

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY FOR COUNCILLORS & STAFF

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Introduction

Neston Town Council recognises that its most important resources are its members and officers and the Council is committed to keeping them appraised of current issues and developing them to their highest potential. Some training is necessary to ensure compliance with all legal and statutory requirements.

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” (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development).

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Encourage Members and staff to undertake appropriate training and development.
- Allocate training in a fair manner.
- Ensure that all training is evaluated to assess its value.
- Ensure that the Town Council has the necessary skills to plan and deliver high quality services.

Commitment to Training

Neston Town Council is committed to the training and development of all councillors and staff to enable them to make the most effective contribution to the Council’s aims and objectives in providing the highest quality representation and services to the Town.

There are a number of benefits to training, it:

- Improves the quality of the services and facilities provided by the Council.
- Enables the organisation to achieve its corporate aims & objectives.
- Demonstrates commitment to employees and acts as a motivator, attractor and retention aid.
- Enables members to undertake their duties to the best of their ability.
- Improves the skill base of both councillors and employees and aids team working.

Councillors

Members bring a vast range of skills and experience to the Council. However, both local government and the world around it, are fast changing and it is an essential investment to develop councillors to their full potential. In addition, the Council is likely to have a number of new functions over the coming years and it will be important for councillors fully appreciate the implications of the decisions they make.

The Council will establish a comprehensive Development Programme for members, based on the following approach:

- Skills development for individual members or groups of members.

- Seminars, Briefings & Workshops to raise general awareness of topical issues.
- Briefings and awareness raising prior to making a key decision or policy.

A rolling programme will be established immediately following the adoption of this Policy and following normal elections and updated annually.

Certain training is identified as essential for all councillors including:

- Induction for new Councillors;
- General Power of Competence;
- Code of Conduct and Ethical Framework;
- Equality responsibilities, and
- Understanding the Planning System (for members of Planning Committee).

Some councillors may have undertaken relevant training at principal council level, or in some cases, as part of their employment.

Training needs are prioritised by the Human Resources Committee following advice from the Chief Officer and completion of a questionnaire by councillors.

Employees

An annual training and development plan will also be established by the Chief Officer and approved by Human Resources Committee for employees and volunteers. It will however be flexible to accommodate new staff or newly identified needs.

Training needs are determined by the appraisal process and are set as targets for individual staff members by Chief Officer on a yearly basis, via the Employee Development Review process. Training needs are also identified during the appointment process and by informal discussion. Although sometimes training does need to be prioritised, the Council will try to accommodate requests from staff which are reasonable and appropriate.

Certain staff are required to be trained as fire wardens and in the future the council will require a member of staff to hold valid a First Aider qualification.

Training is prioritised on the following grounds (not in priority order):

- Legislative requirements e.g., health and safety.
- Changes in relevant legislation.
- Changes in systems, new working methods or equipment.
- New or revised qualifications available.
- The delivery of devolved or new services.
- Specialist need.
- Unexpected need e.g., following a service failure or accident.
- Identified competence issue.

Corporate training is necessary for subjects including corporate objectives or working practices, equality, health and safety.

Other considerations include:

- Implications of employee release for training courses upon the operational need and capacity of the Town Council.
- Economic and effective means of training the employee.
- Provision and availability of the training budget.
- Continued professional development in line with requisite professional bodies.

All new staff will receive induction training.

Resourcing training

Sufficient funds are allocated in the budget for Staff and Members for training purposes with a forecast of anticipated expenditure presented to Members for consideration each year as part of the Budget setting process. Separate budget headings are allocated for Members and Staff.

Qualifications

Employees may apply to take qualification training. These will be considered on an individual basis and will be dependent upon the need or priorities of the Town Council.

- National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) - The Town Council view this as accrediting existing knowledge and this is greatly encouraged.
- Career Personal Development (CPD) - The Town Council supports the Career Personal Development of all its employees.
- Employees will be required to attend training courses, workshops or seminars where necessary relating to legal responsibilities and corporate standards.

Delivery

Members' training, learning and development opportunities will be arranged predominately by Cheshire Association of Local Councils (ChALC). This will be supplemented as appropriate by in-house provision, the use of local training organisations and by inviting "guest speakers" to Council or committee meetings.

Most staff training needs are catered for by ChALC, Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), or local colleges, again supplemented by specialist providers.

Some joint training for both members and officers is not only cost effective but often gives added value through a cross fertilisation of ideas.

Staff and Members attending courses are encouraged to pass on what they have learned to colleagues where appropriate.

Financial assistance

The cost of training for Members will be paid for by the Council and reasonable associated costs such as travel and subsistence, reimbursed.

The Town Council will pay and / or assist with expenses incurred to cover the cost of tuition and examination fees for employees provided that the training is approved by the Chief Officer.

Costs for travel to tuition, courses or examination will generally be paid. This will include such expenses as:

- Course fees.
- Examination fees.
- Associated membership fees.
- The purchase of resources to complete a course or examination.

Where training is provided for a qualification or exceeds the general costs of training, then employees will be expected to sign an appropriate agreement to manage the risks associated with the Council's investment in the training. If an employee fails to sit an examination within a reasonable period of time, fails to satisfactorily progress or discontinues the course, the Town Council may withdraw its support and may request reimbursement of the financial assistance the employee has received to that date.

Should any absence from attending any training or courses occur, it must be reported to the Chief Officer immediately. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Study leave

Employees who are given approval to undertake external qualifications will be granted:

- Time to attend day release courses.
- Time to sit examinations.
- Study time (to be discussed and agreed with the Chief Officer in advance).
- Paid leave for courses, studying and examinations.

Training evaluation

Records of all employee training will be kept on individual personnel files and all Member training will be recorded.

All courses and seminars are evaluated by requesting staff and councillors for feedback.

Policy Review

The Policy will be reviewed 3 years after adoption to ensure it remains current and relevant.

The Annual Training and Development Plan for Members and staff, will be reviewed and updated annually.