

# POWER TO

# THE PEOPLE



**YOUR GUIDE TO LOCAL COUNCILS, THE BENEFITS THEY CAN BRING TO YOUR AREA AND HOW YOU CAN CREATE ONE**



# FOREWORD

Throughout England, parish, town, community, neighbourhood and village councils (local councils) work towards improving community wellbeing and providing more focused services at a local level. They are the most local tier of local government, closer to the community than the level of district, borough or unitary council (principal authorities). Local councils provide a voice for communities, helping people to feel more involved in the decisions that affect them.

This resource is intended for individuals and community groups who think that a new local council might be right for their area. It provides you with information about what local councils are and what they can bring to a community, and gives you the tools to take the idea out to the community and generate support. It also sets out the steps you will need to take to trigger a community governance review (a review by your principal authority that will lead to the creation of a new local council) and provides ideas and information about what to do once your new local council is created.

The resource is broken down into three sections. The first section provides a little background explaining just what a local council is, how it works and what it does. It also gives some examples of the work that existing local councils already do to make their areas better places to live.

Should you decide that a local council is just what is needed for your community, section two provides you with practical advice about the steps you can take to secure a local council for your area. It also includes template documents and guidance to help the process go as smoothly as possible.

The third section deals with life once you have your local council. It highlights the responsibilities of your principal authority once an order creating your local council is made (an order is the document that creates the local council in law). It considers how best to develop the council through tools such as community led planning, through training and through the Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme. It also includes case

studies showing how other people have set up their own local councils, the issues and challenges they faced and how they overcame them.

Creating a new local council may take time but with energy behind it there is the potential to make a significant, positive impact on your local community. However, you do not have to go through the process on your own. Support is available from county associations of local councils located across the country. They are the local member bodies for local councils and have a wealth of experience to help support you. The national body for local councils, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) can provide you with contact details for your county association should you need it. In city areas you may be unsure whether you can find support from a county association. You can, support is available. Again, NALC will be happy to point you in the right direction.



# SECTION 1

WHAT ARE LOCAL COUNCILS



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# INTRODUCTION

Local councils (parish, town, community, neighbourhood and village councils) are an established presence in many communities across the country. They deliver real benefits to local communities and ensure that the community has a stronger voice in the local area. This section looks at how local councils fit into the broader local government family, explains what they are and what they do, shows the different shapes and sizes they come in, explains a little about the role of a local councillor and about the factors that contribute to success.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT – HOW DOES IT WORK?

In England, at a local government level the public are represented by a variety of different types of authority:

County Councils  
Metropolitan Councils  
Unitary Authorities  
Greater London Authority

District Councils  
London Boroughs  
City of London Authority  
Local (Parish and Town) Councils

Whatever system is common in your area you still receive the same basic services as elsewhere.

You may live in an area represented by both county council and district or borough council. The county looks after the broad strategic issues for the entire county area (for example education, social services and transport) while the borough or district concern themselves with more local issues (such as housing, local planning and licensing).

You may live in a unitary authority area. This authority is usually quite large and the council looks after all of the services that a county and district or borough would. If you live in a city area you might live in a metropolitan borough, which again covers the services a county and district or borough would.

In London, you will live in a London borough or the City of London authority but you will also be part of the Greater London Authority. Your London borough covers a variety of different services (housing, education, social services, local planning and licensing) while the Greater London Authority covers strategic issues for all of Greater London (transport, strategic planning, regional development, police and fire).

Local councils are found, or can be created, in all of these areas. Legislation change also means that communities in London can now petition for a local council of their own.

The booklet, *How your council works*, produced by the Urban Forum, the Improvement and Development Agency and the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action provides further detail about how local government works and can be found at [www.urbanforum.org.uk](http://www.urbanforum.org.uk).

## **WHAT IS A LOCAL COUNCIL?**

There are around 9,000 local (parish, town, community, neighbourhood and village) councils representing around 16 million people across England. They are the first tier of local government below the level of district, borough and unitary councils (which are principal authorities, not local councils). Their aim is simple: to improve the wellbeing of the local community.

### **HOW DO THEY WORK?**

A local council is a statutory body, a body made under law. As such, it has certain duties and powers. Local people are elected to the council by the local community and make decisions on their behalf about the work and direction of the council. Put basically, it is a great way for a local community to more easily take decisions on the things that affect them, improve the local area and build a greater sense of community spirit and involvement.

### **HOW ARE THEY FUNDED?**

The local council decides what it will need for the coming year and a sum of money called a precept is collected locally through the local council tax. This money is invested back into the local community to improve facilities and services.

Many local councils also supplement the precept with grants and, if they own property, can receive money from rents or leases. Councils can also generate income through running community facilities, for example the hiring of sports facilities and venues.

### **WHERE DO YOU FIND THEM?**

Local councils can be found in areas as diverse as densely populated urban developments, market towns or sparse rural countryside. Changes to legislation also mean that people in London can now petition for a local council for their local community.

### **WHAT DO THEY DO?**

Local councils get involved in a broad range of projects and activities, the purpose of which is to make the local area a better place to live.

A local council might provide, maintain or contribute to the following

range of services for their community:

Leisure facilities

Local youth projects

Bus shelters

Car parks

Community centres

Community transport schemes

Crime reduction measures

Cycle paths

Festivals and celebrations

Tourism activities

Allotments

Community safety schemes

Litter bins

Illuminations (e.g. Christmas lights)

Parks and open spaces

Planning

Street cleaning

Street lighting

Traffic calming measures

## **WHAT DO LOCAL COUNCILS DO?**

Local councils show a great deal of imagination in developing ideas to tackle local issues or to just make the local area a better place to live. Many ideas are simple but can have a great impact, for example, hanging baskets or flower displays can add colour to a local area. At the other end of the scale, projects such as the building and running of leisure and entertainment venues can take a lot of careful planning and maintaining but can transform an area. Some local councils also supplement their precept with their activities.

### **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

Local councils do a great deal to ensure that young people are both engaged and listened to. Many local councils now support youth councils made up of young people from the local area, in some cases devolving a budget to their youth council to spend as they see fit. These youth councils are often asked for advice by the local council on the issues that affect them and value the different perspective they can bring.

Safe and accessible playgrounds have also become a major feature of areas represented by a local council and are often identified by the local community as a key priority.

Local councils also support young people through youth clubs, summer holiday activities, sports clubs, skate parks, sports facilities and entertainment.

A growing feature of the work of local councils is the provision of youth workers and in some cases youth outreach workers.

**Iver Parish Council,  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE**

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**Population - 11,700**  
**Precept - £336,000**

In Iver there are a number of factors that limit the number of activities young people can engage in, and in recent years the parish had seen an increase in incidents of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage by young people. A number of local young people now find themselves on the streets during the evening with little to do. Given these factors, the council was prompted to consider how it could better provide for the needs of young people in the parish while cutting down on anti-social behaviour.



The local church employs its own youth worker through a charity called the Iver Educational Trust that allows the youth worker to access funding the church would not be eligible for. The council felt that a similar approach would be beneficial. The charity agreed to a proposal made by the council whereby the council would cover the salary of the youth

worker but that the charity and youth worker would secure funding for their activities.

Initially the youth worker took to the streets in an effort to build a relationship with young people in the area. This was done through a drop-in facility one night a week and was supported by local businesses, which provided free doughnuts and hot chocolate. This gave the young people the opportunity to articulate their needs, voice concerns and engage in dialogue and helped them feel more of a part of the community. The role has developed over time and activities are now provided during school holidays. Activities include arts and crafts and sporting activities. To help tackle the problem of graffiti the youth worker works with young people on arts projects.

Another positive to come out of the initiative was that some young people who were concerned that they were all being treated as though they were anti-social, came forward and asked to organise a clean-up day. This was facilitated by the parish council and saw the young people cleaning graffiti, painting walls and litter picking.

The work undertaken has seen instances of anti-social behaviour reduced and has meant that the council is better aware of issues that affect young people, especially those young people on the margins.

## HOUSING

The provision of new housing is largely an issue for the principal authority tier of local government. However, even in this area local councils can make a significant contribution by identifying housing needs and driving forward subsequent plans. The lobbying and hard work of a number of local councils across the country has secured affordable housing for the local community.



**Lighthorne Heath Parish Council,  
WARWICKSHIRE**

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***Population - 940***

***Precept - £6,000***

Lighthorne Heath Parish Council lies to the south of Warwick and Leamington Spa and was formed in 2003. Despite a great improvement over the last three decades, Lighthorne Heath is considered to be an area of relatively high deprivation and is around eight miles from the nearest town or shopping centre.

The area inherited an old shop and post office that had become very run down. There was also a doctor's surgery that was closed down in 2005. There are a number of large families in social housing but the largest size of social house had only three bedrooms meaning that many families were living in overcrowded conditions.

A parish plan was produced which identified that a new shop, a doctor's surgery and additional housing were priority issues. The council worked with the rural housing enabler and local families to establish a clear housing need.

Working with the district council and housing association, land was identified for the new build. The consultations, planning and lobbying resulted in a new doctor's surgery adapted from two new bungalows, a new shop and a new post office. New social housing was also built, one five-bedroom house, two four-bedroom houses, four bungalows and 15 three-bedroom houses.

## THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

The state of the local environment can affect us all where it is not adequately looked after. Local councils do a great deal to ensure that the local area is made more pleasant. Local councils often maintain hanging baskets, a simple idea but one that brings colour and beauty to a local area.



**Great Baddow Parish Council,  
ESSEX**

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***Population - 15,000***

***Precept - £400,000***

Great Baddow Parish Council consulted with local residents prior to and during the millennium year, which identified a number of local projects for Noakes Place, an area of parkland at the centre of Great Baddow. One of the projects identified was the establishment of a Sensory Garden, which had a great deal of support from local residents. After completing a number of other projects that had been identified, work on the Garden was started in 2006.

The idea behind the Sensory Garden was that it would be an area of pathways, seating, trellis and raised beds with planting. The planting was specially chosen for colour, smell and texture that could be enjoyed by people with sensory deprivations. The raised beds would mean that the area would be accessible to those with physical disabilities.

A number of members of Great Baddow Horticultural Society gave their time and services free of charge to draw up detailed plans of the hard landscaping required and detailed plans of the type of planting needed. The council was successful in securing a grant from Essex County Council and invested its own money in the initiative. The Garden was officially opened in October 2007.

**Redbourn Parish Council,  
HERTFORDSHIRE**

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***Population - 4,058  
Precept - £144,260***

Redbourn Parish Council has planted a community orchard. The trees were sponsored by members of the public and it is intended that parishioners will be able to pick the fruit once it appears. The council recently opened Cumberland Garden off the High Street. Once again, fruit trees were planted in the garden. A large compost bin was also built in the garden to take the garden's refuse and plant debris from village planting schemes. Water butts have been placed in various buildings around the village and the hanging baskets are watered with 'grey' water.

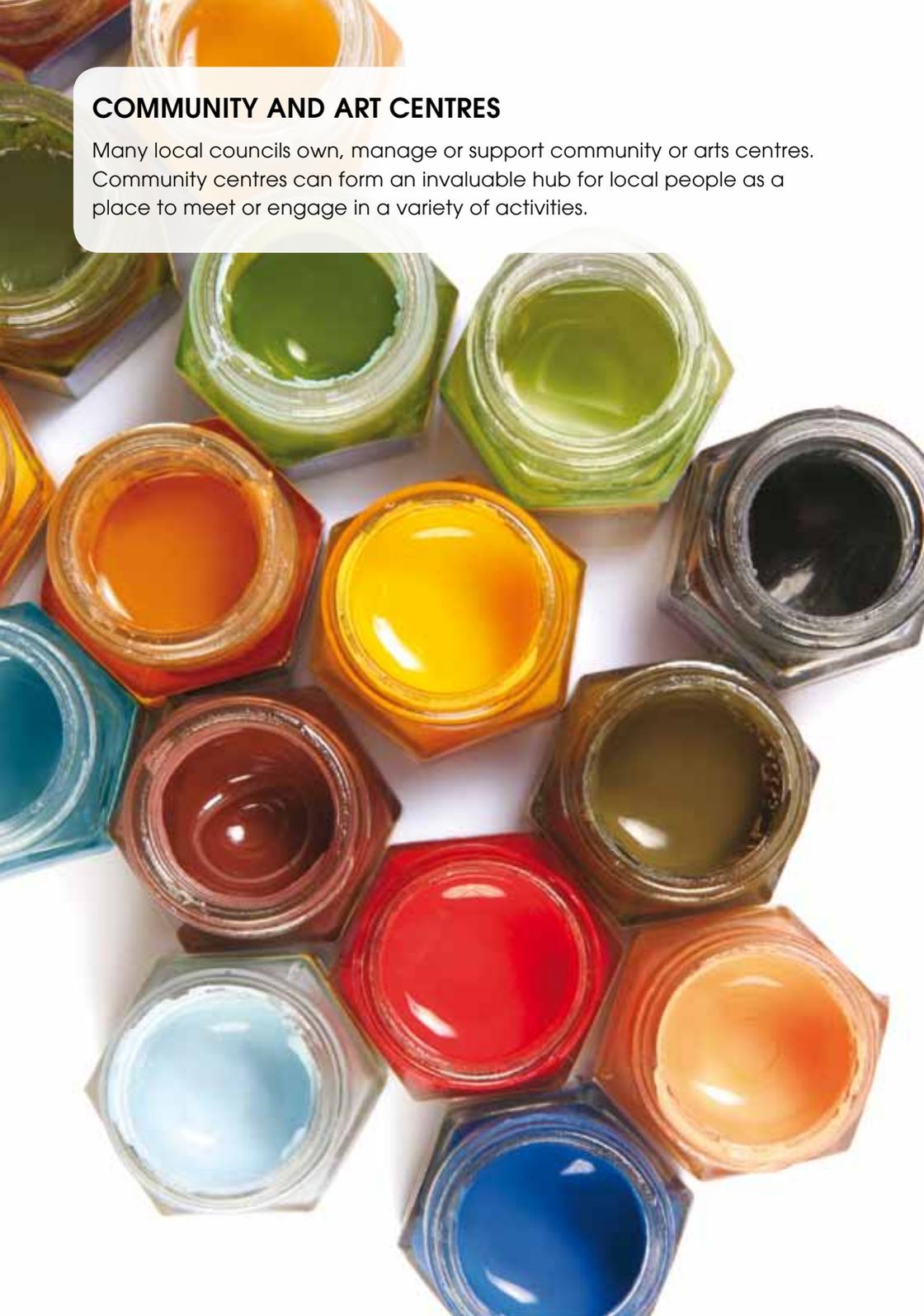
## **CRIME REDUCTION**

Crime is a concern for everyone but local councils can ensure safer streets through crime reduction measures. A number of local councils across the country now fund Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). PCSOs are a visible presence helping communities to feel more secure. Other local councils have introduced their own street lighting and a small number of local councils even fund CCTV in their local area. All of these measures can help a community feel more secure.



## COMMUNITY AND ART CENTRES

Many local councils own, manage or support community or arts centres. Community centres can form an invaluable hub for local people as a place to meet or engage in a variety of activities.



**East Grinstead Town Council,  
SUSSEX**

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***Population - circa 25,000***

***Precept - £382,300***

Between 1995 and 1996, East Grinstead Town Council built the Chequer Mead Community Arts Centre at a cost of £2.41m, the bulk of the funds coming from the town council. Funding was also drawn from the Arts Council Lottery Fund and Mid Sussex District Council. This was a significant undertaking for a local council and at the time it was the largest capital project, in funding terms, developed by any local council in England or Wales.

The centre comprises a 340-seat theatre, a dedicated art and exhibitions gallery, a studio workshop, three meeting rooms, a restaurant/cafe/bar and the usual backstage accommodation. The centre has built a first-class reputation for itself as a venue with a wide educational remit and hosts high-class community and professional performing and visual arts events. Chequer Mead is run as a charity and East Grinstead Town Council continues its role as trustee.



## **LEISURE**

Local councils can help to provide leisure activities for the local community. They provide or contribute to the provision of a range of facilities such as leisure centres, arts centres, playing fields and open spaces, and museums. They might also organise activities such as fetes, festivals and celebrations.

## TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

Local councils are playing their part in taking measures to help tackle climate change and embody the ethos that it is vital we act locally. Local councils are using their communications channels to provide communities with advice about the simple measures we can all take. Simple solutions such as ensuring houses are properly insulated. Local councils are also involved in more significant projects, often working with partners from the local area, such as environmental groups or the principal authority.

**Kirkburton Parish Council,  
YORKSHIRE**

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***Population - 24,000***

***Precept - £127,000***

Kirkburton Parish Council in Yorkshire takes its environmental responsibilities very seriously and was the first local council to utilise new legislation in the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006.

The parish council's Environment Plan covers biodiversity, heritage, climate change and appearance and its aim is to support the development of facilities, and community life in the parish council area in environmentally sustainable ways.

The plan covers a significant number of local issues and a great deal of progress has already been made. One of the key elements in the plan is to provide funds for the installation of renewable technology and energy conservation measures in community buildings. The purpose of this is to ensure that a greater proportion of a building's total energy use is served by micro generation and also demonstrates even greater energy savings, reduced CO2 emissions and lower fuel bills.

The efforts of the local council were rewarded when they won the Best Region Award at the British Renewable Energy Awards in 2008.

## **LOCAL COUNCILS – DIFFERENT SHAPES AND SIZES**

Local councils come in many different shapes and sizes. For example, Weston-super-Mare Town Council in North Somerset represents over 70,000 residents, while Hutton-le-Hole Parish Council in North Yorkshire represents around 200 residents. However, what they have in common is a proactive approach to improving their local areas.

The annual budgets of local councils can range from just a few hundred pounds to several million pounds but even a limited budget does not stop an energetic local council making a big difference to the local area. A council with a more limited budget can still be a vital focal point for the community and can provide it with a stronger voice in articulating its needs to partners such as the principal authority.

Local councils can be found all over England, from some of our biggest cities, such as Birmingham and Newcastle, to rural villages and market towns. Although local issues may differ from one area to another, the powers available to all of them can ensure that these local issues can be overcome.

The following case study examples show that councils of all sizes are making a difference in their local communities.

**Ufton Parish Council,  
WARWICKSHIRE**

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***Population - 240***

***Precept - £5,000***

Ufton is a small village located at the top of a steep hill on the busy A425 in Warwickshire. Due to the size of the community there are few amenities and its location means it is not within safe walking or cycling distance of any nearby town. Despite its small size, the parish council works hard to ensure a sense of community and a feeling of inclusion.

As the number of young people in the village has grown over the last decade, the council undertook a survey of local young people to find out what their needs were. Young people identified the prohibitive cost of travel, which they felt was leaving them socially isolated.

The council responded by securing local funding and having negotiated with Stagecoach was able to provide 13 families with four one-week tickets for use over the summer holidays.

Undertaking this scheme also provided the council with an opportunity to promote further links with local young people, and by talking and listening to local young people during the survey valuable relationships were made. These initiatives have helped to foster a real sense of community and inclusion.

**Langwathby Parish Council,  
CUMBRIA**

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***Population - 750***

***Precept - £10,000***

Langwathby Parish Council comprises the two villages of Edenhall and Langwathby, which are located a few miles north of Penrith.

Following a housing survey, which the parish council undertook in 2002, meetings were held with the district council and Eden Housing Association to press the case for additional affordable housing in Langwathby. Eden Housing took up the proposal and worked with the parish council to take the scheme forward.

The scheme was completed two years ago, providing 13 homes for local people, some shared ownership and some rented.

**Aylsham Town Council,  
NORFOLK**

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***Population - 6,500***  
***Precept - £218,000***

Aylsham runs a programme of events throughout the year aimed at bringing people to the town and supporting the local economy. For 2009 it held:

- a farmers' markets twice per month (both FARMA accredited);
- a craft market once per month;
- a carnival;
- a Christmas lights switch-on evening;
- an Aylsham's 'Got Talent' variety show with a local produce buffet;
- an Aylsham food festival;
- a walking treasure hunt - around the town, using the historic features.

In partnership with Broadland District Council, Norfolk County Council and a variety of other agencies such as Business Link, Aylsham Town Council put on a drop-in advice event for businesses - whether or not they were members of the town's traders' association.

**Sevenoaks Town Council,  
KENT**

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***Population - 18,000***

***Precept - £700,000***

Sevenoaks Town Council in Kent is responsible for a number of local facilities in the town. A large council with significant capacity, it is supporting local people during the recession with a job club aimed at providing an opportunity for people to meet, exchange ideas and get advice on careers, training, benefits and setting up businesses.

The council also took steps to save the local Stag Theatre and Cinema, which it felt was crucial to the long term economic sustainability of the town. The venue went into receivership for the second time in two years in 2008, with many considering it financially unviable and considering the redevelopment value of the land it stood on. In partnership with the local community, local business and the local media, the council put in a bid to run the venue and successfully secured a 25-year lease.

It has been a challenge for the council and a great deal of work is still needed to ensure its survival, but local businesses have stated how good the venue has been for business and a monthly comedy club was recently voted fourth best in the country by *The Guardian* newspaper.

## WHAT IS THE 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. They are local people who have stood for election to the local council. Subject to the standard qualifications and disqualifications for all local elections, anyone in the local area who is a British citizen, a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union, who lives or works in the area and is 18 years or older can stand for election. If you meet these criteria, all you need is the ability to give up a little of your time and a desire to make your local area a better place to live.

Local councillors have three main areas of work:

**Decision-making:** through attending council meetings and committees meetings with other elected members, councillors decide which activities to support, where money should be spent, which services should be delivered and what policies should be implemented.

**Monitoring:** councillors ensure that their decisions lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how well things are working.

**Getting involved locally:** as local representatives, councillors have responsibilities towards their constituents and local organisations. This often depends on what the councillor wants to achieve and how much time they have available.

Activities are varied and may include:

- attending meetings of local organisations such as tenants associations;
- attending meetings of bodies that affect the wider community, such as the police, the Highways Authority, schools and colleges;
- taking up issues on behalf of members of the public, such as making representations to the district or borough council;
- holding a surgery for residents to voice their issues;
- meeting with individual residents in their own homes.

NALC's booklet, *It takes all sorts*, provides the personal experiences of a number of councillors from across the country. They talk about their

pride in their local area and the achievements of their local council, and explain why they first got involved locally. The booklets are available to download at NALC's website, [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk).

## **FACTORS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LOCAL COUNCIL**

For many people their local council has become an indispensable part of the local landscape, providing leadership and support for the local community. There are a number of factors that contribute to a successful local council.

- Local councils are bodies run for the community and represented by the community. Your councillors will know the local community because they are part of it and therefore are much more likely to know what local priorities are.
- Money is raised locally and is spent locally without strings attached.
- Priorities are those of the local community.
- More money is spent in the local area.
- Local councils are democratically and financially accountable.
- A local council can provide a focus for local community and voluntary groups and can provide support to them. This could be through promoting them, providing a place to meet or providing financial support.
- Local councils can often get access to grants and funds to support the work they do, topping up the amount available to invest in the local community.
- There are few limits to the types of projects that local councils can undertake.
- A local council can fund the ongoing costs of a project (i.e. the 'Core' costs) unlike most other grant providers.
- The work of the local council is driven forward by enthusiastic councillors and officers.



# SECTION 2

CREATING YOUR NEW LOCAL COUNCIL





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# INTRODUCTION

Now you understand what a local council can do for a community (see Section 1), Section 2 will explain how you can go about creating one for your local area.

This section includes technical advice to guide you through the process of triggering a community governance review, a review that can create local councils. It also includes a media and public relations guide, which provides you with practical advice to help you to persuade the rest of the community that a local council can bring about significant benefits for the local area.

## FORMING A LOCAL COUNCIL - TECHNICAL GUIDANCE

There are around 9,000 parish, town, community, neighbourhood and village councils (local councils) representing around 16 million people across England. They form the most local level of government and cover many rural and urban areas. Since 1997, over 200 new local councils have been created, including councils in some of our larger cities such as Birmingham, Leeds and Newcastle. Recent changes to the law mean that it is now also possible to create a local council in London. Many people believe a local council is the ideal way to empower their community or neighbourhood.

Recent legislation has been passed with the intention of making it easier for communities to set up new local councils. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007 (Part 4, Sections 79–102) changed the law so that the decision to set up a new local council no longer lay with the Secretary of State, but instead with district, borough or unitary councils (principal authorities). The intention of the new legislation was to simplify the process and to make it more local.

This guidance takes you through the steps you will need to take to create a new local council in your area. The Schedule of actions, which features later in this section, will also help highlight the steps you should take and how the process could work and should be considered alongside this technical guidance.

## **HOW TO CREATE A LOCAL COUNCIL FOR YOUR AREA**

A new local council can be created through a community governance review. A principal authority can choose to undertake a community governance review or a community can prompt a review by securing enough signatures and making proposals to the principal authority. There are two important documents that relate to setting up a new local council:

- *The Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007* – This act changed the law, leaving the decision to create a new local council with principal authorities rather than the Secretary of State. (The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 can be viewed at [http://opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga\\_20070028\\_en\\_1](http://opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070028_en_1))
- *Guidance on community governance reviews* – published by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Electoral Commission, this document sets out the guidelines on undertaking a community governance review and implementing any decisions. It is through a community governance review that a new local council can be created. We would recommend that you read this document. (The guidance document can be viewed at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/communitygovernancereviews>)

## **WHAT IS A COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW?**

A community governance review is a review undertaken by a principal authority for the whole or part of the principal authority's area for the purpose of reviewing or making changes to the arrangements for community governance in their area. This includes the creation of new local councils or the alteration of existing local councils. Your principal authority can initiate a community governance review but if there is a desire for the creation of a new local council you can initiate one yourself through a petition.

## **STEPS NEEDED TO CREATE A NEW LOCAL COUNCIL**

The first thing you need to do is gauge whether there is support for a local council in your community. It may be useful to speak to friends and neighbours or existing community groups to see whether there is an appetite for a local council in your area. You will also need to identify and define the geographical area of your local community. What are

the boundaries of the area? If a desire appears to be there, you will need to generate support in the area and submit a petition to your principal authority. If you have collected enough signatures and the petition clearly defines the area in question, this will trigger a community governance review. The number of signatures you need is explained in the section Petitioning for your new local council.

This section also highlights where a principal authority is not obliged to carry out a community governance review either because it is already carrying one out or has carried one out recently.

### **CHOOSING AN AREA FOR YOUR NEW LOCAL COUNCIL**

Local people usually have a good idea of where their community starts and ends. Most local councils have a single identifiable community, perhaps with a village centre or parade. It is normally easier for small rural communities to identify their community area as there is usually a largely uninhabited area between their local area and neighbouring communities. In urban areas it can often be more difficult to identify where a community specifically starts and where it specifically ends (also see paragraphs 57–60 in the statutory guidance linked earlier in this document).

It is best to start by drawing up a provisional border. Get a copy of a map from your local library or a book shop and try to decide which parts of the area are your neighbourhood and which parts are not. In big towns and cities, large roads such as dual carriageways, playing fields, railway lines (including disused ones), industrial zones and the odd river or stream may be good reference points for drawing a border.

Also try to identify any existing administrative zones, such as polling districts or electoral wards. Do any of these, either singularly or in clusters, represent accurately the area your neighbourhood covers?

Whichever boundaries you decide upon, they must be easily fixed and identifiable. The area you choose for your local council must fall wholly within a single district/borough/unitary authority area. It cannot cross district/borough/unitary boundaries.

Once this is done, it is best to let as many people as possible that will live in the new local council area look at your border and say whether they agree. Arranging a public meeting to discuss your proposals is one good

way of proceeding. If you find that most people react negatively, listen to their views and try to amend the border to accommodate them. If most people seem okay about it, it is time to petition the local area.

### **GETTING YOUR PRINCIPAL AUTHORITY ON BOARD**

It is vital that you try to get support from your principal authority for what you are doing. Developing good relations early on might help the process.

In the first instance, you could perhaps get support through your local district or borough or unitary councillor. You will likely find that your district/borough/unitary council are supportive and will be willing to help you through the process. They may even be willing to instigate a review themselves without the need for you to submit a petition. However, a limited number of principal authorities might not support the idea of a new local council, perhaps seeing it as a loss of control. However, increasingly principal authorities are seeing the benefits that local councils can bring to a local area and are aware of the partnership role local councils can play in helping to deliver services at a local level.

### **GENERATING SUPPORT FROM LOCAL PEOPLE**

As you will see in the next section, you will need to present a petition to your local principal authority in order to trigger a community governance review. This means that you will need to present a good argument to local people, a new local council will cost money after all. In addition, there may be some opposition to the idea. Therefore you may need to win the argument. This Power to the People resource created by NALC provides you with the tools to help inform local people about what a local council could do for the local area. Tools include a template press release, poster and leaflet, a guide to dealing with the media and tips on how to conduct a public meeting.

### **PETITIONING FOR YOUR NEW LOCAL COUNCIL**

To trigger a community governance review to consider your proposals for a local council, the petition needs to meet the criteria set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as follows:

1. if the petition area has fewer than 500 local government electors, the petition must be signed by at least 50% of the electors;
2. if the petition area has between 500 and 2,500 local government electors, the petition must be signed by at least 250 of the electors;

3. if the petition area has more than 2,500 local government electors, the petition must be signed by at least 10% of the electors.

The petition should contain the requisite number of signatures based on the most recently published electoral register. It should be against this register that the petition threshold will be assessed. You will need to speak to your local principal authority for help in accessing the electoral registers in your area.

In addition to the requisite number of signatures the petition must also:

1. specifically define the area to which the review is to relate (whether on a map or otherwise);
2. specify one or more recommendations that the petitioners wish a community governance review to consider making.

This means that any petition must clearly define the area to be covered by the new local council and make clear what recommendations are being made (for example the creation of X parish council to cover X area). Any recommendation must express the preferred name and style for the new council. A list of possible recommendations can be found in the statutory guidance on community governance reviews (paragraph 40), signposted earlier in this document under the heading How can you create a local council for your area? You should state what the name of the new council should be and how you wish it to be defined.

Previously it was only possible to name a new council either a parish or town council. Legislation change now means that you can adopt a different style for your new council. Your new council can now be called:

- (X) Parish Council
- (X) Town Council
- (X) Community Council
- (X) Neighbourhood Council
- (X) Village Council

The powers and duties are exactly the same whichever style of name you decide on for your council. The only difference is that a town council can have a mayor.

It is important that the petition clearly sets out all of the proposals to ensure that it is valid.

A principal authority is under a duty to carry out a community governance review if it receives a valid community governance petition for the whole or part of the council's area. However, the duty to conduct a review does not apply if:

1. the principal council has concluded a community governance review within the last two years, which, in its opinion, covered the whole or a significant part of the area of the petition; or
2. the council is currently conducting a review of the whole, or a significant part, of the area to which the petition relates.

### **PRINCIPAL AUTHORITIES AND COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS**

The principal authority must conclude a community governance review within the period of 12 months from the date the review begins and must consult the local government electors for the area under review and any other person or body likely to have an interest. It must then take into account any representations received.

The principal authority is also required to consider issues such as the identities and interests of local communities, effective and convenient local government, the impact of community governance agreements on community cohesion and the size, population and boundaries of the local council. For further details of the roles and responsibilities of principal authorities in relation to community governance reviews, see the official Guidance on community governance reviews, referred to earlier.

### **INTERMEDIATE ARRANGEMENTS**

All being well, the community governance review will result in the principal authority making recommendations that a new local council be set up in your area. Your principal authority will make a reorganisation order that may include provision for the transfer or management of things such as property or staff.

This may take a year, or perhaps even longer, before the local council is officially set up. This could mean that local enthusiasm for the new local council will dwindle and it may be difficult getting people to stand as candidates in the first election.

It is becoming increasingly common for neighbourhoods to establish a 'shadow local council' to bridge the time gap. These are a non-statutory alternative to local councils. The main feature that makes them different from residents associations or village societies is that they are directly elected by all voters in the area concerned using a secret ballot.

A shadow local council is a good means of laying the ground for your eventual local council. It can begin looking at establishing a long-term vision for your neighbourhood and strategies and plans for achieving this vision. It can prepare a home for the local council, such as an office in the village parade or the community centre. It can even raise funds and purchase assets, eventually dissolving and transferring these to the statutory local council. This is also a good time to consider what budget your new local council might need.



Your local authority may also decide to appoint a 'temporary local council' in the last few months leading up to the election. The authority can choose anybody it wants to sit on this body and usually it will appoint at least one ward councillor. The main difference between this and the 'shadow' approach is that temporary local councils have all the legal powers of an elected local council, so they can appoint a clerk or other staff, exercise powers and provide services.

## **CAMPAIGN FOR AN ANDOVER TOWN COUNCIL**

The Campaign for an Andover Town Council, set up by local residents in the Hampshire town, secured its aim in 2009 when Test Valley Borough councillors resolved to constitute the new parish council in 2010. Once councillors are elected they can then chose to rename the new council, a town council.

Many within the local community had wanted the establishment of an Andover Town Council for a number of years and a number of attempts had been made to make this a reality. The most recent, and successful attempt, was borne from a local frustration that the community could not influence decision-making in the town. Andover was the only unparished area in the borough, which made many feel that without a voice they were largely bystanders to the decisions that affected the town.

The campaign group “felt that a new local council for Andover would give us better representation, the same democratic voice as every other town and village in the Test Valley, someone to fight the community’s corner, act as the town’s watchdog over planning applications, get the community more involved with local life, and give the townsfolk a sense of pride and belonging in their town and access to grants and funding for community projects”.

To generate interest in the idea “we organised a public meeting with speakers from the Hampshire Association of Local Councils and invited people to stay behind and pledge support. From this meeting we then formed a committee and started collecting signatures for the petition.

Many letters and media releases were produced which gave the campaign a high profile in local and regional media”.

“The local principal authority was not entirely convinced by the idea of a local council for Andover but we continued campaigning, which kept the campaign in the public eye, and generated strong local support that was ultimately impossible to ignore.”

## **WHAT IS THE FUTURE?**

“With luck, lots of people will be elected to the council who want it to achieve things for the community. We hope in the coming years the

community feel that their new council delivers, works hard and listens to local people. We hope the council will inspire people to make a difference and that every bit of Andover looks as though it has a council that cares. We also hope that the new council can work in harmony with its principle authority for the benefit of all.”

## MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS GUIDE

OK, so you are convinced that a local council is just what the local area needs. All you need to do now is convince the rest of the community. To trigger a community governance review you will need to secure enough signatures for your petition. Obviously, plenty of legwork will be required but people need to be informed about what a local council can do and how it could benefit the local community. You have all the arguments but now you need the means to get them across to local people. Gaining support for a local council can be done by talking to people within the community and by the effective use of the media.

In an ideal world your campaign group will include somebody with experience of dealing with the media or with public relations. However, this will not always be the case. The media can have a great deal of influence in how local opinion is formed. Therefore, it is important that you build a good relationship with the media (largely the local media) at an early stage. It is also important that you help to influence public opinions through your own public relations. Both avenues are important because some in the community may initially be against the idea of a local council.

The purpose of this guide is to provide you with a little background as to how the media works, help you to work with them and advise the best ways you can get your messages out to the wider community. It covers the role of the local media, how to put a media release together, tips for radio and television, your online presence, holding public meetings, hints and tips on public speaking, answers frequently asked questions, provides you with useful messages to help underline what a local council could do for the community and provides a sample media release you may wish to adopt for your own use.

Many in the community may not understand what a local council is or does, and may need convincing of what benefits it could bring to them personally and to the community in general. Ensuring that people have access to information and the effective use of local media can be key to raising the profile of your campaign and for underlining the benefits of a local council to local people.

Although this resource highlights the many different areas of the media and steps you might wish to take to help generate support for your

campaign it is also quite conceivable that your campaign will strike a chord with local people resulting in minimal input from the local media. This resource will be of most use to campaign groups where local people or the local district or borough or unitary council need convincing of the need and benefits of a new local council. However, keeping momentum going is important whatever your circumstances.

## **SCHEDULE OF ACTIONS**

Throughout the process there are actions that a community group can take to help keep momentum going. No two campaigns will ever be the same but this broad schedule of actions should give you an idea of the kinds of things you will need to consider and broadly when you will need to consider them. This section should be considered alongside the guidance document *How to form a local council – technical guidance* included as part of this resource.

### **THE IDEA**

Talk to friends and neighbours and existing community groups about a local council. Is there any interest or enthusiasm for a local council? Friends and neighbours may prove to be a good barometer of the local community and a campaign group is most likely to grow from these initial discussions.

### **EXPANDING THE IDEA**

If you now have a group of like-minded people you can start thinking more seriously about where the boundary of your local council should lie. Get hold of a map of the local area and draw up a provisional boundary. See what people think of your proposed boundary and amend it to take into account the thoughts of others. It is also a good idea at this point to speak to your local district/borough/unitary councillor and to your district/borough/unitary council. They may be happy to help you and it is important that you keep them informed. It will after all be the responsibility of the district/borough/unitary council to undertake the community governance review.

### **PREPARATION**

Now you should consider your petition. It is important that you are happy with the boundary of your proposed new local council. If you start petitioning and then change the proposed boundary, it will invalidate the petition and you will have to start again. At this point you should work out exactly how many signatures you will need for a petition to trigger a community governance review. Using the electoral register you will need to work out which local government electors reside within the proposed boundary you have chosen. Check the guidance document that comes with this section for the number of signatures you will require. At this point you can prepare your petition.

## **GAINING SUPPORT AND INFLUENCING**

Your petition is prepared. Now efforts to gain support can begin in earnest. You will need to convince people that a local council is right for your local area to secure enough signatures. It is at this stage you should consider how you wish to get the message out. This resource provides a number of ideas you may wish to think about.



You should consider:

- getting out and talking to people. Explain what a local council could do for the area;
- hold a public meeting to create discussion and provide information;
- make information available in libraries, local shops, community centres etc;
- speak to the local press, perhaps issue a media release;
- think about your online presence and consider whether you can provide information this way.

## **KEEPING THE MOMENTUM GOING**

To keep the momentum of your campaign going, keep talking to people, let them know how many signatures you have and how many you still require. You should also keep an eye on what is being said locally. You may need to take action to correct information being presented to the community. If the proposal for a new local council becomes a local 'hot issue' you may wish at this stage to hold a further public meeting. This will give you an opportunity to underline the benefits of a local council and correct any misapprehensions.

## **PRESENTING YOUR PETITION**

When you have secured the requisite number of signatures for your petition you are ready to present it to your district/borough/unitary council. As long as you meet the criteria the district/borough/unitary council is under a duty to carry out a community governance review, which will consider your proposals.

## **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

As part of a community governance review your district/borough/unitary council will consult local people about the creation of a new local council. It is important that you continue to campaign to ensure that local residents are reminded of the benefits of a local council. It is during the review itself that opposition is most likely to materialise. Opposition may come from some in the community or from district/borough/unitary councillors. You should take care to ensure that the local community are getting accurate messages.

## PROMOTION IN THE COMMUNITY

There are a number of simple measures you can take within your local community to help raise awareness about local councils.

### COMMUNITY NOTICE BOARDS

Make use of community notice boards to let people know when events are taking place or to provide information or contact details for people who wish to find out a little more.

### LOCAL BUSINESSES

Local businesses may provide a good opportunity for raising awareness about local councils and in providing publicity for events in the local area. Speak to local shopkeepers about your idea and see whether they will display information.

### THE LOCAL LIBRARY

Speak to your local library and ask if they mind displaying information.



## THE LOCAL MEDIA

Changes to the way we access news and current affairs have placed new challenges on local journalists. There is an increasing presence of online media which has seen many local newspapers close down. Many local journalists now do not have the time or resources to actively investigate news stories with deadlines getting tighter and turnover of staff much higher.

Local journalists are more likely to respond when a news story presents itself. Unfortunately this can often mean that a journalist responds to, and builds a story around, for example, a letter of complaint from a local resident. However, this approach can provide an opportunity for a proactive campaign group. With journalists keen to fill column inches they are often happy to be presented with an interesting local news story. However, it is important to understand the psychology of a journalist before trying to enter into a 'devil's pact' with him or her.

They need a certain proximity to information and facts. They are in the business of getting stories and this simple fact should never be forgotten. Your end of the pact must be to bring stories to them. There is no other business to be had with them.

### TOP TIPS

- Make life simple for journalists.
- Be succinct and avoid jargon.
- Respond quickly to them.
- Build a relationship with them over the longer term.

## MEDIA RELEASES

A media/press release can be a good way to get media coverage. There is a sample press releases available as part of this resource that you can adapt. However, it is just a sample. It is important that you tailor it to your own circumstances and add a little local 'colour'. With the hints and tips below you may prefer your own style.

Things you should remember when putting a media release together.

- The press release should be no longer than two sides of A4.
- The most important aspects of the release should come first.
- Make it newsworthy; give journalists an angle to work from.
- Your contact details should be at the end of the press release.
- If you email your media release, paste the text directly into the main body of the email. Attachments could be blocked by computer firewalls.

All press releases should answer the following questions.

- What is happening?
- Where is it happening?
- Why is it happening?
- When will it happen?
- How will it happen?

## PRESENTATION AND DISTRIBUTION TIPS

- Ensure that the media release articulates the messages you wish to get across and is in a simple and easy to read format.
- Think about which journalists and editorial staff in your local area might be interested in news about your campaign. It can also be useful to send a copy of your media release to local organisations who may have an interest in your campaign, for example, your local principal authorities, local voluntary groups and so on. A media release can be a good way of keeping these kinds of partners in the loop about what stage your campaign is at.
- Set up a contacts database that you can use each time you distribute a release.

## RADIO AND TELEVISION

Dealings with the broadcast media are likely to be much rarer than dealings with the local media but you should be prepared just in case. They have a nature to spread news from local/provincial to regional to national media. However, a well put together media release may just interest local broadcast media, for example a local radio station. There are a number of things you should think about to ensure that you get your message across.



Radio and TV interviews are usually pre-recorded, which does give you some latitude if you are nervous or you do not think you have gotten your messages across very well. On most occasions the interviewer will give you an idea of the kinds of questions they will ask or the general direction of the interview. Like print media, the broadcast media are also working to tight deadlines so will want you to be well prepared. Many interviewers will be happy to let you record your answer again. However, bear in mind that this is the media, they may throw in an unexpected question.

It is sometimes worth acknowledging the question but redirecting the interview towards the key messages you wish to get across.

However, you should have your messages prepared in advance. In campaigning for a new local council you should ensure that you are able to answer the questions most likely to come up and these will cover all of the questions you will ask yourself when preparing a press release: the what, where, why, when and how questions. It will also be useful to highlight the kinds of activities that happen elsewhere. Consider a local council of a similar size to the one you are looking to create and highlight the difference they are making in the local community. Your local county association of local councils should be able to help you here.

### TOP TIPS

- Make sure you know what messages you want to get across in an interview – list your ‘must says’ and ‘like to says’ before you go in.
- Do not become a ‘rent-a-quote’ figure. Too many media appearances on side issues will devalue the occasions when you have something important to say.
- No jargon – make sure your messages are accessible.
- TV – dress the part: contrasting colours and classic styles, nothing ornate to distract viewers.
- TV – prepare: know your three key messages.
- TV – practice delivering messages in short soundbites.
- TV – think ‘ABC’: acknowledge the question; bridge back (draw the interview back to the messages you want to get across); communicate your story.
- TV – show passion when appropriate. Be yourself.

## YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

There are a number of ways that you can create an online presence.

If you have the necessary expertise you may wish to consider a simple website for your campaign. Through a website you will be able to control the messages you wish to get across, provide information about the activities you are undertaking, provide content on what a local council could do for your area and link to other useful websites and documents.

As an alternative to a website of your own you may feel that a blog may be useful. A blog acts as a personalised diary or commentary and can be used to keep people up-to-date on the progress of your campaign. There are a multitude of blog sites that could host your own blog page.

You may also wish to consider what social websites could do for your campaign, for example, Twitter. Twitter might help to generate an audience beyond your local area, generate a little publicity and may provide a good source of ideas from other users.

Facebook could also provide a good opportunity to drive the campaign. An online forum or group will clearly show membership numbers and allow discussion on key issues.

## **HOLDING PUBLIC MEETINGS**

As part of the process of generating interest and stimulating debate you may wish to hold a public meeting in the local area. A public meeting can be an effective way of promoting the benefits of a local council, gathering information, listening to the views of the community and building support. A public meeting at the start of the process could be a good way to draw your idea to the attention of local people. As the campaign progresses, a public meeting can provide a good opportunity to debate issues that have arisen and provide an opportunity to correct any misinformation that may have occurred. It may also be a good idea to invite a representative from your local county association of local councils or from NALC to speak at your event.

### **GETTING PEOPLE TO YOUR MEETING**

Obviously people need to be aware that a public meeting is taking place, where it will be held and what it will be about. Leave plenty of time to advertise the event. Put up posters advertising the event in public places such as local shops, post offices, community centres and library showing the time, date, place and reason for the meeting, along with your contact details. You should also encourage your local networks to spread the word or make use of local email contacts to let people know the event is taking place. You may also wish to piggyback on an existing event where appropriate.

### **SELECTING A SUITABLE VENUE**

There are a few things you should consider when selecting a venue for your public meeting. You should consider how convenient the venue is to local people, whether the venue has disabled access, the type of venue and its size.

### **CREATING THE RIGHT ATMOSPHERE**

It is important that you arrive at the venue in plenty of time to ensure that everything is prepared.

- If you are using any equipment ensure that it is in working order.
- Ensure that any catering is in place.
- Ensure you have any tools you will need such as pens, pencils, paper, presentation materials and water.
- Ensure that toilets, heating, air conditioning and lights are working.
- Check where the fire doors and alarms are and if a fire drill is planned.

You should try to greet people as they arrive. Keep the atmosphere welcoming and avoid entering into any serious debate or discussion before the meeting starts.

### **GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START**

You should try to ensure that the meeting starts at the time you have arranged. This demonstrates that you are in control. Should people arrive late, welcome them to the meeting but do not go over any ground you have already covered, just state briefly the stage that you are at.

At the beginning of the meeting you should introduce yourself and outline the purpose of the meeting. You may wish to prepare a short agenda for the audience but whether you do or not you should give the audience a brief outline of the format of the meeting so that they know what to expect and when they can ask questions or express their own views. You should ensure that everyone understands the outline for the meeting before you proceed. Preparing an agenda can be a good way of helping to ensure that the meeting does not go off on tangents.

### **MAINTAINING CONTROL AND GETTING THE MOST FROM THE MEETING**

- Given the nature of a public meeting it can be difficult to gauge how it might play out. However, there are a number of things that you can do to manage the audience, maintain control and ensure that you get the most from your public meeting.
- Make sure the meeting and speakers keep to your agenda or outline. Speakers should keep to the point and avoid distracting the audience from the key areas of discussion.
- Stick to the agreed timetable and finish on time.
- Try to keep questions and debate as inclusive as possible. Do not let one or two individuals dominate the discussion. Broaden the discussion by throwing questions over to others in the room.
- Ask someone to take notes on the main points of the meeting so that you can consider the issues.
- Keep an attendance sheet complete with contact details so you can provide people with follow up information.
- At the end of the meeting thank people for attending and explain what your next steps will be. This might be, for example, securing more signatures for your petition or waiting for the principal authority to consult the community on proposals.

## **AFTER THE MEETING**

- Be sure to follow up on any agreed actions, for example, someone may have asked for more information.
- Bear in mind that some people may not wish to speak in public. Give people the opportunity to speak to you outside of the meeting.
- Reflect on the meeting and any lessons you can learn from it. What worked and what did not. Did the debate and questions follow the expected line? If not, you may need to think about what extra information you can provide.

## PUBLIC SPEAKING – HINTS AND TIPS

Public speaking can seem a daunting prospect for some but can be important for putting your message across. You may wish to hold a public meeting and this can be a great forum for informing local people about what a local council can bring to a community and for generating discussion.

There are a number of things that you can do to make the experience of public speaking more comfortable and more rewarding.

- Be prepared – If you are using any equipment arrive early to ensure everything is working. It can also be a good opportunity to familiarise yourself with the venue.
- Questions – If you don't know the answers to a question don't try to bluff it. Be honest and admit that you don't know the answer. You may be able to refer the person to a different source for an answer or you may wish to offer to find out the answer and get back to them at a later date.
- Avoid jargon – Your message should be as simple as possible. Remember that not everyone in the audience will understand technical terms.
- Know your material – If you are familiar with what you are going to say you will be much more confident.
- Eye contact – Make eye contact with the members of the audience, make the audience feel engaged.
- Visual aids – Keep them simple, for example, if you are using a Powerpoint presentation use the slides to underline what you are saying not to repeat it. Use simple bullet points to highlight key points.
- Handouts – If you have handouts it may be more useful to give them out after the presentation. They can be a distraction to the audience who may miss important messages you wish to get across.
- Take your time – Speak slowly and clearly. Give the audience a chance to take in what you are saying.
- Hurry up! – Bear in mind that attention spans can be short, plan what you will say in advance. Keep it focused. A speech of around 15–30 minutes should suffice.
- Add a little colour – Draw on examples of what local councils do elsewhere, perhaps drawing on an issue that is of particular relevance to your local area. This will reinforce the points you are making and give the audience something tangible to think about.

- Facts – Facts and statistics can add weight to your argument and again present the audience with something tangible.
- Your mind goes blank or you dry up – Don't panic, take some deep breaths and recompose yourself. The audience will be far more understanding than you think
- Be yourself and enjoy the experience – Don't be someone you're not, the audience will know. Hard as it may be to believe, public speaking can be an exhilarating and rewarding experience.

## QUESTIONS & ASSERTIONS ABOUT LOCAL COUNCILS

A new local council is a big undertaking for a community and people will naturally ask questions. It will cost the local taxpayer a little extra and people want to be sure they are getting value for money. You may also need to correct assumptions that are made about local councils.

### **Q: Why should we pay twice for local services, once to the district/borough/unitary council and once to a local council?**

A: While it is true that we would be paying more, the council tax we currently pay contributes to the wellbeing of the entire district/borough/unitary area. All of the money a local council raises through the precept must be invested back into our community. Local councils can also access grants and funding that can supplement money generated locally.

### **Q: Will the district/borough/unitary council tell us what to spend our money on?**

A: No, it is up to the local council to decide what the money is spent on. This is influenced by local needs.

### **Q: What will it cost me?**

A: That depends on the ambitions of your community. However, for many people this works out at less than £1 a week.

### **Q: Will a new local council just duplicate the work that the district/borough/unitary council does?**

A: Local councils can choose to supplement existing services, for example a local council may wish to pay for extra cleaning in the area in addition to the district/borough/unitary council's service.

However, most local councils concentrate on specific local issues that a district/borough/unitary council may not have the resources to address. For example a local council may wish to invest in providing activities for young people or in helping to tackle crime in the area if it feels there is a need for it that will not be met by the district/borough/unitary council.

### **Q: OK, so we pay our money and it gets used to pay for staff for the local council. That does not sound like it is being invested in the community.**

A: It is vital that a good clerk is employed at any local council. The support of a clerk is important to the elected members and for the

delivery of the plans that are made. The role of the clerk has changed from one that was once primarily administrative to one that is now more managerial. A good clerk can often be the difference between a local council that achieves a great deal and one that does not.

## USEFUL MESSAGES

This list – or crib sheet – provides a useful reference for some of the key messages you may want to get across about local councils. It could be useful in your work with the media or may be helpful in getting messages across to the general public.

- There are around 9,000 local councils across England representing 16 million people (around 35% of the population). There are over 80,000 local councillors sitting on these councils and they are supported by 25,000 staff.
- Over 200 new local councils have been created in England since 1997.
- The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007) allows for local councils to be created in London. Local councils were abolished there in the 1960s.
- Local councils can be found in a diverse range of communities – both rural and urban. Local councils represent people in rural villages, market towns and city conurbations such as Birmingham and Newcastle.
- Local councils undertake a wide range of work for the benefit of their local communities. These services include leisure facilities; community transport schemes; parks and open spaces; play equipment; youth projects; street cleaning; street lighting; community safety schemes; crime reduction measures; tourism; street lighting; community centres; bus shelters and many more.
- A local council is a great way to give the local community a more powerful voice in the local area.
- A local council gives a community the opportunity to focus on, and do something about the issues that they feel most affect them.
- Local councils can help to support local groups in the area. This may be through funding, the provision of somewhere to meet or publicity. This could include local voluntary groups, young people and older people to name just a few.
- Anyone aged 18 or over can stand for the local council (subject to the usual disqualifications such as working for the council you want to become a councillor for).
- People from the local council area vote for the people they wish to see represent them on their local council.
- Local councils collect a sum of money each year from the local community through the council tax in the form of a precept. This money is spent exclusively for the benefit of local residents.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Here are some general ideas that you should bear in mind that will apply to all of the engagement you will have with local people and the media.

- Keep your messages simple. 'Soundbite' has almost become a dirty word but the fact is that people respond best to simple messages. Too much information may result in you losing your audience. People will respond well to examples of the work that local councils already undertake elsewhere and how this could be applied locally.
- Not everyone will be supportive. You may need to persuade some people more than others. Across the country some principal authorities have been more supportive than others. It is important that you engage with your principal authority and your principal authority councillors, emphasising the positives a new local council could bring to your area.
- Do not promise anything that a local council cannot deliver. Be honest about what a local council can and cannot do. Making your own exaggerations may come back to bite you.
- Communication is key – do what you can to ensure that local people have the information with which to make an informed opinion, whether through media channels or through perhaps the most effective form of communication – talking to people.
- Listen to your community. Acknowledge what people want and be open to ideas. Be aware that your original idea may not turn out to be the best option.
- Keep the momentum going and keep the community informed.
- A new local council will not be created overnight. You will need to be patient. However, the end result is worth waiting for and should be around for many years to come.

## APPENDIX – SAMPLE MEDIA RELEASE

(Insert your logo here should you have one)

(XXXX Campaign Group Media Release)

(date, month) 201(X)

### **(XXX CAMPAIGN GROUP WANTS LOCAL COUNCIL FOR XXX)**

XXX Campaign Group is currently seeking support from local residents for a new local council for (name your local area) to provide improved services, local representation and better support for local voluntary and community organisations.

(John Smith), Chairman of XXX, said: “This is about us controlling our future, rather than relying on others...”

So, just what is a Local Council? Local Councils are the tier of government closest to the people and usually work in partnership with district or county councils

Across England there are already around 9,000 local councils representing around 15 million people in areas as diverse as urban city communities, market towns and rural villages. Their aim is simple – to improve community wellbeing, provide better services at a local level and provide local people with a stronger voice.

A local council could give the local community a greater influence over the issues that affect us all. Local councils across the country are already doing a great deal towards improving community wellbeing and providing better services at a local level.

**Continued.../  
.../Follows on**

Local councils might provide, maintain or contribute to the following services: community centres, leisure facilities, local youth projects, crime reduction measures, street lighting, street cleaning, community transport schemes, environmental issues and allotments to name just a few.

XXXX Campaign Group is petitioning the borough/district council to create a new local council for XXX.

(Jean Jones), Press Officer of XXX Campaign Group, explained: "If we can secure enough signatures YYY council will be required to undertake a community governance review and they will have to consult local residents on the proposal. A community governance review must be completed within 12 months and unless very good reasons exist XXX will have their own local council formed."

A new local council would provide the community with a focus for tackling the issues that affect us, provide us with a louder voice and enable us to more easily tackle the issues that we face.

**Ends**

### **Notes for Editors**

1. (XXXX) Campaign Group are an independent group made up of local residents who are campaigning for a new local council in (area)
2. Advice and guidance about local councils can be found at the NALC website at [www.createacouncil.org.uk](http://www.createacouncil.org.uk)
3. For more information contact (key contact name, telephone number or email address)



# SECTION 3

ESTABLISHING YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL





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# INTRODUCTION

Your new local council has now been created. Where do you go from here? Section 3 provides advice as to how you can move things forward and ensure that you are best equipped to meet the challenges that you will face.

The section covers community-led planning, a process that could help you to plan for the future and the Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme that can help to ensure that your council is efficiently managed and responsive to the community.

The section also features advice on the benefits that training can have in ensuring that both councillors and staff have the right skills for the tasks you will undertake.

In addition, the section gives you an idea of the actions you will need to consider initially, gives some background to the power of well-being (a new enabling power available to local councils), and provides a list of useful contacts that can help you get the most from your local council.

## GETTING THINGS ROLLING

OK, so it has been decided through the community governance review that a new local council should be created for your local area. What happens now? Well, your local principal authority is required to make a Reorganisation Order, which gives effect to the decisions made as part of the community governance review. The principal authority as part of its responsibilities may also make provision for the transfer or management of things such as property or staff.

### GETTING THE PRECEPT RIGHT

It is important that a realistic figure is set for your first precept because setting the precept too low could create significant issues for future years. It is important that you and your principal authority carefully consider what your needs will be in your first year and then in subsequent years. You should consider what your operational costs will be, for example staffing and premises rental and liaise with your principal authority over what would be the right figure. You should also consider your statutory costs (i.e. your obligations dictated by law), such as costs around your annual audit and insurance costs.

There is a good reason to get it right first time. Should you discover that your initial precept is inadequate to cover your costs you will be required to raise the precept the following year. Should this be a significant rise this can create a great deal of negative publicity in the local area about the 'tax burden' you are placing on local people.

### SHADOW COUNCILS

Although a reorganisation order creates a new local council in the eyes of the law, it will not be formally constituted until elections are held. Depending on when your new local council is created, there may be a time gap before these elections are held and the local council is formally constituted. This could mean that enthusiasm in the local area wanes and it becomes more difficult to encourage people to stand at the first election. Therefore, it has become increasingly common for the principal authority to set up a shadow local council often made up of local district or borough councillors.

A shadow local council can be a good way to lay the foundations for your local council. It can prepare a home for the parish council, such as

an office in the village parade or the community centre. It can even raise funds and purchase assets, eventually dissolving and transferring these to the statutory parish council.

Your local authority may also decide to appoint a 'temporary parish council' in the last few months leading up to the election. The authority can choose anybody it wants to sit on this body and usually it will appoint at least one ward councillor. The main difference between this and the 'shadow' approach is that temporary parishes have all the legal powers of an elected parish council, so they can appoint a parish clerk or other staff, exercise powers and provide services.

## **ELECTIONS**

As part of the Reorganisation Order, the date for the first election to your new local council will be set. As mentioned previously, it is important that enthusiasm for the new local council is maintained, particularly in the run up to elections. Encourage people to stand, again, highlighting the difference that they can make. Template posters are available as part of this resource to help highlight upcoming elections. You should also consult the Electoral Commission website (see useful contacts) for the rules and regulations around elections and standing as a candidate.



## **MEMBERSHIP OF YOUR LOCAL COUNTY ASSOCIATION AND NALC**

You should give careful consideration to joining your local county association of local councils and NALC (one subscription covers membership to both). Membership of your local county association will more easily give you access to the network of local councils in your area.

Through membership you will have access to a number of services that will assist you in the performance of your duties and help your local council to develop:

- legal advice;
- training;
- publications, briefings and information;
- financial advice;
- technical advice;
- policy advice;
- administrative advice and materials;
- conferences and events.

More broadly, both your local county association and NALC lobby at both local and central government level on your behalf to influence matters directly related to local councils.

NALC is a democratic national representative body for local councils. Each county association of local councils appoints one representative from its member councils to sit on the National Council and a number of further committees ensure that views from across the country are voiced at a national level.

## **MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY OF LOCAL COUNCIL CLERKS**

When you have appointed a clerk to your new local council they may wish to consider membership of the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC). As the professional membership body for local council clerks SLCC has been supporting its membership since 1972 and is committed to the attainment of high professional standards in the clerks profession. A professional and capable clerk is vital to ensuring that your local council delivers the best possible services for your community. The network's continuous professional development programmes and other resources that the Society provides will help your clerk to develop the skills to push your local council forward.

## COMMUNITY LED PLANNING

Having successfully created a local council, it is important that you begin to plan for the future and identify possible areas of work that will be of benefit to the community.

A great way of doing this is to engage with people in your community to find out what they think about the local area and how it could be improved. Involving members of the community in this way can be very beneficial for a newly created local council as it can:

- increase people's awareness of the council and the difference it can make locally;
- provide an opportunity for councillors to better understand and respond to local needs and aspirations;
- attract significant volunteering, help in-kind or even funding to get things done.

### COMMUNITY LED PLANNING (CLP)

One approach to involving local communities that has proven particularly popular among local councils is Community Led Planning (CLP). This is a step-by-step structured process that has already been undertaken by some 4,000 communities across England, enabling every citizen to participate in improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of their local area.



Different types of CLP have developed to suit different geographical contexts and include Parish Plans, Market Town Healthchecks and increasingly, Neighbourhood-led Plans in urban communities. Although they use slightly different methods of securing local involvement, they all adhere to a number of overarching principles.

A CLP is:

- produced by, and for, a community, often in partnership with a local council, and can take between 12 to 18 months to complete;
- is based on thorough research undertaken by members of the community into local needs and aspirations;
- results in a shared vision for the future of the community and an action plan detailing how this can be achieved;
- is about local people contributing their own efforts to bringing about that vision and linking with organisations that can help them to do this.

Increasingly, newly created local councils are making use of Community Led Plans to kick-start their work in the community. The case study presented below shows how West Auckland Parish Council undertook a plan to get to know their community and prioritise future projects, which could benefit everyone in the area.

## West Auckland Parish Plan DURHAM

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**Population: 2,629**

**Precept: £22,000**

After West Auckland Parish Council was created in 2003, its councillors were keen to make sure that they adequately represented the varied needs and interests of people living and working in their village.

Having heard about neighbouring parishes that had successfully undertaken their own parish plans, they got in touch with Durham Rural Community Council who were able to meet with them to explain the process of producing a plan, the funding available and methods that they could use to engage with the rest of their community. Cllr Martin Roberts was quick to see the potential of the Parish Plan: "I thought it would give us some legitimacy... We wanted to say we were listening to everyone."

Following a decision by the council to proceed with the plan in 2004, an event was held to launch the process and attract community interest. Soon a core group of volunteers had been recruited, responsible for overseeing and coordinating its progress. To understand the views and expectations of everyone in the community, the council developed a questionnaire that was hand delivered to over 1250 households. The results of this questionnaire were then discussed at public meetings and eventually published as an action plan in 2006. This detailed a number of practical activities that could be undertaken to improve the wellbeing of the community under the headings of:

- employment and local economy;
- transport and highways;
- crime and security;
- environment;
- education;
- leisure and recreation;
- community.

At the time of writing this resource, many of the actions identified in West Auckland's Parish Plan had already been implemented. For example, a

new war memorial garden had been designed and built with help from an organisation called Groundwork, while evidence of local residents' views had been used by the local authority to inform proposals to build a by-pass in the area. Moreover, West Auckland Council believes that the process of producing a Parish Plan allowed them to be more proactive in serving the local community rather than waiting for people to come to them. It also helped them to develop their relationship with the local authority and put them in a much better position to draw down external funding for future work.

## SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY LED PLANNING

Carrying out a Community Led Plan is fun and rewarding, but it can also be hard work.

To help you undertake a Community Led Plan for your area, it is highly recommended that you contact your nearest Rural Community Council; independent charities that have supported the process since it was pioneered in rural areas in the late 1970s. They employ dedicated community development workers who can help:

- provide you with a copy of the Community Led Planning Toolkit;
- explain the steps your community needs to take to produce a high-quality plan;
- point you in the direction of funding;
- advise on appropriate methods for finding out the views and aspirations of your community;
- make links with local authorities and other service providers and explain how they might be able to support your plan;
- put you in touch with other communities working on similar issues/ actions.



Rural Community Councils can be found in most counties across England. To find details of your nearest one, please visit [www.communityledplanning.com](http://www.communityledplanning.com).

## THE QUALITY PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL SCHEME

After your new local council is created you will obviously want it to run as smoothly as possible. There is a lot to take in but working towards attaining Quality Parish and Town Council status can be a good way to instil good working practices. The Scheme covers a number of tests that highlight good practice and minimum standards and can be used as a good way of developing the role of the council in the local community.

The Quality Scheme is open to all local councils in England, irrespective of size. It enable local councils to work more closely with others in the delivery of local services and to better represent their local communities.

The Quality Parish and Town Council Scheme was launched in 2003 following the Government's Rural White Paper, 2000. The aim of the scheme is to provide benchmark minimum standards for local councils.

The scheme is supported by six National Stakeholders:

- the Commission for Rural Communities;
- the Department for Communities and Local Government;
- the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;
- the Local Government Association;
- the National Association of Local Councils;
- the Society of Local Council Clerks.

Submission portfolios are peer-assessed in the local area by accreditation panels made up of panel members with a great deal of experience of local government at all levels.

To achieve Quality Status, local councils must demonstrate they have reached the standard required by passing several of the following tests.

- Electoral Mandate;
- Qualifications of the clerk;
- Council meetings;
- Communication and Community Engagement;
- Annual Report;
- Accounts;
- Code of Conduct;

- Promoting local democracy and citizenship;
- Terms and conditions;
- Training.

### **SO WHO BENEFITS?**

Most importantly, the local community, through:

- more responsive services – the Quality council will be capable of solving local problems without recourse to the principal authority;
- real contact and discussions with its Quality council;
- a local access point providing information on services;
- a council that is more accountable, visible, representative and provides community leadership;

### **THE LOCAL COUNCIL ITSELF:**

- greater credibility in the eyes of the local community, voluntary and private sectors, and principal local authorities;
- greater civic pride;
- more representative of the local community;
- better ability to articulate the needs and wishes of the local community;
- more will be achieved by working in partnership with other organisations;
- ability to demonstrate that it is effectively and properly managed, which will instil greater confidence in the community;
- can deliver more local services – if the council wishes to;
- greater involvement by the voluntary and community sector and by principal local authorities (e.g. developing community led plans, market town health checks etc.);
- a better-informed community;
- a well-trained clerk, through the Certificate in Local Council Administration.

### **THE LOCAL PRINCIPAL AUTHORITY:**

- reassurance that the Quality council has been independently assessed and is therefore capable of working together with the principal authority to deliver services on their behalf or in partnership;
- reliable evidence of the competence of the Quality council, through the four-year re-assessment process;
- proof that the Quality council is willing and able to be fully involved

in local issues (this will be particularly valuable when implementing new initiatives);

- stronger partnership working, with the town or parish council bringing its local perspective and experience to the table. Quality councils should be more innovative and pro-active, and will want to share their ideas and experiences;
- increased confidence that the Quality council is representative, competent, well managed, and thus capable of taking on and sustaining an enhanced role.

More details about the scheme and a copy of the guidance can be found at [http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Toolkits/Quality\\_Status.aspx](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/Toolkits/Quality_Status.aspx).

## TRAINING

Increasingly, training is being seen as vital to the development of the local council tier of local government not only for clerks but also, for councillors (members). It is important that a local council recognises the value of well-trained clerks and councillors.

The National Training Strategy for Parish and Town Councils was first conceived in a rural white paper in 2000. Its purpose is to offer training to councils in order for them to make the most of their role and carry out their duties more easily. The strategy has now been in place for several years, which has led to significant advancement for local councils nationally.

The body responsible for training in your area is a county training partnership (CTP). A CTP consists of a number of key organisations including your local county association of local councils, the local Society for Local Council Clerks branch, and potentially representatives from the rural community council (RCC), relevant principal authorities, educational bodies and private trainers engaged in the area.

In most cases, the lead body of the partnership is the county association of local councils, although in some cases this is the rural community council. Some partnerships have joined together to form regional training partnerships (RTPs). The partnership will arrange training events and courses for clerks, councillors and other officers. Contact with the training partnership lead officer is encouraged in order to discuss your training needs and find out what support and resources you might be able to access.

There is a variety of training available to both clerks and councillors across the country. This includes topics as diverse as chairmanship, freedom of information, accounts and audit and new councillor training, to name just a few. This is just illustrative of the kinds of training sessions that take place but there are a variety of sessions available on a number of topics. A significant amount of people from within the local council tier have also completed certificates, diplomas and degrees in Local Policy with the University of Gloucestershire. This degree course has now become a Degree in Community Engagement and Governance with a top-up to honours. It provides a higher education qualification for clerks and other officers, which can be studied by councillors too.

## **CILCA (CERTIFICATE IN LOCAL COUNCIL ADMINISTRATION)**

This is the accredited certificate for the local council tier, designed to test basic levels of competence for the role of local council clerk. The syllabus has been designed to cover all aspects of the clerk's role and candidates are required to compile a portfolio of evidence to show they fully understand their job. The certificate for clerks is a vital criterion for a council gaining Quality Parish Status.

A qualified clerk is a vital cog in ensuring that a local council is driven forward. As an employer, the local council should appreciate the value in funding training for staff to ensure that they gain the right skills and operate effectively. We would recommend that all councils have a training budget for clerks and councillors.

The benefits of a trained clerk are: being up to date and confident when it comes to advising the council, this will help it realise its potential. Training for clerks is a sound investment: it can help a council to save money by minimising auditing costs, avoiding mistakes and keeping up to date, and can help a council to find new sources of funding. Being trained will also help a clerk further their career, adding to their skills base and possibly even allowing them to take on clerking for more than one local council.

## **CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)**

Launched in 2007, the National Training Strategy CPD scheme offers anyone the opportunity to assess their skills prior to setting an annual development plan based around their needs. They then record a range of learning activities to meet the needs initially identified. CPD points are self-awarded following completion of activities and/or attendance at training events.

The CPD scheme is the vehicle by which members of the Institute of Local Council Management can progress through the ranks of membership, which are: Student followed by Associate, Member, Principal and Fellow.

A copy of the CPD booklet including the skills audit, development plan and record can be downloaded from both the NALC and SLCC websites.

## THE POWER OF WELL-BEING

The power of well-being is the informal name given to the power enabling a local authority to do anything which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area. The power was given to English principal authorities in 2000 and extended to local councils in 2009 (with eligibility criteria that local councils must meet).

There are certain legal safeguards in place around the way in which a local council can spend its money. Local councils have to ensure they have the powers to spend funds for the activities they undertake. However, there is a mechanism for local councils to spend money on more general projects that benefit the community. Councils have this flexibility under Section 137 of the 1972 Local Government Act. Even Section 137 spending has certain constraints, for example, expenditure is limited each year and the funds cannot be spent on an individual. Basically, it allows councils to spend money for which it has no specific power, but with limitations.

The power of well-being provides local councils with a greater flexibility in how they spend funds. It is a power of first resort and removes the need to trawl through existing legislation to check whether the local council has the power to exercise a function. Importantly, the power is very broad, a council can spend money, without being limited, on:

- any person present in the area including those who live, work or visit in the area. For example, tourism activities:
- an individual person's activity (provided that it promotes the areas well being). For example, sporting/academic excellence. A local council could support a local person training towards the London Olympics.
- any person or any area outside the parish if the council thinks it will promote its own areas wellbeing. For example, partnership working between local councils in the same area. Two or more councils may share the same issue such as road safety. A stretch of road may pass through two or more local council areas and road safety may be an issue along a certain stretch that affects all of the local councils. The power would more simply allow a local council to work with its neighbours to devise a solution.

However, local councils do not have access to the power as a right. They

have to meet certain criteria in order to be eligible to use it. The criteria ensure that a local council is well managed. An increasing number of local councils have now met the criteria and are being freed up to spend their funds more flexibly. Guidance on the power and the criteria can be found at the website of the Department for Communities and Local Government at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/1149100>.

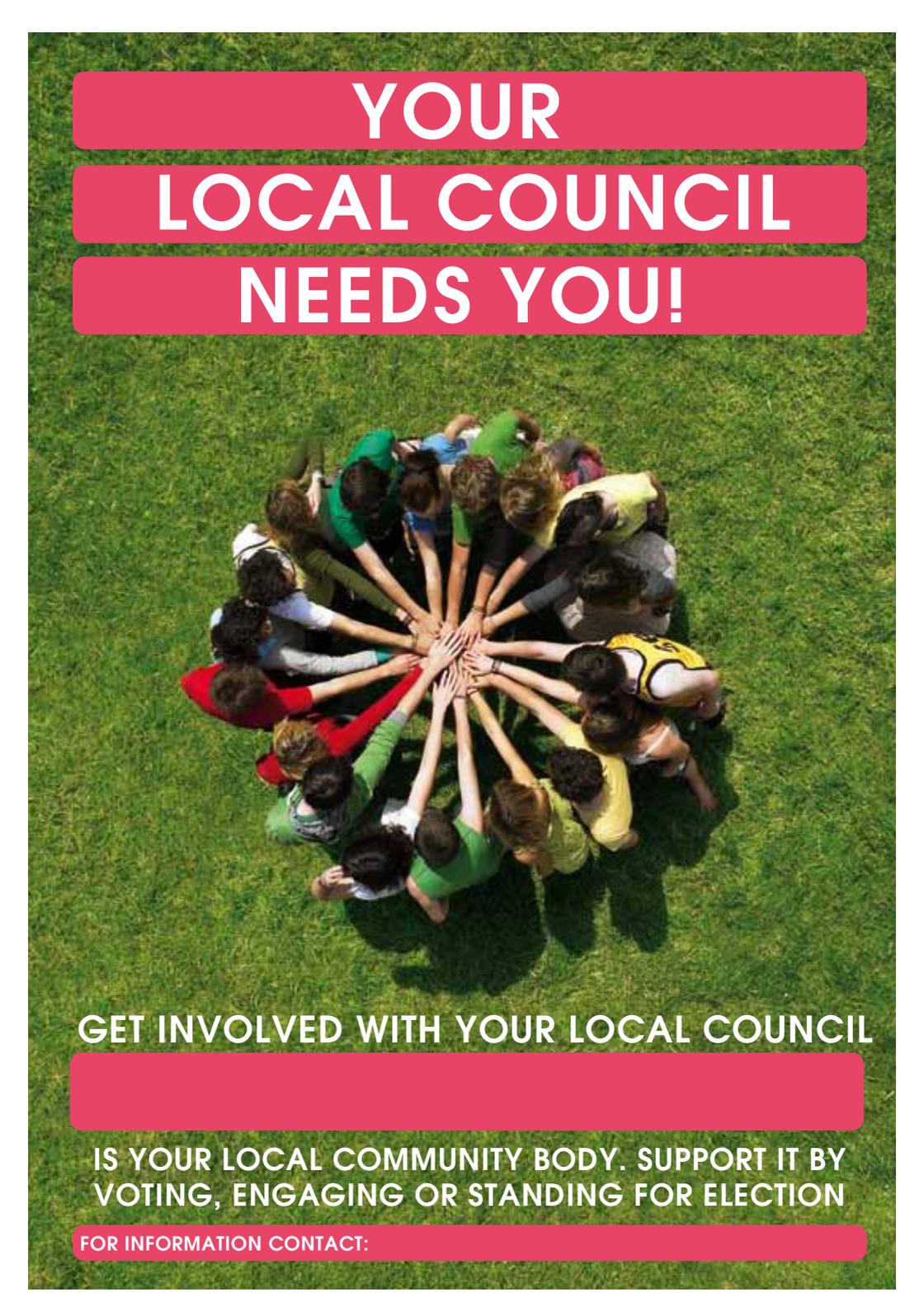
## **APPENDIX – POSTER AND LEAFLET**

On the following pages you will find both a poster and a leaflet sample that you can use in your bid to establish your new local council.

The poster, on which you can write the name of your proposed council, can be used to publicise your aims of setting up a new local council.

The leaflet again allows you to enter the proposed name of your council and contains important information about local councils that your community may want to know about,

Both the poster (in A3 size) and the leaflet (A4 size) can be downloaded from the new local councils' website at [www.createacouncil.org.uk](http://www.createacouncil.org.uk).



# YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL NEEDS YOU!

GET INVOLVED WITH YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL

IS YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY BODY. SUPPORT IT BY  
VOTING, ENGAGING OR STANDING FOR ELECTION

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:

## SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN FOR



## WE ARE SEEKING SUPPORT FOR A NEW LOCAL COUNCIL FOR OUR AREA

### HOW CAN WE GET A LOCAL COUNCIL?

The principal authority council will need to undertake a Community Governance Review. They can opt to undertake a review or the local community can petition them to undertake one. Over the next few months we will be collecting signatures for a petition proposing a new local council for our area.

### Do you want to find out more?

Visit the website of the National Association of Local Councils to find out more about the work of local councils and the benefits they could bring to our community, [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk)

### Get Involved

The Campaign Group welcomes your views and invites you to get involved.

For further details about the campaign please contact:



### HOW ARE LOCAL COUNCILS FUNDED?

The local council decides what it will need for the coming year and a sum of money called a precept is collected through the local council tax. This money is invested back into the local community to improve facilities and services. Many local councils also supplement the precept with grants.

### Why would a new local council be good for our area?

It would enable the community to have more control over the issues that affect us.

A local council can act as a voice for local people and provides a forum for discussion about what local needs actually are.

It will provide support for the local community. A local council can help support local groups and can seek grants and funding to top up money raised locally.

## WHAT IS A LOCAL COUNCIL?

There are around 9,000 parish, town, community, neighbourhood and village councils (local councils) across England. They represent around 16 million people and represent communities in both rural and urban areas. They have powers to raise money locally (the precept), all of which is invested back into the community.

Local councils are providing communities with a voice in their local area, delivering a variety of services and working hard to improve local quality of life.

Local councils, often in partnerships with other local bodies including the local district, borough or unitary council, might provide, maintain or contribute to any of the following services (although the list is far from exhaustive)

Allotments, Leisure facilities, Local youth projects, Community safety schemes, Parks and open spaces, Crime reduction measures, Cycle paths, Community centres, Public lavatories, Street cleaning, Street lighting, Tourism activities, Festivals and celebrations, Markets, Community transport schemes, Local environment

## WHAT DO LOCAL COUNCILS DO?

Local councils are involved in a wide variety of different activities bringing real benefits to their communities. Most importantly the activities are undertaken to target local needs.

Local councils are very active in ensuring that young people are listened to and engaged. Many local councils have set up youth councils made up of young people from the local area to help to ensure that the needs of young people are catered for. Local councils also provide or support the provision of playgrounds, youth clubs, youth cafes, skateparks, sports facilities, arts and crafts and youth outreach.

Many local councils own, manage or support community or arts centres. Community centres can form an invaluable hub for local people as a place to meet or engage in a variety of activities.

Crime is a concern for everyone but local councils can ensure safer streets through crime reduction measures. For example, funding Police Community Support Officers (PCSO), investing in street lighting or even CCTV.

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL COUNCILLORS

Local councils are made up of a number of councillors who meet regularly to make decisions on the work and direction of the council. They are local people who have stood for election to the local council.

Local councillors have three main areas of work:

**Decision-making:** through attending council meetings and committees meetings with other elected members, councillors decide which activities to support, where money should be spent and which services should be delivered.

**Monitoring:** Councillors make sure that their decisions lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how well things are working.

**Getting involved locally:** As local representatives, councillors have responsibilities towards their constituents and local organisations.

## USEFUL CONTACTS

These contacts can provide you with more information about the role of local councils and local councillors, provide examples of the work they do or give more general information about local government and local representation.

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### **The National Association of Local Councils**

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) represents the interests of local councils in England. NALC lobbies the government and provides support and advice to member councils in partnership with a network of county associations of local councils. Contact details for your local county association can be found on the NALC website.

[www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk) and [www.createacouncil.org.uk](http://www.createacouncil.org.uk)

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### **The Department for Communities and Local Government**

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) sets policy on local government. Its vision is to create great places where people want to live, work and raise a family.

[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

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### **The Society of Local Council Clerks**

The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) is the professional body for local council clerks. It helps clerks to develop and grow and to achieve recognition for their work.

[www.slcc.co.uk](http://www.slcc.co.uk)

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### **Action with Communities in Rural England**

Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) is the national umbrella body for the Rural Community Action Network (RCAN), which operates at national, regional and local level in support of rural communities across the country. Members of the Rural Community Action Network have a long history of supporting communities to find solutions to their own needs.

[www.acre.org.uk](http://www.acre.org.uk)

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## **Urban Forum**

Urban Forum is a national charity and a membership organisation that supports communities to have a greater say over decisions that affect them. They work with their members to influence government policy and by supporting them to influence decision-making locally. By gathering evidence and feedback from its members, it acts as a bridge between policy-makers and community groups operating on the ground.

[www.urbanforum.org.uk](http://www.urbanforum.org.uk)

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## **The Commission for Rural Communities**

The role of the Commission for Rural Communities (CRC) is to provide well-informed, independent advice to government and ensure that policies reflect the real needs of people living and working in rural England, with a particular focus on tackling disadvantage.

[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

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## **The Local Government Association**

The Local Government Association (LGA) is the membership body for the principal authority tier of local government, acting as their voice and advocates on its behalf. On behalf of its membership its aim is to deliver a shared vision of an independent and confident local government sector.

[www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

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## **The Improvement and Development Agency**

The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) supports improvement and development in local government, working with local authorities and its partners to develop and share good practice.

[www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)

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## **London Councils**

A think-tank and lobbying organisation that promotes the interests of London's 33 borough councils.

[www.londoncouncils.gov.uk](http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk)

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### **Local Government Information Unit**

The Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) is an independent think-tank and resource for local government.

[www.lgiu.org.uk](http://www.lgiu.org.uk)

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### **The British Youth Council**

The British Youth Council is an organisation of young people for young people. It runs training workshops, creates volunteering opportunities and builds inspiring campaigns that give everyone aged 25 and under, a chance to make a positive contribution to society, both in the UK and other countries. They also link up with networks of local youth councils across the UK to share ideas, skills and information.

[www.byc.org.uk](http://www.byc.org.uk)

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### **Directgov**

A government website that provides you with information about public services.

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This resource has been developed with the help of a number of partner organisations and individuals who have kindly given their time to provide their expertise. NALC would like to thank:

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**Dick Muskett**, formerly of the Young Foundation

**Hugh Barnard**, Limehouse Community Forum

**Sam Shippen**, Society for Local Council Clerks

**Toby Blume**, The Urban Forum

## **FEEDBACK**

We would welcome feedback from individuals and community groups who have used this resource. Please email [nalc@nalc.gov.uk](mailto:nalc@nalc.gov.uk) and let us know how your campaign is going and what you think of this resource.

For an electronic version of this resource please go to [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk)

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