



Roles, duties and responsibilities of a Town Council

The Council: The Council is a legal corporate body, entirely separate from but comprising its members. The Council has a duty to appoint a Chairman, a Clerk, a Responsible Financial Officer (often this will be the Clerk) and an Internal Auditor. It must convene an Annual Meeting of the Council in addition to at least a further three meetings each year. Further meetings must be convened if requested by the Chair, or by any two members.

The Council has a duty to consider all relevant matters brought before it in a proper manner; to make informed judgements, decisions and recommendations and, by instruction to the Clerk, to implement the same.

The Council has responsibilities towards its employees under Health and Safety legislation and may take responsibility for the provision and/or maintenance of (for example) open spaces (Open Spaces Act 1906 ss. 9 & 10), allotments (Smallholdings & Allotments Act 1908 s. 23), public clocks (Parish Councils Act 1957 s. 2), village halls (Local Government Act 1972 s. 133), footpaths (Highways Act 1980 ss. 43, 50), litter bins (Litter Act 1983 ss. 5 & 6), and may appoint school governors.

Councillors: The role of Councillors as individuals is to act impartially for the benefit of the electorate as a whole. Councillors have a duty to complete a Declaration of Acceptance of Office, register their interests, sign up to the Code of Practice and not to do anything which would bring the Council into disrepute. They have a duty to abide by the Council decisions even if they did not vote in favour of them; they have a duty to attend all meetings and send apologies (with reasons) if unable to attend.

Councillors have shared responsibility for the financial management of the Council.

Chairman: The office of Chairman is created by statute (LGA 1972, s 15). S/he is entitled to express his/her own views in meetings and also has the authority to direct the Council when necessary.

His/her duty is to conduct meetings which allow expression of all points of view, which keeps discussion relevant and to the point. Together with the Clerk s/he must ensure all actions of the Council are lawful and undertaken with the minimum of delay. S/he should ensure that interests are declared where appropriate and that there is no improper influence brought to bear on members.

His/her responsibilities are to ensure that when matters are discussed at meetings members are sufficiently well informed, that the meetings are quorate and that any possible uncertainties are clarified prior to discussion and decision taking.

The Clerk: The role of the Clerk is that of Executive Officer. It is through the Clerk and by her/his actions that the Council's decisions are implemented; s/he is responsible for all aspects of the administration, s/ he is the line manager of other staff employed by the council, s/he is responsible for guiding and offering advice to the Council and its members on procedural and legal aspects of their work and policy making.

Duties include agenda setting in consultation with the Chairman, arranging, advertising and minuting meetings and distributing those minutes as appropriate. The Clerk will deal with all communications with the Council, whether by letter, e mail or telephone, s/he will operate a PAYE system for employees, manage the Council's finances, produce reports as requested for the Council and its sub-committees, supervise contractors, liaise with other agencies as required.

The Clerk's responsibilities are to the Council as a whole, not to individual Councillors.

S/he should ensure that the Council and its members operate within the law, promote the Council within the community and ensure the Council's business is undertaken efficiently and effectively.