AGENDA 9, Enc vi) ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL - Training Costs Reimbursement Policy

1. Purpose and Scope

Ashington Town Council recognises that investing in the professional development of its employees is fundamental to delivering high-quality services to residents and ensuring effective governance. A well-trained, skilled workforce directly benefits the community through improved service delivery, sound financial management, and responsive local democracy.

The Council is committed to supporting employees to develop their skills and expertise across all areas of service delivery. This policy establishes a fair and transparent framework for managing significant training investments, balancing the Council's duty to protect public funds with its commitment to staff development and retention.

This policy applies to all employees of Ashington Town Council, regardless of contract type or hours worked. It covers training and development activities where the total cost to the Council exceeds £1,000.

2. Policy Statement

The Council will support employees to undertake training and professional development that:

a) is directly relevant to their current role or career progression within the Council;
b) supports the Council's strategic objectives and service delivery;
c) addresses identified skills gaps or succession planning requirements;
d) meets statutory, regulatory, or health and safety requirements.

Where the Council makes a significant financial investment in Developmental Training (as defined in Section 3), and that training provides qualifications or skills that are transferable to employment outside the Council, a reimbursement agreement may be required to protect the Council's investment whilst recognising the mutual benefit such training provides.

3. Definitions and Categories of Training

For the purposes of this policy, training is categorised as either Essential Training or Developmental Training:

Essential Training

"Essential Training" means training that is required by law, regulation, or is mandatory for the employee to perform their role safely and effectively. Essential Training is exempt from reimbursement provisions regardless of cost. Examples include:

- Health and safety training required by statute (manual handling, first aid at work, working at height, COSHH awareness);
- Certificates of competence required for equipment operation (ride-on mowers, strimmers, chainsaws, pesticide application - PA1/PA6);
- Safeguarding and child protection training;
- Data protection and GDPR compliance training;
- Training required to maintain professional registration where this is a condition of employment;
- CiLCA (Certificate in Local Council Administration) and ILCA (Introduction to Local Council Administration) where required for the role;
- Any other training identified as mandatory through risk assessment or statutory requirement.

Developmental Training

"Developmental Training" means training that, whilst beneficial to the Council and the employee's role, leads to qualifications or skills that are readily transferable to employment outside the Council. The Council recognises the value of supporting such training as it enhances service delivery, aids staff retention, and supports career development. However, where the cost exceeds £1,000, reimbursement provisions will apply. Examples include:

- Professional accountancy qualifications (AAT, ACCA, CIMA);
- Human resources qualifications (CIPD);
- Project management certifications (PRINCE2, APM);
- Horticultural qualifications (RHS certificates and diplomas, City & Guilds horticulture, sports turf management);
- Advanced health and safety qualifications beyond statutory requirements (NEBOSH, IOSH Managing Safely);
- IT and technical certifications;
- Management and leadership qualifications (ILM, CMI);
- Driving licence upgrades (Category B+E trailer, minibus D1) where not essential to the role.

Other Definitions

"Training Costs" means the total financial investment made by the Council, including course fees, examination fees, required study materials, professional membership fees where these are a prerequisite for the qualification, and any travel and accommodation costs directly associated with the training.

"Completion Date" means the date on which the employee successfully completes the training programme, passes the final examination, or receives the qualification certificate, whichever is later.

4. Financial Threshold

Reimbursement provisions will apply to Developmental Training where the total training costs exceed £1,000. This threshold has been determined having regard to the Council's annual training budget.

The reimbursement threshold will be reviewed annually as part of the budget-setting process and may be adjusted to reflect changes in training costs or the Council's financial position.

For clarity, Essential Training is exempt from reimbursement provisions regardless of cost, as this training is necessary to meet the Council's statutory and regulatory obligations.

5. Reimbursement Provisions for Developmental Training

Where an employee voluntarily leaves the Council's employment within 24 months of the Completion Date of Developmental Training exceeding £1,000, they will be required to reimburse a proportion of the training costs in accordance with the sliding scale set out below.

6. Reimbursement Sliding Scale

Time Since Completion Date	Reimbursement Required
0 - 6 months	100% of training costs
6 - 12 months	75% of training costs
12 - 18 months	50% of training costs
18 - 24 months	25% of training costs
Over 24 months	No reimbursement required

The sliding scale recognises that the Council derives increasing benefit from its training investment the longer an employee remains in post. After 24 months, the employee will have made a substantial contribution to the Council using their enhanced skills, and the Council's investment is considered to have been recouped through improved service delivery.

7. Exemptions from Reimbursement

In addition to the exemption for Essential Training, reimbursement will not be required in the following circumstances:

a) The employee's departure is due to redundancy or the Council's decision not to renew a fixed-term contract;
b) The employee is dismissed on grounds other than gross misconduct;
c) The employee leaves to take up a position with another local authority, parish/town council, or public sector organisation;
d) The employee retires in accordance with pension scheme rules;
e) The employee leaves due to ill health that is substantiated by medical evidence;
f) The employee does not successfully complete the training or fails to obtain the qualification;
g) Exceptional circumstances apply, as determined by the Personnel Committee on a case-by-case basis.

The exemption reflects the Council's recognition that movement of skilled staff between local authorities and public bodies benefits the sector as a whole, and the training investment continues to serve the public interest.

8. Training Agreement

Before commencing any Developmental Training where costs exceed £1,000, the employee must enter into a written Training Agreement with the Council. This agreement will set out:

a) The nature and duration of the training;
b) The total anticipated costs;
c) The expected Completion Date;
d) The reimbursement provisions and sliding scale;
e) Any study leave or adjusted working arrangements agreed;
f) The circumstances in which reimbursement would not apply.

The employee will be given reasonable time to consider the Training Agreement and may seek independent advice before signing. Training will not commence until the agreement is signed by both parties.

A template Training Agreement is appended to this policy.

9. Recovery of Costs

Where reimbursement is applicable, the Council may recover the amount due by:

a) Deduction from the employee's final salary payment (with the employee's written consent as required by the Employment Rights Act 1996);
b) Direct payment by the employee;
c) An agreed payment plan over a period not exceeding 12 months.

The Council will provide the employee with a detailed breakdown of the training costs and the calculation of the reimbursement amount at the point of resignation.

In cases of genuine financial hardship, the Executive Officer may, in consultation with the Personnel Committee, agree a longer repayment period or, in exceptional circumstances, a reduced amount.

10. Approval of Training

All requests for training costing over £1,000 must be submitted in writing to the Executive Officer, setting out the nature of the training, costs, benefits to the Council, and any impact on service delivery.

The following approval thresholds apply:

Training Cost	Approval Required
Up to £1,000	Executive Officer
£1,001 - £2,000	Executive Officer in consultation with Chair of Personnel Committee

Over £2,000	Personnel Committee

Training requests for the Executive Officer will be approved by the Chair of Personnel Committee (up to £2,000) or the Personnel Committee (over £2,000).

11. Determining Training Category

The Executive Officer will determine whether training is categorised as Essential or Developmental at the point of approval, having regard to:

d) Whether the training is required by statute or regulation;
e) Whether the training is identified as mandatory through risk assessment;
f) Whether the employee could perform their role safely and effectively without the training;
g) The extent to which the qualification is transferable outside the Council.

Where an employee disagrees with the categorisation, they may request a review by the Personnel Committee, whose decision will be final.

12. Monitoring and Review

The Executive Officer will maintain a register of all training undertaken under Training Agreements, including costs, completion dates, and the status of any reimbursement provisions.

The Executive Officer shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.

Any proposed amendments to this policy shall be reported to and approved by the Council.

13. Appendix A: Training Agreement Template

ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCILTRAINING AGREEMENT

This Agreement is made between Ashington Town Council ("the Council") and the employee named below ("the Employee").

Employee Details

Name:	
Job Title:	

Training Details

Course/Qualification:	
Training Provider:	
Duration:	
Expected Completion:	

Cost Breakdown

Item	Cost (£)
Course & Exam Fees	
Study materials	
Travel and accommodation	
TOTAL	**£**

Terms and Conditions

The Employee acknowledges and agrees that:

1. The Council will pay the training costs set out above.
2. The Employee will make reasonable efforts to complete the training successfully.
3. As this training is deemed *Developmental Training*, if the Employee voluntarily leaves the Council's employment within 24 months of the Completion Date, reimbursement will be required in accordance with the Training Costs Reimbursement Policy.
4. The Employee consents to any reimbursement due being deducted from their final salary payment, subject to National Minimum Wage requirements.
5. The Employee has read and understood the Training Costs Reimbursement Policy, including the exemptions from reimbursement.
6. The Employee has had the opportunity to seek independent advice before signing this agreement.

Signatures

Employee

Signed: _____ Date: _____

On behalf of Ashington Town Council

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Name: _____ Position: _____