

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: 21 November 2024

Ward(s): All

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 2023-24 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.
- 2.2. To review the Member Learning and Development Strategy attached as Appendix 1.

3. Background

Member training and development

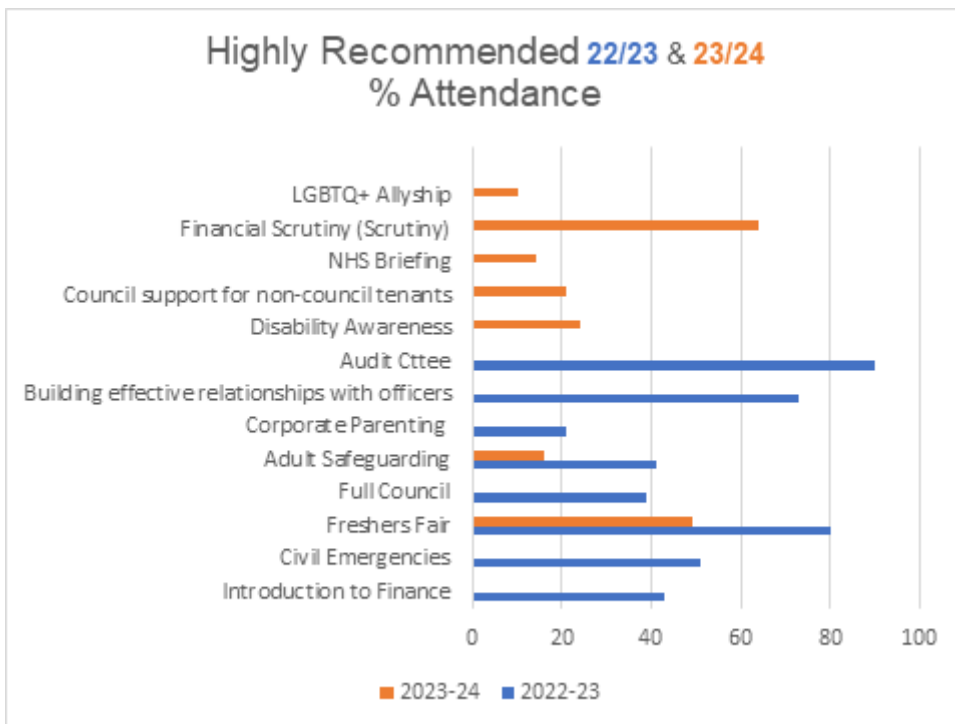
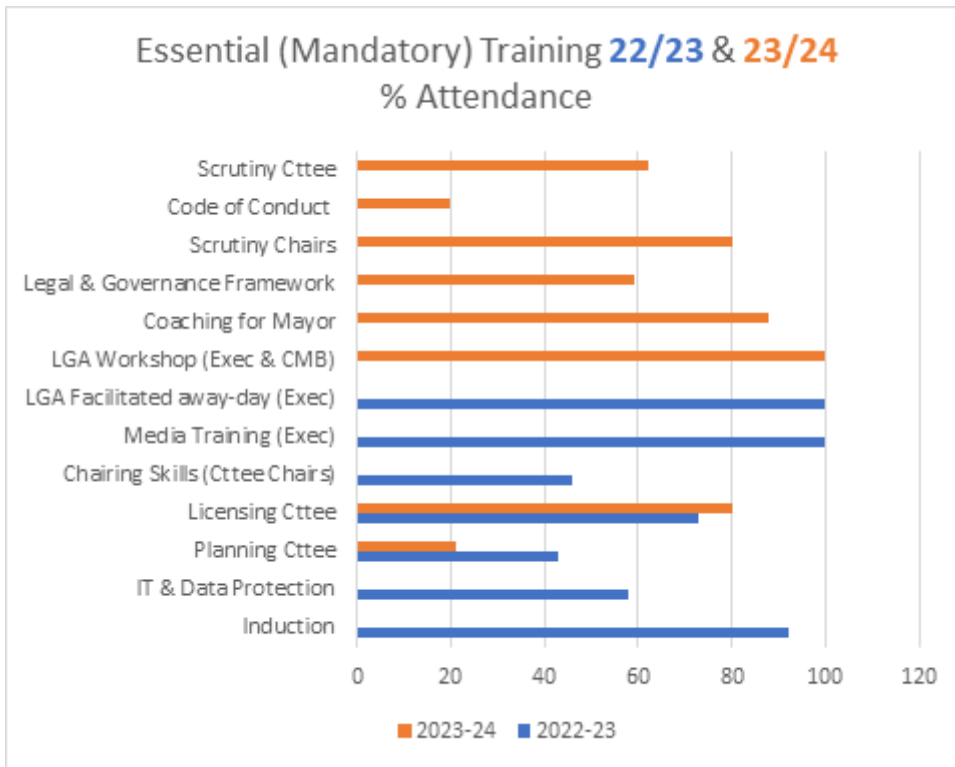
- 3.1. The Member Learning & Development Strategy 2023/26 (see Appendix 1) was approved by Audit Committee in November 2023. The Strategy's aim is to inspire and enhance the skills of the councillors in their development and growth as local leaders. The success criteria for achieving this aim are:

- Mandatory training – 100% attendance*
- Highly Recommended training – 80% attendance
- Recommended training – 60% attendance
- 90% of members expressed overall satisfaction with the development programme

Whilst there has been great effort to ensure training is scheduled on dates or at times when there are no other council meetings taking place, we have not been able to achieve these attendance targets due to:

- Councillors have attended the training in previous years
- Previous classification of mandatory training as 'essential' training may have led to some ambiguity as to the importance of the session. Following a recommendation by Audit Committee and with the approval of the Member Learning & Development Steering Group, essential training was reclassified as mandatory training
- Other commitments taking priority

The charts below provide comparison of attendance against the previous year.



3.2. To improve engagement and attendance, the Member Learning & Development Steering Group agreed:

- to re-classify adult safeguarding and corporate parenting as mandatory training.
- to reduce the number of mandatory sessions for all councillors to a maximum of 3-5 per year, including training for regulatory committees

- to provide a copy of the annual training programme to Group leaders/offices prior to the AGM, to ensure councillors commit to attend the training associated with the appointments.

3.3. The training programme for 2023/24 focussed on core skills development including equality, diversity & inclusion issues, refresher training on governance and corporate priorities, key roles and committee appointments, community leadership and briefings on council services. The schedule is summarised below:

May 2023
LGA Workshop: Providing Impactful Collective Leader
Freshers Fair
Mayoral Coaching
Planning for Committee Members
Governance, Monitoring Officer and Code of Conduct
Licensing for Committee Members
June 2023
Unconscious Bias / Creating a diverse workforce
Housing – Damp & Mould
Chairing Scrutiny Meetings
September 2023
Code of Conduct – ½ hour briefing
Scrutiny for committee members
October 2023
Adult Safeguarding
November 2023
Disability Awareness
Council support for non-council tenants
December 2023
Update on NHS Healthcare Provision
January 2024
Financial Scrutiny for committee members
Budget Overview
February 2024
LGBTQ+ Allyship
Conflict Resolution
Register of Interests
March 2024
Social Media
May 2024
Civil Protection & Community Safety
Scrutiny for Committee Members

- 3.4. In April 2024, we conducted an annual survey of the training and development and received 16 responses. The key points from the feedback were:
- The training offer is appreciated
 - We are meeting expectations in relation to the topics being covered
 - Time is a major constraint to councillors' participation
 - Providing copies of presentations and recordings on SharePoint helps
- 3.5. A Personal Development Programme (PDP) was rolled out to all councillors in January 2024. The PDP provided a structured framework to help councillors to identify key development objectives, how they would be met, how to measure success and a target date for completion of the objectives. 15 councillors took part in the programme, including 7 Executive Members. Councillors were asked to complete a self-evaluation form prior to having a confidential meeting with the Facilitator. Following the meeting, each councillor was provided with a personal development plan and after all meetings took place, the Facilitator provided a non-attributable summary report of the discussions, including an analysis of development priorities and key recommendations.
- 3.6. The key areas identified for councillor development will be covered in future training programme. The PDP summary report proposed several key actions including that councillor development is continued and actively promoted across the organisation, councillor participation should be increased, development sessions should be offered on more than one occasion, executive team development approach adopted to build strong relationships, leadership development to be offered to councillors in non-executive roles and that the personal development plans should be reviewed and updated following the 2026 elections.
- 3.7. The training budget allocated for the year was adequate for the training and development planned. Other development activities included: Microsoft Office, LGA Annual Conference, LGA Leaders Weekend, Handling Suicidal Conversations, the LGA Black, Asian & Multi Ethnic weekender events, National Children & Adult Services Conference, Pension Fund Conference and Licensing.
- 3.8. 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

Financial Declarations

- 3.9. All members reviewed, confirmed and where necessary, updated, their register of interests, including their financial declarations, in March 2024. The Members Register of Interests is available on the Council's [democracy website](#).

- 3.10. 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

- 3.11. 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.

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

	Complaint	Received	Status	Outcome
1	Behaviour	03.04.2023	Complete	The complaint was rejected because the councillor was not acting in his capacity as a councillor.
2	Behaviour at a Licensing Sub-Committee meeting	30.11.2023	Complete	An apology was issued which was accepted by the complainant.
3	Behaviour	01.02.2024	Complete	No finding of breach of the Code of Conduct

4. Implications

4.9. Financial Implications

- 4.9.1. The budget for member training and development was increased to £37,500 in 2023/24 as part of the council's commitment to member training and development. The council spent £23,239 on training courses and development opportunities for councillors in the 2023/24 financial year.

4.10. Legal Implications

4.10.1. 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.

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

4.11.1. There are no environmental implications arising directly from this report.

4.12. Equalities Impact Assessment

4.12.1. 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.

4.12.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required. There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.9. Standards Committee is asked to note the content of this report to maintain an overview of member training and conduct.

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Member Learning and Development Strategy.

Background papers: None.

Final report clearance:

Authorised by: **Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer**

Date: 13 November 2024

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