

What are Community Councils?



What are Community Councils?



Community Councils were introduced by a law called the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

The Act says a Community Council should find out the views of the community and tell the local council about them.

There are around 1 thousand 2 hundred Community Councils in Scotland.

Community Councils get involved in local **issues**, either working on their own or in partnership with other organisations.

An **issue** is a subject or problem that people are thinking and talking about.

The area that a Community Council covers is decided by each local council.

The local authority must ask Community Councils about:

- how local services are delivered
- local planning applications
- **licensing** applications

A **Licensing** Board makes the rules for places that sell alcohol to the public.



Some things that Community Councils do



- write letters to tell people about an issue
- reply to draft policy reports or consultations
- get and reply to questions and problems from members of the public
- have public meetings and surveys to find out what things the community are worried about
- meet other Community Councils or other community groups
- send representatives to go to other local meetings
- make a newsletter to send to homes in the area, or put it on social media or the Community Council website
- arrange for public officials or others to attend future meetings of the Community Council
- arrange community events to tell people about the work of the Community Council

What does a Community Councillor do?



A Community Councillor represents the views of the community.

You have a duty to find out what most people in the community think about an issue, no matter what your own opinion is.



You must check the quality of the information you get so that you know it is true.

Do not let your own beliefs or feelings affect what you think about it.



If you have any private or personal interest in an issue that the Community Council is looking at, you have a duty to tell them.

You must not take part in discussions about the issue and how decisions about it are made.



You must find out what your local community need and want and take decisions that change things for the better.

You must treat everyone fairly and listen to different opinions, but you must not represent the interests of any one group.

Office Bearers



Each Community Council must have **office bearers** – people who have special jobs to do – like a Chairperson, a Treasurer and a Secretary.

Office bearers make sure Community Councils work well.

Members of the Community Council are all responsible for what the Community Council decides.

The Chairperson or Chair

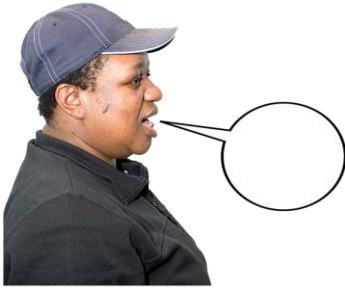


The Chairperson makes sure:

- everyone follows the rules
- the meeting follows the agenda
- that discussions are useful and that the meeting starts and finishes on time
- there are actions to say what work will happen next



The Chair may be asked to settle any arguments when there is a disagreement about the rules.



In regular meetings all speakers should address their comments to the Chair.

This helps the Chair to keep control of the discussion.

In Committee meetings that are not so formal, the Chair can decide how the discussion goes.



The Chair may also act on behalf of the Community Council between meetings or represent the Community Council at other meetings.

The Community Council can also ask other office bearers or members to do this.

The Vice Chair



The Vice Chair stands in for the Chair when they cannot come to a meeting.

The Vice Chair often becomes the next Chair.

The Secretary



The Secretary makes sure the Community Council runs smoothly by:

- organising online or in person meetings
- booking places to have meetings
- setting the agenda
- keeping minutes and records



The secretary also makes sure there is good communication between committee members, the public, the media and local authority officers.

The Treasurer



The Treasurer is responsible for:

- keeping the Community Council's financial records
- making payments on behalf of the Community Council
- managing the bank account

The Treasurer makes sure that any money coming in or going out:



- is agreed by the Community Council and recorded in the minutes
- has 2 **signatories** – people that Council members have agreed must sign all banking information



The Community Council must write to the bank to tell them who the 2 signatories are

It is good practice to have more than 2 authorized signatories, in case 1 person is not available.



The Treasurer must keep details of all receipts and money paid out and make an Annual Statement of Accounts.

Councils should use an independent examiner to approve the accounts.



The Treasurer must report and answer any questions about the Statement.

The Statement must be approved at the next AGM and it is then sent to the local council.



The standard form of words for the Treasurer's certificate is: "I certify that the above accounts have been prepared by me and accurately reflect the financial provisions relating to the period....."

What are Community Council Forums?



Some Community Councils in some areas join to be Forums or Associations to:

- share knowledge and experience
- share information and **resources** – staff, money and materials



- work together on projects that can improve life in the community
- tell people what Community Councils do and why they are a good thing
- be a way for people to say what they are worried about and have their voices heard by local decision-makers



Consultation and making decisions



The Scottish Government and other public bodies should make sure that Community Councils are asked what they think as early as possible when policies and decisions on local issues are being made.

Any consultation should be short, easy to understand, and easy to get.

It should include:

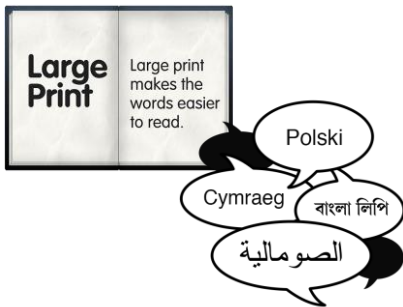
- a **summary** – a short version – about why the consultation is happening and how long it will last
- questions
- when work will happen and be finished
- information about other formats





When the consultation is finished a summary of the responses should be available in different ways like:

- on the organisation's website
- in paper format if asked for
- at face to face meetings



The person who has arranged the consultation must also send out feedback.

The feedback should:

- be available in different formats
- give a general view of what people have said
- explain what could change because of what people have said
- be put online





The [National Standards for Community Engagement](#) sets out good ways of working.



Copyright images © Photosymbols. Prepared by Disability Equality Scotland

