

Role of a Local Councillor

Local councils are made up of a number of councillors who meet regularly to make decisions on the work and direction of the council. Councillors collectively decide and prioritise the nature of the activities that their council will undertake, including determining the annual precept (tax) and how facilities and services will be provided. They have collective responsibility for ensuring that the council is adequately resourced to deliver the facilities and services it has agreed to provide. They also have collective responsibility for ensuring that the council's financial management is sound.

A local councillor is expected to:

Attend and participate at council meetings

Raise matters to be duly considered and decided at council meetings

Represent their council externally

It is important to remember that the job of the council is to represent the interests of the whole community. Understanding the needs of different groups in the community (such as young and elderly people) is an important part of the role of councillor. Occasionally there will be a conflict of interest requiring sensitive judgement; for example, dog owners, parents of young children and walkers might disagree about use of the village green owned by the council. Making difficult decisions, in an open and reasoned way, is something that local councils need to do well although some councillors who, for example, represent a ward may also choose to represent the interests of individual residents, this activity is independent of the council.

Councillors should:

Attend meetings when summoned to do so

Consider, in advance of the meeting, the agenda and any related documents

Take part in meetings and consider all the relevant facts and issues on matters which require a decision, including the views of others expressed at the meeting

Take part in voting and respect decisions made by the majority of those present and voting

Represent the whole electorate, and not just those who voted for them.

The role of the clerk is to assist the council with the discharge of its statutory function or duties and the exercise of its statutory powers. The clerk plays an essential role in helping councillors implement their decisions.

