Learning and Development Policy

1. Why we have this policy

This policy explains how learning and development works at Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) and sets out how learning opportunities are accessed, supported and applied in practice.

This policy supports the delivery of the Council's Learning and Development Strategy (available on the Learning & Development page of Our Space) and aligns with the Corporate Plan and regulatory requirements.

2. Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to:

- All permanent and fixed-term employees.
- Apprentices and trainees.

The principles of this policy apply across all service areas and roles.

Where learning is role-specific or subject to regulatory requirements, additional guidance may apply.

Any exclusions will be determined based on operational or contractual arrangements and will be clearly communicated where relevant.

3. How we identify learning and development needs

Understanding where development is needed helps us focus learning where it will have the greatest impact.

- The annual appraisal cycle, one-to-ones and ongoing development conversations.
- Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) at team, service and organisational level.
- Organisational priorities, including the Corporate Plan and statutory training requirements.
- Emerging or urgent needs arising from change, service demand or external requirements.

4. Accessing learning opportunities

We want employees to have fair and transparent access to learning opportunities.

Learning may be requested through:

- Development conversations with line managers
- Formal learning requests where required

Requests will be considered based on:

- Relevance to the individual's role.
- Alignment to organisational priorities.
- Value for money.
- Available resources.

Requests for learning and development funding should be discussed with the employee's line manager before a Learning and Development Request Form (available on the Learning & Development page of Our Space) is completed.

Line managers will review requests and recommend them for consideration. The Learning and Development team will review requests in line with this policy, the Learning and Development Strategy and available budgets.

Where funding is approved for an external qualification, accreditation or development programme with a value of £500 or more, employees will normally be required to complete a Learning and Development Funding and Repayment Agreement (available on the Learning & Development page of Our Space) before the learning begins.

Employees will be supported with time to learn, with an expectation that learning is planned and prioritised alongside operational responsibilities. Line managers are expected to enable reasonable time for development activities.

5. Learning opportunities available

CBC supports a range of learning approaches to meet different needs, including:

- On-the-job learning (e.g. stretch assignments, shadowing, project work).
- Coaching and mentoring.
- Formal courses and qualifications.
- Apprenticeships.
- Digital and online learning.
- Conferences, networks and communities of practice.

6. Funding learning

Where budgets allow, CBC will support learning and development that:

- Supports organisational priorities.
- Meets role or service requirements.
- Represents value for money.
- Is affordable within the current budgets.

This includes appropriate use of the apprenticeship levy.

Funding arrangements must include:

- Clear expectations on expenses and associated costs.
- Consideration of time commitment and impact on service delivery.
- Requirements linked to funded qualifications (e.g. attendance, completion).

Where funding is approved for an external qualification, accreditation or development programme with a value of £500 or more, employees will normally be required to complete a Learning and Development Funding and Repayment Agreement before the learning begins. The agreement explains the support provided by the council and any repayment arrangements that may apply where employment ends or a programme is not completed.

7. Booking and attending learning

Employees are responsible for booking onto learning once it has been agreed with their line manager and, where applicable, approved through the Learning and Development Request process.

Where an employee is unable to attend:

- Cancellations should be made as early as possible.
- Line managers should be informed.

Non-attendance without reasonable notice may:

- Impact future access to learning.
- Be followed up with the individual and their line manager.

Line managers are responsible for ensuring appropriate oversight and accountability within their teams.

8. How we'll know it's working

We want learning to make a real difference, not just achieve high attendance numbers.

We'll look at things like:

- Participant feedback.
- How learning is applied in the workplace.
- Improvements in performance and service delivery.
- Whether learning is helping us achieve organisational priorities.

Learning data will be used to:

- Inform decision-making.
- Improve learning provision.
- Support reporting to leadership and management teams.

A structured evaluation approach will be used to ensure learning is effective and delivers value.

9. Making learning accessible and inclusive

We want everyone to have fair access to learning and development opportunities, regardless of their role, background or circumstances.

This includes:

- Providing equal access to development opportunities.
- Making reasonable adjustments where required.
- Offering additional support where appropriate for under-represented groups.
- Monitoring participation and outcomes to identify and address any inequalities.

This approach aligns with the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and wellbeing priorities.

10. Keeping this policy up to date

The Learning & Development team will review this policy regularly to ensure it remains relevant, effective and aligned to organisational priorities.

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, or sooner where required, in response to:

- Changes in legislation or regulation.
- Organisational priorities.
- Feedback and evaluation findings.

This policy should be read alongside related policies and frameworks, including:

- Performance and appraisal.
- Wellbeing.
- EDI.
- Learning and Development Strategy.