



City of Westminster

Standards Committee

Date: 22nd October 2014

Classification: For General Release

Title: Member Induction Programme Review

Report of: Head of Cabinet Secretariat; and
Head of Legal and Democratic Services
(Monitoring Officer)

Wards Involved: Not Applicable

Policy Context: Supporting Local Democracy

Financial Summary: The cost of the induction programme

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Standards Committee has a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the Members of the Council and to assist Members to observe the requirements of the Code of Conduct. In exercising this duty, the Committee previously reviewed the proposed arrangements for the induction of newly elected (and re-elected) Members, to ensure they were provided with sufficient information and resources to enable them to participate in business appropriately and fully understand their responsibilities as Councillors.
- 1.2 This report details the induction programme that took place for Members following the May 2014 local elections and sets out the additional training and opportunities which have been provided since. The report also details feedback from Members on the induction programme, which has been sought to enable officers to firstly, learn lessons from the programme and secondly,

ascertain what further training and development Members require to participate fully and productively as City of Westminster Councillors.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Standards Committee notes the post-election induction programme, as detailed in this report, to assist both newly-elected and re-elected Members fulfil their role as City of Westminster Councillors and ensure they have the relevant knowledge to participate appropriately in Council business;
- 2.2 That the Standards Committee notes the attendance rates of the induction sessions as detailed in **Appendix A** and, specifically, the proportion of Members who have received training on the Members Code of Conduct (as detailed in section 5 of this report);
- 2.3 That the Standards Committee notes the feedback obtained from Members regarding the induction programme, as detailed in **Appendix B**;
- 2.4 That the Standards Committee provides comment and recommendations relating to any further work it considers necessary to ensure that the City Council fulfils its duty to provide its Members with appropriate guidance, advice, training and/or development opportunities to enable them to conduct themselves in accordance with the Council's requirements and participate appropriately and productively in Council business (See section 3 below).

3. Key Areas of Consideration:

- 3.1 The Committee may wish to consider the following key questions, in light of the information contained in this report and the feedback from Members:
 - (1) What key messages for improvement can be drawn-out from Members' comments and feedback on the induction? (*initial suggestions are contained in section 7 below*).
 - (2) Are there any knowledge gaps or practical areas that officers should seek to address going forward as a priority?
 - (3) What action can the relevant Member-level bodies usefully take to ensure that Members have the adequate knowledge and training to perform their respective roles? For example, the Westminster Scrutiny Commission in respect of 'scrutineer' training and Audit and Performance in respect of fraud, bribery and corruption issues (*examples of current activity are contained in section 6 below*).

4. Member Induction Programme

- 4.1 An induction programme was compiled for new and re-elected Members to attend after the recent local elections in May 2014. The programme incorporated both logistical elements associated with the induction of new

Members, as well as sessions organised in conjunction with the Council's Executive Management Team (the Strategic Executive Board as then was).

- 4.2 The programme began on the evening of the election count (Friday 23rd May), with all Members provided with the necessary forms and information associated with their election. Members were also given a schedule for the more detailed induction sessions that were held on Thursday 29th May and Monday 2nd June.
- 4.3 The induction sessions consisted of a combination of workshops hosted by the Executive Management Team and senior managers, as well as a 'marketplace' that allowed Council departments to showcase the work they do, highlight their key achievements and current priorities and detail how Members can engage with them.
- 4.4 The workshop sessions were timetabled so that, over the two days, Members would be able to attend six of the eight Executive Management Team presentations. The marketplace was a more informal atmosphere at which Members could talk one-on-one with senior Council officers about the work they do and find out more about individual teams.
- 4.5 There was also the opportunity for Members to address some practical elements of induction, such as their official Council photograph, being measured for their ceremonial robes, and to speak with the IT team about Members' IT needs and the allowance in the coming year.
- 4.6 Across the two days, **26 individual Members** attended at least one session (more than 40% of those elected), including **all 14 newly-elected Members**. A breakdown of the attendance per session is included as **Appendix A** (NB: the appendix counts individual attendances at each session and not individual Members; hence why the total is higher than stated here).

5. Members Code of Conduct Training

- 5.1 The Standards Committee has a specific duty to directly advise on training on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct. At its last meeting, the Committee noted that the statistics relating to Member attendance at previous Code of Conduct training sessions held in 2012 (at 40%) was a cause for concern. In recognition of the importance of this training, the Committee resolved to communicate the message to all Members that training on the Code is considered to be compulsory and the expectation exists that all Members would attend.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) held three Code of Conduct training sessions (two in June and one in July), which achieved a very good attendance rate. Members were also advised that further one-to-one sessions would be arranged for any Member who either could not attend the scheduled sessions or wished to receive further advice. A number of Members have taken up this offer and one-to-one sessions have since been held upon request. This is a standing invitation and Members are

advised to contact the Head of Legal and Democratic Services at any time if they require advice relating to matters relating to their conduct or interests.

- 5.3 These recent sessions combined (the scheduled sessions and one-to-one training) achieved an **attendance rate of 98%**, which is a vast improvement on the 2012 rate. The Member who has not yet received training has been contacted to ensure training can be arranged at the earliest opportunity.

6. Other training provided for Members

- 6.1 In addition to the induction programme and the mandatory Code of Conduct training the following additional training has been provided since the elections:

Planning and Licensing functions

In recognition of the quasi-judicial nature of the functions of the Planning Committees and the Licensing Committees, mandatory training for all Members sitting on either committee for the first time is a long-standing local requirement. This training is provided in-house by the Area Planning Team Leaders and the Council's Licensing Policy and Strategy Manager, respectively. Members have always been extremely conscientious in fulfilling this requirement and no issues have occurred relating to non-attendance. Refresher training or further guidance is always available upon request.

Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption

An anti-fraud, bribery and corruption session has been arranged for all Members in the near future and will be conducted by the Tri-Borough Head of Fraud.

Scrutiny function

The Westminster Scrutiny Commission received a report at its July 2014 meeting that explored the possible options for backbench Member training and development in the area of scrutiny. The Scrutiny team are now assisting in arranging a number of site visits for Members of the various committees. The first Policy and Scrutiny Committee to take-up the offer of organised site visits has been the Housing, Finance and Customer Services Committee, with visits and briefings arranged to the Housing Options Service, a regeneration site (Ebury Bridge Estate), CityWest Homes as well as a tour of intermediate housing.

- 6.2 The Committee's views are sought on whether further training and development could usefully be arranged, either relating to the functions detailed above, or relating to an area that has not yet been addressed.
- 6.3 It should be noted that no single committee has overall responsibility for Member training and development. There are a number of committees and Members in various roles and positions of responsibility who are 'stakeholders'

to be consulted on aspects of training and development – ranging from ‘Committee Chairmen’ to ‘scrutineers’ to Cabinet Members.

- 6.4 It should also be noted that ‘training and development’ should not be narrowly defined in terms of theoretical knowledge, but also encompasses practical skills applicable to various committee roles - such as effective questioning techniques or chairmanship skills. These essential tools, which enable Members to play an effective and productive part in our democratic framework, can also be addressed and enhanced through formal training if there is a desire from Members to do so.

7. Induction session feedback

- 7.1 Following the completion of the induction programme, officers contacted all Members to request feedback on their experiences. Two simple key questions were posed:

- (1) Did you attend any of the Member Induction sessions? If not, why not.
- (2) If you were planning the Member Induction, what would you have done differently?

The responses are detailed at **Appendix B**.

- 7.2 The feedback from the induction sessions was positive overall, but there are certainly lessons to be learnt when organising a similar programme in the future. The three key areas of criticism are detailed below, with associated questions for the Standards Committee to consider:

- The overuse of Powerpoint presentations;
 - *What alternative presentation or training delivery format does the Committee think would be more suitable or conducive to Member training?*
- Having information about the sessions further in advance;
- An overall feeling that the presentations should have been targeted to focus on how Members can engage with the services rather than the achievements of the service.
 - *Does the Committee have any suggestions as what appropriate steps can be taken to ensure Members have information about officers ‘on the ground’ in the service areas, as well as those ‘at the top-level’ of the organisation? Is there a simple communication solution to this (such as providing up-to-date contact lists on an annual basis), or is this symptomatic of a more fundamental engagement issue to be addressed?*

- 7.3 Members responded positively to the informal marketplace setting, which officers have noted for similar inductions in the future. In fact, Members have requested that similar, more focussed sessions, be held at frequent intervals going forward which highlight the work of specific Departments or teams in more detail. This feedback has been extremely useful for officers – to understand and receive the message that there is an appetite amongst Members for a more robust and ongoing cycle of training to be developed and taken forward, rather than limited to once every four years (following an election).
- 7.4 Utilising this feedback, the Cabinet Secretariat and Members Services team is now working on a regular programme of more detailed Department-led sessions for Members, as requested. Comments and recommendations are sought from the Standards Committee as to how these sessions can be as successful and useful as possible, in light of the information contained in this report and the feedback from Members detailed in Appendix B.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The cost of the induction programme will be met from existing budgeted resources.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.
- 9.2 Members are required to make a Declaration of Acceptance of Office before undertaking formal duties as Westminster Councillors and all Members successfully did so. The legal aspects of the requirements relating to the disclosure and registration of Members' interests were covered in the training sessions conducted by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and further advice relating to conduct, interests, or any other legal matter pertaining to Members' participation in Council business is always available upon request.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 The feedback overall from Members on the induction programme was positive and those involved in co-ordinating future training and development opportunities, as well as future post-election induction programmes, will take on board all feedback provided.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- Standards Committee Report - Member Induction Programme (12 March 2014)

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Breakdown of Member attendance at Induction Sessions and Code of Conduct training

Appendix B – Feedback from Members on the Induction Sessions

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