

Appendix C – Charter Status Next Steps

The Member Development Charter Status Assessment Team have now provided the report and feedback on our Member Development Programme. Recommendations have been made and will form the basis of the discussion in 18 months as part of the interim review period, as well as helping to form our Member Induction Programme for 2022.

The assessment Team said “*Barnet Council has achieved the Charter Standard for Councillor Development – this was a particularly impressive first submission. A review of progress against the assessment team’s recommendations for continuous improvement will take place in approximately 18 months. The Assessment Team considers Barnet Council to be capable of achieving ‘Charter Plus’ status and recommends that it aims for this at the 18-month assessment.*”

Assessors Comments:

1) There is a clear commitment to Councillor development and support:

“There is an impressive commitment and passion for learning throughout Barnet Council (BC) – evident on the assessment day from both councillors and officers. The member development programme benefits from high profile officer support, which is highly valued by councillors. There is a sustainable budget of £22.5K for member development and there is a strong commitment from the council’s leadership to maintaining this offer, even in the context of increased budget challenges.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused a temporary pause of member development activity. However, officers have worked around the restrictions by delivering training sessions via online meeting platforms, which have been well received by the majority of councillors. The assessment team recommends that BC consider how online learning can be utilised beyond the pandemic. For example, there may be opportunities to deliver virtual development opportunities in co-ordination with other London Councils. The development of shared training activities would provide the opportunity for economies of scale, whilst also potentially strengthening the relationship between neighbouring councils and councillors.

With the upcoming elections in 2022, the assessment team recommends that BC considers engaging with the Local Government Association’s (LGA) ‘Be a Councillor’ Programme, as a way of promoting the role of councillor and attracting new and diverse talent. Corporate ‘Be a Councillor’ events can work in tandem with political groups’ activities in this area and could be especially important in the ‘post-covid’ era, when the role of the councillor has seen significant change.”

2) The Council has a strategic approach to councillor development:

“The council has a high profile and enthusiastic Member Development Steering Group (MDSG), which is strategic in focus. The MDSG has strong links into the political groups and has helped shaped the Councillor Vision Statement 2020. The assessment team recommends that BC works with the MDSG to develop a more strategic approach to member development, particularly in areas such as leadership development and mentoring. At present, there is quite a lot of variation between how

different political groups approach member development. The assessment team felt that BC could provide corporate tools, such as a leadership development framework, to encourage greater consistency across the council and ensure that best practice is shared across political groups.

BC has completed two Training Needs Assessments (in 2019 and 2020) which have helped shaped the councillor development programme. The assessment team recommends that BC builds on the TNA's and rolls out a Personal Development Plan programme post the elections in 2022. The Personal Development Plan programme could be piloted by the MDSG ahead of implementation and include the opportunity for a 1-1 development conversation for each councillor. These conversations could take place virtually, with an officer from either HR or Democratic Services, and should ideally utilise a coaching approach to support councillors to self-identify future ambitions and development needs."

3) Learning and development is effective in building skills and knowledge:

"In order to continuously improve its development offer, BC should develop a robust evaluation strategy for member development. The assessment team recommends that the evaluation strategy is developed with input from HR/OD colleagues and that the feedback from evaluation should be reviewed regularly by the MDSG.

A number of training activities at BC are delivered in-house by council officers. With this in mind, it may be beneficial for the council to invest in Train the Trainer support for key officers, to support them in this development role. This would ensure that best practice training methods are followed, as well as encouraging creativity in the delivery and use of PowerPoint etc. BC could also vary its member development programme by increasing partner involvement – for example, by allowing partners to provide sessions to members as part of their induction programme."

Areas that our Member Development Programme was commended on:

- Group Leader and Council Management Team commitment to member development.
- High profile MDSG, group leader representation and links to General Purposes Committee for accountability.
- Sustainable budget for member development of £22,500.
- Clear links between member development and corporate priorities.
- Member development is a standing item on Group Meeting agendas.
- High profile and valued officer support from Head of Governance and Governance officers.
- Clear councillor development vision statement 2020, led by the MDSG.
- Training Needs Analysis in April 2019 and August 2020 has shaped the member development programme.
- Prospective Councillor event held prior to the 2018 election and active Youth Council.
- Examples of leadership development via LGA Leadership Academy and examples of mentoring in political groups.

Areas for Continuous Improvement:

- To have a more corporate approach to member development that is replicated across the three political groups. This approach should include a framework for leadership development, mentoring etc. A clear leadership development strategy should be established to support political succession planning.
- To pilot a Personal Development Planning programme, with MDSG acting as a pilot group. This pilot should be evaluated before then being implemented with a target of 60% councillors participating.
- In preparation for the 2022 election, develop a strategic Be A Councillor programme using the LGA support modules. A project plan to take this forward should be undertaken ASAP, prior to political parties/associations selecting candidates. The Be a Councillor campaign can be viewed here <https://www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor>
- Undertake a skills audit of all councillors after the 2022 elections, to identify skills, knowledge and interests.
- Implement an evaluation strategy for member development with input from the MDSG. Seek support from HR/OD team to ensure that evaluation is meaningful.
- Look to involve strategic partners in the member development programme. The 2022 induction programme will offer opportunities for greater partner involvement.
- Post Covid-19, look at the approach to virtual and e-learning and opportunities for councils across London to collaborate on development and share the costs. This can be led by councils directly or led by London Councils via the London Member Development Network.
- Since a lot of development activities are delivered in-house by council officers, it may be beneficial to provide officers with Train the Trainer support. This will ensure good practice training techniques are followed and provide the opportunity for creativity in respect of training delivery and use of PowerPoint.
- The Council to take forward an early application for Charter Plus accreditation.

Induction 2022:

The Governance Service will be shortly be commencing work on the development of an induction programme for Members to be rolled out after the 2022 elections. Part of this work will include feedback from Members elected in 2018 on what information they felt would have been helpful when they joined the Council and what format Members feel would be most beneficial.

Some feedback from Members was provided during the drop-in session held before the Chartered Status assessment day as follows:

- Clear information on where to go to first – Members enquiries, Governance, Planning etc, depending on the subject/query.
- Clear information on the role and responsibilities of each department in the Council.
- Names and Contacts of Senior Members of the Council, from Head of Services to Chief Officers, to know who to contact first and where to escalate issues.
- A buddying system set up, so that newer Councillors are supported by more experienced Councillors.

- A Need to know guide and information provided – how to deal with caseloads, where to direct residents, what support/guidance is available for residents.
- Briefings provided by Lead Officer for each Committee on the subject committee specific knowledge required and where to find more information.