

Learning and Development Policy & Procedure
Adopted by Council 25th September 2015
Reviewed July 2022

1. Our policy

- 1.1 Leighton-Linslade Town Council is an organisation in which learning is valued. Staff will be supported to undertake the learning and development which they need to help them achieve and maintain a high standard of performance and all will be given encouragement and support to achieve their full potential. This will allow them to provide a proper level of service to the people of Leighton Buzzard and Linslade.
- 1.2 The council is committed to ensuring employees' identified priority learning needs are met, within budget constraints and service requirements, and that the council's workforce development needs analysis is aligned with strategic business priorities, service and budget planning procedures and timeframes.
- 1.3 Time for learning, in whatever format it takes, will be allocated and protected to ensure that our organisation meets its learning and development needs, this is essential to ensure that our workforce is competent to deliver our services in the best way possible, and in accordance with statutory and regulatory requirements.
- 1.4 Learning and development opportunities are open to all employees in line with the council's equality in employment procedure.

2. The purpose of this procedure

- 2.1 The procedure sets out the conditions to be followed and applies to all council employees

3. Roles and responsibilities

- 3.1 Managers are responsible for:
 - identifying learning and development needs
 - ensuring the provision of personal development plans (within personal performance assessment process or separately, if required)
 - evaluating learning outcomes in relation to the original identified needs
- 3.2 All training will be considered according to priority, budget availability and operational capacity to release individuals for training.
- 3.3 Managers should ensure that all employees have fair and equal access to learning and development activity, and must allow 'protected' learning time.
- 3.4 Managers must ensure their teams complete all corporate mandatory training.

3.5 Managers and employees will assess the most appropriate way of meeting identified learning outcomes, ensuring that a variety of activities are considered in addition to traditional training courses, (see paragraph 5.2).

3.6 Employees are responsible for:

- identifying their own learning and development needs with their manager
- having regular discussions about their progress with their line manager, applying their learning to improve performance/productivity
- committing to undertaking and completing any allocated training to the best of their ability within the agreed timescale

4. Identifying, meeting and evaluating learning needs

4.1 Identify learning needs

Individual learning needs may come from:

- changes to job requirements
- SMART objectives
- under performance
- career development aspirations
- professional requirements and standards or having to perform an existing role more effectively or efficiently
- behavioural development in line with the Council's core competencies

Learning needs may be about developing knowledge, skills, improving behavioural competency, or achieving a required qualification for the role - It's essential to identify the need before seeking potential solutions.

4.2 The council is willing to consider personal learning and development opportunities which may not necessarily be directly linked to an employee's role, if a discernible benefit to the council can be identified and appropriate budgetary resources are available.

4.3 Identify possible solutions

There are various methods of development including courses, on the job learning, coaching, mentoring, research, project work, E-learning, distance learning, reading books or journals such as sector-specific publications, attending conferences and events.

4.4 Before engaging external providers, always fully consider solutions which are already available, including those in the above paragraph, or which may be developed.

4.5 Evaluate learning

Managers are expected to review all learning activities with employees following development events and plan how learning will be transferred into the employee's day to day work or practice - consider whether or not the learning objectives were met and evaluate the overall quality and cost effectiveness of the learning solution.

5 Learning fees and expenses

5.1 Learning "fees" are the financial costs paid by the council for the course or training.

For most training courses of up to 3 days duration or up to a cost of £1,000 which meet identified learning needs as set out in section 4, the Council will meet the costs in full.

5.2 In accordance with Financial Regulations and procedures, employees may be required to seek up to 3 quotations for appropriate training to ensure best value. Exceptions will apply to very specific training for which there may be limited providers or where the council has entered into a preferential agreement with a specific provider.

5.3 Learning “expenses” are intended to compensate employees for costs they actually incur by attending learning activities - they are initially paid by employees, and then claimed back from the council using the claim form for mileage, travel and/or subsistence expenses.

Claims for the following may be made with prior agreement from your line manager:

- travelling to training
- food (if this is not included in the course fee and if the employee is required to leave home before 7am or will not return home until after 7pm)
- hotels/accommodation and overnight expenses
- “out of pocket expenses”
- equipment and stationery
- books

Remember - you need to obtain and keep receipts.

6. Training records

6.1 Completion of training events, e-learning modules, qualification modules or awards, informal development activities such as shadowing and secondments and attendance at external conferences or seminars should all be recorded as part of your continued professional development. Please provide a scanned in or photocopied copy of any relevant documents such as proof of attendance and certificates of completion.

Remaining sections of this policy apply to learning and development courses which are of longer than 3 days duration or exceed a cost of £1,000.

7. Funded courses

7.1 A funding agreement **may** be required to be completed and signed when the council is being asked to contribute funds towards fees for any learning activities. The decision as to whether to apply a funding agreement is that of the Town Clerk or, if/when they feel it is appropriate, with the Personnel Sub-Committee.

7.2 Managers should ensure that the funding agreement is completed, signed, scanned and emailed, before an employee starts the training or qualification

7.3 Support may be financial (full or partial), or time, or a combination of both - provision of one type of support is not a guarantee of the other. Claims can be made for:

- course tuition fees
- registration fees
- assessment fees
- verification of QCF awards or modules
- exam fees
- cost of joining professional bodies as a student, where this is a requirement for the employee to undertake the programme

(once the course is complete, the Council may consider continuing to pay fees associated with personal membership of professional bodies where considered appropriate; the decision on this rests with the Town Clerk).

However, if the council is paying for a course, managers must ensure that the employee has the appropriate resources to complete it, either at home or in the workplace.

7.4 The Town Clerk will approve funding agreement requests fairly, consistently and objectively.

Decisions should be based on:

- the level of priority
- the amount of support the employee has had in the past and whether they successfully completed their learning
- the employee's personal performance assessment rating
- the ring fenced service training budget available

7.5 Continuing assistance under this scheme, e.g. a second year of study or a second attempt at an examination will only be granted if the council has evidence of satisfactory progress being made.

7.6 A single application is required for an individual undertaking any recognised qualification, the council will commit to fund the complete course subject to the candidate making satisfactory progress.

8. Employee responsibilities

8.1 Attend the learning on the days and at the times necessary and complete any course work as required - employees must inform their manager and training provider straight away, if they can't do this for any reason on any occasion.

8.2 Keep their line manager informed of their progress and anything that might affect their ability to complete - their manager is fully entitled to contact the course training provider to discuss progress.

8.3 Repay the training fees if required to do so, where they fail to honour all or part of any funding agreement.

9. Repaying financial support

9.1 In the following circumstances the council may ask employees to pay back some or all of the financial support provided.

9.2 Employees leaving the council during their period of study may be required to refund all training fees to the date of their leaving, and these may be deducted from the employee's final salary.

9.3 Employees leaving the council within two years of completing the course and the qualification being confirmed may be required to pay back the council for the costs associated with the course on a monthly pro rata basis, e.g.:

- an employee leaves having completed 2 months of service, the balance of 22/24ths of the total cost must be repaid
- an employee leaves having completed 18 months of service, the balance of 6/24ths of the total cost must be repaid

9.4 Employees **not** leaving the council, who decide they can no longer continue with a financially supported course/learning, may be required to pay back the council.

9.5 The final decision in respect of a requirement to repay fees is that of the Town Clerk, who may seek the guidance of the Personnel Sub-Committee if required.

10. Exemptions

10.1 In the following circumstances, the council will not ask employees to pay back all or some of the financial support provided:

- Ill health retirement
- Death in service
- Redundancy other than through the voluntary separation scheme, or organisational change
- On a TUPE transfer of service

11. Paid time off and study leave

11.1 Where an employee is undertaking an approved qualification programme, the Town Clerk may grant reasonable paid time off to attend workshops, lectures and/or seminars, and to sit examinations.

11.2 Up to three days study leave per learning year may be granted for the purposes of preparing for exams, producing assignments or portfolios, or for other course work - each study leave day taken must be matched by a day's annual leave from the employee's current leave entitlement. This may be best achieved by matching a half day of annual leave with a half day of study leave on up to six occasions or on three occasions a day of annual leave followed or preceded with a day of study leave. Study leave should be requested through the Council's Compassionate and Special Leave procedure.