Learning and Development Strategy 2026 - 2028

1. Why this strategy exists

Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) operates in a changing environment with growing financial pressures, increased regulatory requirements and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) meaning employees will be part of new organisation/s moving forward. This difficult environment means that we require our employees to be skilled, adaptable and resilient.

Our approach to learning, development and employee engagement is aimed at helping our people build the skills, confidence and support they need to deliver excellent services for residents, both now and in the future.

This strategy sets out how we will develop, support and engage our people, ensuring that learning is focused on what matters most to the organisation and the communities we serve.

2. Why learning matters now

The way we deliver services is changing, which means the skills and support our people need are changing too.

Key drivers include:

- Ongoing financial pressures across local government, requiring effective use of resources and investment.
- Advances in technology, data and artificial intelligence, changing how services are delivered and accessed.
- Increasing expectations from residents for responsive, accessible and digitally enabled services.
- Recruitment and retention challenges across the public sector.
- Professional and regulatory requirements that require employees to maintain competence and knowledge.
- LGR - creating significant organisational change and uncertainty.

3. Key priorities

This strategy has four key priorities that will support current organisational needs to deliver our corporate plan as well as future workforce requirements as we move through LGR.

Priority 1 – Building skills and capability

We will help employees build the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to do their jobs well and deliver great services to residents.

This includes:

- Professional and technical development.
- Customer and resident-focused behaviours.
- Digital confidence and capability.
- Regulatory and statutory competence.
- Financial and commercial awareness.

Priority 2 - Develop leaders and managers

Strong leadership helps create positive teams, better services and a stronger organisation.

We will develop confident, capable and values-led leaders and managers who can:

- Lead people effectively.
- Manage performance and wellbeing.
- Make sound decisions.
- Foster inclusive and positive team cultures.
- Lead through change and uncertainty.

Priority 3 – Building an engaged and positive culture

People do their best work when they feel informed, involved and valued.

We will strengthen employee engagement by:

- Improving communication, collaboration and information sharing.

- Creating meaningful opportunities for employees to share their views and help shape improvements.
- Using employee feedback and engagement insight to drive improvement.
- Enhancing induction and onboarding experiences.
- Supporting a positive and inclusive workplace culture.

Priority 4 - Supporting people to grow and develop
Supporting people to develop and progress helps us build a strong, resilient and sustainable workforce for the future.

We will:

- Promote career development opportunities.
- Develop a culture of learning and continuous improvement.
- Support internal progression and mobility.
- Develop clear and accessible development pathways where appropriate.

4. How learning happens at CBC

At CBC, we believe learning is most effective when it is practical, accessible and embedded into everyday work and learning will be delivered through a blended approach, including:

- Workplace and experiential learning.
- Coaching and mentoring.
- Peer learning and knowledge sharing.
- Digital learning solutions.
- Formal training and qualifications where appropriate.

5. Everyone has a part to play

Creating a strong learning culture requires commitment across the organisation.

Senior Leadership Team will:

- Champion learning, development and engagement.
- Actively support learning and development across the organisation.
- Set clear expectations regarding performance, behaviours and continuous improvement.

Line Managers will:

- Support learning and development within their teams.
- Hold regular development conversations.
- Enable the application of learning into practice.
- Act as role models for continuous learning.

Employees will:

- Take ownership of their own learning and ongoing professional development.
- Engage actively in learning opportunities.
- Apply learning within their role.
- Share knowledge and contribute to continuous improvement.

HR, L&D and Employee Engagement will:

- Provide advice, guidance and practical support.
- Design, commission and evaluate learning activity.
- Ensure alignment between learning, engagement and organisational priorities.

6. Making learning accessible and inclusive

CBC is committed to ensuring all employees have fair and equitable access to learning and development opportunities.

We will:

- Remove barriers to participation wherever possible.
- Provide reasonable adjustments and accessible learning formats.

- Monitor participation and address inequalities where identified.
- Promote inclusive development opportunities that support progression and representation.
- Create learning environments where people feel comfortable contributing, asking questions and trying new things.

7. How we'll know it's working

We want learning to make a real difference, not just achieve high attendance numbers so we will measure this through:

- Learner feedback and experience.
- Application of learning in the workplace.
- Behaviour change and performance improvement.
- Impact on service delivery and organisational priorities.