

Great Tey Parish Council

Training and Development Policy

Introduction:

The effective operation of the Council relies on a well-trained, knowledgeable, and confident team. This Training and Development Policy sets out the Council's commitment to providing comprehensive learning opportunities for both Councillors and staff. The policy is designed to ensure that all individuals involved in Council activities possess the skills, knowledge, and confidence required to perform their roles effectively, in compliance with legal and regulatory standards, and in alignment with the principles of good governance.

This policy underlines the importance of ongoing professional development and aims to foster a culture of continuous learning, where both staff and Councillors are equipped to meet the evolving demands of their roles and responsibilities.

Scope of the Policy:

This policy applies to:

- All staff, including full-time, part-time, temporary, and fixed-term employees.
- All Councillors, including newly elected members and those with ongoing terms of office.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that everyone involved in Council operations is well-equipped to undertake their responsibilities effectively, legally, and in line with best governance practices.

While Councillors and staff are not required to be experts in every field, it is essential that they gain sufficient training to confidently manage their duties and respond appropriately to challenges, including those related to data protection and regulatory compliance.

1. Purpose and Scope of Training:

The Council recognises the need for both Councillors and staff to receive regular training to enhance their skills, knowledge, and understanding of key responsibilities. This includes ensuring that all members of the Council are familiar with relevant laws, data protection regulations, and governance standards.

Training will focus on the following key areas:

- **Data Protection:** To ensure that Councillors and staff understand their responsibilities in relation to personal data and privacy.
- **Governance and Accountability:** To promote transparency, good practice, and effective decision-making.
- **Role-Specific Training:** To equip Councillors and staff with the knowledge required to fulfil their roles effectively and lawfully.
- **Personal Development:** To encourage ongoing growth and skills development.

2. Training for Staff:

2.1 Identifying Training Needs

Training needs for staff will be identified through the following processes:

- Induction and probationary periods
- One-to-one meetings
- Appraisals

Great Tey Parish Council

- Workforce planning
- Team meetings and annual planning
- Legislative or organisational changes

Staff are encouraged to proactively identify their own learning needs. In return, the Council will offer a variety of learning opportunities, including:

- Conferences, seminars, and short courses
- Online training and e-learning
- Internal coaching and mentoring
- Work shadowing
- Time for self-directed research

2.2 Types of Training:

Training will be categorised as follows:

- **Mandatory:** Essential for the role or required by law (e.g., Health & Safety, Data Protection).
- **Desirable:** Relevant to the role but not legally required (e.g., Certificate in Local Council Administration – CiLCA).
- **Optional:** Supports personal development but is not directly related to current duties (e.g., Town Planning Technical Support diploma).

2.3 Financial Assistance and Study Leave:

- Financial support for mandatory and desirable training may be provided at the Council's discretion.
- If financial support exceeds a specified threshold, repayment may be required if the employee leaves the Council within a defined period or does not complete the course.
- Staff may take study leave for mandatory training during working hours. For non-mandatory training, the Council may grant up to 50% of the study leave time, capped at three days per year.

Study leave requests must be submitted in writing, with details of the course and its relevance to the employee's role.

3. Training for Councillors:

3.1 Training Expectations:

Training is a vital element of good governance, and all Councillors are encouraged to participate in relevant learning opportunities. Councillors, particularly those in leadership roles such as Chairs and Vice-Chairs, must attend mandatory training sessions specific to their role.

Newly elected Councillors should prioritise essential training to ensure they are fully prepared for their duties.

3.2 Training Notification and Requests:

The Clerk will circulate available training opportunities. Councillors are encouraged to request specific training where necessary and are responsible for making their own bookings once approved.

3.3 Training Approval, Budgeting, and Expenses:

- Training will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, subject to the annual training budget.

Great Tey Parish Council

- Travel expenses for attending training will be reimbursed, with additional expenses requiring prior approval.
- The Clerk has the authority to approve training for Councillors within the allocated training budget.
- Any training that exceeds the annual training budget must be approved by the Chair of the Council before costs are incurred.

3.4 Post-Training Feedback and Knowledge Sharing:

After attending training, Councillors are expected to:

- Provide feedback on the effectiveness of the training.
- Share any legislative or best practice updates with the Council to facilitate collective learning.

This promotes ongoing professional development and ensures that all Councillors are kept informed of changes that may affect their duties.

3.5 Substitute Attendance:

If a Councillor is unable to attend a booked training session, they are responsible for arranging a substitute. Failure to attend without appropriate notice may result in the Council incurring unnecessary costs.

4. Data Protection Training and Good Governance:

Data protection is a fundamental aspect of good governance. All Councillors and staff should:

- Understand the basics of personal data and individuals' rights.
- Be clear about their responsibilities in relation to data protection within the Council.
- Feel confident in responding to data protection issues, including data breaches or subject access requests.

Training on data protection will include:

- Induction sessions for new Councillors and staff.
- Short courses and annual refreshers for all members.
- Access to guidance from the ICO, NALC, and county associations.

Training will be practical and directly applicable to the real activities of the Council, helping to ensure that data protection principles of lawfulness, transparency, and accountability are embedded in everyday practices.

Key Considerations for Data Protection:

- Are policies approved, understood, and consistent with the Council's data map and risk assessment?
- Do all staff and Councillors know how to report a data breach?
- Is there a reliable process for handling rights requests, such as Subject Access Requests?
- Is the Council's privacy notice up-to-date and easily accessible?

5. Continuous Review and Compliance:

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislative or operational changes necessitate it. The Council is committed to ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation, including:

- The Local Government Act 1972

Great Tey Parish Council

- The National Training Strategy for Local Councils
- Data protection legislation

Any amendments to the policy will be communicated to all Councillors and staff.

6. Non-Contractual Status:

This policy is non-contractual and does not form part of any employee's contract of employment. The Council reserves the right to amend or withdraw this policy at any time.

Conclusion:

The Council strongly encourages all Councillors to undertake relevant training to ensure they fulfil their duties effectively and in compliance with applicable laws and governance standards. Training is essential not only for personal growth but for ensuring that the Council operates efficiently, transparently, and with accountability. Through ongoing development, the Council aims to build a skilled, knowledgeable, and confident team ready to serve the needs of the community.