hear and be heard. Appendix 1 reflects a year in which all attendances were of a virtual nature.
- 3.8 The Regulations expired on 7 May 2021. Since this time, some meetings at LBTH have been 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, it will be necessary to distinguish their attendance types in the minutes, and it may also be sensible to do so in attendance statistics, such as those reported to the advisory committee in future.

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 2020 to May 2021 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 new 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.

Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- Previous attendance monitoring reports to Standards Advisory Committee.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Member attendance May 2020 to end April 2021.
- Appendix 2 – Co-optee attendance May 2020 to end April 2021.

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