

SWANSCOMBE AND GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL TRAINING/ LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY.

(This Policy was reviewed by the full Council at its AGM held on 14 May 2025, minute 20/25-26)

1 Introduction

1.1 This document forms the Council's Training and L & D Policy. It sets out:

- The Council's commitment to training
- The identification of training needs
- Corporate training
- Financial assistance
- Study leave
- Short courses/workshops
- Evaluation of training
- Links with other policies
- Reporting on progress

1.2 The objectives of this strategy are to:

- Encourage Members and staff to undertake appropriate training /L & D
- Allocate training in a fair manner
- Ensure that all training is evaluated to assess its value

2 Commitment to Training

2.1 SGTC is committed to the ongoing training and development of all Councillors and employees to enable them to make the most effective contribution to the 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." Learning and development describes the formal, ongoing efforts that are made within organizations to improve the performance and self-fulfilment of their employees and in our case members (i.e. Councillors) through a variety of educational methods and programs. In the modern local government, these efforts have taken on a broad range of applications—from instruction in highly specific job skills to long-term professional development. In recent years, training and development has emerged as a formal business function, an integral element of strategy, and a recognized profession with distinct theories and methodologies. More and more companies of all sizes have embraced "continual learning" and other aspects of training and development as a means of promoting employee growth and acquiring a highly skilled work force.

2.3 SGTC recognises that its most important resource is its Members and officers and is committed to encouraging both Members and officers to enhance their knowledge and qualifications through further training. Some training is necessary to ensure compliance with all legal and statutory requirements.

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2.4 Providing training yields a few benefits:

- Improves the quality of the services and facilities that SGTC provides.
- Enables the organisation to achieve its corporate aims and objectives;
- Improves the skills base of the employees and members.
- Produces confident, highly qualified staff working as part of an effective and efficient team; and
- Demonstrates that the employees are valued.

2.5 Training and development will be achieved by including a realistic financial allocation for training and development in the annual budget, as well as taking advantage of any relevant partnership or in-house provision available.

2.6 The process of development is as follows:

- Training needs should be identified by considering the overall objectives of the organisation, as well as individual requirements.
- Planning and organising training to meet those specific needs.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of training.

3 The 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 or regular meetings with their line manager. There are number of additional ways that the training needs of staff may be recognised:

- Questionnaires
- During formal interview/review
- Following confirmation of appointment.
- Formal and informal discussion

3.2 Members will be asked to identify their development needs with advice from the appropriate body or person: i.e. committee, Town Clerk. There are several additional ways that the training needs of Members may be recognised:

- Questionnaires
- During review
- Following election/co-option
- Formal and informal discussion

3.3 Other circumstances may present the need for training:

- Legislative requirements i.e. First Aid, Fire Safety, Manual Handling.
- Changes in legislation
- Changes in systems
- New or revised qualifications become available
- Accidents

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- Professional error
- Introduction of new equipment
- New working methods and practices
- Complaints to the Council
- A request from a member of staff
- Devolved services / delivery of new services

3.4 Employees who wish to be nominated for a training course should discuss this in the first instance during their appraisal; where it will be determined whether the training is relevant to the authority's needs and/or service delivery.

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 Financial Assistance

5.1 It is important to note that all supported training must be appropriate to the needs of the Council, be relevant to the individual's role and is subject to the availability of financial resources.

Each request will be considered on an individual basis and the benefits to the individual and the organisation will be identified.

To best ensure cost effectiveness, Members and employees will be required to attend the nearest college/venue offering the required course, unless an alternative is authorised by the Personnel Committee in the interest of operational effectiveness or Best Value.

5.2 Other considerations include the following:

- Implication of employee release for training course(s) on the operational capability of the council
- The most economic and effective means of training
- Provision and availability of training budget

5.3 For approved courses Members 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

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5.4 Members and officers attending assisted courses are required to inform the Town Clerk immediately of any absences, giving reasons.

5.5 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 Study Leave

6.1 Employees who are given approval to undertake external qualifications are granted the following:

- 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.

7 Short Courses/Workshops/Residential Weekends

7.1 Where attendance is required at a short course, paid leave will be granted to employees.

7.2 Members and staff attending approved short courses/workshops/residential weekends can expect the following to be paid:

- The 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

8 Evaluation of Training

8.1 Records of all training undertaken by employees will be kept in the personnel files of each member of staff.

8.2 As part of SGTC's continuing commitment to training and development, employees 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.

9 Linking with other Council Policies

9.1 Relationship with other Council policies:

- Equality of opportunity in all aspects of Member and officer development.

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- Risk Assessments – a commitment to Training and Development greatly assists in achieving good governance and an effective system of Risk Management.
- Health and Safety Policy – ongoing training and development is key to ensuring a positive approach to Health and Safety is embedded throughout the authority.
- Undertaking training is a clear indication of Continuing Professional Development.

10 **Reporting on Progress** – Member and Staff training will be reported into full Council meetings as and when it has been undertaken.

11 **Conclusion**

11.1 The adoption of a training or learning and development policy should achieve many benefits for the Council. It will assist in demonstrating that the Council is committed to continuing professional development and enhancing the skills of both Elected Members and staff.

11.2 The adoption of a training or learning and development policy has a practical implication for SGTC's budget and ensures that the Council is aware of the implication of its commitments and allocates adequate and appropriate funding in a long term and sustainable platform that supports these aspirations and commitments.

12 **Freedom of Information**

12.1 In accordance with the *Freedom of Information Act 2000*, this Document will be posted on the Council's Website and copies of this document will be available for inspection on deposit in the Council Office.

13 **Commitment to Officers and Members**

13.1 SGTC has a fully integrated policy in the field of training and L&D based in this document and the commitment to funding in its' regular budget. SGTC supports the concept of investing in lifelong L&D for members and officers and will commit an appropriate budget percentage (%) of its budget on a regular sustainable basis. The Council will work with and avail itself of the resources of professional bodies/organisations, as appropriate.