



CLILC • WLGA

A Guide for New Councillors in Wales

May 2017



Contact

Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the interests of local government and promotes local democracy in Wales. The Association is a membership organisation that represents all 22 local authorities in Wales, the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities are associate members.

The WLGA's primary purposes are to promote better local government, to promote its reputation and to support local authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public services and democracy.

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1. Introduction

Congratulations on your election as a councillor and welcome to your new role in local government.

Being a councillor is a unique form of public service because you can make a real difference to the quality of other people's daily lives and prospects. Local councils are responsible for a whole range of services; waste, recycling and environmental services, schools, social services, planning, housing, benefits, libraries, transport, leisure facilities and many more.

As a councillor, you will help determine the way these services are provided, funded and prioritised. You will need to balance the best interests of the residents in your community, in the wider borough or county, in your region, across Wales, your political party (if you are a member of one), and the council. You will also need to ensure that your authority is governed effectively and ethically. Clearly this is a challenging and responsible position.

Your first days in office as a new councillor can feel like the start of any new job. You may not be sure who to speak to, what the business is all about or even exactly what your role is. You know what you want to do

but how to go about it can be something of a mystery. You will also find that you have to juggle a number of roles and responsibilities and significant challenges.

To undertake the role effectively takes a significant amount of time, personal commitment, patience and resilience. This Councillors Guide can help by introducing you to local government and to your work as a councillor. It will provide you with reference information that will help you in your early days of office. It has been written by the WLGA, with input from councils, specifically for councillors elected in May 2017. If you have questions relating to the law or policy in your authority, officers locally will be able to provide you with further information.

Your First Days in Office

Your first priorities will be:

- signing your declaration of acceptance of office
- reading and signing the Code of Conduct
- declaring any interests and affiliations that you may have
- being briefed on how the constitution of the council works
- understanding the salaries, allowances and expenses procedures
- understanding and being introduced to who's who within the council
- understanding and discussing the council roles and positions you might be interested in being appointed to
- taking part in the induction programme for new members
- being provided with your ICT equipment and access to your online information
- organising your community work and your 'office' system at home
- checking out what support services such as child care are available
- being shown around by a mentor or guide

Induction

All councils arrange an induction for newly elected councillors as they do for new members of staff. Make sure you have a copy of your council's councillor induction pack and timetable of introductory events and training sessions. It is important that you attend these sessions, no one is elected for the first time with all the information and skills they need and even returning councillors will benefit from a refresher as events are moving fast in the public sector.

At these sessions, you'll learn about your role and the policy and laws that will guide you, you'll meet the officers and councillors that you'll be working with and you'll start to develop some additional skills. Some councils also arrange for you to be guided or mentored by experienced officers or councillors. If there are resources, support or information that you need, just ask.

We asked some experienced councillors for some advice for new councillors, you might find these useful.

"Being elected is a gift from the community, you won't know what's in it until you start to unwrap it!"

"Expect to be daunted and don't expect to change the world."

"Don't be afraid to make mistakes, we all do, you will learn from them."

"Find yourself a mentor, they won't tell you how to do your job but they can certainly help you find out how everything works!"

"What you give to the role is what you get out of it, don't expect to be financially rich, but rich in many other ways!"

"Co-operating with people works much better than confronting them."

"Remember that councillors from across the political divide also want to make a positive difference in their communities."

"Find out how you are to conduct yourself in a Full Council meeting, it is very formal and if you don't know what you are doing it can get pretty scary."

"Find out which officers can help with what, get a directory of responsible officers – it'll save a lot of time."

"Don't be afraid to ask officers questions – that's what they are there for."

"Turn on your answering machine at home or you'll be answering calls all day."

"My work as a councillor has provided me with real insight into the wide range of needs within the community, it's important to engage, listen and learn at all times."

"Don't say something on Twitter or Facebook as a councillor that you wouldn't be prepared to tell the world!"

"Be prepared for meetings – read your agenda and papers and know how you intend to contribute."

"Go to all the induction and training sessions, and if it doesn't make sense ask!"

"Treat the officers with respect and understand the constraints they have to work within, polite persistence really pays off and a smile and a thank you costs nothing!"

"Check council and committee agendas for issues that might affect your ward."

"Learn to listen to people in your ward, you can get a real sense of what's happening as well as what needs to be done."

"Get organised at home, or you'll soon get buried under a mountain of paper, use IT as much as possible it saves a lot of space."

2. Working with Communities



Many councillors stand for office because they want to make a difference in their local community, because they want to fix a local problem or because they want to give something back to the community that has supported them. Working with people in the community is a vital part of your role.

All councillors are advocates for their communities and are 'case workers' for their individual constituents when advice or support is requested. Although you will spend time in council meetings, much of your time will be spent within your communities, speaking and working with members of the public and community groups.

This role is developing and becoming even more important. One of the reasons for this is because the funding for the public sector is reducing and local government is having to rethink how it delivers services. Councils need to engage more with local people to design, commission and deliver services and to monitor whether they are working. They should also help local communities to support themselves. Councillors, because of their unique position within the community, can lead the engagement with and development of the communities they represent. This

aspect of your role is usually called community leadership.

Councillors as Community Leaders

For the individual councillor, being a community leader can mean many things:

- **Making sure that the views of local people are taken into account when policy and decisions are made.** This will include making sure that everyone has a say, not just those that speak loudest. You will also need to speak to the hard to reach or the disinterested.
- **Making sure that the council is aware of the needs of people in your community.** This will require you to know about the needs of everyone in your community not just those who tell you what they want.
- **Empowering your community to support itself.** This may mean organising people to act, share information or develop skills so that they become less dependent on the council.
- **Working to enable the council and local people to work together to get things done.** This is sometimes called co-production and is based upon an equal and reciprocal approach to delivering services.

- **Encouraging joint working** (typically referred to as 'collaboration') between and within communities, and across councils, 'crossing borders' if this is the best way of working.
- **Raising local concerns and working with others to tackle local issues** such as childhood obesity, teenage pregnancy, affordable housing, street scene, and crime and disorder reduction.

Getting to Know your Community

You may have lived or worked in your community or wider electoral division for many years, but the chances are you will not know all the communities that live there and all their issues and problems. The dynamics of communities change due to the movement of people in and out of the community.

A good way to familiarise yourself with your community or electoral division is to walk, cycle or drive around it, looking at roads, pavements, play areas, open spaces and other community facilities. This gives you an opportunity to note and report things like broken fences or equipment, potholes, graffiti or faulty streetlights to the appropriate council department and record action taken. This can also be a good opportunity to meet informally with your constituents. Some councillors carry out locality walks accompanied by fellow councillors and key council officers so they can make decisions on the spot. A few quick wins will make a good first impression.

A community walk could be a regular activity, accompanied on occasion by key local contacts like residents' association chairs, town or community councillors or community police. It is useful to build a shared

knowledge of problems in an area and discuss possible solutions.

Once you know your electoral division and what your constituents expect of you, you can then set some priorities and make some judgment as to how far they are compatible or conflict with the council's overall priorities for the area as a whole.

You may have already considered many of these questions during your campaign, but here are some questions to consider:

- What percentage of people in your electoral division are employed?
- Who are the main local employers in your community? Do people commute elsewhere?
- Which are the key community groups that you need to contact?
- What is the demographic make-up of your community?
- How many people speak Welsh?
- How is your council addressing issues in housing?
- Do you fully understand what the plans for the community are in this area?
- What would members of your community like to change?
- How effective does your community consider the services they receive from the council to be?
- What were the most recent educational results for the schools in your ward?

Ask officers for any ward information that they keep and look at the information published by the Local Government Data Unit: <http://www.infobasecymru.net/IAS/>

Casework

The problems and issues local people raise with councillors are often referred to as 'casework'. Casework can sometimes lead on to policy development or campaigning on an issue but initially it is about the resolution of an individual query or problem.

Your casework will come from: conversations, social media, letters, telephone calls and e-mails; surgeries, advice sessions and doorstep calls; campaigning and other political activity. When taking on a case the general steps you will need to consider are:

1. What is the problem?

Establish the facts and find out how your constituent wants you to help. Identify whether there is a long history to the problem and who has been approached in the past. Avoid promising to sort out every problem, but always offer a sympathetic ear.

2. Who do I need to speak to?

The issue may be about a council service or about another service provided by a partner or a concern about a wider local matter. If it's a council matter, you may want to put your concern in writing to a council officer, although most members find that a quick face to face discussion, telephone call or e-mail is quicker and easier in sorting out casework problems. Get into the habit of

taking copies of all correspondence. Find out if your council provides members with a package or app which will enable you to track the progress of your casework. Some political parties provide these too.

If it's an issue relating to another service provider, you might wish to contact the organisation directly, or seek advice from a more experienced councillor or officer who may be able to signpost you to a source of help.

3. Provide feedback

After you have made initial enquiries, let the constituent know what you are doing and keep them up to date with progress and eventual outcomes. They may not know what is going on unless you tell them.

4. Consider the wider issues

Reflect on the issues raised by the casework and let other councillors know. Several similar concerns raised with councillors may suggest a broader service-wide problem, or that an issue needs to be dealt with by a new or revised policy or a scrutiny review. Where you have had a success, it is worth letting your colleague ward members know in case they face a similar situation.

5. Celebrate your success

Try to publicise your success to residents through Blogs, leaflets and newsletters – but if you are giving details of the case, make sure you ask permission from the individual concerned first.

Councillor Surgeries

Case work will often result from direct meetings with people in the community so it is important that people can speak to their local councillor. Councillors are generally easily contactable and often very visible in their communities and people will often stop to talk to you in the street. Some councillors are active on social media. Another way of being accessible and contactable is through surgeries. Typically, this will involve you advertising a place and time when you will be available to meet people to talk about their concerns and what the council is doing. You could share your surgery with other councillors or local agencies or set up your meetings in community venues which are already regularly used to attract more people. Sometimes if you have a large electoral division, it can be useful to vary your location to make it easier for people to get to you. Accessibility of the venue is an important consideration and community centres or libraries are accessible, and have adequate facilities such as refreshments, toilets and waiting areas.

You need to make sure that wherever you choose is safe for you. Make sure that there is someone else in the building with you and, although violent behaviour is rare, you might want to consider leaving yourself an exit from your meeting room.

You can also call on people in their homes. It is helpful to notify residents when you intend to be in their area and remember your personal safety, take advice from

officers before you go and take someone with you.

Social Media

Sometimes the best way of engaging with people is through social media. It can be more immediate and far reaching than traditional surgeries, meetings and visits. Asking a question on Facebook or Twitter is a fast way of gathering information and opinions. If constituents know that they can contact you via Facebook, you can reach more people than with face to face meetings.

Remember there are pitfalls associated with using social media, what you say, if you can be identified as a councillor, even when "off duty", will be open to very wide scrutiny and all the requirements of your Code of Conduct apply. Make sure that you are aware of your council's guidance and member protocols on the use of social media.

Equalities

As a councillor, you represent several different communities and individual citizens with diverse identities. You will want to treat everyone with respect, so an understanding of equalities is essential. The Code of Conduct requires you to promote equality and to treat others with respect and consideration.

Equality is about ensuring that all people are treated equally. This does not mean treating

everyone the same, but recognising the differences in their situations and experience and ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all.

For you to represent the diverse people in your electoral division, you need to know who they are. Do you know how many “communities of interest” you have? For example young people, older people, transgender people, gay men, lesbians, disabled people, people from different faith or religious organisations, Black, Asian, or people from other different minority ethnic groups, or people with different political opinions?

Information about this can normally be provided by specialist council officers, such as the council’s equality officer, however your knowledge of the locality and talking to people will help you identify your communities and their needs.

3. Some Background and Context for Your Role: Governance in Wales



An Overview

In Wales, there are five 'tiers' of representative democracy. Wales is served by 40 (currently) Members of Parliament (MPs), 4 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), 60 Members of the National Assembly for Wales (AMs), as well as 1,254 local councillors elected to the county or county borough council. In most rural areas and in some urban areas the electorate is also served by a town and community council. There are over 8,000 community and town councillors in Wales.

There are 3 national park authorities, covering the Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia; the authorities' membership includes some members appointed by the Welsh Government and councillors appointed by the local authorities who have land within the national park.

There are 3 fire and rescue authorities in Wales covering North Wales, Mid and West Wales and South Wales. Councillors are appointed to the fire and rescue authority by their constituent local authorities.

The 4 police forces in Wales, Gwent, Dyfed-

Powys, North Wales and South Wales are each governed by an elected Police and Crime Commissioner and scrutinised by a police and crime panel, which includes councillors appointed by the relevant local authorities.

There are also a range of Welsh Government Sponsored Bodies (WGSBs) in Wales, these are public bodies that play an advisory, public policy, regulatory role or are responsible for public funding or service delivery. Public appointments are made to the boards of these bodies by the Welsh Government. Examples include the Arts Council for Wales, Natural Resources Wales and Sport Wales.

Seven health boards in Wales are responsible within their geographical area for planning, funding and delivering primary health care services GPs, pharmacies, dentists and optometrists, hospital services and community services. An elected member from an authority within the local health board area sits on each of the boards.

Each of the 22 local authority areas in Wales has a public services board (PSB). The purpose of public services boards (PSBs) is to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in its area by

strengthening joint working across all public services in Wales. The statutory members of a PSB are the local authority, the local health board, the fire and rescue authority and Natural Resources Wales. The following are also invited to participate: Welsh Ministers, Chief Constables, the Police and Crime Commissioner, certain probation services and at least one body representing relevant voluntary organisations.

What do Councils Do?

Councils provide a range of services to their communities. Some are **statutory** which means that they must be provided, for example, refuse collection. Others are **regulatory** which must also be provided and include planning, including the management of development, and licensing of, for example premises or taxis. Finally, there are **discretionary** services which councils may choose to provide, such as the promotion of tourism.

Here are some examples of what your council is responsible for:

Education

Schools and school transport

Housing

Strategies, advice, provision and benefit administration

Social Services

Care and protection of children, older people and disabled people

Highways and Transport

Road maintenance, traffic management and planning, street naming

Waste Management

Refuse collection, recycling and fly tipping

Leisure & Cultural services

Libraries, museums, leisure centres and the arts

Consumer protection

Trading Standards

Environmental services

Food safety, pollution control

Planning

Development planning and development management

Economic Development

Attracting new businesses, promoting leisure and tourism

Emergency Planning

In case of emergencies such as floods, diseases, or terrorist attacks

Working with the Welsh Government

The terms “Welsh Government” and “National Assembly for Wales” mean different things, but are often confused and used alternately. The Welsh Government is the executive, and consists of Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers supported by civil servants; the National Assembly for Wales is the legislative, consists of Assembly Members (AMs) and develops and scrutinises Welsh Government policy and performance and passes Welsh law. The Senedd in Cardiff Bay is the home of the debating chamber for the National Assembly for Wales. The Civil Service supports the work of the Welsh Government and the Assembly Commission supports the work of the National Assembly for Wales. AMs will be deciding on a new name for the National Assembly for Wales in 2018.

The Welsh Government has a wide range of powers which impact on local government and the services it delivers. It is responsible for a range of local government policy areas, such as social services, education, the environment, planning, transport and economic development. Critically, it is responsible for distributing Wales’ £15 billion budget, of which £8.6 billion (2016/17) is spent on local government services.

The Welsh Government sets the national agenda for Wales, and whilst setting strategies and key targets, it gives

significant flexibility to local government to work within these national parameters. Most of the funding passed from the Welsh Government to local councils is not ‘ring fenced’, that means councils have maximum flexibility to spend the money on local needs and priorities.

Councils have direct links with the Welsh Government, via elected members and officers. Much of the national representation and negotiation over policy development and funding is undertaken through the Welsh Local Government Association (the WLGA). This is a cross-party organisation which represents all councils and seeks to speak with one voice on behalf of local government. Leaders and senior councillors from all local authorities are appointed to the WLGA, with a number acting as local government spokespersons, meeting regularly with Cabinet Secretaries, Ministers, AMs and UK Government Ministers, to ensure local government’s concerns and views inform national decision-making. There is a statutory Partnership Council between the Welsh Government and local government which promotes joint working, co-operation and informed policy development.

The National Assembly can make laws for Wales in the following areas:

- agriculture, fisheries, forestry and rural development;
- ancient monuments and historic buildings;
- culture;
- economic development;
- education and training;

- environment;
- fire and rescue services and promotion of fire safety;
- food;
- health and health services;
- highways and transport;
- housing;
- local government;
- National Assembly for Wales;
- public administration;
- social welfare;
- sport and recreation;
- tourism;
- town and country planning;
- water and flood defence; and Welsh language.

Working with the UK Government

Although the Welsh Government and National Assembly for Wales have significant financial, legislative and policy powers over much of what Welsh local government does, it is important that councils continue to work closely with UK Government Ministers and MPs in London.

There are some key areas affecting local government that are not devolved, such as Home Office functions around policing and community safety, other UK-wide issues such as benefits and the overall system of local taxation (i.e. council tax). However, the Wales Act 2017 devolved some additional powers to the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government including powers relating to the raising of taxes. Welsh local government's links with

the UK Government are increasing given ongoing discussions about the implications of Brexit.


Councils will have direct links with the UK Parliament and Government, via local MPs and relevant Cabinet Secretaries or Ministers. Much of the national representation is conducted via the WLGA and Local Government Association.

Working with the European Union - Planning for Brexit

Local government implements most of the legislation currently operating under European Union (EU) law, operates within EU wide regulatory and policy frameworks and accesses funding from many European Programmes. It therefore has a key role to play in the planning for Brexit. In particular, it will need to input into the development of new UK and Wales legislative, policy and funding frameworks that will need to replace current EU arrangements in the following key areas:

- competition policy and state aid;
- employment and workforce issues;
- regulatory services;
- procurement;
- environment, planning and waste;
- agriculture and rural development; and
- regional economic development.

As local government will continue to participate in some EU funding



programmes, initiatives and networks post Brexit, it will be important to continue our involvement and participation in key European networks to enable partnership working with other nations and regions and joint bids for funding.

Working with Community and Town Councils

There are 735 community and town councils in Wales with around 8,000 councillors. Some are elected but most are co-opted. Many county councillors are 'dual hatted' and have also been elected to serve on their local community and town council.

Community and town councils are not present in every part of Wales as there is a procedure for forming new councils; they can be established or disbanded at the wishes of the community. They can set a 'precept' or 'rate' which is collected by the council along with the Council Tax.

The level of services provided by community and town councils varies across Wales but can include:

- provision and maintenance of community transport schemes;
- traffic calming measures;
- local youth projects;
- tourism activities;
- leisure facilities;
- car parks;
- village greens;
- public lavatories;

- litter bins;
- bio-diversity schemes;
- street lighting and cleaning;
- burial grounds;
- allotments;
- bus shelters;
- commons and open spaces;
- footpaths and bridleways;
- crime reduction measures; and
- provision of village hall or contributing to another body that provides a facility.

In addition, many councils use the Section 137 discretionary power that enables them to provide other services, such as public telephones; village surgeries; preservation or restoration of old objects or buildings; best kept village competition; tidying land of unknown ownership; Christmas trees; flower shows, festivals and fairs; contributions to play groups and youth clubs; meals on wheels; and assistance for the disabled.

Almost all councils employ a Clerk who is responsible for the efficient administration of the council which includes servicing of meetings; ensuring the council meets its legal obligations and handling its financial processes. The medium to large councils (some with budgets over £1 million) employ a range of other staff including administrators, cleaners, maintenance staff etc. All councils are required to have standing orders and financial regulations to regulate their operations.

If your community is covered by a community and town council, you will normally work closely with the councillors and council on areas of mutual interest or common concern.

Most local authorities have agreed charters with their community and town councils which outline shared values, approaches to engagement and joint work and many meet regularly through liaison forums or meetings.

One Voice Wales is the organisation which represents and provides support services to community and town councils across Wales.

For further information, visit www.onevoicewales.org.uk



4. Your Roles in the Council

Councillors' formal roles within the council vary. All councillors are members of the full council which sets the overall policies and budget. A small number of councillors will form the cabinet or executive board with all other members being active in the overview and scrutiny of the performance of the council, other organisations and external bodies.

There are regulatory committees which deal with the planning and licensing functions. Councillors are also appointed to external local bodies such as school governing bodies and local partnerships, either as representatives of the council, or as trustees or directors in their own right. Some councillors also sit on:

- Fire and rescue authorities;
- police and crime panels; and
- national park authorities (where relevant).

Many council and committee meetings are now webcast. This means that they can be viewed by the public as they are happening or for a period of time afterwards. You will need to remember that what you say and do in a meeting could be watched from anywhere in the world.

Some tips for participating in a meeting which is being broadcast.

- Be natural and be yourself!
- When you are speaking, be direct, to the point and as brief as possible.
- Be aware of the range of the camera view as talking with colleagues, eating, adjusting clothing can be distracting if it is behind the member who is speaking.
- Prepare your contributions in advance (bullet points which enable you to speak naturally rather than a prepared speech which looks and sounds unnatural).
- Be aware of how your messages could be interpreted by the public, both what you say and how you say it.
- You may have to be more clear about some of the information that you give so that it is clear to a lay person what you are doing and why you are doing it. A good example of this is declaring interests. It will be helpful to say not only that you have an interest but what the interest is whether it is personal or prejudicial and also how you intend to act as a result.
- Avoid jargon and "council speak" – this applies to officers too!

- Heckling doesn't work well on a webcast as usually it is only the chair and the member who has the floor who can be seen and heard. Other comments are often unintelligible as they are off microphone.
- Make sure that you are in range of the microphone and keep your head turned towards it. Don't speak until your light comes on, or the first part of your contribution will be lost! Make sure that you turn your microphone off when you have finished speaking.
- Be aware of how what you say could be used by the media.
- Bear in mind that you are subject to the law of Defamation.

Your formal roles within the council will vary, these are some that you may be involved in but you will not be expected to undertake them all.

Full Council

Legally councils are corporate bodies and ultimately the full council (that is the whole membership in a formal meeting) is responsible for everything the council does. Certain decisions must be made by the full council. These are major policies, the approval of some statutory plans, the setting of the annual budget and the council tax, and certain appointments and dismissals. Under the leader and cabinet model everything else is delegated to the cabinet/executive and to officers, other than the statutory committee functions (planning and licensing). Your

council's constitution will have more details about how the formal full council operates.

Overview and Scrutiny

All councils are required to have a least one overview and scrutiny committee, although most have more than one (they are sometimes called panels, forums or boards rather than committees). As only a small proportion of councillors will become part of the cabinet or executive board, the majority will be required to play a significant role in overview and scrutiny.

Scrutiny is a key vehicle for councillors and communities to put forward their views and shape council policies. It gives councillors an opportunity to oversee council performance and provide challenge to the cabinet or executive where necessary. Although scrutiny's focus is on the council itself, through scrutiny, councillors can consider wider issues affecting their area, including the role played by other public service partners.

Overview and scrutiny committees do not make decisions on behalf of the council but their work is vital as they can help the council to formulate policy before a cabinet makes a decision on it, they can investigate an issue of concern and make recommendations to cabinet, they can monitor the performance of the council and flag up any problems before they become major issues, in fact, scrutiny has often been described as an early warning system or a means of identifying unforeseen consequences. Scrutiny committees can also

scrutinise decisions that have been made before they take effect, by “calling-in” the decision and recommending that it is re-considered by the cabinet or by the council. Overview and scrutiny has a specific duty to scrutinise the joint work of the public services board and to scrutinise crime and disorder matters.

As a scrutiny member, you will be expected to research and review information, listen to evidence and information provided by people invited to the committee, either officers, the community or professionals with expertise in the matter under review and help to formulate findings/recommendations. It is important that you have good listening and questioning skills to make sure that you gather all the information you need.

Tips for scrutiny members from existing councillors

“Attend every meeting and be prepared to undertake research between meetings”

“Prepare for the meeting by reading all the information”

“Work with the chair and other members of the committee to develop a questioning strategy”

“Ask focussed questions, don’t make speeches or go on about what’s happening in your ward.”

“when scrutinising I usually start by putting myself in the shoes of a resident, what questions would they ask? Would they want to challenge the response?”

Planning

Planning in local authorities is concerned with managing local resources effectively, making sure that development is sustainable and appropriate, and preventing inappropriate development. All councillors will be involved in some way in the planning process. You will contribute, for example, in steering the development of the Local Development Plan (LDP) which sets the framework for local decision making on land use and its review and monitoring. The adopted Development Plan is the basis upon which planning applications should be decided as it states what the council’s plans are for the area and it will have been subject to significant community involvement and public scrutiny.

The principles behind LDPs:

1. Sustainable development is promoted. This means that any development meets present needs but also makes sure that future generations can also achieve their needs and aspirations.
2. The LDP encourages public involvement in plan making. Authorities should try to engage their communities throughout, to reduce disagreements about later stages of the plan and to reassure people of

where development is likely to occur in their area.

3. The plan needs to be integrated with other relevant plans and strategies at local regional and national level.
4. Regular monitoring of plans takes place to take account of changing circumstances.

Councillors are closely involved throughout the whole process. Once the plan has been adopted it is monitored every year through an Annual Monitoring Report. There will also be a major review of the LDP every four years. The LDP must be their first reference point when seeking to assess the appropriateness of any development proposal.

Even if you are not a member of a planning committee you are very likely to have enquiries from the public about planning issues so it is important that you know what they do and how they do it.

Planning committees are involved in determining whether planning permission should be granted, taking into account the law on development and the requirements of the Local Development Plan. Being on a planning committee can be challenging when it comes to adhering to the Code of Conduct. There are laws that must be followed when making planning decisions. Failure to do so can lead to challenge through the courts, and formal complaints to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales as well as causing damage to the reputation of the local authority. Planning

committee members must make sure that decisions are soundly based having regard to the relevant legal and policy background.

Planning Applications

Planning applications go through the following stages:

- **Pre-application advice** (optional for applicants but encouraged).
- **Validation**, where applications are checked and validated.
- **Consultation, Publicity and Notification.**
All applications are required to be advertised by a site notice or by serving notice on adjoining owners or occupiers. Others, such as community and town councils should also be consulted. There are fixed timescales for this. Local members should be aware of applications in their areas and should contact officers if they need clarification or further information. There is a list of statutory consultees such as Natural Resources Wales and the Highway Authority that are consulted on relevant applications.
- **Consideration and Assessment**
Determination of the proposal against the adopted plan will be required unless there are material considerations which indicate otherwise. The Government sets a target for making decisions of 8 weeks or 13 weeks for major applications. Many decisions are made under the

authority's delegated powers to officers. Those decisions which are to be made by members will be reported by officers who make a recommendation.

- **Recommendation**
Officers make a clear written recommendation with a report providing all relevant information to enable members to make an informed decision.
- **Decision**
- **Permission granted, granted with conditions or legal agreement or refused.**

What happens when permission is refused?

Firstly, there must be reasons for refusal which are clearly stated and based on sound planning principles. There can be one or multiple reasons for refusal.

An applicant (not a third party) is entitled to appeal the refusal and this must be made within 6 months of the decision date. The appeal is dealt with by the Planning Inspectorate for Wales and costs will be incurred by the local planning authority in defending its decision.

If significant proposals raise issues of more than local importance, the Minister has the authority to "call in" the application for determination by Welsh Government. The decision is taken out of the hands of the local authority and usually results in a public inquiry.

Planning law, policies and procedures are challenging and complex. Attending your council induction session will be essential.

Licensing


Through their licensing functions, local authorities seek the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, the prevention of public nuisance and the protection of children from harm. As a member of a licensing committee you could be involved in decisions about licensed premises such as pubs and premises preparing food, tattoo parlours, and casinos; the licensing of taxis, the organisation of events or licensing of street traders.

The Standards Committee

Every council must have a standards committee. The committee includes some councillors and some independent lay members appointed by the council. The committee is responsible for promoting high standards of conduct by councillors, and for adjudicating on alleged cases of misconduct or alleged breaches of the councillor code of conduct. The committee can issue a range of censures, including the suspension of a councillor for six months. All councillors are required to sign the Code of Conduct to ensure they uphold the highest standards (see chapter 5).

The Audit Committee

Every council must also have an audit committee, this committee exists to monitor the authority's financial affairs and has its



membership prescribed by the Welsh Government as at least two thirds being members of the authority, one member a lay member and no more than one executive member. The audit committee will oversee the arrangements for internal and external audit, report on the adequacy of the authority's risk management and internal control arrangements, have an input to the planning of the audit priorities and approve the annual audit programme. They will also consider the authority's audit statements.

The Democratic Services Committee

The democratic services committee supports and oversees the work of the Head of Democratic Services in ensuring that councillors and committees and, in particular, the scrutiny function, is provided with appropriate resources and support. The committee makes regular reports to the full council on councillor related matters such as training and development, the support provided to individual councillors and committees and councillor resources such as laptops and mobile phones.

The Cabinet or Executive

The cabinet or executive is responsible for taking most of the council's decisions within the overall policy and budget framework. Each executive member has a specific portfolio area such as social services, the environment and housing or human resources. Their role is to drive forward their part of the Executive Work Programme. It is unusual for newly elected members to have

an executive role, however, it is important to be aware of the executive work programme and make the necessary links with portfolio holders about issues affecting their portfolio in your locality.

Outside Bodies

As a councillor, you may be nominated by your council to sit on various types of outside bodies such as community organisations, housing associations and local companies. Being a council representative on an outside body does not necessarily mean that you will be representing the council's interests on the organisation. You will be expected to act in the interests of the outside body and exercise independent judgement in making decisions, in accordance with your duty of care to the body. You may have regard to the interests of the council, but this should not be the overriding consideration. In some cases, (e.g. if you are the director of a company or a trustee of a charity – see below) voting in the council's interests could be a breach of your duty to the body.

Your council may have adopted a policy on how and when reports are to be presented on what the organisation is doing. You should ensure that you know what is expected of you in terms of reporting back.

However, you should also ensure that any reports that you present to the council do

not breach any duty of confidentiality you may have to the outside body.

You should ensure that details of your appointment onto the outside body are included on the register of interests kept by the Monitoring Officer. The outside body may also have its own register of interest, which you should complete.

When the outside body considers issues related to your council you should declare a personal interest. The specific rules adopted by each body will vary and you should ask for advice and guidance from the secretary of the organisation and/or the Monitoring Officer, as appropriate. If the outside body has a Code of Conduct you should observe it – if it does not, you should follow the Members' Code of Conduct.

When the council considers issues relating to or affecting the outside body you must declare a personal interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct. If this is your only interest, it will not be considered a prejudicial interest unless the matter relates to an approval, consent, licence, permission or registration and therefore you will be allowed to take part in the debate and vote. Confidential information must be treated with care and if you have any doubt over the status of any information then you should keep it confidential and check with the relevant officer. You must always observe duties of

confidentiality – both to the council and the outside body. Deliberate leaking or disclosing of confidential information will be a breach of the Code of Conduct. If you are hoping to be appointed to an outside body it is important that you have the time and skills necessary to take on the responsibility.

Serving on a Fire and Rescue Authority

There are 3 fire and rescue authorities in Wales, North Wales, Mid and West Wales and South Wales. Members are appointed to a fire and rescue authority by their constituent authorities according to political balance.

As a member of a fire and rescue authority you will be expected to:

- represent the fire and rescue authority in the community;
- represent and promote the interests of the community;
- act as the prime link between the fire and rescue authority and both the county/county borough councils and the local community;
- participate in fire and rescue authority meetings; and support the fire and rescue authority's key role of delivering services to the community; and providing strong local governance.

Serving on a National Park Authority

There are 3 national park authorities in Wales, Brecon Beacons, Pembrokeshire Coast and Snowdonia. National park authorities are composed of members from local authorities who have land within the park. Councillors are appointed according to political balance, although consideration is also given to having wards within the park and commitment to park purposes. These local authorities receive funding from the Welsh Government to make a financial contribution to the running of the park. In addition to local elected members, the Welsh Government appoints several members who may have experience or specialist knowledge of a subject such as, the environment, tourism, farming or community work. They are appointed through a recruitment process, and all vacancies are advertised publicly. Terms of office for local authority members and Welsh Government appointees are for 4 years, with a maximum of 10 years' total service for appointees.

Members of the national park authority act as advocates of the national park authority and its purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area, promoting opportunities for public enjoyment and understanding of the special qualities of the national park. They have a duty to foster the economic and social well-being of communities living in the national park. As a national park member, you would be expected to:


- make decisions and oversee performance through participation in authority meetings;
- represent the interests of all residents of the national park;
- represent the national park authority on outside bodies;
- promote and support good governance of the national park authority; and promote and support its services.

While serving on a national park authority, members are expected to represent the interests of the park rather than their principal authority. As a national park authority member, you will be expected to participate fully in the park's induction and continuing development programmes to help you make an effective contribution.

Serving on a Police and Crime Panel

Police and Crime Commissioners have been elected in the 4 Police force areas in Wales; Dyfed Powys, Gwent, South Wales and North Wales. The commissioners set policing priorities, decide on the precept (the money which comes to policing from the Council Tax) and appoint and hold to account the Chief Constable.

The activities of the Commissioner are scrutinised by a police and crime panel that will act as a critical friend, offering challenge and support. They will review the Police and Crime Plan, Annual Report and can veto the proposed precept. The panel also hold confirmation hearings for senior appointments



such as the Chief Constable and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner.

A police and crime panel is a free-standing body, formed and maintained by the Secretary of State. It is made up of at least 10 councillors from the local authorities within the police force area and two independent members. Panels are not committees or joint committees of local authorities so councillors who sit on a panel, will do so as an individual rather than in their capacity as local authority representatives.

Your Responsibilities as a Corporate Parent

As a councillor, you personally carry responsibility for the care, education, and future life chances of every child that is looked after by your local authority. This is because once a court has made the decision to grant a care order, the council as a whole becomes the responsible corporate parent.

Your local authority will have a lead member with delegated powers and statutory responsibilities under the Children Act 2004. This member will be responsible for making sure that the council is delivering its aims for local children and young people, planning improved safeguards and better outcomes and working with statutory and voluntary partners, to ensure sufficient funding, priority setting, and commissioning of services.


Overview and scrutiny committees will monitor and question the services provided

to looked after children, making sure that there is a clear link between the priorities as set out in the various statutory plans, and the council's budget. It can monitor performance and the impact of services on the lives of children who leave care. It may help develop policy for the executive to consider. It can involve relevant parties (children and young people, carers, parents, partnership organisations, and front-line staff) in gathering evidence.

As a local councillor, you have a duty to make sure that the children and young people in your locality are sufficiently supported. Although the council will be unable to disclose information about individuals, you can check about the availability of services generally. If you are a school governor you can ask questions about the support that is available from the school for looked after children who are pupils there. It is important to remember that councillors should not get involved with the lives of individual children, or in directing officers in the care of children.

Taking Decisions for Future Generations

Every public body in Wales has an individual and a collective duty to tackle the challenges that face Wales now and in the future, such as climate change, poverty, health inequalities and jobs and growth. To address these challenges, we need to work collaboratively to take decisions for the benefit of people now and in the future. The



duties of local authorities in this area, are set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The Act defines **seven well-being goals** which show the kind of Wales public bodies collectively want to see. Public bodies in Wales must work towards these goals. The Act also puts in place a **sustainable development principle** which tells organisations how to go about meeting their duties under the act. There are **five ways of working** which public bodies need to think about to show that they have applied this sustainable development principle. The five ways of working are a common-sense approach to effective decision making and good governance. The goals and five ways of working are set out below.



It is important that councillors consider these requirements when they take decisions. Scrutiny members have an important role in making sure that decisions have been made according to the sustainable development principle.

Taking decisions based on the principles of equality

The councillors' Code of Conduct outlines expectations around councillors' behaviour and commitment to equalities and respect. Local authorities, as public service providers and as major employers, have a range of statutory duties and responsibilities around equalities. The Equality Act 2010 outlines a series of 'protected characteristics' and places duties on public bodies that can be summarised as follows:

- **Remove or minimise** disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics;
- **take steps** to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people; and
- **encourage people** with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership

- pregnancy and maternity (which includes breastfeeding)
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.

Welsh Language and Councils

The Welsh language has official legal status in Wales which means that Welsh should be treated no less favourably than the English language in Wales and that people in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of the Welsh language if they choose to do so.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 sets out a range of Standards that apply to public bodies, including councils, and established the role of the Welsh Language Commissioner.

The Commissioner publishes a Compliance Notice for each public body, which says how that public body should apply the Standards; each Compliance Notice is unique to the organisation, so councils may be required to attain different levels of compliance within the standards. You should therefore ask council officers for guidance around how the standards apply to you in your role as a councillor and how they apply to the council as a service provider and as an employer. The Welsh Language Commissioner's role is to promote the Welsh language and improve the opportunities people have to use it. The Commissioner also seeks to ensure that

public bodies follow their Compliance Notices and investigates any complaints that an organisation has not met the Standards or its Compliance Notice. The Commissioner has enforcement powers and can impose fines on public bodies for non-compliance.

The standards cover these 6 areas of work in a local authority.

1. **Service Delivery Standards**– focuses upon the provision of services, procurement, corporate identity and communication;
2. **Policy Making Standards**– focuses upon assessing impact on the Welsh language in all policy decisions and taking positive steps to promote Language use;
3. **Operational Standards**– focuses upon the promotion and facilitation of Welsh in relation to an organisation's internal activities;
4. **Promotion Standards** – focuses upon promoting the Welsh language in all aspects of business including external / partnership work; and looks specifically at education and skills, language transmission, children and young people, the community and a supporting infrastructure for the Welsh language;
5. **Record Keeping Standards** – focuses upon maintaining records for compliance in areas such as staff skills, complaints, training and recruitment including compliance with the other

Standards; and

6. **Additional Standards** - requires the Authority to prepare an Annual Report regarding Standard compliance, and to provide information to the Welsh Language Commissioner as required.

Chairing Meetings

At some point in their careers, all councillors will find themselves chairing a meeting. Many of the meetings you chair will be formal committee meetings or 'task group' meetings with officers and/or partner agencies involving a range of public, private and voluntary sector agencies. These will need to be chaired in accordance with the council's constitution and procedure rules and any other procedures or 'protocols' that apply. Outside of this, however, you may also be asked to chair other group discussions, e.g. public meetings, board meetings for voluntary or community groups, appointment panels, committees of enquiry etc. Different meetings will need different approaches. You will need to think about the tone, style and venue for the meeting, how to manage the meeting and encourage people to contribute, how to take decisions and which rules you need to adhere to.

Some suggestions from chairs

"As a chair, I always try to include all members of the committee, but if they start to wander off the point, or repeat what has already been said, I'll politely move the agenda on. After all, you have to make the best use of the time available."

"It's worth always being really well prepared for committee meetings, it doesn't look good if you have to keep referring to officers"

"When you are meeting in the community bear in mind that people will have no idea who you are, who the officers are and what you can and can't do, try to make this clear at the outset!"

"If things are getting heated or confrontational at a meeting, suggest a break!"

Tips for new chairs when having meetings in the council or community.

Before	During	After
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify the meeting's objectives. • Ensure (or work with officers to make sure) that the right people are invited to attend. • Ensure that all necessary documents are produced or that officers produce these in sufficient time. • Choose your venue and make sure that it is suitably equipped and set out. • Develop some contingency plans for non-attendance. In a council committee, there will be a quorum of members required for the meeting to go ahead. There may not be this requirement in the community. • Prepare yourself by knowing about all the matters under discussion and the purpose of each agenda item. • Prepare yourself by knowing all the "rules" that will apply in the meeting about who can contribute, how often and how. • Make sure that your committee members or meeting participants are fully prepared and informed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a good first impression, welcome people and clarify everyone's role. Welcome viewers if the meeting is to be webcast. • Focus on what the meeting needs to achieve and gain commitment to the agenda. • Establish any ground rules, how should people contribute? how will everyone have a chance to speak? • Steer discussions in a structured way and manage the time and the personalities. • Encourage different views and opinions. • Summarise discussions and any decisions made after each agenda item and at the end of the meeting so that people are clear what's been achieved. • Thank everyone for their contributions. • Agree details for any follow up meetings. • Finish the meeting on time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that minutes record the key decisions. • Make sure that any meeting notes or minutes are circulated to participants and anyone else who needs to know what was decided. • Check progress on any actions agreed at the meeting.

5. The Ethical Framework

Local government requires high standards of conduct to ensure that there is public confidence in everything we do. You have a legal duty to act ethically. This is set out in the Local Government Act 2000. Also, the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) (Wales) Order 2008 requires a mandatory Code of Conduct in each authority based on a national model.

The Code draws on the 7 Principles of Public Life which were set out in the Nolan Report "Standards of Conduct in Local Government in England, Scotland and Wales". Three more were added to these: a duty to uphold the law, proper stewardship of the Council's resources and equality and respect for others. The standards are now described as follows:

- 1. Selflessness**
Members must act solely in the public interest. They must never use their position as members to improperly confer an advantage on, or to avoid a disadvantage for, themselves or to improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on others.
- 2. Honesty**
Members must declare any private interests relevant to their public duties and take steps to resolve any conflict in a way that protects the public interest.
- 3. Integrity and Propriety**
Members must not put themselves in a position where their integrity is called into question by any financial or other obligation to individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their duties. Members must on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.
- 4. Duty to Uphold the Law**
Members must act to uphold the law and act on all occasions in accordance with the trust that the public has placed in them.
- 5. Stewardship**
In discharging their duties and responsibilities members must ensure that their authority's resources are used both lawfully and prudently.
- 6. Objectivity in Decision-making**
In carrying out their responsibilities including making appointments,

awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, members must make decisions on merit. Whilst members must have regard to the professional advice of officers and may properly take account of the views of others, including their political groups, it is their responsibility to decide what view to take and, if appropriate, how to vote on any issue.

7. Equality and Respect

Members must carry out their duties and responsibilities with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity for all people, regardless of their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age or religion, and show respect and consideration for others.

8. Openness

Members must be as open as possible about all their actions and those of their authority. They must seek to ensure that disclosure of information is restricted only in accordance with the law.

9. Accountability

Members are accountable to the electorate and the public generally for their actions and for the way they carry out their responsibilities as a member. They must be prepared to submit themselves to such scrutiny as is appropriate to their responsibilities.

10. Leadership

Members must promote and support these principles by leadership and example so as to promote public confidence in their role and in the authority. They must respect the impartiality and integrity of the

authority's statutory officers and its other employees.

The Code of Conduct

Every local authority has a Code of Conduct based on a national model. The Code of Conduct shows you how to apply the ethical framework.

Unless you sign your Declaration of Acceptance and give a written undertaking to observe the Code of Conduct you cannot be a member. If you fail to undertake or observe the Code, you can be suspended or even disqualified from office. The Code applies to all councillors in Wales.

The Code applies to you whenever you are ...

- in any "official" meeting of the authority;
- in any meeting where councillors or officers of the authority are present;
- acting, claiming to act or giving the impression you are acting as a representative of the authority;
- conducting business of the authority as a member and acting as a representative of the authority;
- acting in an official capacity; and
- acting as a representative on another body unless that body has conflicting legal rules or its own code.

Also at any time if:

- you conduct yourself in a manner likely to bring your office or authority into disrepute; or
- you use or attempt to use your position to gain advantage or avoid disadvantage for yourself or others; or
- you misuse your authority's resources.

General rules you need to follow under the Code

- promote equality;
- treat others with respect and consideration;
- do not bully or harass people;
- do not compromise the impartiality of officers;
- do not disclose confidential information;
- do not prevent access to information;
- do not bring your office or authority into disrepute;
- you must report breaches of the code;
- do not make vexatious complaints;
- you must cooperate with investigations;
- you must not use your position improperly;
- do not misuse your authority's resources;
- reach decisions objectively;
- consider advice that officers give you and give reasons if you don't take it;
- comply with the law and your authority's rules regarding expenses; and
- do not accept any gifts or hospitality that would place you under an obligation or seem to do so.

Interests

The public must have confidence that you are making decisions in their best interests not yours; therefore, if you have an interest in the matter you must declare it. There are two types of interest: Personal and Prejudicial.

What are Personal Interests?

You have a personal interest when a decision relates to or is likely to affect you or a "close personal associate" in relation to:

- your job or business;
- your employer or company in which you are a partner or director;
- someone who has contributed to your election costs or member expenses;
- any company where you have shares over £25K or more than 1% of the total share value which has premises or land in your area;
- any contract that your authority makes with a company in which you are a partner, paid director or hold shares;
- any land in which you have an interest in your authority's area;
- any land let by your authority to a firm in which you are a partner, paid director or hold shares;
- any land in your authority's area which you have a license to occupy for at least 28 days;
- any body to which you have been elected appointed or nominated by your authority;
- any public authority or body exercising functions of a public nature, charity, public opinion or policy, trade union or professional association, private club or society in your authority's area of which you are a member or in a management position; and/or
- any conflict between your ward and decisions which affect the authority as a

whole.

Who is a 'Close Personal Associate'

Someone who is a friend, a colleague with whom you have strong connections, a business associate or a close relative. It also includes someone with whom you have been in dispute. It does not include a casual acquaintance, distant relative or someone who you meet through your work.

What do you do if you have a Personal Interest?

- you must declare it verbally at meetings;
- you must declare it when making written or verbal representations outside of a meeting;
- you must complete a declaration of interests form;

BUT you are entitled to take part in discussions and vote unless it is a prejudicial interest.

What are Prejudicial Interests?

Prejudicial interests are personal interests which a member of the public would regard as likely to influence your opinion or your ability to be objective for example:

- if your daughter lives next to a proposed site for a new housing development; or
- if your son attends a local school which is due for closure.

What do you do if you have a Prejudicial Interest?

- you must leave the meeting during the discussion;
- you must not exercise delegated powers;
- you must not seek to influence the decision; and
- you must not make written or verbal representations.

UNLESS

- the standards committee has granted you a dispensation;
- the public have a right to speak or provide evidence (but you must leave after you have spoken); or
- you have been called before a scrutiny committee.

Predetermination and Bias

If you are involved in making a decision, you are required to take into account evidence and all relevant factors and disregard that which is irrelevant. You should also avoid making up your mind before hearing all the facts.

It is possible that your decision making may be open to challenge if you give the impression that you have made up your mind before hearing all the relevant information from all the relevant people. This is called 'predetermination' and means having decided a position on something where no argument would change your mind.

Predetermination has been the subject of legislation (Section 25 of the Localism Act 2011). which tried to clarify “that it is proper for councillors to play an active role in local discussions and that they should not be liable to legal challenge as a result”. This was because council decisions could be challenged because of councillors being accused of having closed minds, usually because of previous statements in meetings or to the press. Following the Act, cases are less likely to be brought against councillors based on what they have said previously. However, you may still be challenged if it can be shown that you did not follow your legal requirements to take into account all relevant factors before making a decision.

What happens if you breach the Code of Conduct?

If someone believes that you have breached the Code, a complaint can be made to your Monitoring Officer. As councillor, you have a duty to make a complaint if you think a fellow councillor is in breach of the Code. Authorities have their own ‘local resolution protocols’ for dealing with ‘low-level’ complaints locally which might involve, for example, Monitoring Officers addressing the problem with Group Leaders or an ad hoc committee of councillors. More serious alleged breaches of the Code will be referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. If a complaint is found to be proven, the Ombudsman will refer the case to a local standards committee or the Independent Adjudication Panel for Wales, and sanctions can range from no action through suspension to disqualification for 5 years. Even if you are suspended you are still subject to the Code!

Your authority will have further guidance on the Code but if you are in any doubt about how you should act, ask the Monitoring Officer and read the Guidance from the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales on this website: <http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk/>

6. Rules and Regulations



The council will have a constitution setting out decision-making structures and procedures, terms of reference of internal committees, roles and responsibilities of individual positions of office, procedure rules for meetings, codes of conduct and financial regulations. Your local constitution will be based on a nationally agreed model constitution.

Procedure Rules

Full council, the cabinet/executive, overview and scrutiny and regulatory committee meetings are governed by rules for procedure. These cover the timing of meetings, order of business and rules of debate. Make sure that you know the rules of debate, how and when to declare an interest and the terms of reference for any committee you sit on. Although it is the chairperson's responsibility to interpret these "rules" you will need to make sure that you know what they are and act accordingly.

Agendas and Minutes

Legally, councils are obliged to publish a notice of any public meetings three clear working days before the meeting. This notice must include the date, time, venue and agenda. Officers will make sure you receive this for your committees and possibly for

others, so that you can decide if you would like to attend as an observer if items are being discussed of interest to your ward.


Officers will take minutes at all formal council meetings. This serves as a record of the decisions taken, the reasons for the decisions being taken and any background papers received. These minutes are available to the public. All council meetings and committees are open to members of the public unless there are legal reasons to exclude them.

Co-optees

If a committee needs access to specific technical expertise or knowledge, councils can co-opt members of the public with these skills to committees. Some co-optees are statutory, such as the chair and members of standards committees, chair and members of audit and some members of the education and crime and disorder scrutiny committees. These co-optees are entitled to vote at a meeting, other non-statutory co-optees can contribute fully but are not entitled to vote.

Schemes of Delegation

In the constitution, a scheme of delegation sets out which individuals – both councillors and officers – have individual decision-



making capacity for which functions. Many decisions are made day to day by officers but within the policies, resources and procedures agreed by the council.

Information Rights

There are legal entitlements of access to information by councillors and the public. Access is restricted to confidential information (e.g. private information or commercially sensitive information). The main provisions for this are set out in the Access to Information Act 1985 and the Local Government Act 1972). The public has extensive rights to committee papers (agenda, minutes and background papers) and there are legal duties on councils to publish and store, and retrieve on request, such documents and information.

Access to Information

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) gives people rights of access to information held by the council. This is to make sure that the public understands how the council works, how it spends its money and how it makes decisions.

The Act obliges councils to state publicly, through a publications scheme, the information the public can access about the council (e.g. published strategies and policy documents).

It also obliges councils to comply to requests for information unless exemptions apply.

Information that you hold as part of your official business, such as letters, papers and emails may have to be made available, but information that you hold for your own purposes will not be covered by the FOIA.

Further information can be found on the ICO website: <https://ico.org.uk/>


Data Protection

The Data Protection Act (DPA) applies to personal data – i.e. information about living, identifiable individuals.

If you hold and process personal data you must comply with the data protection principles, set out in the DPA. The principles include the following requirements in relation to personal data:

- it must only be collected for a specific purpose;
- it must be kept secure;
- it must be relevant and up to date; and
- it must not be excessive - only hold as much as you need for as long as you need it.

You should also be aware that under the DPA, individuals are entitled to see copies of personal data held about them – for example constituents may ask for copies of information you hold about them. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) can provide guidance on how to handle such requests.



The DPA requires most individuals and organisations (such as councils) who hold personal data to notify the ICO that they do so. Councillors who hold personal data must also check if they need to notify. While not all councillors need to notify the ICO, failure to do so when required is a criminal offence.

The need to notify depends on the role that members are undertaking when processing personal information. If acting as a member of the council or major political party, you will not be required to notify. However, when acting as a community representative or if you are an independent councillor you may need to do so. To make sure that you are covered, most councils suggest that all members notify the ICO that they are processing personal data.

Before sharing any information about a constituent or organisation with another party such as an AM, MP or MEP (such as an individual complaint) you should ensure that you have the explicit agreement of the constituent or organisation. The same obligation is true of others who may wish to disclose information to you as the local councillor.

The ICO provides guidance on data protection issues relating to elected members of a local authority and on what a local authority must consider when deciding to disclose personal information to its elected members. The guidance includes

examples of good and bad practice which are useful in explaining how elected members should behave in relation to the requirements of the DPA.

Further information can be found on the ICO website: <https://ico.org.uk/>

All Welsh local authorities, health boards/trusts, police forces, fire and rescue services, many charities and voluntary sector organisations have signed up to the Wales Accord on the Sharing of Personal Information (WASPI). This Accord provides a framework for service-providing organisations directly concerned with the health, education, safety, and social well-being of people in Wales. It concerns those organisations that hold information about individuals and who need to share that information to deliver effective services. The Accord is part of the Welsh Government-led *Sharing Personal Information Project* which aims to make sure public services, as well as appropriate third and private sector service providers, share personal information about individuals legally, safely and with confidence. The framework facilitates this by establishing agreed requirements and mechanisms for the exchange of personal information between service providers.

Procurement

Authorities have a duty to spend money responsibly. Therefore, they have procurement processes for acquiring goods,

works and services from suppliers.

Procurement starts with identifying needs and finishes with the end of a contract or the life of the asset. Local government in Wales spends over £2 billion a year externally. With a service delivery reform agenda for improvement, increasingly integrated public services, and a significant growth in partnerships with private and voluntary sector suppliers, it is important to get procurement right. Through leadership, decision making and scrutiny roles, you will have a significant part to play in the achievement of strategic objectives through effective procurement of service delivery.



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7. Communications and the Media

Although leaders and portfolio holders will promote corporate council policy and political parties may have communications strategies, you will be expected to generate your own personal publicity and communications with constituents.

Who to communicate with:

- the public;
- other councillors;
- council managers and staff;
- local AMs and MPs;
- your political party and group if you have one;
- local organisations and businesses;
- the media;
- organisations working collaboratively with your council; and
- central government and regional and national bodies in Wales.

How to communicate:

- Social media;
- newsletters;
- websites;
- blogs; and
- local media, newspapers, radio and television.

A key feature of your communicating and

influencing role is the impact that you have in the local media. There is a generally held assumption that local government gets a 'bad press', but evidence suggests that local media are willing to present local government in a positive light, if handled in the right way.

Your council will have protocols governing the issuing of press releases and speaking to the local media, if you are not sure whether your council has such procedures you should check before taking any action. Local press, television and radio journalists want a story to cover. These may often be the main source of information on local government for both interested and disinterested citizens and you will need to use your communication and influencing skills to ensure that a balanced and accurate account is given to the media in the first instance.

Social Media

Digital media and social networking have a huge potential for contributing to open and transparent government, participation and collaboration. These are helpful tools for authorities and members to engage with the community. Twitter and Facebook are increasingly the communication channel of choice and a significant opportunity to reach more people than ever before. 'digital

engagement' has helped councillors speak directly with communities of interest and gauge opinions quickly. However, there is a temptation for local councillors and politicians generally to use social media as a one-way channel of communication, tending to broadcast ideas and actions rather than listening and engaging with communities and individuals. Social media is an excellent platform for asking questions and getting feedback from individuals and communities.

Some councillors have also encountered some of the pitfalls associated with using digital media. You need to remember that if you can be identified as a councillor, even when "off duty" what you say will be open to very wide (potentially global) scrutiny and you will need to apply the usual rules governing communication and conduct.

8. Financial Stewardship

Councils face growing challenges due to a continuing programme of UK public sector austerity and the lingering effects of recession. Councils' budgets are shrinking, at a time when needs are increasing and demographic pressures, including an ageing population, are growing. Councils are having to make difficult decisions around service cuts and job losses. They are also exploring new ways of delivering services. Although councils have local flexibility around how they prioritise and spend their resources, some of the most expensive and statutory services like education, social services and housing must be funded to a level which delivers certain standards. This means that other discretionary services, those which are often most valued by the public, such as the local environment, libraries, leisure centres and the arts suffer when money is short. Councillors have a significant responsibility to ensure that public money is being spent responsibly. In 2016/17 local authorities in Wales were responsible for spending £7 billion.

The money that councils spend on the day to

day running of services is called the **Revenue Budget**. This includes expenditure on staff salaries and wages, payment to suppliers, running costs of property and loan repayments. Whilst this expenditure is partly funded from fees and charges and council tax, the main source of funding is from the Welsh Government. About 45% comes from the Welsh Government in the form of the Revenue Support Grant, 26% from specific grants and 13% from redistributed business rates.

The **Revenue Support Grant** from the Welsh Government is not ring fenced or hypothecated. This means that the grant is flexible and councils decide how it is to be used to meet local needs and priorities and invest in services.

Council tax funds on average only 15% of local council expenditure in Wales. So, despite the level of controversy and publicity it generates, it only contributes a small proportion of a local councils' income. If a council needs to increase its expenditure, it can only do this by raising more money through the council tax which results in a disproportionate increase, as a 1% budget increase would require a 6% Council Tax increase.

The council tax bill includes a precept for police and community and town councils. (Fire and rescue authorities levy constituent councils for their share of the budget). Many people often do not appreciate that their council tax helps pay for police officers and fire-fighters, as well as the broad range of council services.

A council's **Capital Budget** covers the money it spends on investing in buildings, infrastructure and expensive pieces of equipment. To count as capital expenditure, new assets or additions to assets must have a life of more than one year.

Councils develop a **medium term financial plan**, which reflects their other corporate strategic plans and which links with their Risk Management and Asset Management Plans. Each year the annual budget will be developed in the medium term financial plan. As well as setting out the council's spending plans for the following year, the budget process results in the setting of the council tax for the following year. The annual budget and level of council tax is set by the whole council on the advice and recommendation of the cabinet or executive board.

In a council, budget planning typically takes between 3-5 years. However, there is a need to approve individual budgets each year, culminating in the setting of the local council tax, usually in February/March each

year. For the annual budget the following timelines typically apply.

<u>July</u>
Budget Strategy Report considered.
<u>July/September</u>
Directorates continue to develop budget proposals.
<u>October</u>
Provisional budget settlement received
<u>November/December</u>
Consultation on draft budget savings proposals.
<u>December</u>
Final Budget Settlement received.
<u>January</u>
Fine tuning of budget proposals and consideration of medium term financial plans.
<u>February</u>
Approval of Corporate Plan and budget and setting of council tax.

The council is advised and supported in managing its finances by a senior officer, known as the Section 151 Officer, who is statutorily charged with responsibility for ensuring financial probity. This officer is often the Treasurer or Director of Finance.

The management of financial transactions is governed by the financial regulations of the council.

As a councillor, you will need to know about and may be involved in the following financial activities:

- upholding financial management standards;
- approving the Annual Statement of Accounts;
- approving the Financial Strategy;
- approving the authority's budget, you may be able to ask for this to be amended or ask the cabinet to reconsider before giving approval;
- approving fees and charges;
- reserves & provisions, as part of the Statement of Accounts process;
- setting the Council Tax;
- approving the Council Tax Reduction Scheme on a yearly basis (currently a requirement of Full Council)
- approving the Treasury Management Policy statement; and
- staffing, that is determining how officer support for executive and non-executive roles within the authority will be organised.

Some financial terms explained

The Barnett Formula is the way the resources allocated to the Welsh Government is calculated by the UK government.


Capital expenditure is the money spent on assets (e.g. housing redevelopment, leisure centre construction).

CIPFA – Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. This is the leading professional body for people in public finance. As the world's only specialised public services accountancy body, they provide information, guidance, and determine accounting standards and reporting standards to be followed by local government.

Council Tax is a local tax which is collected from occupiers of residential property. The amount of tax is calculated by reference to home value bandings. Council tax funds the council approved expenditure after taking off government grants, business rates, fees and charges.

Green Book The Green Book provides analysis of the Standard Spending Assessments by individual services used in the calculation of the revenue settlement for unitary and police authorities in Wales.

HRA or Housing Revenue Account If the council owns its own social housing stock, the HRA is a specific account of expenditure and income that every local authority housing department must keep in accordance with the Local Government & Housing Act 1989. The account is kept separate or ring fenced from other council activities. Income is primarily generated by the rents and



service charges paid by tenants, while expenditure is on the management and maintenance of the housing stock, and capital financing charges on the HRA's outstanding loan debt.

Hypothecation Otherwise known as 'earmarking' or 'ringfencing' applies to funding from government that is meant for a pre-determined purpose such as specific grants. The Revenue Support Grant is un-hypothecated and is given to a council for it to determine how it is spent giving the council more flexibility in meeting its own objectives.

Inflation The increase in costs of the same goods from one year to the next. Most commonly used measures of inflation bundle together the increase in costs of a range of goods such as food and fuel commonly purchased by households. The following are measures of inflation:

- CPI (Consumer Price Index)
- RPI (Retail Price Index)

When setting budgets, councils are particularly concerned with wage/salary inflation and increases in specialist large spending areas like residential care.

Local Government Funding Formula This is the method that the Welsh Government uses to distribute the Revenue Support Grant to each council. It is based on the population and demographic, physical, economic and


social characteristics of each area set out in the standard spending assessment, the standard spending assessment is a notional calculation of what each council needs to spend to provide a standard level of service.

Local Government Settlement This is the official term for the Welsh Government's funding for local government, and includes the Revenue Support Grant, specific purpose grants and non-domestic rates and is distributed based on the funding formula.

MTFP or Medium Term Financial Plan The Medium Term Financial Plan covers a period typically of three years and forms part of the Council's corporate planning processes. The MTFP aims to identify financial and funding pressures facing the council over the forthcoming three years that will lead the future budget setting process, outline the council's budget position for the next three years, and set out future levels of government funding.

NNDR or National Non-Domestic Rates A levy on businesses collected by councils on behalf of the Welsh Government, and paid into an All Wales Pool. The Pool is then redistributed amongst all Welsh local authorities.


Revenue expenditure refers to day to day running costs (e.g. salaries, supplies, maintenance).



RSG – Revenue Support Grant A grant paid by central government to aid local authority services in general (as opposed to specific grants for specified purposes). The grant makes up the difference between expenditure at Standard Spending Assessment, and the sum of a) the amount the authority would collect if council tax was set at the government’s standard level and b) redistributed NNDR.

The Standard Spending Assessment or SSA is a notional calculation of what each Council needs to spend to provide a standard level of service. The Welsh Government uses such an assessment as part of the formula for distributing Revenue Support Grant to local authorities. It is calculated to reflect the differing costs of providing services in each authority area because of their different demographic, geographic, and socio-economic characteristics.

Specific Grants The Welsh Government provides some funding to local government in the form of hypothecated grants. These grants can only be used for the specific purposes for which they are provided.



9. Local Government Reform



With various plans for local government reform having been outlined by Wales' political parties in their 2016 election manifestos, there will be much that needs to be decided during the next term of the National Assembly for Wales.

On 31st January 2017, the Welsh Government published a white paper for consultation called *Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed*, which you can read here.

<https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/reforming-local-government-resilient-and-renewed?lang=en>

At the time of writing, the Welsh Government was reviewing the responses to the consultation but the Cabinet Secretary has proposed that if there is support, legislation will be introduced in 2017-18.

The paper proposes that the existing 22 authorities are retained (unless some wish to merge voluntarily) and that local government builds upon its commitment to collaboration by delivering some services regionally. The Welsh Government's preferred option is that some services would be delivered according

to an agreed national footprint, whilst others would still need to be delivered collaboratively but on a footprint decided by councils. In practice this would mean that economic development, transport planning and strategic land use planning would be delivered within the regions set out in the map below. Other services such as education improvement, additional learning needs, social services, public protection, promotion of the Welsh language and some back-office services would be delivered over a footprint decided by councils.

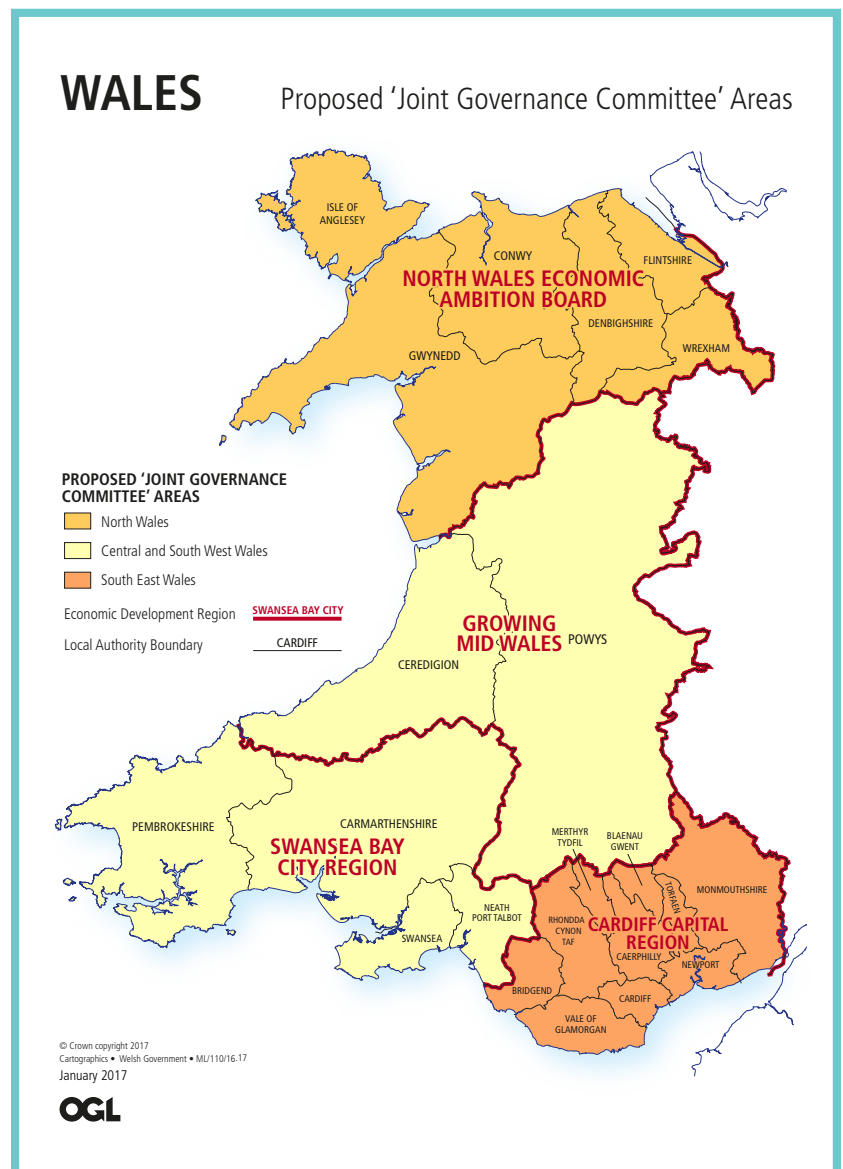
Arrangements will need to be made for these regional services to be governed effectively, so the Welsh Government is proposing that Joint Governance Committees are established to ensure that services are effective and locally accountable. The Welsh Government will also be providing a framework setting out how these new arrangements will be scrutinised.

Local authorities and the WLGA has been broadly supportive of the proposed approach as it built on the progress councils have made themselves in delivering services jointly or regionally. The WLGA is keen to ensure that subsidiarity (the presumption that power is transferred to the level of government closest

to the people) is protected in any reforms and has put forward three principles:

- that funding should continue to be provided to the 22 councils who would then agree which budgets are pooled regionally;
- that the statutory function for services should remain at the local level; and
- that local accountability is vital through local councillors exercising oversight and scrutiny of any regional service.

The White Paper also sets out potential changes to the voting system for local government including votes for 16 year olds and proportional representation.





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10. Working with Officers

Officers are employed to manage the work of the council and help councillors put their policies into action. Officers working in local authorities are, like councillors, subject to a code of conduct.

There are several key designated officer roles which are statutory.

They are the:

- Head of paid service (normally the chief executive or managing director) who is the most senior advisor and manager within the council;
- Section 151 Officer (normally the director of finance or equivalent) who is responsible for ensuring financial probity;
- Monitoring Officer (normally the Head of Legal Services or equivalent) who ensures compliance with the law and advises and acts to protect the council; and the
- Head of Democratic Services who ensures that members and committees are provided with appropriate resources and support. S/he will also provide policy advice to the democratic services committee.

Some officer posts are politically restricted under legislation. This means that these people are not allowed to have any active political role either in or outside the workplace. These are the Head of Paid Service, the statutory chief officers, deputy chief officers (officers reporting to a chief officer excluding secretarial/clerical support staff) the Monitoring Officer, officers exercising delegated powers, assistants to political groups and any officer who is responsible for giving advice on a regular basis to members, committees or the authority.

Officers have a duty to give unbiased advice. You will need to bear in mind that this advice is given from a professional standpoint and designed to help you take appropriate decisions and actions.

It is important to establish positive professional relationships with officers so that you can work in partnership to turn policies into action for the benefit of the public.

Council Staff

Councils are major employers in Wales and employ some 140K employees (100K full time equivalents). This has reduced significantly due to budgetary pressures in recent years.

Most of the workforce will live as well as work within the county borough boundary and they and their families will receive as well as provide services.

Councils have a duty of care to their employees. Councils employ staff as corporate bodies with councillors being ultimately accountable for their welfare. There is a raft of employment legislation aimed at protecting employees and ensuring equality for all staff. It is important that any decision made by the council considers the impact on the workforce. Councils should ensure that there is an effective human resource strategy in place which relates to the various strategies and plans adopted by the council. The strategy should consider how it will recruit, train, retain, develop and reward the workforce.

Pay and Conditions of Service

Most councils operate the nationally agreed terms and conditions of employment for local government and the nationally agreed pay scales and pay settlement. However, councils can determine and vary their own terms and conditions e.g. flexible working hours and leave policies. Pay deals are generally settled at a national level but all councils are consulted before any agreements are reached.

11. Improvement, Performance and Regulation



Improvement Plans and Performance Reports

Each year, councils in Wales produce many plans and performance reports, both for management purposes and to report to the public on their objectives and performance. Each council publishes a Corporate Plan that sets out their longer term corporate vision i.e. what they will do, how they will do it, and how they will monitor progress. Councils must set compare and publish performance information and produce annual performance reports.

Your council's performance indicators and reports will be a key source of information for you as a councillor, whether in a cabinet or scrutiny role, to measure and monitor performance in priority areas and to judge whether your council is on track to meet objectives and outcomes.

My Local Council www.mylocalcouncil.info/ is a website designed with councillors and the public in mind and provides all the key performance data for your and all councils across Wales. It allows you to compare your council's performance with other councils and includes all published audit, inspection and performance annual reports about your authority.

From 2017, councils must set and publish Well-being Objectives, to take reasonable steps to meet these and to publish an annual report on the progress they are making. It is expected that the statement of objectives will be incorporated into a local authority's Corporate Plan and that, similarly, the annual progress report will be part of a wider Annual Report (and not a separate document). The first set of Well-being Objectives were published by 31st March 2017 and will be reviewed annually.

Directors of Social Services have a statutory duty to publish an annual report on social services performance.

Wales Audit Office (WAO)

The **WAO** works with the Auditor General for Wales who is the public services 'watchdog'. The WAO audits the financial accounts of councils, reports on how services are being delivered, assesses whether value for money is being achieved and checks how they are planning and delivering improvements.

The WAO produces Annual Improvement Reports for each council which comment on their governance, improvement and performance planning and reporting

arrangements.

Social Care Wales

Social Care Wales is responsible for leading work to improve care and support for people in Wales. This new organisation was formed in 2017 from the Care Council for Wales and the Social Services Improvement Agency and is building on their work as well as taking on new functions. Social Care Wales provides workforce support, sets standards to protect the public, leads on improvement and provides research and information.

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW)

The **CSSIW** is responsible for regulating and inspecting social care and social services to make sure that they are safe for the people who use them. They provide independent assurance about the quality and availability of services such as care homes, nurseries, fostering and adoption agencies, residential special schools and further education colleges accommodating students under 18.

Estyn also inspect local social services in local authorities using a methodology based on the quality standards required by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA):

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act came into force from April 2016. It is the new legal framework that brings together and modernises social services law. The Act imposes duties on local authorities, health boards and Welsh Ministers that require them to work to promote the well-being of those who need care and support, or carers who need

support.

Estyn

Estyn inspects quality and standards in education and training providers in Wales. It currently inspects each councils' education services for children and young people on a six-yearly cycle. Estyn also inspects schools and other education and training providers in Wales at least once within a six-year period.

Education in Wales is changing. The Welsh Government is updating the curriculum and introducing a digital competence framework. There will also be some changes in inspection from September 2017 for example:

- the notice period for inspections will be reduced to 15 days;
- inspections will typically take 4 days rather than 5; and
- they will focus on 5 inspection areas; standards; wellbeing and attitudes to learning; teaching and learning experiences; care, support and guidance; and leadership.

12. Support for Councillors

As a councillor, you will be provided with a range of support and information. There are dedicated officers providing support to members, covering advisory, administrative, committee, casework and research services. In addition to this there are 2 key statutory posts.

The Head of Democratic Services

The Head of Democratic Services will ensure that the authority and individual non-executive members receive support with the following:

- Committee and meetings support;
- member support and services; and
- scrutiny support

The Monitoring Officer

Every principal authority in Wales (county councils and county borough councils) must appoint a Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for maintaining ethical standards and advising and training councillors on the Code of Conduct. The Monitoring Officer also supports the work of the council's standards committee and is responsible for advising and training community and town council members on the Code of Conduct. In effect, the

Monitoring Officer, in partnership with the standards committee is the primary source of advice and guidance for both councillors and officers on ethical and standards issues and the operation of the Code of Conduct.

If you are affiliated to a political party then you will have access to policy, advisory and research services, national advisors and in party briefing sessions and networks.

If you are employed, your employer may be able to support you with time off for council duties and a flexible arrangement for you to maintain a council- work life balance.

Salaries

As a councillor, you will be entitled to receive a salary in return for the contribution that you make. There is a basic salary for all members and an additional senior salary for councillors who undertake specific responsibilities, such as executive/cabinet members or committee chairs. The maximum that can be paid as a basic salary is calculated annually and nationally by the Independent Remuneration Panel as £13,400 in 2017/18. The amount of the senior salary depends upon the size of your authority. In addition to your salary you will also be entitled to claim allowances for travelling and

subsistence and reimbursement for costs of care if you look after, for example, children or an older person. Councillors are also entitled to paid family absence and, from 2017 onwards, for senior salary holders, paid sickness absence. The council is required to publish the details of the salary you receive.

Annual Reports

Local authorities have a duty (following the Local Government Measure 2011) to 'make arrangements' for councillors to make an annual report about their activities as a councillor during the year. This is not a duty on councillors to produce an annual report, although many do and some councils expect their councillors to produce an annual report.

Development and Training for Councillors

Every councillor, regardless of their role or experience, will need some training and development. If you do not fully understand your role and the policy and legislative framework that underpins it, you will be putting your council at risk. It is your responsibility to make sure that the council (through the democratic services committee) provides this for you. Your council has a legal duty to provide you with an opportunity to discuss your training and support needs and provide the appropriate development. Many councils provide this through personal development review schemes. Generally, you should be provided with:

- induction training;
- a role description;
- an opportunity to be mentored;
- an opportunity to talk about the training you would find useful;
- continuing training for specific council roles; and

- briefings and updates in policy and legislation.

E learning specifically for councillors is available on the All Wales Academy on the Learning Wales website here <https://learning.wales.nhs.uk/>.

Check your skills

Here is a list of the skills that are generally accepted to be required by all members. If you need help with any of these after your induction, officers will arrange this for you.

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Understanding of the role of the councillor	<p>The extent and limits of a councillor's individual responsibilities and the powers and responsibilities required to undertake corporate governance.</p> <p>Also corporate responsibilities such as corporate parenting and safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.</p>	<p>Undertakes their role effectively in the council, the community and with partner agencies.</p> <p>Understands when it is and is not appropriate to act for the electoral division or in the interests of the area as a whole.</p> <p>Acts proactively to deliver outcomes.</p> <p>Ensures that both the authority's corporate responsibilities and the member's personal role are undertaken in for example protecting children and vulnerable adults and supporting looked after children.</p>
Understanding the role of the local authority	<p>Understanding of the services delivered, both statutory and discretionary and the policies, procedures, plans and strategies which underpin them.</p>	<p>Is able to describe the work of the council to the public and where these responsibilities lie with other agencies such as community and town councils, voluntary sector or the Welsh Government.</p> <p>Contributes to the development of council plans and strategies and takes decisions in the light of these.</p>
Conduct	<p>Understanding of the ethical framework governing the work of councillors, specifically the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Understanding of the role of the Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>Appreciation of the importance of accountability, integrity and transparency for good governance.</p>	<p>Abides by the Code of Conduct at all times.</p> <p>Always declares and defines interests when appropriate.</p> <p>Seeks advice from the monitoring officer when appropriate.</p> <p>Treats others with respect in all settings.</p> <p>Demonstrates integrity.</p> <p>Values others.</p> <p>Listens.</p> <p>Stays calm in difficult situations.</p>

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Equalities and respect	<p>Personal skills in demonstrating respect for others regardless of sex, race, religion, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity or sexual orientation.</p> <p>Understanding equalities and diversity law relating to the work of the council and the role of the councillor. Understanding of the need for and what constitutes respectful behaviour towards others.</p>	<p>Demonstrates equalities values in personal behaviour and council decisions. Applies appropriate equalities legislation and demonstrates equalities values in personal behaviour and council decisions.</p> <p>Treats everyone with respect at all times when acting as a councillor whether in the council, community, or political group.</p>
Balancing council and community expectations and responsibilities	<p>Understanding of the distinct responsibilities of a councillor as a member of a corporate body and as a representative of an electoral division or community.</p>	<p>Takes decisions relating to the corporate body or electoral division ethically.</p> <p>Manages both community and council expectations through effective communication.</p>
Audit, Inspection and Regulation	<p>An understanding of the role of the Audit Inspection and Regulatory bodies and associated council processes.</p>	<p>Engages effectively with the audit, inspection and regulatory process within the council, using this information to constructively challenge and support the affected services.</p>
Balancing personal commitments	<p>An understanding of time management principals including prioritisation and delegation.</p>	<p>Maintains an effective work/life balance, managing the time available to concentrate on the issues with the most significant outcomes.</p>

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Information Management	<p>Understanding and interpreting information and data.</p> <p>Ability to handle data in the format provided by the council.</p> <p>Understanding of the definition of confidentiality and how to handle confidential information.</p> <p>Understanding of the legal requirements of Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.</p>	<p>Receives information and data from a variety of sources and is able to store share and use it effectively and where possible electronically.</p> <p>Does not keep records about people without seeking their agreement.</p> <p>Responds promptly and appropriately to FOI requests.</p> <p>Does not distribute or share confidential or restricted information.</p>
Using ICT and social media	<p>Skills in all 'Office' applications such as word processing, presentation and spreadsheets. And communication and social media applications including email, tweeting, blogging and personal website management.</p>	<p>Conducts council business electronically. Communicates with the community electronically and through social media where appropriate.</p> <p>Maintains an effective, positive and ethical online presence.</p>
Meeting preparation and participation	<p>Understanding of the Standing Orders, any protocols and rules of debate.</p> <p>Skills in public speaking, debating and asking questions.</p>	<p>Prepares effectively for meetings by reading papers and analysing data. Undertakes personal research and participates in any pre meetings.</p> <p>Contributes to positive meeting outcomes by seeking tangible decisions or actions.</p> <p>Effectively contributes to meetings making points clearly and succinctly. Remains focussed on the business in hand.</p> <p>Understands and applies meeting 'rules'. Seeks guidance from officers and group leaders before meetings as appropriate.</p>

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Working with the media	Skills in building relationships with the media and being interviewed on TV, radio and for the press and online media.	Is a recognised source of credible information for the media. Speaks confidently, authoritatively and appropriately in interviews. Enhances the reputation of the council when appearing on screen or in print.
Self-promotion	The ability to develop a profile in the community through local activities and effective communication and consultation.	Writes an annual report on achievements and activities. Is highly visible in the community. Maintains a high standard in both personal reputation and that of the council.
Working with officers	<p>Understanding the role of officers generally and the 'rules' they need to abide by including a deeper understanding of the role of senior officers such as the Chief Executive, Senior Management team, Monitoring Officer and Heads of Finance, Legal and Democratic Services.</p> <p>Skills in acting as a corporate employer. Understanding of the appointments process and interviewing skills.</p>	<p>Maintains professional relationships with officers, recognising appropriate boundaries and abiding by the Member Officer Protocol.</p> <p>Acts as an effective member of an appointment panel, applying sound HR and equality and diversity principles to secure the best candidate.</p>
Health and safety	<p>Understanding of Health and Safety legislation in the work of the council.</p> <p>Understand how to assess risks and ensure personal safety and that of others.</p>	<p>Promotes and ensures the health and safety of everyone in the council.</p> <p>Ensures personal safety when working in the council and when in groups or alone in the community.</p>

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Continuing professional and personal development	Ability to identify personal development needs and to participate in development activities.	<p>Undertakes regular personal development reviews taking account of role descriptions and competency frameworks.</p> <p>Takes responsibility for developing personal skills and knowledge, attends learning and development activities seeking tangible outcomes.</p>
Financial capability	<p>Understanding of the way councils and services are funded.</p> <p>Understanding and skills in budget setting. Personal financial capability.</p> <p>Understanding the impact of Welfare Reform and the austerity agenda.</p>	<p>Engages effectively in the budget setting process.</p> <p>Is prepared to take hard, evidence-based decisions.</p> <p>Demonstrates skills in numeracy when interpreting data and asking questions.</p>
Interpersonal skills	Self-awareness, and skills in self-management, "good manners" Emotional Intelligence, listening, negotiation, conflict management and mediation skills.	<p>Acts in a professional and respectful manner to all people and in all places. Is self-aware and able to develop and manage relationships both within and outside the council.</p> <p>Brokers relationships and manages conflict in the community and council and between the two.</p>
Sustainable Development	Understanding of issues that impact on future generations such as health and wellbeing, financial security and the environment.	Takes decisions based upon the needs of future generations as well as the current population.
Safeguarding	Understanding of the legal requirements, and the responsibilities, placed on authorities and individual councillors to protect children and vulnerable adults at risk of abuse.	Is vigilant and acts to make sure that children and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse, taking appropriate decisions and reporting instances appropriately.

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Corporate Parenting	Understanding of the role of the councillor as a Corporate Parent.	Takes appropriate responsibility for the welfare of looked after children, actively seeking appropriate information on their situation and progress.
Working with the community	<p>Knowledge of community groups and leaders.</p> <p>Understanding of community issues and concerns.</p> <p>Ability to seek the views of all relevant parties.</p>	<p>Understands the needs of the local community and secures action from the council on behalf of local people.</p> <p>Communicates with the community, individuals and the council to ensure engagement and understanding of all parties.</p>
Consultation and engagement	<p>Understands the different levels of engagement ranging from communication to co-production set out in the national principals of engagement for Wales.</p> <p>http://participation.cymru/en/principles/</p>	<p>Demonstrates positive outcomes as a result of effective engagement.</p> <p>Uses a range of communication and consultation tools such as Social Media to understand the needs and views of the community.</p>
Voluntary sector	Understands the role and responsibilities of the voluntary sector in the area.	Builds effective relationships with the voluntary sector and communicates and works with them when appropriate.
Local issues	<p>Understands the issues of importance to people locally and throughout the council area.</p> <p>Knows which council plans will impact on local issues.</p>	<p>Works with the community and the council to find solutions to local problems.</p> <p>Secures funding for local initiatives.</p>
Working with community and town councils	Understanding of the responsibilities of community councils and their forward work programmes.	Works with community councils to deliver outcomes for the community. Fosters positive relations and active communication with the community council and the Clerk.

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Being accessible to the public	Understanding of and ability to arrange and publicise opportunities to discuss casework with the public.	<p>Makes themselves available through the most appropriate means to connect with the greatest number of people.</p> <p>Uses surgeries, street surgeries, informal settings, home and social media as appropriate. Promises only that which can be delivered.</p>
Managing casework	Ability to use case management techniques and software and to monitor and communicate progress.	<p>Keeps the people on whose behalf they are working informed of progress. Monitors progress of cases after they have been referred to officers or other agencies.</p> <p>Uses the established referral schemes within the council.</p>
Signposting	Knowledge of sources of information and advice within and outside the council.	Makes links between members of the public and the appropriate source of help in the council or in the community.
Work on outside bodies	<p>Understanding of the role of the outside body.</p> <p>Understanding of the role of the councillor on the outside body whether as a council representative, locality representative, or as an individual.</p>	<p>Reports to and from the council and outside body as appropriate.</p> <p>Represents the views of the council, personal views, or that of the community effectively and appropriately according to the setting.</p> <p>Members should engage in relevant briefing and training provided by outside bodies.</p>
Working as a Trustee on other organisations	<p>Understanding of the role of the organisation and your duties and responsibilities as a trustee.</p> <p>Understanding of the potential implications of conflict of interest arising in the dual role of trustee and councillor.</p>	<p>Operates within the standards set in the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Seeks advice from the Monitoring Officer as appropriate.</p>

Requirement	Knowledge and Skills	Effective Behaviours
Working as a school governor	Understanding of education policy and school organisation.	Oversees the school performance. Challenges the school management as a critical friend. Takes part in governor training.
Working as a member of a Community or Town Council	Understanding of the role of the Community Council and its limits.	Liaises effectively between the community council and unitary council, acting as a link and Council representative when appropriate. Takes part in community council training.
Working as a Co-optee	Understanding of the role and limits of the role of co-optees on committees.	Shares expertise with the committee impartially.
Party policy	Awareness of values and manifestos both nationally and locally.	Effectively balances the requirements of people, party, group and council.
Liaison with National Government, Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales	Understanding of the functions of the Welsh Government and means of engagement.	Liaises with local MPs and AMs. Brings local issues to the attention of the WG when appropriate.
Group membership	Rules and constituency group structure and policies.	

13. Welsh Local Government Association



The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the interests of local government and promotes local democracy in Wales. Its primary purposes are to promote better local government, to promote its reputation and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public service and democracy.

The WLGA is a politically led cross party organisation that seeks to give local government a strong voice at a national level. The Association is a membership organisation that represents all 22 local authorities in Wales, the 3 fire and rescue authorities and the 3 national park authorities as associate members.

The WLGA believes that services are best provided within a democratic framework of local accountability and that the people who use public services should have as much of a say in the way they are organised, managed and funded as possible. Local government is the tier of government closest to service users and best able to respond to their needs. It is recognised that it is the role of central government to set the strategy for public services nationally

but that it is down to local government to deliver services based on local circumstances.

Originally established in 1996 primarily as a policy development and representative body, the WLGA has since developed into an organisation that also leads on improvement and development, procurement, employment issues and hosts a range of partner bodies supporting local government. The WLGA is funded by member authority subscriptions and by grants from the Welsh Government to deliver national programmes.

The WLGA's main decision-making bodies are the council – comprising 70 members proportionately representing the populations they serve – and the executive board – comprising the 22 council leaders. The leader of the largest political group is appointed the WLGA Leader, however, the WLGA has traditionally sought to be politically balanced and operates on a basis of consensus, involving all political groups on the WLGA.

Senior councillors are appointed as WLGA spokespeople covering key local government portfolio areas. These portfolio areas cover every aspect of local government service

ranging from finance, education and social services to libraries, leisure and archives. Being a WLGA spokesperson is a considerable responsibility, as they represent the whole of local government in discussions and negotiations with the Welsh Government, the UK Government and all other national partners in their service areas. The Association's lobbying work is therefore extensive.

The WLGA's key areas of work include:

- bilateral meetings between WLGA spokespersons and Cabinet Secretaries/ Ministers;
- pre-and post-legislative scrutiny with the National Assembly for Wales, UK Parliament and the European Parliament;
- policy development and joint working with the Welsh Government and UK Government;
- engaging with the workforce unions and professional associations;
- working with the various audit bodies and inspectorates in Wales;
- providing improvement support including peer review and member development and training and promoting good practice;
- arranging conferences, seminars, workshops and training events;
- the publication of reports, guidance documents and on-line resources; and
- communications, press work, and social media.

Member support and development services from the WLGA.

The WLGA works with all local authorities across Wales to help provide support to members by:

- working strategically with the Welsh Government to ensure that the needs of members in are promoted;
- providing guidance on request on all aspects of member support and development;
- providing member and officer networks to facilitate collaboration and practice sharing in democratic and support services;
- providing support and guidance materials such as model strategies, role descriptions, development frameworks and training modules; and
- working with each authority to develop and deliver learning opportunities for councillors.

The Wales Charter for Member Support and Development

This is an award which has been developed by the WLGA and authorities to provide a guide, some impetus and recognition for authorities wishing to provide high standards of support for their members. Most councils have been successful in securing the first level of this award and have received or are working towards the advanced level. Some authorities have also been awarded a good practice and innovation award under the Charter.



14. Further Information

Description	Website
All Wales Academy: E-learning resources for councillors.	<u>https://learning.wales.nhs.uk/</u>
Data Unit Wales: Data, information and support for local authorities.	<u>http://www.dataunitwales.gov.uk/</u>
Good Practice Wales: Single access online portal to Welsh public services good practice and knowledge.	<u>www.goodpracticewales.com/</u>
Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales: Salaries and allowances.	<u>www.wales.gov.uk/irpws/sub/home/?lang=en</u>
Information Commissioners Office: FOI and Data Protection.	<u>https://ico.org.uk/</u>
Local Democracy and Boundary Commission Wales	<u>www.ldbc.gov.wales</u>
Local Government Association	<u>www.local.gov.uk/</u>
My Local Council: Single access online portal providing key performance data all councils across Wales.	<u>www.mylocalcouncil.info/</u>
One Voice Wales: Organisation representing community and town councils.	<u>www.onevoicewales.org.uk/</u>
Planning Aid Wales	<u>www.planningaidwales.org.uk/</u>
Public Services Ombudsman Wales	<u>www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk/</u>
Welsh Government	<u>www.wales.gov.uk/?lang=en</u>
Welsh Local Government Association	<u>www.wlga.wales</u>