

Enc iv) CLERK'S NOTE: Training Costs Reimbursement Policy

1. Background

The Council has significantly increased its investment in staff training and development in recent years, recognising that a skilled and confident workforce is essential to delivering high-quality services to residents. With a dedicated training budget of £9,000 and a small team of 5-6 employees, this represents a substantial commitment to professional development.

This investment benefits both the Council and individual employees. Well-trained staff deliver better services, make fewer errors, work more safely, and are better equipped to respond to the changing demands of local government. For employees, training enhances job satisfaction, supports career progression, and improves long-term employability.

However, some training—particularly professional qualifications—represents a significant financial outlay and provides employees with portable credentials that are valuable to other employers. Without appropriate safeguards, there is a risk that the Council could invest heavily in an employee's development only for them to leave shortly afterwards, taking their enhanced skills to another organisation outside the sector.

2. Rationale for the Policy

The proposed policy seeks to balance two important objectives: continuing to invest in staff development, whilst protecting the Council's training expenditure as custodians of public funds.

The policy distinguishes between two categories of training:

Essential Training — training that is required by law, regulation, or is mandatory for employees to perform their roles safely. This includes statutory health and safety training, certificates of competence for equipment operation (mowers, strimmers, chainsaws, pesticide application), safeguarding, and sector-specific qualifications such as CiLCA. Essential Training is exempt from reimbursement provisions, as the Council has a duty to ensure this training is completed.

Developmental Training — training that, whilst beneficial to the Council, leads to qualifications transferable outside local government. Examples include professional accountancy qualifications, HR credentials, horticultural qualifications, and advanced health and safety certifications beyond statutory requirements. Where Developmental Training costs exceed £1,000, a reimbursement agreement would apply.

3. Key Features

The policy includes the following provisions:

- A £1,000 threshold before reimbursement provisions apply, representing approximately 11% of the annual training budget;
- A sliding scale reducing from 100% to nil over 24 months, recognising that the Council benefits increasingly from its investment the longer an employee remains;
- Exemptions for redundancy, ill-health retirement, and employees moving to other local authorities or public sector bodies;
- A clear approval process with appropriate delegation levels;
- A template Training Agreement to ensure transparency and mutual understanding.

4. Points for Members' Consideration

Members may wish to consider:

- Whether the £1,000 threshold is appropriate, or should be set at a different level;

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- Whether the 24-month reimbursement period strikes the right balance between protecting the Council's investment and not unduly restricting staff mobility;
- Whether the exemption for staff moving to other local authorities or public bodies should be retained;
- Whether there are any additional categories of training that should be included in either the Essential or Developmental examples.

5. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from adopting this policy. The policy provides a framework for protecting existing training expenditure rather than requiring additional budget. Any reimbursements recovered would be returned to the training budget or general reserves as appropriate.

6. Recommendation

That the Committee:

1. Considers the draft Training Costs Reimbursement Policy;
2. Approves the policy subject to any amendments agreed at this meeting; and
3. Authorises the Town Clerk to implement the policy with immediate effect.