Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council

Three villages one community

COUNCILLOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

1. Purpose

Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe & Acresford Parish Council recognises that informed, confident and respectful councillors are essential to lawful decision-making, effective community leadership and good governance. This policy sets out how the Council will identify, provide, record and review training and development for parish councillors.

The Council will provide reasonable access to training so that councillors can understand their public office, fulfil their responsibilities, contribute effectively to collective decisions and support the Council's continuous improvement.

2. Policy aims

- Provide a structured induction for newly elected and co-opted councillors.
- Maintain councillors' understanding of legal, financial, ethical and procedural responsibilities.
- Support role-specific learning for the Chair, Vice-Chair, committee members and councillor portfolio leads.
- Encourage continuing development throughout a councillor's term of office.
- Maintain auditable evidence for governance, risk management and the NALC Local Council Award Scheme.
- Ensure the training budget is used proportionately and provides value for money.

3. Status and expectations

Councillor training is not generally a statutory qualification requirement. However, every councillor is expected to take reasonable steps to understand the Council's functions, powers, procedures and standards of conduct. Acceptance of public office brings personal responsibilities that cannot be discharged effectively without suitable learning and development.

Councillors are therefore expected to complete the core learning identified in this policy, attend additional training relevant to their responsibilities, and promptly provide completion details to the Parish Manager for the Council's training record.

4. Main training provider

The Council's principal provider will be the Leicestershire & Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC). Training will normally be accessed online through LRALC's scheduled courses, webinars and approved specialist partners. Face-to-face or in-house sessions may be used where appropriate, available and cost-effective.

The Council may also use NALC online courses, the Local Government Association councillor e-learning platform, principal authority briefings, professional advisers and other reputable providers where the learning need cannot adequately be met through LRALC.

5. Core learning for all councillors

New councillors should complete the core programme as soon as reasonably practicable, normally within six months of election or co-option. Existing councillors should undertake refreshers following an ordinary election, a material change in law or guidance, or where the Council identifies a need.

- Councillor induction, including the role of the parish council, corporate decision-making and the distinction between councillor and officer roles.
- Code of Conduct, declarations of interest, the Seven Principles of Public Life, confidentiality and respectful behaviour.
- Standing Orders, meeting procedures, lawful decision-making and public participation.
- Finance for councillors, including the budget, precept, financial controls, audit, internal control and value for money.
- Data protection, information security, Freedom of Information and appropriate use of email and social media.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion, accessibility, dignity at work and the Civility & Respect principles.
- Planning fundamentals and material planning considerations where councillors participate in planning decisions.
- Health and safety, risk awareness, safeguarding and emergency arrangements where relevant to Council activities.

6. Role-specific and continuing development

Additional learning will be matched to the councillor's responsibilities and the Council's priorities. Examples include:

- Chairing meetings for the Chair, Vice-Chair and committee chairs.
- Employment responsibilities and appraisal awareness for councillors formally involved in staffing matters.
- Internal controls, risk management, procurement and audit for finance committee members.
- Community engagement, communications, customer service and managing difficult situations.
- Neighbourhood planning, planning responses, biodiversity, sustainability and climate change.
- Playground inspection awareness, allotments, burials, events and asset management where relevant.
- Project management, strategic planning and the Local Council Award Scheme.

Councillors should review their needs annually and whenever they take on a new committee, portfolio or representative role. Learning may include a formal course, webinar, conference, briefing, guided reading, mentoring, peer learning or structured learning on the job, provided there is a clear link to Council responsibilities.

7. NALC Local Council Award Scheme requirements

This policy is intended to support the Council's applications and continued compliance under the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Local Council Award Scheme (LCAS).

Bronze Award. The Council must have a training and development policy for staff and councillors and must provide a record of all training and development undertaken by named staff and councillors during the previous year. The record may include formal courses, online learning, conferences, qualifications, guided reading and learning on the job. The Council will therefore maintain a complete annual record and will ask every councillor to report relevant development.

Silver Award. The Council must continue to meet the Bronze requirements and demonstrate a stronger training culture. Evidence may include this policy, a training budget, a detailed annual training record, role-

relevant development and Council consideration of training needs. The Council will use its annual review process to demonstrate that learning is planned, resourced, completed and applied in practice.
Gold Award. Where the Council progresses to Gold, councillor development will also support evidence that councillors and officers work effectively as a corporate body, manage performance, deliver the business plan and maintain a culture of civility and respect.
The number of courses completed by each councillor is not, by itself, the measure of compliance. The Council's evidence must show appropriate, recorded development across the Council and that learning supports lawful, effective and improving practice.

8. Identifying training needs

- A skills and training-needs review will be undertaken at least annually.
- New councillors will receive an induction discussion and details of the LRALC online programme.
- Committee chairs and portfolio leads may recommend relevant training.
- The Parish Manager may identify learning arising from legislation, audit, risk assessment, complaints, policy reviews, new projects or observed governance needs.
- The Council may agree whole-council training where a shared need is identified.
- Individual learning needs will be considered fairly, taking account of role relevance, urgency, cost and available budget.

9. Booking, attendance and expenses

Training should normally be requested through the Parish Manager, who will arrange or approve booking in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and approved budget. Councillors should not commit the Council to expenditure without prior authorisation.
Where training is provided online, councillors are expected to join punctually, participate appropriately and follow any provider instructions. Where a booked councillor cannot attend, notice should be given as early as possible to avoid cancellation charges.
Approved course fees and reasonable travel expenses will be met by the Council in accordance with its Travel Expenses Policy. The Council may require repayment of an avoidable non-attendance charge where a councillor fails to attend without reasonable notice or explanation, subject to Council consideration of the circumstances.

10. Training records and evidence

The Parish Manager will maintain a training record showing, as a minimum:

- Councillor's name.
- Date of learning.
- Course, activity or subject title.
- Provider or source.
- Delivery method, such as LRALC online, in person, reading or mentoring.
- Any certificate or attendance evidence.
- Where useful, a brief note of how the learning relates to the councillor's role or Council priorities.

Councillors must provide details of completed learning promptly. Certificates, booking confirmations, attendance emails, notes or a short learning declaration may be retained as supporting evidence. Records will be managed in accordance with the Council's retention and data protection arrangements.

11. Applying and sharing learning

Training should improve Council practice rather than simply create an attendance record. A councillor may therefore be asked to provide a short verbal or written summary, share useful materials, recommend a policy or procedural change, or explain how the learning will be applied to a Council project or responsibility. Training attendance does not authorise an individual councillor to act or speak on behalf of the Council unless authority has been formally delegated.

12. Equal access and reasonable adjustments

The Council will seek to provide fair access to development and will consider reasonable adjustments, alternative formats or different course times where required. Online LRALC delivery will normally be used to improve accessibility and reduce travel, but it will not be the only option where online access creates a substantial barrier.

13. Budget and value for money

The Council will consider an appropriate training budget during its annual budget-setting process. Priority will normally be given to induction, legal and governance updates, training linked to risk, mandatory responsibilities, Council projects and the requirements of the NALC award level being pursued.
Before approving higher-cost or specialist training, the Council may compare providers, consider whole-council or in-house delivery and assess whether the learning can be shared.

14. Monitoring and review

The Parish Manager will report training activity and outstanding needs to the Council at least annually and may provide interim updates where needed for LCAS preparation. The Council will review this policy annually, or sooner following a significant change to legislation, NALC award criteria, LRALC provision or Council responsibilities.

Appendix 1: Annual Councillor Training Record

Councillor	Date	Activity / course	Provider	Method	Evidence	Role / application

Version	Date	Change	Author
1.0	November 2026	Initial councillor policy, including LRALC online provision and NALC LCAS requirements	KG