



Welcome...



This update shows the breadth and depth of the recent development activity undertaken by Barking and Dagenham Members. Questioning Skills, Modern Slavery and Handling Difficult Conversations are just some of the internal training events held. Residential leadership courses on Scrutiny, Planning and for Young and BAME councillors plus a range of networking events have made this a busy period.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have facilitated and attended Councillor development sessions and to colleagues of the Member Development Group (MDG). You can read below about the productive MDG Away event held at Eastbury Manor and our successful interim assessment for the Elected Member Development Charter Plus award. The Barking & Dagenham Councillors' 360 Degree Feedback Programme is now open. You can read more about this and how you can join, below.

I warmly encourage as many Members as possible to take part in this interesting development programme which will help to develop us all. As ever, please feel free to get in touch with me to discuss your views regarding the training and development of councillors and colleagues.

Cllr Sade Bright, Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Aspiration

Leading our communities



Right to left: Barking and Dagenham Councillors Mohammed Khan, Foyzur Rahman, Olawale Martins, Darren Rodwell, Ingrid Robinson and Donna Lumsden with Councillors Celia Hibbert Wolverhampton City Council and Caroline Kalu LB Lewisham

Leadership development was the focus of the busy residential programme we attended in February together with Barking and Dagenham councillor colleagues Donna Lumsden, Ingrid Robinson and Olawale Martins.

Specially designed for Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) councillors, there were useful discussions on demographics and working with different cultures. This brilliant weekend was organised by the Local Government Association (LGA).

We learnt the importance of influencing and that there is a delicate balance in leadership roles with residents, local organisations, the Council and political party. The impressive presenters helped us identify our own leadership styles and the need to use different styles in different situations. We covered ways to lead our local community, the importance of articulating our vision and translating vision into reality.

One of the ideas that stuck out was that there are three types of people; those who:

- Let it happen
- Make it happen
- Wonder what happened!

The six skilful trainers covered topics as broad as political power, maintaining your integrity and perfecting your political pitch. We discussed the importance of perception and even how to deal with fake news.

With councillors from different parties and from various parts of the country, the opportunities for joint learning and networking were enormous. Time just flew. We were provided with an excellent atmosphere where we shared ideas and learnt in an enjoyable environment. And the Leader took time out from his meeting in a different part of the venue to pay us a visit!

Cllrs Mohammed Khan and Foyzur Rahman

Effective scrutiny



Right to left: Cllr Eileen Keller, Health Scrutiny Chair, and Cllr Paul Robinson, Health Scrutiny Deputy Chair

Leading and managing reviews, chairing scrutiny meetings and ensuring the impact of scrutiny recommendations, are just some of the challenges faced by chairs of Scrutiny committees. To help equip us we set off to Coventry for an intensive weekend at the Local Government Association's Effective Scrutiny residential.

It was great to have the opportunity to speak to councillors from other authorities who have different scrutiny arrangements. We learnt that we are not alone and often have the same issues as other councils. The importance of building stronger working relationships across the council through scrutiny was emphasised. We learnt what other authorities were doing to engage backbench Members while bringing Cabinet Members and officers along with their decisions.

There was a good mixture of practical exercises and presentation by experts in their field. For example, we were given a leadership challenge where we worked on issues to scrutinise within our borough while liaising closely with other councillors to find a solution. We learnt the do's and don'ts of effective scrutiny and how to lead the scrutiny process.

The event also provided a good understanding of the role of the scrutiny officer. This is particularly important for new councillors who are still learning who does what.

Through interesting presentations and relevant exercises everyone was kept engaged all the way through the weekend. It was a useful learning experience if you want to be more involved in scrutiny, not just for chairs and deputy chairs but for committee members as well.

Cllr Eileen Keller, Health Scrutiny Chair, Cllr Paul Robinson, Health Scrutiny Deputy Chair, Cllr Andrew Achilleos, Overview and Scrutiny Deputy Chair

Further information

For guidance and a range of free resources about effective governance and scrutiny, visit www.cfps.org.uk

Making the best start



Left to right: Barking and Dagenham Cllrs Emily Rodwell and Princess Bright with Cllr Vanisha Solanki London borough of Redbridge

Just three months after being elected, Cllr Emily Rodwell, Cllr Simon Perry and I attended the Young Councillors' residential weekend organised by the Local Government Association (LGA) at Warwick University. This was a fantastic opportunity to meet and problem-solve with forty young councillors each starting their political journeys.

An engaging mix of practical exercises, a range of presentations and group discussions kept everyone interested throughout the weekend. There were sessions on personal resilience and time management. A communication skills expert emphasised the importance of body language and ways to send the right message.

I particularly enjoyed the 'Hot Topics' session. This was a chance to pose questions and burning issues to a panel of experienced councillors and hear how they and fellow delegates might tackle these. We were encouraged to practice dealing with difficult situations ourselves. Through filming and play back I was able to see where I did well and what I would like to do differently in future.

As young councillors there was emphasis on networking, being open and listening to other people's views. With participants from around the country and representing different political parties, there was plenty of opportunity to practice.

I am glad to have been encouraged by the Council to attend this course so early in my political career. It has given me lots of new ideas, areas to work on and an excellent network for the future.

Cllr Princess Bright, Chair Audit and Standards Committee

Leading an effective Planning Committee



Cllr Saleem (right) with Martin Hutchings LGA Planning Advisory Service Improvement Manager.

The LGA (Local Government Association) Planning Essentials is an intensive residential course delivered by the Planning Advisory Service. It provided an opportunity for Members from across the political spectrum to learn from leading experts. We heard presentations by councillors from different Authorities. Practical exercises enabled us to compare knowledge and experience. I really enjoyed the event and recommend this training to other

Members.

I gained expert knowledge of planning issues and how to lead an effective planning committee. This included proper and transparent public engagement, the need for clear, focused officer presentations and the importance of treating officers fairly and professionally. The discussions gave me the opportunity to review the LBBd committee and its chairing role with peers from around the country. I am pleased to say that we are doing well, with few appeals being upheld against our Planning Committee's decisions.

The networking opportunities were fantastic. As a result, I have gained a better understanding of common challenges and plan to visit other Planning Committees to learn more about how they work.

Cllr Muhammad Saleem, Chair Planning Committee

More info

The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) provides online resources to help local authorities understand and respond to planning reform: local.gov.uk/pas

Taking time out to plan



Right to left: Cllr Sade Bright, Cllr Muhammad Saleem, Cllr Princess Bright, Cllr Donna Lumsden, Lois Taylor, Cllr Jane Jones, Cllr Edna Fergus, Cllr Eileen Keller, Cllr Ingrid Robinson, Fiona Jamieson, Cllr Kashif Haroon

The Member Development Group (MDG) held an outstanding Away Event at Eastbury Manor in March. Officers including Fiona Taylor, Director of Law and Governance joined twelve Members to examine local government trends, review the last year and plan Member Development priorities. It was a lively and enjoyable day and I sincerely thank my colleagues in the Member Development Group for their support and contributions on the day.

We focused on challenges for councillors and discussed the need to focus on the positive things residents and councillors are doing. The importance of looking at different ways to develop ourselves was considered.

As a result we are launching the Barking and Dagenham 360 Degree Feedback Programme for Members. Other priorities include finding ways to encourage more residents to understand the role of Members so they might consider standing for elected office.

An excellent guided tour of Eastbury Manor allowed time to consider this wonderful asset to our Borough and enjoy different ways to learn. An informative presentation by Kate Herbert LGA Principal Advisor for London sparked ideas and helped determine priorities for the year ahead.

Cllr Sade Bright, Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Aspiration and Lead Member for Member Development

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My experience of the 360 Degree Feedback Programme

Cllr Jane Jones shares her experience of the Barking & Dagenham Councillors' 360 Degree Feedback Programme.



Why did you take part?

It's good to be told how other people perceive you. As an elected politician it's very useful information.

I had successfully completed training programmes designed for Members with a personal development and teamwork focus.

These gave me good ideas about the elements required for working with others and helped clarify my own perspective of my strengths and weaknesses. But what did other people think of me? As a relatively new councillor I wanted to know what my peers thought.

What did the process involve?

First, I assessed myself on local leadership, communication skills, partnership working, political understanding, scrutiny and challenge and regulating and monitoring. These are the core skills of the Local Government Association Political Skills Framework. I recommend answering honestly but don't think too long.

Then I asked others to assess me. This is done electronically so there is no limit on numbers. You can choose political colleagues, partner organisations, residents, officers or even family members!

The results are confidential, no-one knows who has said what. Fiona Jamieson, the Member Development Officer met with me and we jointly looked at the results. We compared my own assessment with other people's. We discussed the feedback so I could consider whether I agreed with it, if I wanted to make changes and if so what did I want to do differently.

What did you get out of it?

You can't see the back of your own head. This is a good way to learn how others see you! People aren't overly critical. Indeed, there were areas where others rated me more highly than I rated myself.

It's the subtleties of behaviour that came out of it for me. I was able to consider how my behaviour may have been appropriate in past situations, question if it still served me well or if I needed to consider behaving differently. An update, if you like – you might do the same with your wardrobe when you get a new role! It's really helpful to be told how people perceive you and have support to consider that. This has made me a more rounded politician.

What would your advice be to other Members?

I really encourage other people to do it. If there's feedback available – learn from it!

More information

The 360 Degree Feedback Programme for elected Members is now open for the new municipal year. If you would like to take part or would like more information email Fiona.jamieson@lbbd.gov.uk

Charter Plus success



The Council passed the London Charter Plus for Elected Member Development interim assessment with flying colours! Cllr Sade Bright met with Mark Palmer who carried out the assessment on behalf of London Councils.

The Charter provides a robust, structured framework to help authorities enhance and hone member development. Four elements are assessed:

1. Commitment to member development
2. Strategic approach to member development
3. Learning and development is effective in building capacity
4. Supporting members

The Council's work was highly commended: Be A Councillor event, Councillor Induction and Training Programme, Councillor PDP's, Cabinet Induction, development of new councillors through mentoring and leadership programme

courses and the Member development newsletter showcasing good practice and key initiatives.

The strategic focus of the Member Development Group was also praised, together with the sustainable member development budget.



Read more about the Charter for Elected Member Development: www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/node/4743

Don't miss out | Every Friday our comms team sends a weekly Members' Briefing email update. Not receiving it? [Email the team](#)

Gaining questioning skills



Right to left: Cllrs Lumsden, Kangethe and Keller with trainer Tim Young

Sixteen Members braved a cold, snowy January evening to join the Council's Questioning Skills training for Members. We were not disappointed. This was one of the best courses I have ever been on and the trainer was brilliant. It was a great mix of theory and practice and kept us engaged the whole evening.

As newly-elected councillors we need to be able to question effectively. This challenging course gave me an excellent insight into the importance of being prepared, listening well before I make a judgment, preparing key lines of inquiry

and creating strategies for questioning.

I truly valued working with the experienced Members who attended and benefited from their knowledge and different perspectives. I felt uncertain about the group exercise but that turned out to be the best part. The importance of working as a team thoroughly came home to me.

This training really made me think and it definitely improved my skills. I now feel more focussed and able to question in the many different roles I have as a councillor.

Cllr Donna Lumsden

Respect for Each Other and Each Other's Differences



Right to left: Cllrs Muhammad Saleem LBB, Ms Gillian Merron Chief Executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Cllr Ingrid Robinson LBB, Ms Marie Van der Zyl, President of Board of Deputies, Cllr Richard Sweden LB Waltham Forest

Together with a record number of London councillors, Councillor Muhammad Saleem and I attended Jewish London – A Seminar for Councillors on 4 November 2018.

This enlightening event hosted by London Jewish Forum, Board of Deputies of

British Jews and Jewish Leadership Council was a Sunday well-spent.

Councillor Saleem and I opted for the workshop on Antisemitism and one on Israel. Both were very thought provoking. The work carried out by Jewish Care was showcased as an excellent example of care in the community.

Networking opportunities together with excellent food enabled us to meet past colleagues and friends. These included former Ilford North MP, Mr. Lee Scott whom Councillor Saleem knew when they both attended the East London Three Faiths Celebrations at Eaton Road Muslim Centre, Ilford. Mr. Scott now works as an Advisor to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. It was particularly refreshing to hear Mr. Scott giving examples of excellent multi-faith work to bring various religious communities together. I met an old work colleague Stephen Jaffa who now works for the Jewish Leadership Council and Gillian Merton who is the Chief Executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Ms. Merton was born in Ilford and lived briefly in Barking and Dagenham.

My personal highlight of the day was Dr. Martin Stern's powerful speech on his life as a Holocaust survivor; so very relevant in the time that we are now living. The Holocaust shows what happens when people fail to respect each other and each other's differences.

Councillor Ingrid Robinson

More information

The Jewish Manifesto for Local Government can be downloaded

here: www.bod.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Local-Manifesto-2018-v6-WEB.pdf

More resources

Barking and Dagenham has membership of the following organisations, so it is free for councillors to access:

- Top Tips, Daily News, Podcasts, Essential Guides from Local Government Information Unit (LGIU): <https://www.lgiu.org.uk/resources-for-new-councillors/>
 - Member Briefings, Events and Reports from London Councils: <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/members-area>
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Your feedback, comments and ideas about this newsletter are welcome!
If you have something you would like to share in the next edition, please send it by 30 October 2019. Contact Fiona Jamieson [by email](#) or phone: 020 8227 2877



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