

Appendix B: Feedback from Members on support received from the Council

All backbench Members, after the reception, were asked the following three questions. Their full responses are listed below.

- Since last year what has worked well in terms of the support provided to you from across the Council?
 - What could be improved to help you work better in your ward?
 - Are there any workshops that you would like to see run for Members?
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I have found the support from Members Service to be of a high quality. Because of the high casework load, I have discussed with my Member Services Officer how he may provide an active support with casework.

I am still unhappy about the role of P&S Committees in Westminster. Too often they allow Cabinet Members an uncritical role in their examination of policy. P&S Committees is where Cabinet Members should be accountable for their policies and actions. I think a workshop on this would be helpful, preferably run by someone who shares the view that P&S should be a critical friend.

1. On the whole I am happy with the support from members' services. My Member Services Officer has been working very well.
 2. I think a monthly email reminding us of remaining ward budget available would be useful.
 3. A workshop updating us on the likely impact of DCLG funding settlements before the seminar usually held in January would be useful.
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1. Ten out of ten when my specific Member Services Officer is at work re Members support (a little more hit and miss with some others of the team)
 2. No need to improve - but if relevant wanted to say P and S and all Committee Reports are getting worse. Executive page A4 summaries rather than long winded documents which lose their train of thought too prevalent.
 3. Ask new members. But some kind of team working with a charity theme to get officers/members mixing always good.
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I think an address book with phone numbers and emails of all the relevant officers would be very helpful - so I know who to contact.

I think the drinks reception worked well, informal yet very informative.

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1. Having a very competent support officer and City Inspector
 2. Contact details of which officers do what
 3. Planning workshop might be helpful
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I am very happy with the level of support I receive - particularly from my Ward Officer, who is excellent.

Rather than workshops, I wonder whether we have ever considered 'Introduction To...' or 'How To...' guides (particularly for new members). I know that Councillor Begum has suggested this, too.

1. Our Member Services Officer and the service she has provided, first class, would be at loss without her support!
 2. A list of the key support Officers and contact details who are available to ward Councillor bespoke to each ward i.e. City Inspector, Arboricultural Officer, Street Management, Enforcement Officer, Highways Officer, CWH key contact for the ward based on CWH office handling the ward, Planning Officer etc.
 3. Planning & licensing
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I think the drafting of letters has worked well, the weekly updates also worked well in making sure we were kept up to date on issues such as ward funding applications. These could be more individual in terms of listing what's been asked for and where we are with it ie still waiting to hear or completed tasks per Councillor.

I think what could be improved is a better directory of each department, what they do and who the main contacts are for each area as well as services they can provide for members. It would also be helpful to have a list of expected response times.

In terms of workshops I would like one on housing benefit and another on housing bidding/allocations.

I am very happy with the service I receive from my ward officer and all other officers that provide a service in my ward particularly.

1. I have had no negative experiences with WCC officers over the last year - in fact I have had very good support from all I deal with.

2. Other Council colleagues... have often said that we need an up-to-date (probably online) internal phone directory and set of WCC organisational charts: it's sometimes difficult to know whom to contact about an unfamiliar problem, and even if one gets a name, phone numbers are quite closely guarded in some cases.
3. We need a proper remote access e-mail system with much greater storage capacity (and/or perhaps a WCC cloud to help with archiving older messages).

In challenging street management roles in the West End and St James's, we need stability in our teams of Wardens and other street mgmt officers: on a couple of occasions over the past few years, highly effective front-line officers have been moved to other wards without warning (and apparently to those officers' surprise). Clearly there will always be some turnover and rotation of staff, but rotations out of the stress areas should be very carefully considered if the officer him/herself is not asking to move.

Workshops

As to workshops, I have never properly understood our housing allocation policies or worked out how to fast-track an urgent housing repair. A practical workshop (with appropriate hand-outs) on how to advise those seeking WCC housing and on how to help existing tenants with housing-related problems would be very helpful.

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1. The availability of Officers to answer simple questions about procedures or requests from constituents is very important. In general the system works particularly when the high workload of Officers is taken into account. Short briefing documents outlining the Council's position on topical issues are also helpful.
 2. Clearer indication of what is confidential and what isn't. At present Councillors including me generally play it safe and so do not always make the best case to their constituents.
 3. The induction courses organised by the Council about a year ago were essential and should certainly be repeated for new Councillors. Workshops would also be helpful that inform members about the Council's legal powers and obligations in key areas of activity e.g. planning, licensing, healthcare and education.
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