

To: **Governance and Audit Committee**
22 January 2025

Councillor Learning and Development Strategy 2025 - 2028

Executive Director of Communities

1 Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek the committee's approval of the councillor learning and development strategy 2025 -2028.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the committee approves the councillor learning and development strategy 2025-28 as set out at annex A.

3 Reasons for recommendation

- 3.1 The current strategy covering 2020-24 is coming to an end. The new strategy reflects the importance Bracknell Forest Council places on being inclusive, ambitious and always learning in the way the council delivers good public services. The councillor learning and development strategy provides a framework to continuously develop councillors so they can be effective in delivering the council's priorities.

4 Alternative options considered

- 4.1 The council is committed to the councillor development charter plus standard, which expects the council to demonstrate a strategic approach to councillor learning and development. Therefore, no alternative options were considered.

5 Supporting information

- 5.1 Bracknell Forest Council seeks to ensure that all councillors are equipped to serve their communities confidently and effectively. Through the comprehensive councillor learning and development programme, councillors are offered a diverse range of development opportunities, geared towards providing them with the requisite knowledge and skills to undertake their roles.
- 5.2 The council adopts a strategic approach to councillor learning and development, with annual programmes being guided by a single strategy document. This renewed strategy, covering 2025-28, embeds the council's values of being inclusive, ambitious and always learning into the councillor development offering and provides a clear link between development activities and the council's priorities set out in the council plan.
- 5.3 While building from the strong foundations put in place by previous strategies, this iteration moves away from the idea of development activities being tailored to individual councillor roles. Rather, the strategy aims to provide councillors with transferrable skills and knowledge, in areas such as leadership, communication and strategic thinking, that can be applied in a number of different roles, as well as in other parts of their professional and personal lives. This approach is in line with the efficient use of the resources allocated to councillor development and ensures value for money. By facilitating access to different sources of learning councillors will be

able to broaden their skills and knowledge and fit additional learning around their other commitments.

- 5.4 The strategy aspires to support different learning styles so far as possible and while the strategy commits to providing knowledge and skills that can be applied to different roles, councillors will be supported and encouraged to take ownership of their own learning, allowing them to grow as a councillor in roles and areas of their choosing.

6 Consultation and other considerations

Legal advice

- 6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

Financial advice

- 6.2 The financial implications associated with this report are expected to be contained within existing councillor training and development budgets.

Other consultation responses

Councillor Development Charter Steering Group

- 6.3 A meeting was held with the councillor development charter steering group on 22 November 2024 where the strategy was presented and members were encouraged to provide feedback. All in attendance were supportive of the proposed strategy.

Equalities impact assessment

- 6.4 The councillor learning and development strategy provides for an inclusive approach to councillor development. This strategy ensures that every councillor, regardless of background, has equal access to training and development opportunities. The diverse needs of councillors are recognised in the strategy and its aim to remove any barriers - whether physical, social, cultural, or religious - that may prevent full participation. Regular evaluation of the strategy will test this principle. Training in equalities is also a component of the councillor learning and development programme.

Strategic risk management issues

- 6.5 Councillors play a pivotal role in taking forward the council's objectives. To do so effectively, it is essential they are provided with sufficient opportunity to develop their knowledge, capabilities, networks and skills. Without a suitable learning and development offering for councillors there is a risk that the council will not be as well placed to deliver its objectives.

Climate change and ecological impact

- 6.6 The strategy promotes environmentally responsible practices by encouraging digital learning resources, reducing the need for travel, and minimising our carbon footprint.

Health & wellbeing considerations

- 6.7 The strategy aims to deliver councillor learning and development using a diverse range of delivery methods, each selected to provide councillors with greater flexibility and a better work/life balance.

Background papers

[The councillor development charter and charter plus framework.](#)

Contacts for further information

Report authors:

Assistant director: democratic and registration services
Ann Moore
Communities
Ann.moore@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Head of registration and councillor services
Philip Sadler
Communities
Philip.sadler@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Report authorised by:

Executive director: communities
Kevin Gibbs
Communities
Kevin.gibbs@bracknell-forest.gov.uk