



THE NATIONAL TRAINING STRATEGY FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS IN ENGLAND



2010-2015

THE NATIONAL TRAINING STRATEGY FOR TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS IN ENGLAND

2010-2015



Society of
Local Council Clerks
Professional Supportive Innovative



Commission for
Rural Communities
Tackling rural disadvantage

NALC

Communities
and Local Government

Local
Government
Improvement
and Development



UNIVERSITY OF
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
at Cheltenham and Gloucester

Published by the NTS

For further information on the NTS, please contact
the National Training Managers at either:

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
109 Great Russell Street
London
WC1B 3LD
Tel: 0207 637 1865/ web: www.nalc.gov.uk

The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)
8 The Crescent
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 4EA
Tel: 01823 253646/ web: www.slcc.co.uk

© THE NTS 2010. All rights reserved

Every effort has been made to ensure that the contents of this
publication are correct at time of printing. The NTS cannot accept
responsibility for errors, omission and changes to information
subsequent to printing. Reproduction of this publication in any form is
forbidden except by prior express permission of the publisher.

Printed by Darwin Press

CONTENTS

	Page
Executive summary	7
Preface	9
Part A	The strategy 11
	Commitments, strategic aims and NTS action 12
	Managing training 12
	Finance and funding 13
	Training tools and delivery 14
	Qualifications and CPD 14
Part B	Context and background 16
	Achievements 18
	Why review the NTS in 2009-10 21
	The review group 23
Part C	Research methodology and findings 24
	Research undertaken in 2007 25
	Research undertaken in 2009-10 25
	Findings from the research in 2009-10 26
	Final consultation and approval 30
Part D	Two year Implementation Plan for National Action (online only)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Training Strategy (NTS) Review Group is delighted to publish this new training strategy for the town and parish council sector. This document serves several purposes. Firstly, it makes proposals for the next few years to meet the challenges ahead. Secondly it informs the reader of the journey the NTS has taken since its beginnings in 2001 and celebrates its considerable successes.

The initial scoping of the strategy was based on four key headings which frame the findings and the strategy itself:

1. Managing training
2. Finance and funding
3. Training tools and delivery
4. Qualifications and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

The strategy represents shared commitments related to each heading, leading to fourteen strategic aims:

1. Managing training

- To promote and strengthen partnership working, interaction and dialogue
- To create and support the most appropriate structures for partnership working in response to need and circumstance, acknowledging that partnerships might be formal or informal, independent or part of another organisation, income generating or limited to strategy
- To promote and facilitate the sharing of good practice to improve partnership working
- To facilitate the provision of training by a range of providers to suit local circumstances

2. Finance and funding

- To explore the variety of funding models to inform sound financial decisions and to maintain the quality and consistency of training throughout the country
- To seek, where appropriate, investment from beyond the sector
- To promote the value of investment in training, especially through the precept, and collect examples of the cost and benefits of investment
- To ensure that training is financially sustainable and where possible makes a profit for reinvestment in training, contributing to new training tools, bursary schemes, networking events, the training of trainers and the employing of training officers

3. Training tools and delivery

- To create a varied menu of training units capable of being adapted to suit local and individual circumstances including face-to-face and opportunities for online learning
- To emphasise the importance of induction training for new councillors and officers and to find ways of ensuring that they receive training at the earliest opportunity
- Where possible, to take training to the customer's location
- To promote the importance of networking through training, council training strategies, training budgets and CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

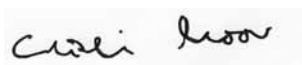
4. Qualifications and CPD

- To ensure that CiLCA, advanced professional qualifications and CPD are enjoyable, relevant and constructive experiences worthy of the effort involved
- To draw up a set of National Occupational Standards and to establish CiLCA's position within the National Qualifications Framework as the basis of a review of the sector qualifications

The strategy includes proposals for action at the national level and we invite stakeholders to draw up their own action plans for implementing the NTS in other settings. Finally, we review the research undertaken to inform the new strategy which builds on the views of a wide range of contributors across our sector including, most importantly, representatives of local councils for whom it is intended. We hope it offers a fair reflection of the issues faced and presents a range of workable solutions to meet the training needs of the sector over the next five years.

I am grateful to the members of the NTS Review Group for their ideas, enthusiasm and dedication to drawing up this strong new training strategy.

Regards to you all



Crispin Moor

Director, Commission for Rural Communities

Chairman of the NTS Review Group



PREFACE

Part A contains the strategy itself as a framework for national, regional and local training activity over five years from 2010 to 2015. It includes overarching strategic commitments and aims arising from research undertaken in 2009 and 2010 (see Part C), and actions to be taken by the National Training Strategy Steering Group (NTSSG).

Part B explains the background to the new National Training Strategy from the original document written in 2001 and the sector's achievements in developing training, to the impact of changes to the political and financial landscape creating the need for a new strategy.

Part C explains the comprehensive research process by which the review was conducted in 2009 and 2010. It then summarises findings from a national online survey and two focus group meetings of local stakeholder representatives from which the strategic commitments and aims were identified.

Part D (online only) is a more detailed implementation plan designed to show how the NTSSG proposes to deliver its actions. It also suggests priorities for the NTSSG activities (this document is only available electronically via the NALC and SLCC websites).

Part A

The Strategy



Commitments, strategic aims and NTS action

This section presents the National Training Strategy for the next five years. It is firmly embedded in the findings of the consultation processes undertaken in 2009 and 2010 and outlined in Part C. It is therefore organised under the four key areas that provided the framework for consultation and research findings.

The strategy represents a national commitment to training in the local council sector shared by national, regional and local stakeholder organisations. It presents strategic aims and introduces actions to be taken at the national level; Part D contains an implementation plan for national action directly linked to NTS Steering Group (NTSSG) action points in the strategy.

Reviewing the strategy

The NTSSG will monitor the progress of the strategy annually and it aims to revise the strategy after five years. Annual progress reports will be available.

The implementation plan (Part D) has been designed for 2010/11 with the aim being to review its progress and amend the plan annually over the life of the strategy.

Managing training

Commitment

NTS stakeholders continue to believe in maintaining consistent, innovative and high quality training. We are committed to co-operation and networking between stakeholders through diverse and flexible forms of partnership working. We are dedicated to working constructively with others in the most appropriate way for managing and delivering training in local, regional and national settings.

Strategic aims

- To promote and strengthen partnership working, interaction and dialogue
- To create and support the most appropriate structures for partnership working in response to need and circumstance, acknowledging that partnerships might be formal or informal, independent or part of another organisation, income generating or limited to strategy
- To promote and facilitate the sharing of good practice to improve partnership working
- To facilitate the provision of training by a range of providers to suit local circumstances

NTSSG actions

1. To promote joint working between NTS stakeholders, including the Local Government Association, Local Government Improvement and Development (formally the Improvement and Development Agency) and government departments to support training initiative

2. To maintain the NTS brand and logo creating a strong identity across the sector and representing a national commitment to partnership at all levels
3. To facilitate online and face-to-face networking between all stakeholders to improve training management and delivery through partnership
4. To ensure that training is expanded to increase the impact of training and development across the local government sector

Finance and funding

Commitment

We agree that training should be financially sustainable and therefore properly valued in terms of cost. We are committed to the quality and consistency of training as an investment with extensive benefits and therefore we will encourage councils to provide financial support for training across the sector.

Strategic aims

- To explore the variety of funding models to inform sound financial decisions and to maintain the quality and consistency of training throughout the country
- To seek, where appropriate, investment from beyond the sector
- To promote the value of investment in training, especially through the precept, and collect examples of the cost and benefits of investment
- To ensure that training is financially sustainable and where possible makes a profit for reinvestment in training, contributing to new training tools, bursary schemes, networking events, the training of trainers and the employing of training officers

NTSSG actions

5. To investigate and disseminate case studies demonstrating successful funding models for training delivery
6. To seek, where appropriate, national investment from beyond the sector and in particular, to pursue equity of access to government funding with principal authorities
7. To agree funding models for priority investments such as NTS branded booklets, training for trainers, new modular training packs, induction training and e-learning, ensuring that the quality and consistency of training is replicated throughout the country
8. To agree an appropriate funding model for the national management of training and sector qualifications
9. To consider and make proposals for investing in training for SLCC trainers and advisors, parish liaison officers at principal authorities and county association staff

Training tools and delivery

Commitment

We believe that training should be designed in a variety of ways to suit individual and local needs and circumstances. We also believe that interaction with others is an essential experience of training in this sector. We agree that training should be very strongly encouraged.

Strategic aims

- To create a varied menu of training units capable of being adapted to suit local and individual circumstances including face-to-face and opportunities for online learning
- To emphasise the importance of induction training for new councillors and officers and to find ways of ensuring that they receive training at the earliest opportunity
- Where possible, to take training to the customer's location
- To promote the importance of networking through training, council training strategies, training budgets and CPD (continuous professional development)

NTSSG actions

10. To investigate and make proposals for e-learning or online learning models
11. To develop a model of blended learning comprising face-to-face training, online delivery and printed materials
12. To work with partners to create new learning units as required by the sector
13. To make sure that NTS products are updated as required
14. To promote the use of the online training directory
15. To promote ways of ensuring that new clerks and councillors undertake induction training at the earliest opportunity

Qualifications and CPD

Commitment

We believe that training and qualifications underpin professionalism and help create councils worthy of respect. We agree that professional qualifications demonstrate standards of performance in the sector. We also agree that the process of achieving a qualification requires a commitment to significant effort that should be recognised.

Strategic aims

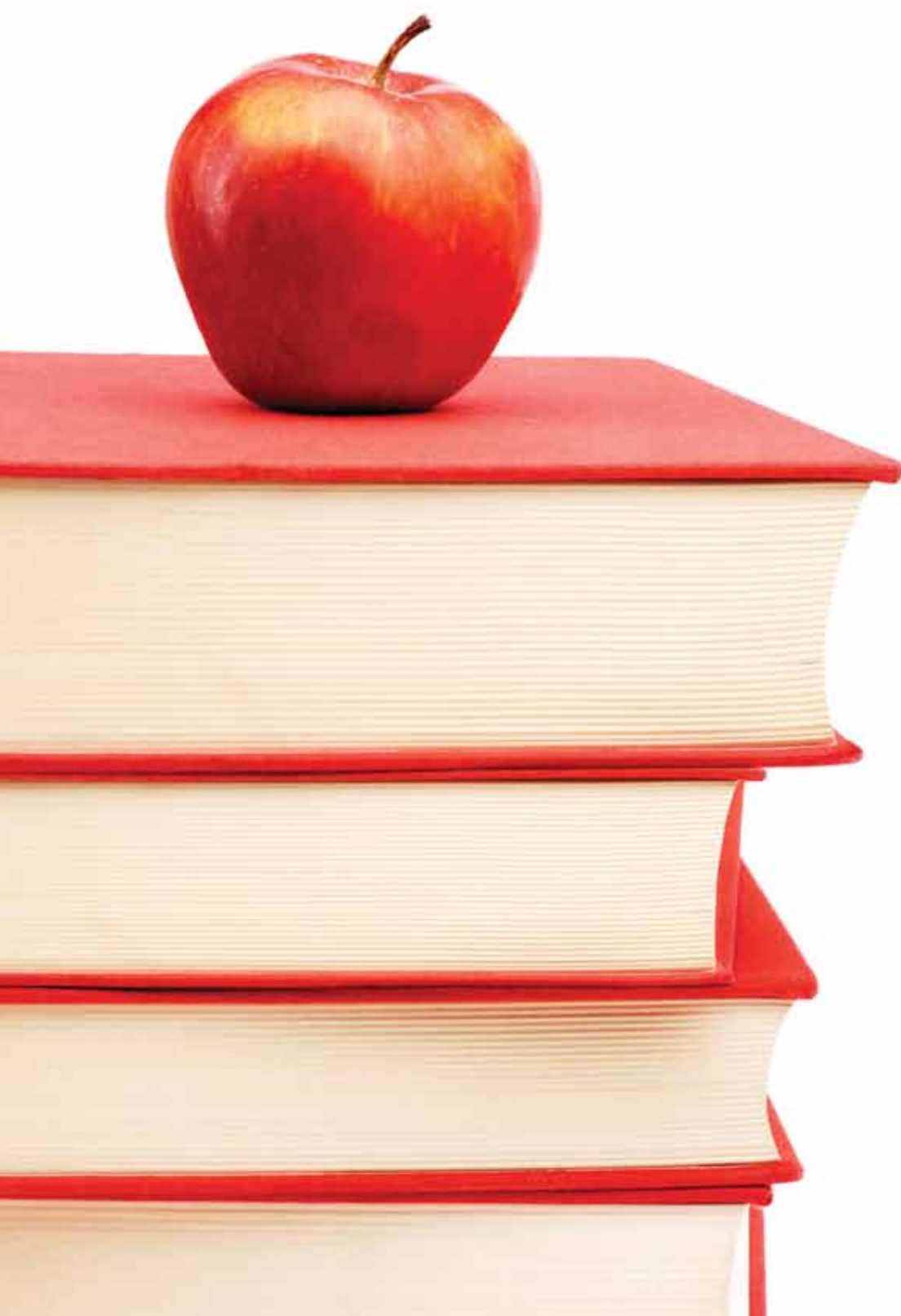
- To ensure that CiLCA, advanced professional qualifications and CPD are enjoyable, relevant and constructive experiences worthy of the effort involved
- To draw up a set of National Occupational Standards and to establish CiLCA's position within the National Qualifications Framework as the basis of a review of the sector qualifications

NTSSG actions

16. To negotiate with an appropriate national stakeholder to establish CiLCA as an entry-level qualification at Level 2 (or 3) of the National Qualifications Framework.
- 17 To review and report on occupational standards for the sector and appropriate forms of assessment
18. To encourage more candidates to undertake CiLCA
19. To support the growth of the CPD programme for clerks
20. To investigate CPD and an optional qualifications framework for councillors

Part B

Supporting context and background



Supporting context and background

Before 2000, research undertaken for the (then) Rural Development Commission showed that training was of variable quality. Training providers operated independently and with limited co-ordination or communication in some areas. In response, the Government published a Rural White Paper in November 2000 and made £2 million available to the Countryside Agency for the development of a National Training Strategy (NTS) to “provide training and support for parish and town councils” and to “help parish councils to meet the quality standard” through the Quality Parish Scheme (QPS).

The NTS was developed by national stakeholders forming the NTS Steering Group which included:

- National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
- Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)
- Countryside Agency (now the Commission for Rural Communities)
- Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
- Local Government Association (LGA)
- Local Government Employers (LGE)

In addition the following bodies and roles were represented:

- Cheltenham and Gloucestershire College (now The University of Gloucestershire)
- a parish council clerk, Roger Greenwood
- a parish councillor, Mike Beresford
- a County Association representative (Suffolk ALC)
- a Rural Community Council representative (Gloucestershire)
- Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions (now CLG)

The NTS was launched in 2001. Its key objectives were to:

- establish the context in which to develop local councils’ expertise and a supporting National Training Strategy
- enable local councils to rise to the challenge of the Rural White Paper by strengthening the development and learning culture in local councils and encouraging investment in training
- develop the training framework building on existing training provision and accreditation
- enable high quality training delivery throughout England

In addition the NTS aimed to provide:

- a basic core package for clerks
- additional and advanced training for clerks and other staff
- training materials for councillors
- training for trainers and assessors

- national standards
- the establishment of an accrediting body
- links to qualifications frameworks

Achievements

The strategy promoted County Training Partnerships (CTPs) bringing together key partners in each county with an interest in training local councils. Lead bodies were established; in most cases the County Association of Local Councils (CALCs) took on this role. Other partners included:

- the SLCC branch
- the Rural Community Council (RCC)
- district, borough and county council representatives
- relevant educational bodies and private training organisations

Some CTPs have thrived and developed into complex and efficient training networks (including a regional training partnership). In other instances CTPs have been less successful with some ceasing to operate as originally intended under the NTS model. Reasons for this include the lack of sustained national and local resources, in some areas limited support from principal authorities, lack of commitment to the partnership, different perceptions of roles within a partnership and inactive local players.

The NTS developed entry-level training and qualifications for clerks. It established a set of competencies for a clerk's role. These evolved into core topics or standards forming the 'backbone' of induction training and the accompanying qualification. The six central topics were:

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Law
- Procedures
- Finance
- Planning
- Community Action

The NTS invested in the distance learning induction package, Working with Your Council (WWYC), and designed the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) based on these topic areas. Candidates generate a portfolio as specified in a guide to demonstrate knowledge and competence under the six headings. The Monitoring and Verification Board (M&VB) was established in 2001 with representatives of the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA), NALC, SLCC and the Countryside Agency; the Chief Verifier was appointed to the Board in mid 2002. Secretariat was provided by NALC. Certificates were awarded by the AQA.

In 2003, the AQA retrenched its business to focus entirely on academic qualifications. This resulted in the M&VB taking the decision to manage the qualification 'in house' and award the certificates itself.

The portfolio is now marked by a team of five 'verifiers' who are all experienced in both the work of local councils and in assessment. They work remotely under the supervision of the Chief Verifier and meet regularly for training exercises to ensure consistency in marking. Quality assurance is provided by the University of Gloucestershire reporting to the M&VB each year. CiLCA was revised in 2008 following wide consultation to reflect changes affecting the sector. A CiLCA Trainers' Guide is currently being developed and will be designed in synergy with the actions and activities of the revised NTS.

Over 1200 people (approximately 18% of clerks in England) now hold the qualification with numbers rising steadily month on month. As a mark of its reputation, the qualification has been adapted for community councils in Wales. The QPS requires a council to have a qualified clerk; CiLCA provides one of the accepted qualifications (the other is the Certificate of Higher Education from the University of Gloucestershire).

WWYC and CiLCA are thought to relate to Levels 2/3 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) although this has not been formally recognised. The University of Gloucestershire provides qualifications at Levels 4 (CertHE), 5 (DipHE or FdA) and 6 (BA Hons) of the NQF.

Training for councillors has been developed through booklets, guides and training packs for use by trainers. These include:

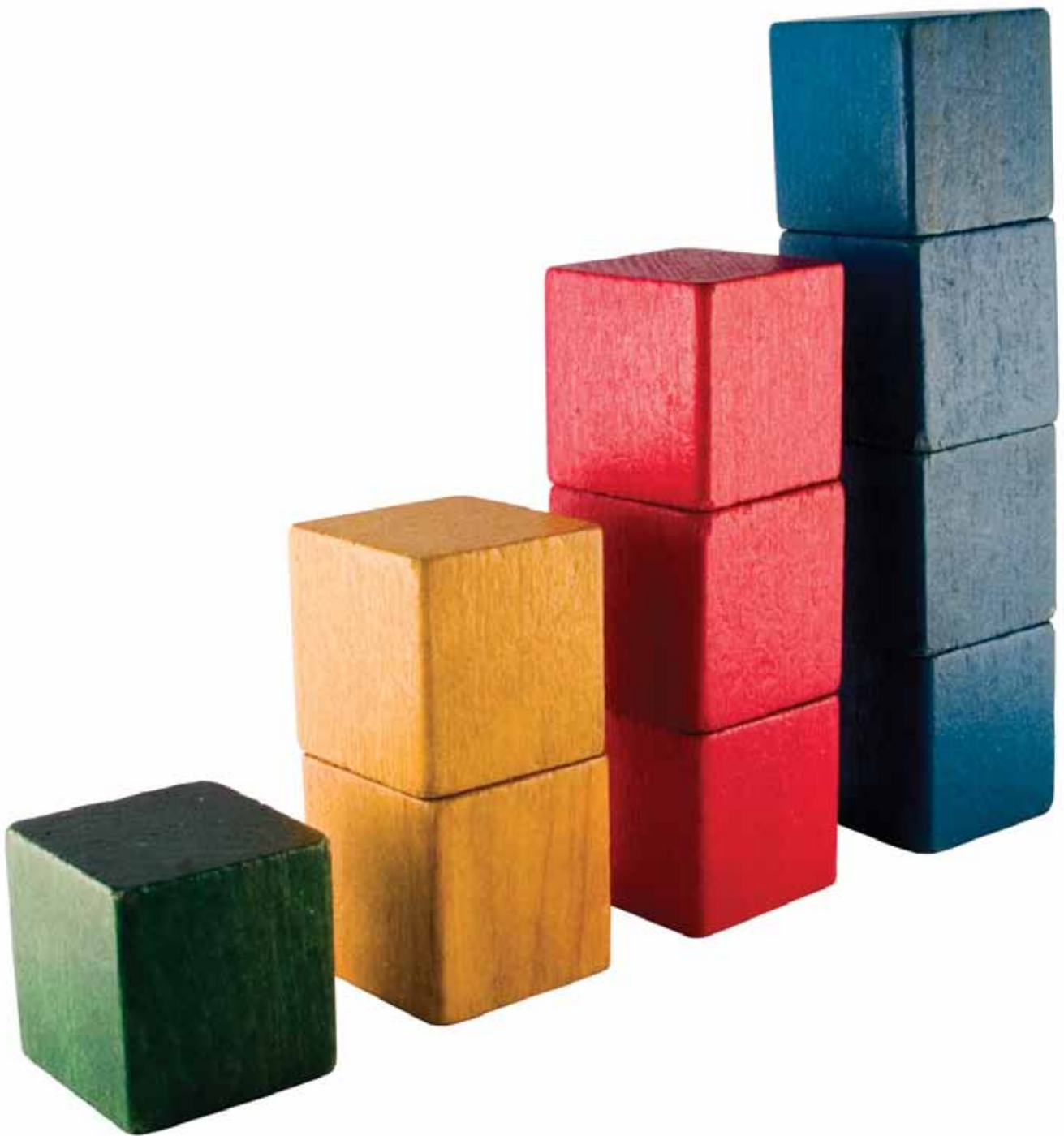
The Good Councillor's Guide: a booklet distributed to 70,000 councillors through county associations with a second edition to meet demand

- Chairmanship: a training pack
- Being a Good Councillor: a training pack supporting the Good Councillor's Guide
- The Next Step: a training pack developing the role of local councillor
- The Power of Well-being: a training module for councillors
- Being a Good Employer: a booklet for local councillors

The training packs encouraged trainers to adopt an interactive style of training involving group work, role play, mind mapping and case studies. This ethos was supported by a 'train the trainer' programme to build a training resource for CTPs, a programme which is still operating in 2010.

Other NTS products included:

- What's on the Agenda?: a film with training guide
- The Essential Clerks' Guide: and a mentoring scheme for brand new clerks



- A bursary scheme for clerks to smaller councils (re-launched in 2009)
- The pilot of an online training directory

The NTS also developed a CPD scheme (Continuous Professional Development) launched in 2008. Led by the SLCC, the scheme offers participants the option of completing a 'skills audit' before creating an annual development plan. Activities that meet these objectives are entered into a development record. The plan and the record are stored online. To support the CPD scheme the SLCC has generated over 50 short courses for delivery across the country.

The CPD scheme draws together a variety of learning opportunities and qualifications into a comprehensive framework with one course or qualification leading to the next level. The CPD scheme also supports membership of The Institute of Local Council Management (ILCM) and progression through levels of membership.

In summary, many of the objectives set in 2001 have been achieved. As a result of the original NTS the local council sector now has:

1. A basic core package of training for clerks;
2. Additional and advanced training for clerks;
3. A national entry-level qualification tailored to the sector
4. National competencies which underpin qualifications;
5. Links to qualifications frameworks;
6. Training packages and booklets for councillors;
7. Training for trainers and assessors;
8. An accrediting body;
9. Training partnerships for delivering locally
10. A CPD scheme.

Why review the NTS in 2009-10?

The original NTS was launched with financial support from Government. This level of funding is no longer available. It is time to demonstrate the independence of the sector and create a new self-sustaining strategy. A new NTS is needed to help local councils meet many new challenges affecting the sector arising in the last few years; these challenges include:

- The changing political and economic landscape
- Extensive new legislation
- The revised QPS and introduction of the power of well-being
- Evolving mechanisms for local training delivery

- Developments in information and communications technology
- The increasing importance of the National Qualifications Framework

The political and economic landscape has altered with more unitary authorities, a greater emphasis on localism, many new parish councils especially in urban areas and a new Government. The severe pruning of public sector budgets in the current climate will have an impact on local councils as principal authorities look for new ways of delivering services more efficiently. Local councils will need more training opportunities to help them develop further to meet new demands and opportunities.

The last Government provided some additional funding to enable the National Association of Local Councils to develop a programme of initiatives, in conjunction with the LGA and IDeA, to support its agenda for local community empowerment. This was in the context of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (LGPiH) 2007, the Sustainable Communities Act 2007, the Community Empowerment White Paper (2008) and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

In 2008 the QPS was revised and the power of well-being was applied to local councils. The revised QPS introduced a 'statement of intent' for council training as a criterion to be met while the application of the power of well-being to local councils through the LGPiH Act 2007 was a significant development. The number of councils meeting the criteria and resolving to use the power of well-being has surpassed expectations with approximately 5000 councillors so far attending training.

CTPs have evolved in a variety of ways since being introduced. A new strategy is required to support the diversity of local arrangements for the delivery of training.

Advances in technology mean that e-learning can now be developed as part of a modern blend of methods for acquiring skills and knowledge.

It has also become more urgent for the sector's qualifications to be formally aligned with the National Qualifications Framework. The wider education debate, designed to improve the skills of the workforce, stresses the importance of ensuring that everyone has access to Level 2 qualifications. It is essential to position CiLCA in the NQF. The Government's new Qualifications and Credits Framework (QCF) offers a more versatile model for vocational learning which could attract government support in new ways. Sector Skills Councils provide a framework of organisations dedicated to supporting professional sectors. However, although there is a local government partnership known as SkillsPlus, local government is not yet formally represented by a sector skills council.

The challenges for a review of the NTS are to adapt to the new political and economic climate and to

produce a strategy that reflects these changes whilst supporting the sector's development at all levels.

The review group

In 2009 it appeared that the time was right for creating a revised NTS. A review group was therefore set up with members drawn from the original NTS stakeholders. The aim of the review group was to research, coordinate and produce a revised NTS reflecting the needs of the sector. The following organisations were involved:

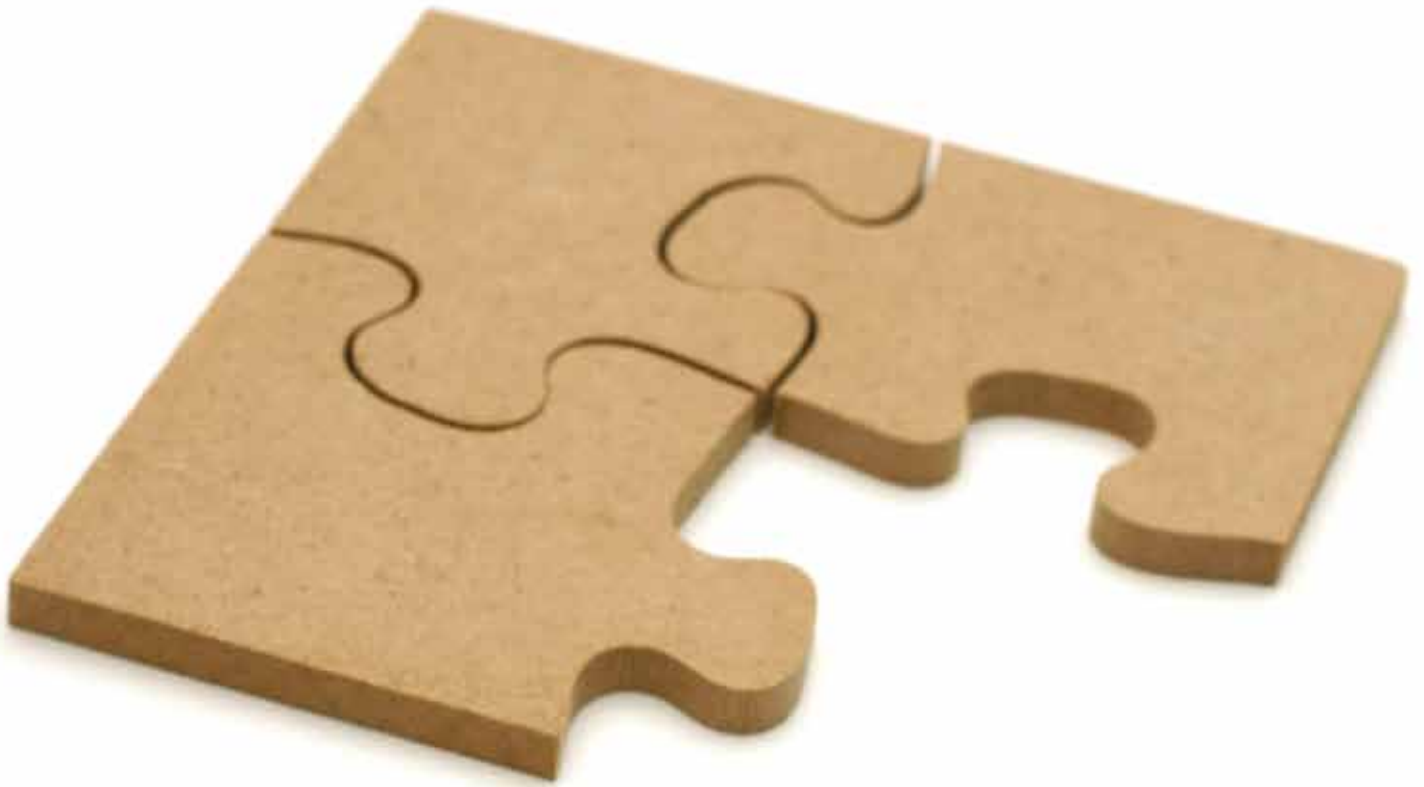
- Commission for Rural Communities (CRC)
- National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
- Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)
- Local Government Association (LGA)
- Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID)
- Communities and Local Government (CLG)
- University of Gloucestershire (UoG)

Following the review it was suggested that the review group become the national body responsible for coordinating learning and skills for the sector under the title of the 'NTS Steering Group' (NTSSG).

The review began with a scoping meeting in June 2009 when the group identified the following key aims for the review:

- To create a shared vision for training and development
- To link training across local government (and wider) sectors
- To review resources for training
- To strengthen the co-ordination and delivery of training at national, regional and local levels
- To strengthening the consistency and quality of training delivery across the country
- To ensure that all objectives and actions should be achievable and measurable

The group agreed a variety of methods by which organisations and individuals in the sector would be consulted. These methods are outlined in the next section (section C).



Part C

Research methodology
and findings

Research undertaken in 2007

In 2007 the NTS conducted an initial survey with questions about the strategy and training needs in the sector. 24 out of 38 CTPs (68%) and 1050 individuals (83% clerks and 17% councillors) responded to the survey. These findings are taken into account in the current review.

- 78% of CTP respondents agreed that there had been an increase in training since the NTS was established
- On average CTPs ran 10-14 courses a year
- 31% of councillors appreciated the idea of mandatory training for the Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme (QPS); 16% did not appreciate the idea and 51% were uncertain
- NTS products were widely approved

Research undertaken in 2009-10

Quantitative research

An online survey using 'Survey Monkey' proved an efficient way to reach broad cross section of respondents. Respondents had a three-month time frame to complete the survey. Alternative print arrangements were offered for those without internet connections (one hard copy request received).

A public sector e-learning organisation 'Learning Pool' was engaged to construct an online NTS website (<http://ntshub.org.uk/>) containing information such as case studies, the current National Training Strategy and documents relating to the review's discussions. Learning Pool created a link to the survey on the website and provided a summary of the survey findings. In future the website could be used as a source for sharing and promoting matters relating to local council training and development.

Qualitative research

In December 2009 two regional focus groups were held in York and London to extend the data collected from the national survey and to strengthen the voice of County Associations and SLCC branches. Approximately 10 County Officers and 10 Branch Representatives attended each focus group.

Topics for investigation

During the initial scoping phase the review group listed a range of topics for discussion.

- Delivery mechanisms
- Quality of training and accountability
- Qualifications
- Meeting the needs across the spectrum of parish council sizes
- Peer Support
- Professional Development (CPD)

- Development of councillor training
- Expansion of NTS to wider markets in the parish sector & 'nearby' sectors
- Funding

These topics were drawn together into four key areas as the basis of the online survey and focus group discussion:

- Managing training
- Finance and funding
- Training tools and delivery
- Qualifications and CPD

Findings from the research in 2009-10

On-line survey

There were over 1400 respondents to the survey during the three months it was live (December 2009 – February 2010) including the following:

	%
Clerks	58.3
Councillors	33.3
Trainers	4.8
Principal Authority members/officers	2.5
CALC Officers	2.1
SLCC Officers	2.4
Others	5.2

The findings are summarised in a full report completed by Learning Pool (available via NALC or SLCC).

Managing training

- 63% of respondents felt that the effectiveness of County Training Partnerships (CTPs) as an overall mechanism for training was good or average but 46% felt that they were poor
- 48% felt that their own CTP had a high or moderate impact, 24% felt that the impact was low or unknown while 26% were not aware of their CTP

Finance and funding

- When asked to prioritise potential investment in training through the NTS, the top five answers were:
 1. NTS booklets (e.g. The Good Councillor's Guide)

2. Training for Trainers
3. Modular training packs for local delivery through training events
4. Mentoring support with parish and town councils
5. CiLCA training (eg induction training such as WWYC and other tailored support packages)

- The NTS should invest in training SLCC trainers and advisors, parish liaison officers at principal authorities and county association staff
- The NTS should invest in a national system to ensure the quality and consistency of training was replicated throughout the country.

Training tools and delivery

- The top three products offered by the NTS are CiLCA, The Good Councillor's Guide and WWYC
- 73% of respondents preferred to receive training through a one-day event. Over 50% welcomed the idea of e-learning
- 91% would use the online directory for training
- 86% felt that induction training should be mandatory for clerks and 95% felt that induction training should be strongly recommended to councillors. A further 69% wanted an optional qualifications framework for councillors

Qualifications and CPD

- 85% felt that CiLCA should be recognised as a part of the Government's national qualifications framework
- 79% agreed that the sector's qualifications (CiLCA and the Local Policy (now CEG) Degree) are sufficient.
- 65% felt the CPD programme was effective
- 76% thought that membership bodies such as the Institute of Local Council Management was a good way of actively engaging in professional development

Regional focus groups

Managing training

Question:

How should the NTS be managed at the county level in future?

Response:

There was strong support for co-operation and networking between stakeholders involved in the management and delivery of training in local, regional and national settings. Structures for partnership working have evolved in a variety of different ways and this diversity and flexibility should be supported while good practice should be shared to improve partnership working.



Finance and funding

Question:

How can the NTS, CiLCA, training and a bursary scheme be financed given that there is unlikely to be further funding from Government?

Response:

Training should be financially sustainable and therefore properly valued in terms of cost. It should not run at a loss and where possible, it should make a profit for re-investment in training, (new training tools, bursary schemes, networking events, the training of trainers and the employing of training officers). Training is an investment with extensive benefits therefore councils should be encouraged to fund training across the sector.

A variety of funding models should be investigated and promoted to inform sound financial decisions while investment from beyond the sector should be sought to minimise the impact on precepts, subscriptions and training costs within the sector. It would be useful to identify examples of the cost of failing to invest or of successful investment in training.

Training tools and delivery

Question:

What training tools are required to ensure the quality and consistency of the training message and delivery?

Response:

Training should be designed in a variety of ways to suit individual and local needs and circumstances. Networking is an essential experience of training in this sector. It was agreed that compulsory training is not practical but it should be very strongly encouraged with induction training at the earliest opportunity for both clerks and councillors being given priority. Training strategies, budgets and CPD for staff should be promoted.

A varied menu of training units should be created so that they can be adapted to suit local and individual circumstances. Training units could be designed for both face-to-face and online opportunities for learning. Where possible, training should be taken to the customer.

Qualifications and CPD

Question:

Is it necessary to improve the current qualifications and CPD structure for clerks and if so how?

Response:

Training and qualifications underpin professionalism, demonstrate standards of performance in the sector

and help create councils worthy of respect. CiLCA, advanced professional qualifications and CPD should be enjoyable and constructive experiences worthy of the effort involved. The process of achieving a qualification requires a commitment that should be recognised and the benefits should therefore be clear.

Final consultation and approval

Following evaluation of the survey and focus groups the review group drew up the draft strategy to reflect the views expressed. The draft was then sent to county associations and SLCC branches and was discussed by representatives at the national CALC/SLCC branch networking event in Northampton in June 2010.

The review group then evaluated the feedback and, where appropriate, amended the strategy to reflect suggestions for improvement to the text. The group also reached a consensus on outstanding issues at its meeting on August 16th 2010. It then approved the strategy for presenting to stakeholder bodies for information where required.

Following this it was agreed that the review group continue as the national body responsible for coordinating learning and skills for the sector under the title of the 'NTS Steering Group' (NTSSG).

The strategy was officially launched in December 2010.

