

Roles and Responsibilities

Below you will find some brief summaries about the different roles within local councils

The Council

Although councillors act as individuals, the Council is a **corporate body** with a legal existence of its own. Its decisions are the responsibility of the whole body, and not the individual councillors. It is important to remember that councillors should work together, like a team.

A good council does the following:

- plays a vital part in representing the interests of the community it serves
- improves the quality of life of local people and the local environment
- influences other decision makers, for example, in planning matters
- delivers services to meet local needs
- works with other groups in the community to develop the community and provide better services to the electors

The Councillors

As a councillor you bring many skills and experiences to the table, and every councillor can make a contribution. The following list gives a taster of the things a councillor should do:

- effectively represents the interests of their ward or parish
- actively and constructively contributes to good governance
- actively encourages community participation and citizen involvement in the work of the council
- knows and has contact with key local stakeholders
- represents the council to the community
- is a channel of communication for the ward/parish and ensures constituents are informed of services and decisions that affect them and the reasons for these decisions
- develops and maintains a working knowledge of organisations operating within the area
- deals with constituents' enquiries and representations fairly and without prejudice
- contributes to the formation of the council's policies and plans by active involvement in council meetings
- undertakes appropriate training and development to help fulfil the requirements of the councillor's role
- Acts as the council's representative on outside bodies and reports back

The Chairman

The chairman is elected at the annual parish council meetnig each year (not the annual parish/town meeting). The role requires the following items:

- plan the meeting with the clerk
- brief themselves and prepare fully before every meeting
- be punctual - set a good example to other councillors
- Welcome guests, speakers and the public
- conduct the meeting
- participate (but do not dominate) in the meeting
- and lead the team.

The Clerk

The clerk is the proper officer of the council in law. They are a vital team member providing legal and financial advice and information to support the council's decisions. The clerk has a number of responsibilities:

- prepare the agenda and summon the councillors to meetings
- write up the minutes as a legal record of the decisions made at the meeting.
- provide advice and administrative support and implement the council's decisions.
- the clerk may have to act as a project manager, personnel director, public relations officer of finance administrator.
- the clerk is often (but not always) the Responsible Financial Officer
- the clerk works for the council, and is not at the beck and call of individual councillors (including the chairman)
- the clerk can be delegated decision making powers in order to act on behalf of the council