



LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

Lancaster City Council Councillor Training and Development Strategy 2025/27

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1. Foreword and Executive Summary

Foreword

To be added by Chair of Council Business Committee

2. Introduction and Aims of the Strategy

Lancaster City Council has recognised that to succeed in delivering high quality, cost-effective services to residents, it needs well-motivated and skilled councillors, with the expertise to drive forward the Council's agenda.

Continuous Councillor development is key to achieving this. All councillors have a responsibility to learn new skills in line with the ongoing changes in technology and local government.

The overarching aim of the Strategy is to ensure that there is support to enable all Members to acquire the knowledge and skills to maximise their ability and capacity.

Arising from this overarching aim, the following principles will underpin how Councillor development is delivered:

- Councillors will be offered opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills and expertise they need to perform their roles effectively;
- Councillors will be encouraged to take responsibility for, and actively seek opportunities for, their own learning and development;
- Training and development applies to all Councillors, even those who have been in position for some time and may feel that there is nothing new to learn.
- Councillors who take advantage of the opportunities available will be actively encouraged and supported.

This Strategy sets out how the overarching aim will be achieved, using these principles as the basis for doing so.

3. Strategic Context

The Council Plan 2024-2027 is central to the context of the Strategy, particularly the principles in that Plan of:

- A sustainable district
- An inclusive and prosperous local economy
- Happy and healthy communities
- A co-operative, kind and responsible council

Councillors need to be equipped to help direct on those principles and to deliver the accompanying themes of action on the climate emergency;

community wealth-building; increasing well-being, reducing inequality; delivering effective services and taking responsibility.

It is the underlying premise of this Strategy that Councillor development will support the Council in achieving its stated aims in the Council Plan by enabling Councillors to increase and realise their potential as decision-makers, community representatives and community leaders. Elected Members of the Council have a key role in ensuring that the Council continues to achieve success on the four principles set out in the Council Plan.

4. Developing the Strategy

The terms of reference of Council Business Committee include “To manage issues relating to Councillors, including monitoring training and development undertaken”. On 20 February 2025, the Committee resolved:

1) That a new Councillor Training and Development Strategy be produced and reviewed every 2 years.

In drafting the Strategy, the Committee has had regard to comments from a recent LGA Peer Review and a survey of Councillors undertaken in 2023/34 by Democratic Support. Matters arising from those were:

- the importance of training on Community Leadership;
- improvement of the Overview and Scrutiny function;
- ICT training;
- Questioning, Negotiating and Chairing skills.

Council Business Committee will champion Councillor Training and Development and ensure that the opportunities provided meet the needs of Councillors, including:

- Ensuring that the Learning and Development Programme includes events that enable more experienced councillors to continue to refresh existing skills and acquire new knowledge and skills.
- Maintaining a clear evaluation process, with a requirement for Councillors to feedback on events and courses to evaluate the effectiveness and value for money of development activities.

The Councillor Training and Development Strategy will be owned by Council Business Committee.

5. Identifying Development Needs and Priorities

Ownership is vital to the success of the Strategy and Councillors should be responsible for, and have a direct input into, their own training and development. The ways in which development themes and priorities are identified will be informed by the Council Plan, input from other sources, such as Internal Audit, Councillor Surveys, Peer Reviews or similar, and the needs of individual Councillors.

It is expected that every Councillor will attend a number of training and development events each year, including Councillor briefings. While recognising that individual circumstances must be taken into account, Councillors must attend the mandatory training events, or complete the online training, that relates to their Committee membership.

Councillors are also encouraged to undertake background reading and other activities that facilitate their personal development. The intranet pages for Councillors will be used to disseminate training and development materials and useful information.

Themes for 2025/27

Training opportunities will centre around:

- Community leadership
- Overview and Scrutiny including questioning skills
- Chairing skills
- Negotiating skills
- ICT support for those Councillors who might benefit from increased understanding

These themes and priorities will be reviewed every two years by Council Business Committee in reviewing this strategy. This should ensure that a balance is maintained in the core training programme between:

- Knowledge-based training to keep Councillors informed about new developments, including legislative changes, new policies and major projects.
- Skills-based training to enable Councillors to perform their role effectively, for example on scrutiny techniques, community leadership, chairing meetings and IT skills.
- Role-based training, which could be for all Councillors, e.g. ward councillor roles or members of particular committees. For regulatory committees training is required before a Councillor can

participate in all or some of the activities of a committee, as set out in the Council's Constitution.

- Training that enables more experienced Councillors to continue to develop.
- Training and development opportunities that support Cabinet Members in their leadership roles.

Training events will be offered to those Councillors holding roles that they are applicable to, or via Group Leaders and Administrators where places are limited and the course might be of interest to any Councillor.

Councillors are encouraged to make suggestions for training and development events at any time to Democratic Support.

Cost of meeting training needs

Wherever possible, to provide the best value for the funds available, training will be delivered in-house by the relevant Chief Officers or service managers.

Where the development needs of councillors can be met through attendance at external courses, there is a Member Development budget. Attendance is subject to there being sufficient funding available in the budget and meeting the criteria set out by Council Business Committee, set out below.

- a) There are two tier levels of amounts that can be spent on events (depending on role) of up to £750 for Chairs of Committees or Cabinet members, and up to £500 for all other Members;
- b) A Training Request form (**Appendix A**) has to be filled in by any Councillor wishing to attend a course/event/conference, and their application has to be forwarded via their group leader (if they have one) to Democratic Support;
- c) After a Councillor has been to their event, they should complete an evaluation form (**Appendix B**) to say what benefits to the Council / constituents have been achieved by their attendance at the course / conference.

The Council will also make use of online training and tools and Democratic Support will circulate offers of seminars to be provided free of charge, or for a nominal fee, from organisations which the Council is subscribed to, such as the Local Government Association and North West Employers. Democratic Support will also liaise with neighbouring authorities where appropriate, to share costs of external trainers to provide training which would be useful to our Councillors and theirs.

6. Access to Learning

It is recognised and understood that Councillors come from a variety of backgrounds, with different skills, experiences, knowledge and expertise in a wide range of subject areas, and that each Councillor may have different learning and development needs and different learning styles.

The objective is that all learning and development opportunities should be open to all Councillors. No Councillor should be disadvantaged by their previous work, life or learning experience in the way learning and development opportunities are offered and accessed.

Democratic Support will respond positively to reasonable requests from Councillors regarding how development opportunities can be made more accessible.

Councillor Briefings will be provided to assist Councillors understanding of local/national changes, major projects and other essential learning.

Driven by the needs of Councillors, briefings will generally be made on the following basis:

- Councillor Briefings will normally be delivered on weekday evenings and Teams will be used as the preferred medium;
- Where it is appropriate to the Councillor Briefing or information being shared and is important to ensure that as many Councillors as possible have access to it, briefings will either be run on more than one date, or recorded for Councillors to watch at their leisure.
- Invitations will be sent by email to all Councillors for Councillor Briefings as far in advance on the session as possible, setting out the purpose/content of the training that will be provided. Information about other development opportunities will also be circulated to Councillors as and when they arise.
- Slides and other materials will be made available to all councillors via the *For Councillors* section of the Council's Intranet.

The Councillors' Allowances Scheme includes provision for allowances, including Carer's Allowance, to be claimed when attending training to reduce barriers that may otherwise exist.

7. Support for New Councillors.

A comprehensive induction programme – approved by Council Business Committee in the year before the Council's four yearly elections - will be provided to ensure that newly-elected councillors can quickly participate

fully in the business of the Council. This will include key training, but also more informal sessions where councillors can meet senior officers.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation of the programme of Councillor development activities will be undertaken in a variety of ways to ensure that it is responsive to Members' needs.

- Every two years the Council Business Committee will evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of this Strategy. If necessary, it will be updated to take account of lessons learnt, Councillor feedback, latest developments and best practice. Significant issues will be brought to the attention of the Council Business Committee at other times, if required.
- Wherever possible, evaluation forms will be completed by the participants after each training session. Members who attend externally provided courses will be encouraged to provide feedback to Council Business Committee on those courses to ensure value for money is obtained. The form for this is shown at ***Appendix B***

Evaluation and feedback will be analysed by Council Business Committee and will inform the process and provision of Councillor training. It will shape future policies in this respect.

9. Other Councillor Development Support

The Council recognises that effective Councillor development includes support and opportunities, in addition to training. The Council will therefore provide the following to Members:

- Advice and support from the Democratic Support team within the resources available.
- Access to IT equipment, information, stationery and office space in the Members' Rooms at both town halls.
- Access to relevant Council and other information electronically through the *For Councillors* pages on the Intranet.
- Laptops for use away from the Council offices, as set out in the *Members' Computer Usage Agreement and Policy*, and support in how to make best use of this or councillors' own IT equipment.

10. Delivering the Strategy

Council Business Committee will have a key role in ensuring that the aims and actions set out in this Strategy are delivered. The Council Business Committee will:

- Champion and encourage Councillor development.
- Provide a strategic overview of Councillor training and ensure that provision is in line with the Council's aims and objectives and corporate priorities.
- Monitor and review on a bi-annual annual basis this Councillor Training and Development Strategy.
- Monitor the ongoing provision and take-up of all aspects of training and support for Councillors.
- Provide a mechanism for the consideration and approval of training where there are competing requests.

The role of co-ordinating Member development activity across the City Council lies with Democratic Support function, which has responsibility for the effective and efficient delivery of training and development activities for Councillor, including liaising with internal and external training providers.

On no account should any Councillor book their own training, train travel to a training event or accommodation for an overnight event themselves. This must always be done for Councillors by Democratic Support.



Councillor Training and Development Request Form

(to be forwarded via Group Leaders to Democratic
Support
email: democracy@lancaster.gov.uk)

APPENDIX A



1. COUNCILLOR INFORMATION

Name: _____ Group: _____

2. COURSE INFORMATION

Name of Course: _____

Offered by: _____ Delivery Location: _____

Date of Course (if known) _____

Brief summary of course content INCLUDING COST (or provide link to online details):

3. WHAT I HOPE TO GAIN BY ATTENDING THIS COURSE:

What skills, knowledge or abilities do you hope to gain or improve by attending this event? How will it benefit you, or your constituents? Continue overleaf if necessary.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

4. GROUP LEADER'S COMMENTS:

Signed: _____ Date: _____

**For Completion by Senior Manager, Democratic Services
BUDGET APPROVED/NOT APPROVED and COUNCILLOR INFORMED**

Signed: _____ Date: _____



**CONFERENCE/SEMINAR
MONITORING AND EVALUATION
FORM FOR COUNCILLORS**

APPENDIX B



This overview will be submitted to the next meeting of the Council Business Committee.

Conference Title	
Councillor's Name	
Date	

1. Were the objectives of the event met?

Please comment and provide details of the objectives (as set out in the event literature) and how they were met, or not met and why. If they were exceeded, met, partially met or unmet.

2. Benefits to you and the Council

Please comment on how you feel the event benefitted you as a community representative/leader and decision-maker.

3. The time allocated for the event was (please tick box):

Too much*	
Sufficient	
Too little*	

****Please comment and provide details of how the duration of the event could be improved.***

4. Please rate the relevance of the event (please tick box):

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Relevance of the event				

5. Please give your feedback on the event, particularly whether you think it provided value for money and any matters that would be of interest to fellow Councillors.

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6. Will you be sharing the course materials and what you have learnt with other Councillors (please tick box)?

Yes	
No	

7. Would you recommend this event to other Councillors (please tick box)?

Yes	
No	

8. Please set out any additional comments you may have about the event in the space below.

Thank you for completing this Monitoring and Evaluation Form

Completed forms should be returned to Democratic Support, Town Hall, Lancaster, LA1 1PJ
(email: democracy@lancaster.gov.uk), as soon as possible.