


Non-Executive Report of the: Standards Advisory Committee Thursday, 30 September 2021	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of: Director of Legal and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Open (Unrestricted)
Member Learning and Development Update	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services Patricia Attawia, Democratic Services Team Leader (Civic and Members)
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.

Given we are now in the lead up to the local elections in May 2022, the report has a focus on early planning for the Member Induction programme and the Committee are particularly asked to focus on providing comment on this area of work.

The Committee is asked to review and comment on this update report which follows on from the last report presented on 15 October 2020.

Recommendations:

The Standards Advisory Committee is recommended to:

1. Review and comment on the report and appendices including recent and planned Member Learning and Development options.
2. Review and comment on draft plans for Member Induction in 2022
3. Note the changes to the Members' Bulletin

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 LGALGIU** 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 Members are invited to sessions using calendar invites which include details of what each session will cover. Reminders are issued nearer the time and either on the day of the training or the day before a text message is sent.

3.4 Specific training is also arranged for councillors on certain committees such as Licensing or Planning. Councillors sitting on Audit and Pensions committees also receive additional training to increase their knowledge.

3.5 Any presentations or training materials to be used in the sessions will be uploaded onto the Members' Hub so they can be accessed during the training and at any time afterwards.

3.6 Appendix 1 to the report sets out the training and briefing sessions, and Member attendance (where the information has been provided) from the period of October 2020 when the Committee received its last report.

Member Learning and Development 2020-21 – including the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and Elections

3.7 The 15 October 2020 Committee meeting was provided with a list of training sessions planned for the year ahead, the table below sets out a summary of these:

Title	Date	Notes
<p>Social Media Policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of the media in Local Government • Using social media as an elected member • The impact of social media/ tips & tricks • Tower Hamlets Our East End as a tool to reach communities 	12 November 2020	As planned
<p>Strengthening Local Democracy</p> <p>Following the recent project to improve information provision to Members, a look at what should come next.</p>	30 September 2021	Scheduled
<p>The Corporate Parent and working with Schools:</p> <p>Information on the above and the role of Members.</p>	TBC	
<p>Elections:</p> <p>Looking at how elections operate and an opportunity for Members to ask questions.</p>	TBC – after referendums have taken place	Delayed due to Elections and referendums in May, recent By-election and upcoming referendums
<p>Information Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 and Data Protection Act 2018 • An overview of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 • The Council's Information Governance & Complaints Teams 	20 & 21 April 2021	<p>As planned.</p> <p>Another session is planned for the autumn – dates being arranged now</p>

<p>Local Government Finance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How LG is financed • Funds the council is responsible for • Tower Hamlets Capital Programme • Annual budget setting • Annual Accounts • The role of the Section 151 Officer and the Member role 	4 & 7 October	Scheduled
<p>Directorate Meet and Greets</p> <p>These were opportunities to meet with senior Directorate officers and discuss key issues</p>	Cancelled	These will now take place as part of the Member Induction programme.
<p>Ethics and Probity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Code of Conduct • Member/Officer Protocol and related protocols • Register of Interests • Gifts and Hospitality • Social media use 	TBC – after September Council	Postponed until after new Code of Conduct is agreed by Full Council

Some of the training did take place, however some was delayed due to Covid and Elections

Training offers in the Members' Bulletin

3.8 In recognition of this the team has included regular opportunities for online courses in the Members' Bulletin run by external providers, such as the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU). There are a growing number of online resources for councillors and the following examples are some of the courses that have been offered:

- Advanced Chairing Skills (LGIU)
- Leadership Academy Programmes (LGA)
- Effective Social Media
- Restart after Covid with Emotional Intelligence
- New Learning Platform for Cllrs with multiple online courses (LGA):
 - Cllr Introduction to Digital and Data Training Series
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
 - Holding council meetings online
 - Effective ward councillor
 - Scrutiny
 - Influencing skills
 - Local government finance

- Supporting mentally healthier communities

As mentioned in the last report, feedback from Members suggested that overall, they are in favour of the greater flexibility created by holding training

online. It is, however, still recognised that there will be occasions when physical attendance is preferable when possible.

Member Briefings 2020-21

3.9 As in previous years there have also been regular and varied briefings either included in the Members' Bulletin or as scheduled virtual sessions run by officers (full details are in Appendix 1), such as:

- Tall Buildings Supplementary Planning Document
- Sharing the findings of the BAME Commission
- Update on the Council's Leasehold Portfolio
- Ramadan, Covid 19 and Vaccination
- Member/Officer relations & Code of Conduct
- Analysis of Safeguarding Adults Review

Attendance at Training Sessions

3.10 Various factors can affect the levels of attendance at training sessions including the topic, notice period, date/time etc. Where attendance details have been provided these can be seen at Appendix.

3.11 Attendance at these virtual meetings is still higher than previously experienced at physical meetings but has dropped slightly from last year's virtual meetings. Figures are set out below:

	Physical	Virtual 2019-20	Virtual 2020-21
	Total of 37 at 5 sessions	Total of 78 at 4 sessions	Total of 111 at 8 sessions
Average Attendance	7.4	19.5	13.8

Notes:

- Only sessions for all members have been included
- Where two sessions were offered on the same topic the attendance figures have been combined.
- Only sessions where services were able to confirm attendance have been included.
- Mandatory sessions have not been included as they would skew the figures.

Learning and Development Plan 2021-22

- 3.12 The programme for 2021-22 will be included in the 2022 Induction Plan, the draft plans for which are set out below.


Member Induction 2022

- 3.13 Planning has begun on the Member Induction programme for 2022, with a cross directorate working group being set up to identify the areas that need to be covered. Councillors will also be consulted for their feedback on the previous induction; in particular what they found especially useful, and what was not included that perhaps should have been.
- 3.14 The Corporate Leadership Team always play an important part in agreeing and implementing the Member Induction Programme and will be involved in planning for 2022 to ensure that the training is effective and meets the individual needs of all elected Members.
- 3.15 The key elements of the 2018 programme and current good practice around member induction will inform the programme for next year. See Appendix 2 for an outline of the 2018 programme. We would send a copy of this with a covering letter to all Members immediately following the election.

Members' Bulletin Function

- 3.16 The Members' Bulletin function has recently moved from Communications to Democratic Services, which means the team will now be responsible for producing the weekly bulletin and what is included.
- 3.17 Updates, training offers, and items of interest have always been circulated in the Members' Bulletin, but we will now have an opportunity to tailor the newsletter more fully to what Members would like to see included.
- 3.18 The look of the Bulletin has been refreshed to look updated and new, with the addition of pictures being possible to increase interest. Further updates to the layout will be looked at in January.
- 3.19 The team is working with communications to look at ways of increasing interest in the Bulletin. Adding items of interest in each edition to the subject line rather than the standard 'Members Bulletin' each time, is one consideration which will help to draw in the reader.

- 3.20 The reporting section of the software used to produce the bulletin will also be able to tell us which areas were 'clicked' on the most so that we can see what is being looked at and use this to inform future bulletins.



Members' bulletin

6 - 12 September 2021

Dear members,

Welcome to your new refreshed members' bulletin - we hope you enjoy reading this edition.

Coronavirus update

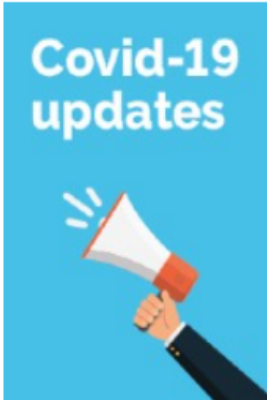
Weekly update from Director of Public Health

Each week our Director of Public Health, Dr Somen Banerjee, publishes a Covid-19 update to keep residents and partners informed about Covid-19 locally in Tower Hamlets.

Last week, the Tower Hamlets rate was 233 cases of Covid-19 per 100,000 and this week it is 206 per 100,000. The fall in cases in young adults continues although levels in over 60s remain similar to last week.

[Read more »](#)

Like (0)




Weekly news

Afghanistan Briefing

Briefing from Corporate Director, Health, Adults & Community & Deputy Chief Executive on support for Afghan Citizens.

[Read more »](#)



TOWER HAMLETS

Figure 1 New Look Members' Bulletin

Weekly issues (2021-22 September 2021) | Tower Hamlets Council
 Working in partnership with the residents of Tower Hamlets, and members of the borough.

For Publishing contact: press@towerhamlets.gov.uk
 020 7323 2000

Members' bulletin

Stay up to date with your news
 25 - 26 September 2021

Local news
 Welcome to your bi-monthly members' bulletin - all news and reports relating to the borough.

Coronavirus update

Weekly update from Director of Public Health
 Cases of Covid-19 remain high but have once again decreased.

Last week, the Tower Hamlets rate saw 228 cases of Covid-19 per 100,000 and this week it is 188 per 100,000. The number of patients in hospital with Covid-19 is also falling gradually.

[Read more >](#)

Covid-19 updates

Covid-19 vaccination
 All young people aged 12 to 15, under the Pfizer vaccine, followed by AstraZeneca vaccine, are invited to be vaccinated in September 2021, to ensure continued new doses of the Covid-19 vaccine are given 4 months ago.

[Read more >](#)

Weekly news

Briefing and statement on recent serious incidents in Tower Hamlets
 The purpose of this briefing is to provide an update related to several serious violent incidents that occurred in Tower Hamlets and to provide information to date. This will allow you to re-assess your understanding of the joint board's response.

[Read more >](#)

Polling Places Review
 On Monday 20 September, a review of polling places took place in Tower Hamlets.

[Read more >](#)

Freedom of the Borough - Wednesday 13 October 2021 (save the date)
 The Freedom of the Borough Ceremony will be held on the evening of Wednesday 13 October at the Tower of London.

[Read more >](#)

Click Map

Figure 2 - Click Map

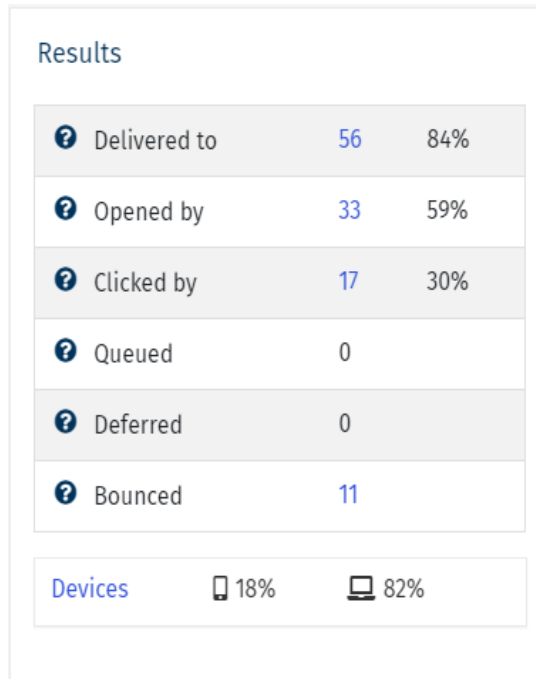


Figure 3: Statistics

3.21 By the time of the next Learning and Development update report it will be possible to present readership information to encourage a discussion as to the best uses of the bulletin.

Member Survey

3.22 A Member Learning & Development Survey was carried out in April 2021. The survey was in three sections with the following headings:

- Learning and Development Feedback and Comment
- Personal Development
- Any other Learning and Development (External training opportunities)

3.23 8 responses were received, with all but one confirming that they had attended non mandatory training sessions.

3.24 An indication of some of the feedback under the headings in 3.22 is set out below:

Learning and Development Feedback and Comment

- Nobody disagreed with the statement, 'I much prefer online sessions'; with 37.5 % indicating mixed views and 62.5% either agreeing or strongly agreeing.
- 88% agreed external trainers should only be used either when absolutely necessary (25%), or when they have a particular expertise (63)
- Suggestions for other training that would benefit Members have been taken on board with sessions having taken place, been scheduled into

the current Learning and Development Plan or being offered online by external providers, such as Members' Enquiries, Scrutiny, and Finance.

Personal Development

- Councillors were asked to rate their skills across seven different areas such as communication skills, scrutiny and challenge, local leadership etc. The average score submitted for each area was 3.63-4 stars out of 5.
- Some ideas for further development were put forward and have been taken on board to see what can be included in future plans. Some have already been scheduled/offered such as influencing skills offered online by the LGA and community engagement which will be covered through upcoming Strengthening Local Democracy and Equalities training.

Any other Learning and Development (External training opportunities)

- Councillors were asked how far they had considered the external training opportunities circulated in the Members' Bulletin, and all had looked at the those provided by the LGA. Some had booked courses either occasionally or regularly whilst others did not find anything of particular interest to them.
- 75% had looked at the courses offered by the LGIU, with the same results as above.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Important considerations when planning the Member Learning and Development programme include ensuring best accessibility to the training sessions allowing for the various demands placed on Members, including any family or caring responsibilities.

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 but the Member Learning and Development Programme generally plays an important role in supporting Members in their decision-making and scrutinising roles which in turn help protect the Council against the various risks set out above.

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 annual reports to the Standards Advisory Committee

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Learning and Development Activity 2020-21
- Appendix 2 – **2018** Induction Training Programme

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