

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING STRATEGY

A National Training Strategy for Parish and Town Councils

In November 2000, in response to The Rural White Paper, the Countryside Agency and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) were tasked with developing a National Training Strategy to provide training and support for parish and town councils. The purpose of the Strategy is to enable councils to make the most of their role and to be able to carry out their duties more easily.

The Strategy commented that, “There is the all too common feeling that because people have worked [in the council] for years that they ‘don’t need training’ or ‘know all they need to know’. The reality is that councils must take responsibility for the continuous development of their staff and members. Being up to date with changes in policy and legislation and advances in technology is essential if councils are to work more efficiently.” *A National Training Strategy for Parish and Town Councils, November 2001.*

The Strategy advocates:

- An emphasis on measurable performance and quality initiatives
- A continued focus on competence and lifelong learning
- A need for a flexible approach towards continuing professional development

The Council fully embraces this Strategy.

Dorchester Town Council

It is the Council’s aim to create a culture of learning and to ensure both elected members and staff are offered every opportunity for personal development and learning. The Council values all types of learning, fully supporting and positively encouraging lifelong learning.

The Council is committed to providing elected members with development, training and educational opportunities to acquire the skills and competencies that are needed by the Council.

Elected member development is relevant to all councillors; it is embedded in all working practice, throughout an individual’s term of office with the Council. Reflection, review, feedback and opportunities for learning should form an integral part of everyone’s experience.

Purpose of Town Councillor development

Elected member development related activities include on and off the job learning, using an appropriate balance of in-house and external facilitators, and providing as much flexibility as possible in terms of location and times, to allow for individual needs. It must however, be acknowledged that resources may limit the options available, and individual needs must always be balanced with those of the Town Council.

- To ensure that Town Councillors are trained to levels appropriate to their roles in order to perform legally and effectively in the best interest of themselves, of the people they represent and of the Town Council.

- To ensure provision of development and training which extends knowledge, competence and capability to meet on-going service delivery needs.
- To facilitate the implementation of Council procedures.
- To assist in the development of good practice.
- To develop improved performance, both of the individual and the Town Council.
- Personal development of the individual.

Programme of development and training

The Town Council will provide a comprehensive raft of development and training opportunities for all elected members. Whilst the opportunities are non-compulsory, Councillors are positively encouraged to participate.

Induction Evening - presentation by the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk to newly elected Councillors giving an overview of the Town Council, its roles and responsibilities, procedures, finance and Best Value, to include projects and issues of the day.

Professional Development Day - annual day-long course to develop and train Town Councillors in their role and responsibilities including:

Making good decisions - duties, responsibilities and best practice in meetings. The role of the Councillor, the Chairman and the Town Clerk. Achieving policy objectives through productive meetings. The cycle of meetings, committees, delegation and policy making. The importance of the Agenda, Minutes and Standing Orders.

Achieving the Council's vision for the future - how best to achieve the Council's objectives, the Best Value Performance Plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Prioritising, policy, budget and precept. Working in partnership with other bodies.

Issues of the day - for instance, White Paper - a new national agenda for town and parish councils, Quality status, delivering more services locally, partnership working with principal authorities, and the local planning framework, legislation and law etc.

Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils training courses

- Chairmanship
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Finances
- Law
- Planning
- Community Activities etc

Individual training - Identification of development and training requirements to enable each Town Councillor to succeed in their job, sourced as required.

Publications

- The Good Councillor Guide

- Code of Conduct
- Chairmanship
- Local Council Review

Training providers

Training provision for elected members is available via:

- Society of Local Council Clerks
- Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils
- University of Gloucester
- Further and higher education establishments
- Local Government Employers' Organisation
- Principal Authorities

Measurement

Elected development and training opportunities should be discussed on an annual basis. It is now necessary for records and monitoring to be undertaken to log Town Councillor training opportunities and participation. This is to be undertaken by introducing the Town Councillor Development/ Training Plan and Record from May 2007.

APPENDIX A

The Town Councillor Development/Training Plan and Record should be reviewed on a bi-annual basis.

A full report of training undertaken by elected members will be presented to the Resources Panel on an annual basis by the Town Clerk.

Responsibilities

The Town Council and the individual elected members themselves both share in the responsibility for development and training. These responsibilities are:

Town Council:

- To make clear that it values the learning and roles of all elected members.
- To provide the necessary resources and support for elected members' development and training.

Town Clerk:

- To provide on-going encouragement to elected members to undertake personal development and training.
- To provide relevant advice and support to elected members in their endeavour to develop and enhance relevant skills.
- To monitor elected members' development and training cyclically, with review and revision on a regular basis.

Town Councillors:

- To value and take responsibility for their own learning, development and careers.
- To have regard for their role in the successful operation of the Town Council.

These responsibilities are to be accepted on signing the Town Councillor Development Charter by each Member on acceptance of office.

**TOWN COUNCILLOR
DEVELOPMENT/TRAINING PLAN AND RECORD**

Councillor -----

Appraiser name and position: -----

Date of appraisal: -----

<i>Development and training identified</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsible</i>	<i>Review date</i>	<i>Completed date</i>



TOWN COUNCILLOR DEVELOPMENT CHARTER

Name of Town Councillor: -----

As a member of Dorchester Town Council, I will be working for an organisation in which learning is valued. I will be supported to undertake training and development which I need to help me achieve and maintain a high standard of performance and will be given encouragement and support to achieve my full potential.

I am entitled to:

- Equality of opportunity in all aspects of my development
- An induction programme in my own role as well as to the workings of Dorchester Town Council
- An understanding of the direction and objectives of the Town Council
- An understanding of the contribution that is expected of me
- A Personal Development Plan which addresses my development needs
- Fellow members who are committed to member development

I will be encouraged to undertake:

- Continuous learning and development throughout my term of office with the Town Council

I recognise that learning is a personal responsibility and I will therefore:

- Share responsibility with Dorchester Town Council for identifying my development needs
- Take advantage of development opportunities
- Take the initiative when I recognise opportunities for learning
- Share my knowledge with others

Signature of Town Councillor

Signature of Town Mayor

Signature of Town Clerk

Date