

29 February 2024		ITEM: 11
Standards & Audit Committee		
Member Attendance at Committees		
Wards and communities affected: Not applicable	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Matthew Boulter, Head of Democratic, Scrutiny and Member Services		
Accountable Assistant Director: Not applicable		
Accountable Director: Asmat Hussain, Interim Director of Law & Governance		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report sets out the committee meeting attendance statistics for Members for the years 2022-23 and 2023-24 to date.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **To comment on the Member attendance statistics and make any recommendations in relation to Member attendance the Committee may feel appropriate.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 19 July 2023 the Standards and Audit Committee requested a report on Member attendance figures at committee meetings for the purposes of understanding what level of attendance there was at meetings.
- 2.2 Appendix A sets out the attendance figures for each Member for the municipal years 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2023, up to 31 December 2023. These figures are available on the Council's website via the Mod.Gov committee system.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The year 2022-23 offers a complete picture of Member attendance. In considering the figures the Committee are reminded that some Members had personal and medical issues during the municipal year which meant they were absent for a lengthy period of time. Where a Member is at risk of not attending a meeting for six months a report is prepared for Full Council to allow

Members to decide if that Member should be allowed special dispensation to remain absent.

- 3.2 Where a Member is not able to attend a meeting they may wish to give their apologies and/or send a substitute.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 It is the responsibility of individual Members and their party whips to ensure attendance at committees. This report, on the request of this committee, allows for Members to comment and make recommendations on Member attendance and to champion engagement and good practice.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 Member attendance is key in ensuring quorate meetings with robust engagement in the decision making processes of the Council. Members are expected to engage with their committee duties and to follow the apologies/substitution procedure where possible.

- 6.2 Attendance at committees is one way for Members to provide community leadership.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Rosie Hurst**
Interim Senior Management Accountant

There are no financial implications.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**
Governance Lawyer and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 states that if a member of a local authority fails, throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance, to attend any meeting of the local authority they will, unless the failure was due to some good reason approved by the local authority before the expiry of that period, cease to be a member of the local

authority. Attendance can be at any committee or sub-committee, or any joint committee, joint board or other body where the functions of the local authority are discharged or who were appointed to advise the local authority on any matter relating to the discharge of their functions. Section 85(2A) of the 1972 also places a similar requirement on members who are members of a local authority's executive who fail to attend any meeting of the executive.

Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 enables a local authority to approve the reason(s) for non-attendance of a Member at any meeting of the local authority throughout a period of six consecutive months, provided that approval is given by the local authority before the expiry of the six-month period in order to avoid loss of office automatically after six-month period. In the event that the reason for non-attendance is approved, the local authority would be required to specify an extension to the period of non-attendance allowed before automatic loss of office would apply.

Once any Member loses their office through failure to attend for the six-month period, the disqualification cannot be overcome by the Member subsequently resuming attendance nor can retrospective approval of the Council be sought for an extension in time. By virtue of S87 of the 1972 Act the office of a Councillor becomes vacant only when the authority declares it to be vacant, which the authority must do, and a casual vacancy arises.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer (27/10/23)

There are no diversity implications included in this report.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children

None.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: Attendance statistics for Members at Committees: 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Report Author:

Matthew Boulter

Head of Democratic, Member and Scrutiny Services

Legal Services