



Councillor learning and development strategy **2025 – 2028**



Learning

Never

Ends

At Bracknell Forest Council, councillor learning and development is integral to our commitment to fostering effective leadership. Our comprehensive development programme, aligned with the councillor development charter, ensures councillors are equipped to meet the evolving needs of our community and contribute confidently to the council's strategic objectives.

This renewed strategy will strengthen our culture of councillor development, providing clear objectives and methods for continuous learning. It will guide the delivery of training and resources, ensuring councillors receive the support they need to lead effectively and make informed decisions that benefit the community.

The council's core values of inclusivity, ambition, and always learning define who we are, guide our priorities, and influence our service to residents and engagement with communities and partners. These values are embodied by our councillors, as demonstrated by their commitment to the [Nolan Principles](#) and their approval of an ambitious council plan in 2023. This councillor learning and development strategy is driven by our commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in public service delivery.

Recognising the critical link between councillor development and the provision of excellent public services, this strategy provides a framework for effective councillor learning and development, building on the strong foundations of previous iterations.

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Vision

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Strategic context

At the 2023 local elections, 28 new councillors were elected, and the council saw its administration change hands for the first time since it became a unitary authority. Following the election, councillors underwent a comprehensive induction programme, designed to equip them with the essential knowledge and skills that would allow them to step into new roles quickly and with confidence.

This strategy acknowledges the evolving needs of all councillors but recognises different levels of experience. For newer councillors, ongoing development opportunities will build on their growing expertise, while returning councillors, who may have new responsibilities, will benefit from advanced training and resources. This ensures that all councillors are fully equipped to contribute to the council's objectives, including fostering engaged and healthy communities, supporting a thriving and connected economy, ensuring a green and sustainable environment, and building an ambitious, resilient, and sustainable organisation.

Given the operational constraints on public funding, this strategy emphasises a creative, resourceful and collaborative approach to councillor learning and development. This will be supported through the maximisation of the council's own resources as well as working with recognised partners such as the [Local Government Association](#). This will ensure value for money while maintaining our commitment to high standards of governance.

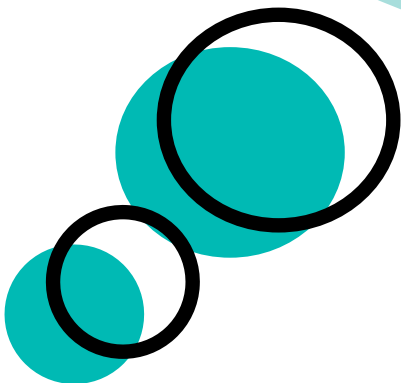


It is vital that the high standard of training and support given to councillors is maintained.

Senior level support is crucial to the delivery of councillor development.

Given limited resources, it is not efficient to tailor training to councillor roles. We aim to provide councillors with transferable skills that can be used across a number of roles.

It is hugely important learning and development activities are delivered in a way that recognises the competing priorities in a councillor's life.



Strategic objectives

To put the strategy into action, we will focus on six strategic objectives. We will use a well-rounded approach that builds on what we already do well and uses new and creative ways to deliver training. Here's how we plan to work to these objectives:

Build on strong foundations

- We understand that councillors juggle multiple responsibilities. This strategy acknowledges these competing demands and will build on existing practices, such as offering recorded sessions and online training options, to ensure accessibility for all councillors.
- We will utilise the established culture of councillor learning and development, maintaining strong senior-level commitment and collaboration across departments to deliver high-quality briefings and training.
- Our success will be measured by retaining our Charter Plus accreditation and receiving positive feedback from councillors.

Develop transferable knowledge and skills

- Training will be designed to build knowledge and skills that are applicable across various roles, both within the council and in external settings, enhancing councillors' overall effectiveness.
- The focus will be on equipping councillors with versatile capabilities, such as leadership, communication, and strategic thinking, which are valuable in multiple contexts.

- Success will be measured by councillors' ability to apply these skills in diverse roles, contributing to their growth as adaptable and resourceful leaders.

Ensure engaging and relevant content

- We will ensure that all training content is relevant, up-to-date, and aligned with the appropriate level of expertise to keep councillors fully engaged.
- Emphasis will be placed on interactive and discussion-based learning methods to foster deeper understanding and engagement.
- Success will be measured by high participation rates in training sessions and positive evaluations from councillors.

Utilise diverse delivery methods

- Our approach will embrace flexible and innovative delivery methods, including online and hybrid sessions, to meet the varied training needs of councillors.
- Training sessions will be recorded to provide accessible resources that can be revisited as needed. Additionally, we will explore the creation of new e-learning modules to further support councillor development.
- We will continue to use video and written briefings where appropriate, allowing councillors to access learning opportunities at their convenience.
- Success will be marked by increased accessibility and participation in training, as well as the effective use of recorded materials.

Foster a feedback culture

- Councillors will be actively involved in shaping the learning programme, ensuring that their insights and needs are reflected in the training provided.
- A new feedback process will be implemented to regularly assess the effectiveness of training sessions, driving continuous improvement in the learning programme.
- Success will be indicated by regular and constructive feedback from councillors, leading to ongoing enhancements in our training offerings.
- In contrast to all-councillor training sessions, training will be tailored to the specific needs of each committee, ensuring councillors are well prepared to address the unique challenges and complexities of their roles.
- Success will be measured, not by the decisions made by councillors in committees, but by their sound application of technical knowledge in relation to the decision-making process.

Support well-informed decision making

- To support councillors in making well-informed, confident and robust decisions, targeted technical training will be provided for members of committees such as planning committee and governance and audit committee. This includes understanding the scope and remit of the committee, as well as relevant pieces of legislation, financial principles and policy frameworks.



Delivering for all

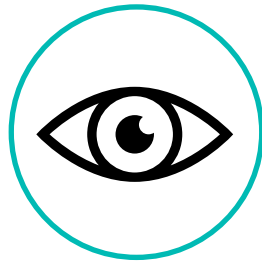
Understanding that councillors have diverse learning preferences is crucial to ensuring that our development programme is effective and inclusive. This strategy is designed to cater to the four primary learning styles - **activists, reflectors, theorists, and pragmatists**. By tailoring our approach to meet these varied needs, we ensure that every councillor can engage with the learning process in a way that resonates with them, maximising their ability to absorb, apply, and benefit from the training provided. Outlined below is how the strategy supports each of these learning styles, ensuring that all councillors are fully equipped to thrive in their roles.



Activists:

Hands-on experience

For councillors who prefer to learn through active involvement, the strategy offers practical, skills-based sessions.



Reflectors:

Time to digest

Reflectors benefit from having time to consider and process information. To support this, the development offering includes short video introductions to topics that are shared before Teams briefings.



Theorists:

Probing ideas

Theorists thrive on understanding the underlying principles and frameworks behind ideas. The strategy caters to this preference by allowing councillors the opportunity to question officers after receiving information in a briefing.



Pragmatists:

Practical application

For councillors who prefer learning that can be directly applied to real-world situations, the strategy offers a variety of development materials focused on practical application.

By addressing these four learning styles—activists, reflectors, theorists, and pragmatists—the strategy ensures that all councillors can engage with and benefit from the development opportunities offered, regardless of their preferred learning style.

Success indicators

This strategy will be crucial in driving the operational changes needed to achieve our vision for councillor development. By promoting self-directed learning, we will empower councillors to take charge of their professional growth, tailoring their learning experiences to meet their individual needs. The strategy will help us embed a culture of regular feedback, ensuring we remain responsive to the evolving needs and preferences of councillors and continuously refine our development programmes.

The strategy will enable us to measure success at four key levels:

Reaction: We will gather immediate feedback from councillors following training sessions, capturing their initial responses to the content and delivery.

Learning: We will assess the learning based on feedback from leadership and group whips.

Behaviour: The strategy will evaluate how well councillors apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills in their day-to-day responsibilities.

Results: At the highest level, we will measure the overall impact of the strategy on the council's strategic objectives: fostering engaged and healthy communities, supporting a thriving and connected economy, ensuring a green and sustainable environment, and building an ambitious, resilient, and sustainable organisation.





Equality statement

Bracknell Forest Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of councillor learning and development. This strategy ensures that every councillor, regardless of background, has equal access to training and development opportunities. We recognise the diverse needs of our councillors and are dedicated to removing any barriers—whether physical, social, cultural, or religious—that may prevent full participation. By fostering an inclusive learning environment, we aim to empower all councillors to fulfil their roles effectively, reflecting the rich diversity of the community they serve. Our commitment to equality underpins every element of this strategy, ensuring that all voices are heard, respected, and supported.

Climate statement

Bracknell Forest Council recognises the importance of addressing climate change and is committed to embedding sustainability within our councillor learning and development strategy. This strategy will promote environmentally responsible practices by encouraging digital learning resources, reducing the need for travel, and minimising our carbon footprint. We will prioritise sustainable development principles in the design and delivery of training sessions, ensuring that councillors are equipped with the knowledge and skills to support the council's wider climate objectives. Through this strategy, we aim to build a council that is not only responsive to the needs of its residents but also committed to protecting and preserving our environment for future generations.

If you need a reasonable adjustment to communicate with us, please call 01344 352000 or email: customer.services@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.

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