

Ferndown Town Council Staff and Councillor Training and Development Policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 This document sets out Ferndown Town Council's (Council's) Training and Development policy:

- Council's commitment to training and development
- identification of training needs
- corporate training
- financial assistance
- study leave
- short courses/workshops
- evaluation of training
- links with other policies
- reporting on progress

2 Commitment to training

2.1 Council is committed to the ongoing training and development of all Councillors and employees to enable them to make effective contributions to Council's aims and objectives in providing the highest quality representation and services for the people of the town.

2.2 According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2007), training can be defined as "a planned process to develop the abilities of the individual and to satisfy current and future needs of the organisation."

2.3 Council recognises that its most important resource are its councillors and staff and is committed to encouraging both to enhance their knowledge and qualifications through further training. Some training is also necessary to ensure compliance with all legal and statutory requirements.

2.4 Council encourages senior and specialist staff to undertake a programme of continuing professional development (CPD) in line with the requirements of their requisite professional bodies and all staff to undertake training as deemed necessary to fulfil their duties on accordance with their contract of employment and job description.

2.5 Providing training yields a number of benefits:

- improves the quality of the services and facilities that Council provides;
- enables Council to achieve its corporate aims and objectives;
- improves the skill base of the employees, producing confident, highly qualified staff working as part of an effective and efficient team, and demonstrates that employees are valued.

2.6 A realistic financial allocation for training and development in the annual budget will be allocated annually by Council, as well as taking advantage of any relevant partnership or in-house provision available.

2.7 The process of development is as follows:

- training needs should be identified by considering the overall objectives of Council, as well as individual requirements.
- planning and organising training to meet those specific needs.
- designing and delivering the training.
- evaluating the effectiveness of training.

3 Identification of training needs

- 3.1 Employees will be asked to identify their development needs with advice from their line manager during their annual appraisal/regular meetings, or during other relevant opportunities (probation period, confirmation of appointment, or during informal/formal discussions).
- 3.2 Other circumstances may present the need for training:
- legislative requirements (e.g. first aid, fire safety, manual handling),
 - changes in legislation,
 - changes in systems/processes,
 - new or revised qualifications become available,
 - accidents,
 - professional error,
 - introduction of new equipment
 - new working methods and practices
 - complaints to Council
 - request from a member of staff or councillor,
 - devolved services / delivery of new services.
- 3.3 Employees who wish to be nominated for a training course should discuss this in the first instance during their appraisal or as the need arises; where it will be determined whether the training is relevant to Council's needs and/or service delivery.
- 3.4 Council also recognises that councillors also need support and training to rise to the challenges of their elected status. New members need to know what the job entails and to build up their knowledge and skills and experienced councillors need to refresh their skills and knowledge to meet the ever-changing needs and demands of the modern world.
- 3.6 All councillors will receive an Induction Handbook within 1 month of taking their seat, new councillors will be given the opportunity to attend a councillor training event, and annually all new committee chairmen will be given the option of attending a chairmanship training course.
- 3.7 All councillors will be kept informed of relevant training courses and conferences particularly those offered by Dorset Association of Local Councils, National Association of Local Councils and Society of Local Council Clerks.
- 3.8 Any councillor wishing to attend any training event should discuss the training with the Town Clerk who will liaise with the Chairman of Personnel Committee before making any booking and seek any additional approval needed so that the training can be "approved duty" for the purposes of reimbursement of travelling and other expenses.

4 Corporate Training

- 4.1 Corporate training is necessary to ensure that employees are aware of their legal responsibilities or corporate standards (e.g. health and safety, risk management and equal opportunities). Employees will be required to attend training courses, workshops or seminars where suitable training is identified.

5 Resourcing Training

- 5.1 An allocation will be made in the budget each year to fund training fees and travel expenses and will be reviewed annually.
- 5.2 Council subscribes to the National Association of Local Councils, Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks and in order to receive regular up-

dates on matters relevant to the sector and have access to the courses and conferences provided.

5.3 There will also be sufficient funds set aside for appropriate technical literature and other information.

6 Financial Assistance

- 6.1 It is important to note that all sponsored training must be appropriate to the needs of Council, be relevant to the individual's role and is subject to the availability of financial resources.
- 6.2 Each request will be considered on an individual basis and the benefits to the individual and the organisation will be identified.
- 6.3 Other considerations include the following:
- implication of employee release for training course(s) on the operational capability of Council,
 - the most economic and effective means of training,
- 6.4 For approved courses councillors and employees can expect the following to be sponsored:
- the course fee
 - examination fees
 - associated membership fees
 - one payment to re-take a failed examination
- 6.5 Members and employees attending assisted courses are expected to inform the Town Clerk immediately of any absences (in the case of the Town Clerk the Chairman of the Personnel Committee).
- 6.6 Failure to sit an examination may result in the Council withdrawing future course funding and/or requesting the refunding of financial assistance. Each case will be considered on an individual basis.
- 6.7 Council will make payment of one individual membership per annum for the Town Clerk and any other employee working in a specialist area where professional membership is desirable as agreed by the Town Clerk to a relevant professional body.
- 6.8 Council operates a Return of Service agreement. Any employee undertaking post-entry qualifications funded by the Council must be aware that should they leave Council employment within two years of completion of the qualification they may be required to repay all costs associated with the undertaking of such training. Each case to be reviewed by the Personnel Committee.

7 Study leave

- 7.1 Employees who are given approval to undertake external qualifications are granted:
- study time to attend day-release courses,
 - time to sit examinations,
 - study time of one day per examination (to be discussed and agreed by line manager in advance),
- Provision of study time must be agreed with the line manager prior to the course being undertaken.

8 Short courses/workshops/residential weekends (including conferences)

- 8.1 Where employee attendance is required at a course on a Saturday or Sunday, up to a normal working day of straight TOIL per day may be taken.
- 8.2 Members and staff attending approved short courses/workshops/residential weekends can expect the following to be paid:
- course fee (usually invoiced following the event),

- travelling expenses in accordance with the Council's current policy,
- subsistence in accordance with the Council's current policy.

9 Evaluation of Training

- 9.1 Records of all training undertaken by employees will be kept in the personnel files of each member of staff.
- 9.2 As part of Council's continuing commitment to training and development, councillors and employees are encouraged to share information received and circulate training presentation papers for in-house training use. They are asked to provide feedback on the value and effectiveness of the training they undertake highlighting in particular the key implications of new legislation, guidance and/or best practice for the ongoing efficiency and effectiveness of the authority.

10 Linking with other Council policies

- Equality and Diversity Policy - opportunity in all aspects of councillor and employee development;
- Training for councillors and staff is a requirement for an award under the Local Council Accreditation Scheme;
- Risk Management Policy – a commitment to training and development greatly assists in achieving good governance and an effective system of risk management and review;
- Health and Safety Policy – ongoing training and development is key to ensuring a positive approach to Health and Safety is embedded throughout Council's activities;
- undertaking training is a clear indication of Continuing Professional Development.
- Performance Management Policy - Council recognises its success and the services it delivers depends on the effectiveness of its employees and councillors.

11 Reporting on progress

- 11.1 The Town Clerk will report annually to the Personnel Committee, detailing attendance at training over the year, as well as the inclusion of councillor and staff evaluation of courses attended.

12 Conclusion

- 12.1 The adoption of a training policy should achieve many benefits for the Council. Training will:
- widen skills and experience,
 - provide opportunities to network,
 - provide the skills to confront challenges,
 - encourage innovation, and
 - improve the standards of Council
- 12.2 It will assist in demonstrating that the Council is committed to continuing professional development and enhancing the skills of both councillors and employees.