

Resources Department  
7 Newington Barrow Way  
London N7 7EP

Report of: The Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Meeting of: Standards Committee

Date: 16 November 2023

Ward(s): All

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## Subject: Annual Report on Member Standards and Conduct

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1. The councillor's role is central to the council; councillors act as community leaders, ensuring that the council is focussed on its residents and communities. Councillors also set the vision for the borough and the priorities for service delivery and make significant decisions on behalf of residents, including key strategies and setting the annual budget. Councillors are also trusted by residents experiencing difficulties, to act as an advocate on their behalf.
- 1.2. To ensure that trust in the Council is maintained, it is vitally important that councillors demonstrate high standards of conduct, make well informed and appropriate decisions, engage positively in development opportunities and are held to account if their conduct fails to reach the high standards required.
- 1.3. The council has a duty to ensure that councillors understand the importance of high standards of personal conduct and proactively engage with and promote [the Seven Principles of Public Life](#) and the Code of Conduct for Members and are effectively supported in their role and equipped to undertake it successfully.
- 1.4. In accordance with the Standards Committee Terms of Reference, the Monitoring Officer is required to submit to the committee an annual report concerning standards of member conduct, including a summary of complaints received under

the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure and their outcome. The complaints received in the municipal year 2022-23 are detailed below. This report also includes information on member training and development and declarations of interest.

## 2. Recommendations

2.1. To note the contents of this report.

## 3. Background

### Member training and development

3.1. The election in May 2022 was followed by a weekend member induction event covering training in governance arrangements and the councillors' roles. Induction was followed by an intensive training and development programme including:

<b>May 2022</b>
Introduction to Finance
Data Protection & Information Governance
Civil Emergencies, Emergency Planning, Your Safety and Security
Full Council, purpose, how it works, the terminology explained
<b>June 2022</b>
Effective Scrutiny
Planning for Committee Members
Licensing for Committee Members
Executive Member training
Adult Safeguarding
Chairing Skills
Corporate Parenting
<b>July 2022</b>
Audit Committee Training for Audit committee members
Introduction to the Budget
S106, CIL and WIP funding
Communities (VCS, LIF, TRAs, community centres)
<b>September 2022</b>
Housing Needs / Allocations Policy
Benefits overview
Planning & Licensing Procedures for all members

- 3.2. Following completion of the intensive induction programme, member development is now focussing on longer term training and development needs, led by the Member Training and Development Steering Group. The Group is chaired by Cllr Khondoker and attendees include senior members and officers. The council committed to working towards the Local Government Association Charter Status, which is a three year programme for member development, in March 2023. A Member Development Strategy is being submitted to Audit and Risk Committee for approval in November.
- 3.3. Reflecting the importance of member development, the training budget was also increased from past years, facilitating an increase in development opportunities. The training and development activities attended by members in 2022-23 included; mentoring, coaching sessions for senior members, Licensing training, Safeguarding for Governors, and a range of Local Government Association training and development opportunities including; Building Safety, Black, Asian & Multi Ethnic Councillors events, LGPS Fundamental Training, the Enhanced Children Services Programme, Being an Effective Cabinet Member, the Black, Asian & Multi Ethnic Weekender, Stir to Action, the LGBTQ+ Weekender, Young Councillors Weekender and Effective Opposition.
- 3.4. Information about free of charge and subsidised development opportunities, provided by London Councils and the Local Government Association, was regularly circulated to Members and the political group office.
- 3.5. Members were also provided with specific advice on governance issues from time to time, including advice regarding declarations of interest, gifts and hospitality declarations and information governance.

### **Financial Declarations**

- 3.6. All members reviewed, confirmed and where necessary, updated, their register of interests, including their financial declarations, in March 2023. The Members Register of Interests is available on the Council's [democracy website](#).
- 3.7. The declarations of interest made at meetings, declarations regarding gifts and hospitality and the councillors' attendance record at committee meetings are also all available on the Council's [democracy website](#).

### **Complaints**

- 3.8. All complaints under the Members Code of Conduct are referred to the Monitoring Officer (the Director of Law and Governance). Following consideration of the complaint, the Monitoring Officer decides whether it is appropriate to seek an informal resolution. Where there is no informal resolution, the Monitoring Officer may:

- decide not to investigate further,
- decide that the matter requires investigation.
- decide to refer the decision as to whether or not there is to be an investigation to the Standards Committee.

3.9 One formal complaint against a councillor was received which required the Standards Committee to be convened. The Standards Committee met to consider the complaint on 9 and 18 January 2023. At the meeting on 18 January 2023 the committee determined that, on a balance of probabilities, an Islington Councillor improperly communicated confidential information, and brought the council into disrepute, contrary to paragraphs 4 and 5 of the council's Code of Conduct for Members, and in breach of the Nolan Principles of Integrity, Accountability and Leadership. The committee resolved to send a formal letter to the Subject Councillor setting out its findings.

3.10 A number of other complaints were received, which did not require the Standards Committee to be convened, as follows:

	Complaint	Received	Status	Outcome
1	That the ward councillors ignored communications regarding business rates.	14.04.2022	Closed	The complainant did not proceed with a formal complaint.
2	That a councillor has failed to declare an interest.	04.11.2022	Resolved	The initial assessment found that an inadvertent breach of the Code of Conduct had taken place and been addressed through correction of the councillor's register of interests. A full investigation was not recommended.
3	That a councillor excluded residents from a consultation process, presented biased information, did not appropriately	08.02.2023	Closed	The complaint was assessed as falling outside the jurisdiction of the Code of Conduct and, if proven, would not be a breach of the Code of Conduct under which the subject member was operating at the time of the alleged conduct.

	consider equalities impacts and predetermined the outcome of the consultation.			
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## 4. Implications

### 4.1. Financial Implications

- 4.1.1. The budget for member training and development was increased to £35,000 in 2022/23 as part of the council's commitment to member training and development. The council spent £32,594 on training courses and development opportunities for councillors in the 2022/23 financial year.

### 4.2. Legal Implications

- 4.2.1. The Council has a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co-opted Members (section 27(1) Localism Act 2011). The Council has adopted a Code dealing with the conduct that is expected of Members and Co-opted Members when they are acting in that capacity (as required by section 27(2) Localism Act 2011). The Code has been revised to incorporate the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020.

### 4.3. Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

- 4.3.1. There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

### 4.4. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 4.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 4.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required. There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.

## 5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1. Standards Committee is asked to note the content of this report to maintain an overview of member conduct.

**Appendices:** None.

**Background papers:** None.

### **Final report clearance:**

Authorised by:

**Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer**

Date: 7 November 2023

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