

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
24 MARCH 2026**

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: Councillor Learning and Development Protocol

REPORT OF: Director – Governance

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Cllr Daniel Allen – Governance

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / ACCESSIBLE SERVICES / RESPONSIBLE GROWTH / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To consider the endorsement of the updated Councillor Learning and Development Protocol and the reporting process for completion of compulsory training.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Councillor Learning and Development Protocol, attached as Appendix A, be noted and endorsed.
- 2.2. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee schedule an 'Annual Report on Councillor Training' onto their Work Programme for future years.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. To ensure that the Councillor Learning and Development Protocol is current, relevant and includes clear reporting on the completion rate of compulsory Member Training with accountability.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. The Learning and Development Member Champions (Councillors Val Bryant, Ruth Brown and Ralph Muncer) have provided comments on the updated protocol and changes to the policy have been made following this, where comments provided.
- 5.2. The protocol was presented to the Leadership Team on 16 March 2026 who provided comment on the document and have endorsed its contents.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Following a request from the Executive Member – Governance and Leader of Council, Councillor Val Bryant, the protocol on Councillor Learning and Development was reviewed to ensure that the information was still relevant and to include reference to where reports on completed compulsory training would be presented.
- 7.2. There are three appointed Councillor Learning and Development Member Champions. In recent years, the three appointed Members have been the three respective political Group Leaders. The role of the Champions is to identify specific learning and development requirements of Members and endorse the learning and development sessions offered during both formal induction and throughout the civic year and to promote attendance amongst group colleagues.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. There are several areas of learning and development which are considered compulsory for Councillors to complete. These are currently safeguarding, IT and data protection, anti-bribery and anti-fraud and Councillor code of conduct.
- 8.2. In recent audits, there has been concern raised regarding the completion of compulsory training by Members.
- 8.3. Therefore, it is proposed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee take on responsibility for monitoring the completion of compulsory training by Councillors on an annual basis at the September (or nearest) meeting.
- 8.4. As part of this monitoring, the names of the Councillors who have not completed compulsory training will be included in the report to the Committee, to introduce a level of accountability and further encouragement to complete the compulsory training.
- 8.5. The Protocol also outlines the areas of learning and development that will be provided by the Council, when this will be provided and how this will be provided.
- 8.6. From May 2026, two dedicated in person sessions will be introduced for Councillors to complete the mandatory training, with relevant Officers in attendance to deliver and support Members with the training. IT will also be requested to be available at the commencement of both sessions so that any outstanding issues preventing access of the GROWZone can be resolved. Note that Councillors will only need to attend one of the following dates:
- a. Monday 11 May 2026, 2pm – 5.30pm
 - b. Thursday 14 May 2026, 6pm – 9.30pm
- 8.7. Mandatory training session for Members of the respective Committees will be held for Licensing and Regulation Committee and Planning Control Committee on:
- a. Licensing & Regulation Committee – Monday 18 May 2026, 7pm
 - b. Planning Control Committee – Tuesday 19 May 2026, 7pm

- 8.8. Member Development dates were incorporated into the Calendar of Meetings for 2025/26 civic year. The following Member Development dates have been scheduled into the calendar of meeting for 2026/27 civic year (subject to approval by Annual Council):
- a. Monday 6 July 2026, 7pm
 - b. Monday 7 September 2026, 7pm
 - c. Monday 9 November 2026, 7pm
 - d. Monday 11 January 2027, 7pm
 - e. Monday 8 March 2027, 7pm
- 8.9. The Protocol explains the process for attendance at a course/training event where a fee is incurred, and the need to get Group Leader authorisation for this payment prior to any commitment.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Ensuring Councillors have completed compulsory training is important to ensure that decisions taken by the Council are in line with legislation and do not put the Council at risk of legal challenges.
- 9.2. As outlined under 6.2.7 (b) and (d) of the Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have the power to review and scrutinise both Executive and non-Executive decisions. Therefore, it is important that training is monitored by the Committee to ensure that this is considered when scrutinising decisions.
- 9.3. Under 6.2.7 (y) of the Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have the power consider reports on safeguarding responsibilities of the Council. Therefore, monitoring of completed safeguarding training will support with this work.
- 9.4. As part of the North Herts Council Councillor's Code of Conduct, it is necessary for Councillors to attend compulsory training provided by the authority. It will be compulsory if:
- a. Full Council, Cabinet or a Committee decide it is, or
 - b. Group Leaders agree that it should be compulsory with any of the Statutory Officers (Head of Paid Service; Section 151 Officer/Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer); or
 - c. a Councillor is directed to attend training following a Councillor conduct complaint.
 - d. If a Councillor sits on the Planning Control or Licensing and Regulation Committee. [NB Councillors cannot participate in decision making at either Committee unless the compulsory training has been completed].

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are no direct financial implications from this report. As part of the annual budget setting process Council allocates an amount for Councillor development which for the 2026/2027 financial year is £11,400 divided between the political groups according to the number of Councillors per group.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2. The proposed Learning and Development Protocol is needed to ensure that Councillors are offered the learning provision and support required for their role. Failure to have this protocol in place may impact on the Council's ability to deliver our priorities and objectives.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. It is essential that Councillors receive up to date safeguarding training to ensure they meet their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty. Ongoing training enables Councillors to identify and address safeguarding concerns effectively, promoting a safe and inclusive environment for all members of the community. By remaining current with best practice and legal requirements, Councillors are better equipped to fulfil their duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different groups.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no known HR implications from this report.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Councillor Learning and Development Protocol 2026/27

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None.