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| **Report subject** | Community Governance training |
| **Committee name** | Finance |
| **Meeting date** | 30/08/23 |

1. **Purpose**
   1. To review and make recommendations on the funding of a [Level 4] Community Governance course as part of the [Clerk’s] continued professional development.
2. **Background information**
   1. As a requirement for the General Power of Competence[[1]](#footnote-2), a clerk must hold a professional qualification. Most commonly, this is the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA).
   2. The CiLCA is a Level 3 qualification, equivalent to an AS / A Level. Further sector-specific professional study for clerks and other local council officers is available through the Community Governance courses run by the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) through De Montfort University at levels 4 (certificate of higher education), 5 (foundation degree), and 6 (BA Hons degree).
   3. The Level 4 course develops the students understanding and skills in areas including law and procedure, finance, the planning system, management, and community engagement, focussing on the practical implementation of the knowledge and skills in their day-to-day work.
   4. The courses are undertaken part-time over two years from January to October each year. It is studied by distance learning with three 24-hour study days per year, as well as a range of online and in-person tutorials. The predominantly online delivery allows students to complete the course from home or at work.
   5. Further information on the courses is available at: [www.slcc.co.uk/qualifications/](http://www.slcc.co.uk/qualifications/)

[SLCC Community Governance Prospectus 2024](http://www.slcc.co.uk/site/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/SLCC-Community-Governance-Prospectus-2024-FINAL.pdf)

* 1. Manager completed CiLCA March 2022. Manager completes at least 21hours training a year which allows them to hold the title of SLCC Principle.

1. **Detailed consideration** 
   1. The CiLCA provides a foundation for a clerk’s training but is only a minimum requirement. An effective clerk/manager in even a modest-sized council is required to have a deep understanding, beyond the scope of the CiLCA, across several areas, including corporate governance, finance, service delivery, estate management, and community engagement. This is essential if the council is to act dynamically and in the best interests of its community.
   2. Whilst seminars, conferences and other training are available through the SLCC and county associations of local councils (CALCs), **the Community Governance courses provide the only recognised higher education qualification for those involved in local council management**.
   3. The potential benefits to a council of staff undertaking the Community Governance courses include:

* A structured programme of widely recognised continued professional development.
* Ensuring the council operates within the law and follows best practice.
* Assignments that encourage students to focus on opportunities and issues of particular concern to their community.
* Students bringing innovative ideas back to the council to support its role in serving the community.
* Greater in-house expertise, reducing expenditure on external professional fees.
* Boosting the confidence and professional credibility of the manager[clerk].
* Raising the Council’s profile within the sector; and
* Increased networking and collaboration between clerks from similar councils to help address the needs of the council.
* The investment required from a council include:

1. **Study time** – students will be expected to undertake much of the work within their own time. However, councils are encouraged to provide study time within working hours. This study will often focus on issues of particular relevance to their council, and which would require research time regardless.

A council may choose to enter into a learning agreement, whereby the student is funded but on the proviso that a certain proportion of study is carried out in their own time.

1. **Financial input** – each course costs £3,250 per year for 600 hours of study and tuition. The majority of students undertaking the course are financially supported by their councils. Whilst some of these councils opt to part-fund the training, the majority fund the entirety of the course.

Similar to point (a) above, to ensure the return on investment to councils, an agreement can be made between the council and the employee that they commit to remain with the council for a number of years following completion of the course or otherwise refund, pro rata, the costs of the course.

The Council’s training budget for the manager is at present £300-£500. The manager tends to complete uncosted training unless training in a specific area is needed. The impact of funding the course on the overall budget would be minimal as council budgeted £4000 for elections 2022/2023.

1. **Recommendation**

4.1. It is recommended that the Council **RESOLVES** that:

1. It supports the manager in undertaking the [Level 4] Community Governance course; and
2. It funds the costs of the course by up to £4000 per year for two years.

1. The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, Schedule para.2(1) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)