

ADVICE NOTE: What Can Local Councils Do?

Powers which have been vested in Parish, Town and Community Councils by Acts of Parliament are summarised in this leaflet as a guide to Councillors and others. Each description is brief and is intended to be a general indication. Like all powers given to public bodies the powers of local councils are defined in detail in legislation and these details may include a requirement to obtain the consent of another body (for example the approval of the County Council to the provision of a car park). Local Councils must exercise their powers also subject to the provisions of the general law (for example planning permission is necessary for a sports pavilion). Information on all these details should be in the hands of the Clerks of the Councils.

In addition to the specific powers below, some councils may be eligible to use the General Power of Competence or the Well-being Power.

The powers are listed alphabetically.

- Allotments provision and maintenance of allotments for cultivation.
- Arts: developing and improving knowledge of the arts and the crafts which serve the arts.
- Baths: provision of baths and washhouses.
- Borrowing: Parish, Town and Community Councils can borrow money for up to a maximum of 25 years with loan sanction consent. The Council must have loan sanction consent before Borrowing.
- Cemeteries: provision and maintenance of burial grounds, cemeteries, crematoria, mortuaries and post-mortem rooms.
- Churchyards: a duty to maintain any closed churchyard where the duty has been transferred by the Church of England.
- Clocks: provision and maintenance of public clocks.
- Commons: power to protect any registered common which has no registered owner.
- Crime prevention: installation of equipment and establishment of schemes for the detection or prevention of crime; making grants to the police authority for these purposes.
- Entertainments: provision of any form of public entertainment and any premises for giving entertainments.
- Halls: provision of buildings for public meetings and functions, for indoor sports or recreation, or for the use of clubs or societies having recreational, social or athletic objects.
- Legal Proceedings: power to prosecute and defend any legal proceedings in the interests of the inhabitants. Power to take part in any public local inquiry.
- Lighting: provision and maintenance of any footway lighting which lights roads or pavements provided the columns are not above specified heights.
- Litter: provision of litter bins and bins for dog waste in streets and support for anti-litter campaigns.
- Open Spaces: provision and maintenance of public open spaces, public walks and pleasure grounds.
- Parking Places: provision and management of some car and cycle parks.
- Parks: provision and maintenance of public parks and appropriate facilities.
- Planning: local councils have a right to be notified of any planning application affecting their area and to make comments which the planning authority must take into account.

- Playing Fields: provision and maintenance of land for any kind of outdoor recreation, including boating pools.
- Ponds: power to deal with ponds, pools, or other places containing filth or matter prejudicial to health.
- Public Lavatories: provision and maintenance of public lavatories.
- Rights of Way: maintenance of public footpaths and bridleways.
- Roadside Verges: power to plant and maintain roadside verges.
- Seats: provision and maintenance of public seats on the highway.
- Shelters: provision and maintenance of shelters for general public use and also particularly for bus passengers.
- Sign: power to erect signs that warn of dangers or announce a place name, or indicate a bus stop.
- Swimming: provision of indoor or outdoor swimming pools or bathing places.
- Tourism: provision of facilities for conferences and encouragement of recreational and business tourism.
- Traffic Calming: contribution towards the cost of traffic calming works provided by highway authorities.
- Transport: establishment of car-sharing and taxi fare concession schemes; making grants for community bus services and bus services for the elderly or disabled; investigation of public transport, road and traffic provision and needs; provision of information about public transport services.
- Village Green: powers to maintain the village or town green.

General Expenditure Power

In any situation not covered by one of the specific powers described above a council may spend money on any purpose that in its opinion is of direct benefit to its area or to the inhabitants. The total expenditure by the council on all the cases under this general power must not in any financial year exceed £6.80 (year 2012/2013) per local government elector in the parish or town or community.