Sturminster Newton Town Council

Training and Development Policy

1. Purpose

This policy explains how Sturminster Newton Town Council identifies and supports training and development for councillors, staff and, where applicable, volunteers. Training is important because the Council can only make lawful decisions and provide safe, effective services if the people involved in its work understand their roles and responsibilities.

The Council will support appropriate training that helps it meet its objectives, comply with legal duties, manage public money responsibly, protect health and safety, and provide good services to the community.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Council, whether full-time, part-time, permanent, temporary or fixed term. It also applies to councillors, recognising that councillors are not employees but need suitable training and information to carry out their role properly.

Where the Council uses volunteers, working group members or non-councillor appointees, it will provide information, briefing or training that is proportionate to their role and the risks involved.

3. Aims of the policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- make sure councillors, staff and volunteers understand their roles and responsibilities;
- support lawful, informed and transparent decision-making;
- help staff carry out their work safely, confidently and effectively;
- support councillors in their community representation and committee roles;
- meet legal, health and safety, employment, data protection and governance requirements;
- encourage continuous professional development where this benefits the Council;
- ensure training is planned, budgeted for and provides value for money.

4. Responsibilities

- The Council is responsible for agreeing this policy, setting a suitable training budget and supporting training that is necessary for the Council to meet its responsibilities.
- The Clerk is responsible for advising the Council on training needs, keeping appropriate training records and making sure that agreed training is followed up where necessary.
- Line managers are responsible for identifying staff training needs through induction, supervision, one-to-one meetings, appraisals and day-to-day management.
- Councillors, staff and volunteers are expected to take part in agreed training, apply what they have learned, and provide feedback or evidence of completion when asked.

5. Identifying training needs

Training needs may be identified through:

- new councillor induction, staff induction or volunteer briefing;
- changes in law, guidance, council policy or working practices;
- appraisals, probation reviews, supervision or one-to-one meetings;
- risk assessments, health and safety requirements or insurance conditions;
- audit recommendations, governance reviews or complaints;
- new services, projects, equipment or responsibilities;
- individual requests where the training would benefit the Council.

Training needs should be reviewed regularly and, where appropriate, included in staff appraisals, councillor development discussions, project implementation and the annual budget process.

6. Councillor training

Councillors will be encouraged to undertake induction and core training so that they understand the role of the Council, the role of councillors, the Code of Conduct and standards in public life, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, interests, decision-making and community engagement.

Additional training may be required or strongly recommended for councillors who chair meetings, sit on committees, serve on working groups, represent the Council externally, or have particular responsibilities such as staffing, finance and planning.

Training may be provided by public bodies, specialist providers or in-house briefings from the Clerk or other officers.

7. Staff training and development

Staff will receive training appropriate to their role, responsibilities and place of work. This may include induction, health and safety, data protection, customer service, use of equipment, cemetery administration, grounds maintenance, finance, governance, management, first aid and other role-specific training.

Where a qualification, certificate or training requirement is essential to a role, this should be made clear in the job description, contract or written statement of employment particulars where appropriate.

The Council may support continuing professional development where it is relevant to the employee's role or the Council's needs. Requests for financial support, study leave or paid time to attend training will be considered in advance and must be approved before costs are incurred.

8. Volunteers and non-councillor appointees

Where volunteers or non-councillor appointees assist the Council, the Council will provide information and training that is suitable for the task being undertaken. This may include health and safety, safeguarding where relevant, confidentiality, data protection, use of equipment and lone working.

The level of training required will depend on the nature of the role, the risks involved and whether the person is working alone, with staff, with the public or on Council land or premises.

9. Budget and approval

The Council will include suitable provision for training in its annual budget. Training should normally be approved before any booking is made or cost is incurred.

When considering training requests, the Council will take account of:

- whether the training is required by law, policy, risk assessment or the role;
- the benefit to the Council, staff member, councillor, volunteer or community;
- the cost, timing and availability of budget;
- the quality and suitability of the provider;
- the need for staff cover or operational arrangements;
- whether the learning can be shared with others.

Training costs will be managed in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and any delegated authority approved by the Council.

The Council will include in it's budget adequate provision for books and subscriptions to ensure that up to date resources are available.

10. Records and evaluation

The Clerk will keep appropriate records of staff and councillor training, including mandatory or role-specific training. Records help the Council monitor training needs, demonstrate competence, manage risk and support good governance.

After training, participants may be asked to provide brief feedback on whether the training was useful and whether any action, update or change to Council practice is needed. Where appropriate, learning should be shared with relevant staff, councillors or volunteers.

11. Equality and accessibility

The Council will consider training requests fairly and consistently. Reasonable adjustments will be considered where required so that staff, councillors or volunteers are not unfairly disadvantaged when accessing training.

12. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are significant changes in law, guidance, staffing structure, Council services, governance requirements or audit recommendations.

Date adopted: July 26

Review date: July 27