

- ① Resetting the relationship between local and national government. Read our **Local Government White Paper** (<https://www.local.gov.uk/local-government-white-paper>)



The role of a councillor

Information on the role of a councillor, support for councillors, guidance on the agreed code of conduct for councillors and more.



The councillor's role covers a variety of different areas:

✓ Representing your local area

A councillor's primary role is to represent their ward or division and the people who live in it. Councillors provide a bridge between the community and the council. As well as being an advocate for local residents and signposting them to the right people at the council, you will need to keep them informed about the issues that affect them.

In order to understand and represent local views and priorities, you need to build strong relationships and encourage local people to make their views known and engage with you and the council. Good

communication and engagement are central to being an effective councillor.

As a local councillor, your residents will expect you to:

- respond to their queries and investigate their concerns (casework)
- communicate council decisions that affect them
- know your patch and be aware of any problems
- know and work with representatives of local organisations, interest groups and businesses
- represent their views at council meetings
- lead local campaigns on their behalf
- act and conduct yourself in a manner that is appropriate for your role.

^ Community leadership

Community leadership is at the heart of modern local government. Councils work in partnership with local communities and organisations – including the public, voluntary, community and private sectors – to develop a vision for their local area, working collaboratively to improve services and quality of life for citizens. Councillors have a lead role in this process.

v Developing council policy

Councils need clear strategies and policies to enable them to achieve their vision for the area, make the best use of resources and deliver services that meet the needs of local communities. As a councillor you will contribute to the development of these policies and strategies, bringing the views and priorities of your local area to the debate. How you do this will depend on the committees and forums you are appointed to. However, the council's policy framework must be signed off by full council, on which every councillor sits.

✓ Planning and regulation

Councils are not just service providers; they also act as regulators. As a councillor you may be appointed to sit on the planning and regulatory committee – considering issues such as planning applications, licences for pubs and restaurants and ensuring that businesses comply with the law. In these roles, councillors are required to act independently and are not subject to the group or party whip. Most councils arrange special training for this.

Dealing with intimidation and abuse

A pressing concern facing those in public life is the increasing level of intimidation and abuse. In local government, this is risking the personal safety of councillors, undermining local democracy and decision-making, spreading misinformation, and putting off prospective candidates from standing. While debate and having different views is all part of a healthy democracy, abuse, public intimidation, and threats are designed to undermine democratic decision-making. View some of our resources on handling intimidation and abuse:

- **Councillors' guide to handling harassment, abuse and intimidation (<https://www.local.gov.uk/councillors-guide-handling-harassment-abuse-and-intimidation>)**
- **Civility in public life (<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/civility-public-life-resources-councillors>)**

Civility in public life

([/our-support/guidance-and-resources/civility-public-life-resources-councillors](https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/guidance-and-resources/civility-public-life-resources-councillors))

Practical advice for handling online abuse

(/practical-advice-handling-online-abuse)

In this section:

Further resources and guidance for new councillors

(/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development/councillor-hub/role-councillor/further-resources-and) Find helpful resources and guidance relevant to new councillors.

Support for councillors

(/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development/councillor-hub/role-councillor/support-councillors) Councils provide support to councillors in their role as democratically elected representatives, although the level and type of support provided will vary.

The constitution and meetings

(/our-support/councillor-and-officer-development/councillor-hub/role-councillor/constitution-and) As a new councillor you will receive a copy of your council's constitution, which sets out how the council conducts its business.

Equality and community cohesion

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Code of conduct and standards

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At the heart of the Equality Act is the Public Sector Equality Duty, which aims to tackle discrimination and inequality by embedding equality considerations in the day-to-day work of all public bodies.

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As a councillor you will be required to adhere to your council's agreed code of conduct for elected members. Each council adopts its own code, but it must be based on the Committee on Standards in Public Life's seven principles of public life.