

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TUESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2026
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*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: Councillor Learning and Development Annual Report

REPORT OF: Director - Governance

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Executive Member - Governance

COUNCIL PRIORITY: All Priorities;

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To provide details to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the completion of mandatory and required learning and development to be completed by Councillors.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. That the Committee note the Annual Report on Councillor Learning and Development.

2.2. That the Committee discuss and provide suggestions on Councillor Learning and Development provision and increasing Member completion.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS
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3.1. To comply with the Councillor Learning and Development Protocol as considered and endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on Tuesday 24 March 2026.
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4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1. None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1. The Annual Report has been shared with the Councillor Learning and Development Member Champions – Councillors Val Bryant, Claire Winchester and Ralph Muncer – to provide comment and, where provided and appropriate, have been incorporated.

5.2. The Annual Report has also been presented to the Leadership Team, Group Leaders and Political Liaison Board.

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. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee were presented with the Councillor Learning and Development Protocol at its meeting on Tuesday 24 March 2026. As part of this Protocol, an Annual Report is to be presented to the Committee at September's meeting annually.
- 7.2. This report provides high-level information on completion of Member Learning and Development.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Member Induction Sessions

- 8.1. As part of the adopted Protocol, compulsory in-person sessions were arranged for Members on Monday 11 May 2026 and Thursday 14 May 2026. These sessions provided mandatory training on Safeguarding, Data Protection and GDPR, Cyber Security and Code of Conduct for Councillors.
- 8.2. 12 Members attended the in-person session on Monday 11 May 2026 and were present for all areas covered. One further Member attended only the Safeguarding session.
- 8.3. 18 Members attended the in-person session on Thursday 14 May 2026 and were present for all areas covered. Three further Members attended only the Safeguarding and Code of Conduct sessions.
- 8.4. Following these in-person sessions, Members who either did not attend or attended only part of the session were emailed directly by the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager to advise on their outstanding training requirements.
- 8.5. At the time of writing 8 Members had at least one compulsory training module outstanding. Of these 8 Members:
 - a. 4 had one module outstanding.
 - b. 1 had two modules outstanding.
 - c. 3 had four modules outstanding.
- 8.6. The relevant Group Leaders have been informed of all outstanding requirements for their members and have been asked to ensure that these are completed.

Compulsory Planning Training

- 8.7. A training session was provided on Tuesday 19 May 2026 by the Planning Officers Society which covered 'Defendable Decisions at Planning Control Committees'. This session was compulsory for all members and substitute members of the Planning Control Committee for 2026/27.
- 8.8. 19 Members attended this in-person session, including 6 members of the Planning Control Committee, as well as 6 substitute members.
- 8.9. At the time of writing, only one substitute member had not completed the compulsory Planning training and therefore will be unable to sit on the Planning Control Committee until this has been completed.

Compulsory Licensing Training

- 8.10. A training session was provided on Monday 18 May 2026 by Link Support Services which covered the Licensing Act and guidance on conducting Licensing Sub-Committee Hearings. This session was compulsory for all members of the Licensing & Regulation Committee for 2026/27.
- 8.11. 14 Members attended this virtual session, including 8 members of the Licensing and Regulation Committee.
- 8.12. As this session could not be recorded, a further session was arranged on Thursday 11 June 2026 and was delivered in-house by the Legal Services Manager.
- 8.13. 5 Members attended this virtual session, all of whom were members of the Licensing and Regulation Committee. The session was recorded and uploaded to Members GrowZone.
- 8.14. At the time of writing, two members of the Licensing and Regulation Committee had not completed the compulsory Licensing Training and therefore will be unable to sit on a sub-committee hearing until this has been completed.

Other Points to Note

- 8.15. Feedback on the sessions delivered throughout the Induction Week was requested from Members, however, only two responses were received. Given the small sample size, the feedback has not been included in this report.
- 8.16. Whilst ensuring that all mandatory training is easily accessible within the GrowZone system for Members, reminders were automatically generated and sent to Members who had already completed training. The matter is being investigated and a resolution will be put in place to ensure the issues do not reoccur in the future.
- 8.17. As discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in March, training records for Members are now available to view on each individual Modern.Gov page under 'More information about this Councillor', which provides high level detail to the public on training provided by North Herts Council (either delivered in house or external training arranged by the Council). This will include the title of the course, the date of completion and who delivered the session.
- 8.18. A Member Skills Self-Audit was conducted by the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Team through May and June 2026, with the results to be compiled and provided to the Learning and Development Member Champions ahead of a meeting with the Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager in September 2026.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 As part of the North Herts Council Councillor's Code of Conduct, it is necessary for Councillors to undertake Code of Conduct training provided by the authority. Requirements for other mandatory training arises from the Council's Constitution, committee requirements, Council decisions or adopted protocols. The Council may require completion of specified training before a Councillor can participate in certain functions or committees. Repeated failure to attend training designated as mandatory by the Council may be considered by the Standards Committee where it indicates a failure to meet the standards expected of a Councillor.

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].
- 9.2. The Committee adopted the Councillor Learning & Development Protocol at its meeting on Tuesday 24 March 2026, which included the following requirement:

An annual report on Compulsory Training will be presented to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September (or nearest meeting available).

The annual report will also be provided to the Leadership Team, Group Leaders and the Political Liaison Board to provide key information on Councillor Development and ensure that compulsory training is being completed as required.

The report presented to O&S will be a high level annual report where aggregate data on training completion is provided. The Standards Committee will consider individual accountability, particularly in circumstances where Councillors repeatedly fail to attend mandatory training as this is likely to fall below the threshold of expected behaviours of Councillors.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are no financial implications directly related to this report.

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. If mandatory training is not completed in a timely manner, there is a risk that Members do not have the necessary knowledge to undertake their responsibilities effectively and that this could subsequently result in negative impacts on the Council e.g., data breaches, successful cyber-attacks, reputational damage. The 'Councillor Learning and Development Annual Report' is a means of reporting relevant issues and managing associated risks.

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. There are no equality implications directly related to this report.

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 directly related to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1. There are no HR implications directly related to this report.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1. None.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 [Item 75 'Councillor Learning and Development Protocol' at Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24 March 2026 – Agenda Pack, Minutes and Recording](#)