



Hampshire ALC Key Topic Note – Role of a Parish or Town Councillor

A parish or town councillor plays a key role in their local community, fostering and representing the views and interests of the electorate. They are collectively responsible, with their fellow councillors, for making council policy and are accountable to the electorate in their parish or town.

Councillors will often be asked by electors to pursue matters on their behalf, and they should work with council staff to bring these matters to the attention of the council as they do not have executive authority as an individual councillor. The key purpose of a councillor is to represent the views of their electorate.

It therefore follows that there are no circumstances where an individual councillor can issue an instruction to their clerk or a contractor. Likewise, a councillor must never act *on behalf of the council* in the organisation of any function or service and must ensure they make it clear, when speaking to individuals, that they speak as a *councillor* and not on behalf of the council as a whole.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

- To participate constructively in the government of the parish/town council.
- To participate fully in the formation and scrutiny of the parish or town council's policies, budgets, strategies, and service delivery.
- To influence and shape the long-term development policy of the council and, as part of the planning process, comment on planning applications in the parish.
- To ensure, with other councillors, that the parish or town council is properly managed, always remembering that the clerk is accountable to the council as a whole and not to individual councillors.
- To keep up to date with significant developments affecting the parish or town council at local, regional and national levels.
- To promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the parish, taking account of the strategic effects on other communities and the parish or town council as a whole.
- To work to bring about improvements through local projects, lobbying other service providers and work.
- To effectively represent the interests of the ward for which the councillor is elected.

- To represent the whole electorate; listen, and then represent the views of the whole community when discussing council business and working with outside bodies.
- To take an active part in the parish or town council's arrangements to build community capacity and promote measures that contribute to the parish or town council's vision and strategy.
- To attend parish or town council meetings.
- To prepare for meetings and be properly informed about the issues to be discussed.
- To take part in meetings and form sound judgements based on what is best for the community and then abide by majority decisions.
- To represent the parish or town council on outside bodies to which the councillor is appointed, such as village hall committees.
- To maintain proper standards of behaviour as an elected representative and abide by the Code of Conduct adopted by the council, maintaining high ethical standards at all times.
- To participate effectively as a member of any committee or working party to which the councillor is appointed.
- To contribute constructively to the democratic process and to actively encourage the parish or town council to participate generally in the government of the area and provide access to information where appropriate.
- To uphold the parish or town council's standing orders and ethical standards (ensuring that the impartiality of council staff is not compromised).
- To produce an annual report to enhance their accountability to the public by providing details of official activities and the contribution made to the effective operation of the parish or town council.

Essential Resources

Other useful information relating to this subject can be found in the Hampshire ALC Member Area:

Hampshire ALC Key Topic: Role of the Chairman

Hampshire ALC Key Topic: Role of the Clerk and RFO

Hampshire ALC Key Topic: Council Meetings

Hampshire ALC Key Topic: Communications and Engagement

Available on the NALC website

The Good Councillor's Guide (NALC Publication)

This document reflects our advice based on our understanding of the current legislation and guidance and our knowledge of the sector. It is not however intended to be formal legal advice.

For more complex issues we are able to obtain initial specialist advice on legal, employment, financial and planning matters as part of your membership fee. Please contact us to access this service.