

# CHAIRMANSHIP

## What every chairman should know

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### **Chairmanship: what every chairman should know**

This booklet provides brief introductory guidance to parish and town councillors on roles and responsibilities within the council, the importance of effective meetings, and ways of engaging with communities. It is based on the pack, *Training in Chairmanship Skills* produced in 2005 as part of the National Training Strategy.

## Introducing *Chairmanship*

A chairman is a councillor who represents the electorate, contributes to decision-making and works with partner organisations like any other council member - but you have the extra responsibility of leadership. The chairman leads the council, manages meetings and is often the council's public face. The chairman is a title in law, but the law says very little about how the chairman operates. This booklet therefore introduces the roles, responsibilities and duties of the chairman; it considers different styles of chairmanship and ways in which chairmen might handle the role.

It is vital to elect a good chairman if the affairs of the council are to run smoothly. If the job were advertised, the specification for a chairman might look like this.

Qualifications	Willing to train
Knowledge	Good basic knowledge of local council law, procedures and financial management
Experience	At least one year's experience as a councillor
Skills	Ability to work well with people Ability to manage meetings Good leadership skills Good organisation and time management skills Good communication and public relations skills
Attitudes	Enthusiasm for and commitment to the work of the council and the community Respect for others

## The Role of the Chairman

### The role and its basis in law

A parish or town council has a duty to elect a chairman (Local Government Act 1972 section 15 (1)(2)).

*The chairman of a parish council shall be elected annually by the council from among the councillors.*

*The election of a chairman shall be the first business transacted at the annual meeting of the parish council ....*

The election of a chairman comes before any other agenda item at the annual meeting in May. The outgoing chairman (whether or not s/he is still a councillor) chairs the meeting for this first item. If s/he is still a councillor s/he

has both a personal and a casting vote but if not, s/he has a casting vote only. If the outgoing chairman is not present then the members choose a chairman from their number just for that item. The clerk *never* chairs the meeting. Once elected, the chairman signs a declaration of acceptance of office as chairman (in addition to accepting the office of councillor). This represents a commitment to the role and is a reminder of its importance.

It is good practice to elect a vice chairman later in the meeting. If both chairman and vice-chairman are absent from any meeting of the council, the councillors present elect a chairman just for that meeting. The chairman of a committee is elected at the first meeting of the committee after the Annual Meeting.

The chairman is leader of the council team and as such, has a responsibility to appreciate and respect the roles of others such as the clerk, councillors and the council itself. Chairmen often speak on behalf of the council in a public arena or represent the council in dealings with the media or other organisations. When they do so, they should remain consistent with what the council has agreed, even if the council has made a decision with which they don't agree. No individual councillor, not even the chairman, can make a decision on behalf of the council (Local Government Act 1972 s101).

The chairman's main role is the management of effective meetings. This is discussed in the next section. The chairman has very few legal duties; for example, if present at a meeting of the council the chairman must preside. Another duty is to sign the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record (and to initial every page if the minutes are loose-leaf). The chairman usually convenes and chairs the Annual Parish or Town Meeting, the gathering of the electorate, but this is not a legal duty.

It is essential to understand rules of procedure contained in statute and standing orders. The chairman also leads the council in managing its finances. As a councillor you have a responsibility in law for sound financial management – no single councillor can avoid the task of keeping a check on the use of public money – but as chairman, you sign the Annual Governance Statement on the annual return on behalf of the council and, if chairing the meeting at which it is approved, you sign the Statement of Accounts. Therefore the chairman must know what financial procedures are required.

The chairman must make sure that the council's business complies with legislation, standing orders and financial regulations. The chairman is responsible for the overall integrity of the council and for ensuring that decision-making is fair, balanced and transparent. Training, experience, networking and advice from the clerk and from the county Association of Local Councils all help develop the knowledge a chairman needs.

### **Styles of chairmanship**

The atmosphere of a meeting and the character of the council often depend on the style of chairmanship and the authority of the chairman. For example, the chairman can strengthen or relax the formality with which business is

conducted. It is essential that the chairman acts with firmness while demonstrating respect for others at all times. There is no need to be authoritarian or aggressive; taken to extremes this attitude can become bullying, and the atmosphere then becomes tense and fearful; people respond by fighting or fleeing and the work of the council falls to pieces. Another chairman might be cautious, anxious and lacking in confidence; this often allows someone else to step in and dominate proceedings. A good chairman provides leadership, guidance and motivation, encouraging others to participate and giving them confidence; people respond by co-operating and remaining committed.

It helps if the chairman can think clearly and stay calm when faced with complex issues or irrational behaviour. A sense of humour at the right moment can lighten the mood. A new chairman should be firm from the outset; it is easier to lighten up later once the ground rules have been established.

The chairman's style might change depending on the purpose of the meeting or event. If the council is deciding policy or debating a response to proposals, the chairman will encourage participation while keeping discussion focused on the topic. If information-giving is moving too slowly or if conflict is emerging from debate, the chairman might be more assertive to move business on or calm things down. If you are at a community event, you will be formal or informal as appropriate and if in the office with staff you show respect and treat the clerk as an equal partner. Sometimes the chairman is expected to adopt a conciliatory style, facilitating or mediating when problems need solving. In each of these cases, the personality of the chairman will affect the way in which events unfold and will draw responses from other participants. This creates an atmosphere in which people might flourish - or not – and presents an image of the council to the wider world.

### **Leading the team**

The chairman is the leader of the team whose style has the potential to create harmony or conflict. If the chairman can bring everyone together for the benefit of the community then the council will be worthy of respect. Party politics can be a source of conflict that wastes resources and presents an image that many members of the public will not support. Some councils insist that the community, not the party comes first. The chairman can take the lead in preventing party politics from damaging the council and will create a council that people will value in all corners of the community.

The clerk, responsible financial officer (RFO) and staff are also members of the team with specific roles, responsibilities and, in the case of the clerk and RFO, legal duties. The clerk (or proper officer) leads the office, even if s/he is the only officer and works from home; if there are staff, then the clerk is their manager. The clerk is employed by the council to carry out its decisions and support its work but s/he takes instructions from the council as a corporate body, not from the chairman. It is wise for the chairman to respect the clerk as an equal partner in the team and to trust the clerk as an objective, professional officer trained to give advice. In law, officers are the only

individuals who can make a decision on behalf of the council; this is because their professionalism can be trusted. It is extremely important to help the clerk feel a valued member of the council team and to encourage him/her to develop appropriate skills, attitudes and knowledge.

The council has a duty to act as a responsible employer and abide by employment law and guidance. The chairman needs to know what is required. The rules protect employers and employees, whether full-time or part-time (eg pay, pension rights, leave, training, harassment and discrimination). All staff must have a contract and all clerks should be paid (as a minimum) according to recommendations published by the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks.

It is a recipe for disaster if the chairman tries to manage the staff. First, the clerk is the manager of all staff and the chairman should not intervene in this relationship. Secondly the council needs to find a way of managing the clerk as an employee that does not compromise the sense of equal co-operation between the clerk and the chairman. The most appropriate way of doing this is for the council to set up a small staffing committee. This committee decides how staff will be recruited and managed, leaving the implementation of their decisions to the clerk. The committee then acts as the clerk's line manager, representing the council as an employer.

It is good practice for the council to make sure that all staff have an opportunity to review their performance at least once a year and to relate their work to the aims of the council. This process works best if staff appreciate that it contributes to the development of both the individual and the council and is not intended to be judgemental. The clerk arranges reviews for all members of staff but the committee is responsible for holding review meetings with the clerk.

## **Chairing Meetings**

### **Preparation and the agenda**

A meeting is the responsibility of the chairman and the clerk working in partnership and it is more likely to run smoothly if it has been carefully planned. The clerk owns the agenda because s/he signs it as proper officer and must therefore be confident that the meeting is legally convened and that business will be conducted lawfully. The chairman can make suggestions for the order in which matters are discussed or, like all councillors, can propose items for the agenda, but the clerk should know how to design the agenda to prevent unlawful decisions.

The principle of warning councillors of matters to be discussed is enshrined in law (Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12 paragraph 10 (2)(b)). A good chairman will be aware of this when the agenda is drawn up and during meetings. It helps if agenda items are expressed precisely, identifying what

councillors are to do. Headings can be too vague, containing insufficient information on the business to be considered.

It is also the responsibility of both clerk and chairman to prevent decisions from being made without warning during a meeting. This is the reason why Any Other Business, Matters Arising, Correspondence and Urgent Business<sup>1</sup> are unacceptable unless the agenda specifies that matters are for information or noting only. Training for clerks usually provides guidance on alternative tactics. For example, an ongoing matter requiring further decisions should be on the agenda in its own right rather than using Matters Arising while updates on progress can be included in a brief clerk's report. As councils get more and more correspondence, it is cumbersome to table everything at a meeting so the clerk sorts it into matters requiring a decision (these get their own agenda heading), matters for noting (these are listed for information only) and other correspondence that can be circulated in a file outside the meeting. Urgent matters that appear too late for the agenda or routine matters often raised under AOB can either be handled by the clerk as part of their job or they go to another meeting, perhaps a committee or an extraordinary meeting.

Preparation includes studying the agenda and all other papers, while a good chairman asks to be briefed by the clerk, carefully anticipating the needs and interests of the councillors. You consider those items that can be covered quickly and those that need more time, planning the phases of the meeting, perhaps noting timings in the margin of the agenda. This means discussion can be properly controlled and the meeting ends on time.

Finally the chairman arrives at the meeting punctually, checking arrangements and welcoming arrivals, especially speakers and members of the public. If possible, the room should be arranged so that members of the public can see and hear proceedings clearly and it is appreciated if there are copies of the agenda available to help them understand what is happening.

### **Rules of procedure and the code of conduct**

The smooth running of the meeting is now in the hands of the chairman. The rules of procedure, often passing unnoticed by observers, support a good meeting and so the chairman should know them well. First the chairman checks there is a quorum (three or a third of all councillors whichever is the greater<sup>2</sup>). Without a quorum the meeting is illegal and must be abandoned. On time, the chairman calls the meeting to order and declares it open.

The first item is usually 'Apologies'. The agenda should be precise in saying what the councillors are to do. For example: *To note (or approve) apologies for absence*. The chairman can remind councillors of their duty to attend the meeting and therefore of the importance of giving apologies in advance

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<sup>1</sup> Urgent business is permitted at meetings of principal authorities, but the law does not apply to parish and town councils.

<sup>2</sup> The law does not prescribe a quorum for committees. The council usually makes its own decision and sets it down in standing orders. It is not advisable to have a committee quorum of fewer than three.



through the clerk, preferably with an acceptable reason. It is not advisable to make reasons public. A record of attendance and apologies is evidence if a councillor is in danger of disqualification. A councillor is automatically disqualified as a councillor, and a casual vacancy is declared<sup>3</sup>, if s/he does not attend any meeting of the council (including a site visit or a meeting as a council representative) for six months. The councillor can prevent disqualification by seeking approval from the council for their continued absence for a designated period of time. In this instance, the reason must be given and approved.

Early in the meeting, councillors are asked to declare personal or prejudicial interests<sup>4</sup> in matters that follow on the agenda. Note that the chairman can prompt a councillor to declare an interest but cannot insist on it. The chairman should know the Code of Conduct well but each councillor, having agreed to the Code when accepting office, must take responsibility for his/her own interests. Each councillor completes a register of interests according to carefully constructed guidance when they first become a councillor and must keep it up-to-date.

The Standards Board for England, the body responsible for managing the ethical behaviour of people in public life, has a useful website that provides detailed guidance on declaring interests. The Monitoring Officer at the principal authority (district level) can also advise. The principal authority has a duty to provide training for all councils. Sometimes councillors use the Code of Conduct to attack other councillors but a good chairman will find other ways of resolving conflict. Once complaints become official the press will have a field day. The chairman is a champion of proper, ethical behaviour, a role model who leads by example.

Again, early in the meeting, the chairman seeks confirmation that the minutes of the previous meeting are a true record and signs a copy of the accurate minutes; this is then a legal document carrying weight in a court of law. This is not an opportunity for councillors to challenge decisions or to argue about what they said before. The chairman simply makes sure that the record is correct.

All good councils provide a designated time for public participation. Experts used to advise that this occurs outside a meeting (often before it starts) but they now say that it should be part of the meeting. It can be an opportunity to ask questions, raise issues or make representations about an item on the agenda. The council should specify arrangements for public participation in standing orders. It helps if there is a reference on the published agenda so that members of the public know what to do; for example, must they notify the council in advance of questions they wish to ask? The chairman controls the session according to agreed procedure. The chairman also invites speakers to make presentations under specific agenda items. External speakers or members of the public do not contribute to the general debate.

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<sup>3</sup> Except if ordinary elections are less than six months away.

<sup>4</sup> Prejudicial interests are in fact both personal and prejudicial.

One particularly tricky aspect of chairing public participation is where a councillor has declared a prejudicial interest in a matter on the agenda earlier in the meeting (and before public participation). If the council has adopted paragraph 12(2) of the Code of Conduct (the clerk will advise), then the councillor with an interest has the same rights to speak on the matter as a member of the public. Advisers suggest that s/he leaves the room while other members of the public are making their own representations on the same topic. S/he also leaves the room when the matter is later discussed. The process needs careful management by the chairman.

One other danger arising from public participation within a meeting is that the council might be tempted to respond to a matter raised by a member of the public by making a decision. The chairman should prevent this because councillors have not been warned of it in advance. The clerk will deal with routine matters automatically; otherwise it is correct procedure to bring the matter to another meeting.

The chairman should prevent a councillor from using 'point of order' as a way of contradicting another speaker. Points of order can be used only if a councillor thinks correct procedure is not being followed. Similarly a call for an amendment cannot be used to oppose a proposal and the chairman should refuse to accept it. When an amendment is appropriate, the chairman manages the vote on the amendment. If more than one amendment is proposed, they are dealt with in order. If all amendments are turned down, the chairman returns to the original proposal.

The chairman can ask the clerk for advice on procedures during the meeting. Many clerks and chairmen have an agreed signal allowing the clerk to attract the chairman's attention if advice is needed – for example, if a matter arises unexpectedly.

### **Handling discussion, reporting and decision making**

The chairman works through the agenda item by item, keeping activity focused on what the councillors are to do in each case and making sure that decisions are lawful. If necessary, the chairman clarifies proceedings for councillors, encourages everyone who wishes to speak (especially those who might be reticent) while keeping discussion to the point, preventing people from speaking for too long and guiding discussion to a conclusion. The chairman can help new councillors feel at ease and prevent articulate and experienced councillors from dominating discussion. Sometimes longstanding councillors seek to diminish new councillors' enthusiasm but a good chairman would be wise to encourage new ideas and help new councillors feel part of the team. There are many ways of stimulating discussion. The chairman can ask for opinions, reactions and examples to illustrate issues; you can question assumptions or claims and tease out points if a councillor seems to be holding back.

Sometimes the chairman has to manage a point of conflict between councillors or an interruption from the public; in this case, the chairman treats everyone with respect, with firmness as required, and enforces rules of procedure where necessary. As a councillor the chairman participates in discussion but should not dominate.

The main purpose of a meeting must always be to make decisions. The most interesting meetings involve discussion about action that the council can take to improve life in the community. If councillors and members of the public spend two hours simply listening to reports they can lose interest; they might even wonder what the council is there for. Meetings can be dominated by reports from the clerk, from principal authority councillors, from representatives on other bodies, from committees, from the chairman, from the Police, from ward councillors and so on. The chairman can help keep these to a minimum by deciding which information is absolutely necessary and suggesting ways of reporting quickly.

There is no need to report committee meetings in detail. Committee minutes are sent out with the agenda and taken as read. The full council simply notes decisions taken by a committee with delegated powers; discussion is not usually necessary. If a committee is advisory, the full council focuses on its recommendations rather than every detail in the minutes. The clerk, chairman and others can be encouraged to prepare written reports to go with the agenda and, at the meeting, they provide a brief summary and respond to questions from others. Anyone giving a verbal report can be asked to keep it short, referring only the most important points or giving an overview.

Whether the business is a report or a debate, the chairman brings each item to a close in a timely manner. If a decision is required you summarise the main points, ensure a proposal is clear and manage the vote by show of hands. There is no requirement for a seconder unless stated in standing orders. If the vote is tied the chairman has a second or casting vote, enabling the council to make a decision. You don't have to use the casting vote if you think it would be detrimental to the council. The chairman then confirms what has been decided (the resolution) so that the clerk has properly recorded it.

It helps if the chairman is aware of the rules by which the council as a corporate body can delegate decisions to an officer, to a committee, a sub-committee or another authority. Note that decisions can never be made by an individual councillor or informal group on behalf of the council (Local Government Act 1972 s101). If the council trusts a committee to make good decisions then delegation is formally agreed by the council and recorded in standing orders or the minutes. If the committee or sub-committee does not have delegated powers, then its job is to make recommendations to the full council. Delegation to an officer is normally written into their job description attached to the contract but it can also be included in standing orders. Many routine decisions are delegated to the clerk, the RFO and other staff in this way. This means that the council can spend valuable meeting time on more important activities.

Meetings are at the centre of council business. This is where the council decides how to spend public money, what to do in the parish and how to manage its affairs. Every member of the team contributes to an effective meeting, but ultimately, the success of a council meeting as the source of strategy, policy and decision-making lies in the hands of the chairman.

## **Public Relations**

### **Welcoming the public**

The council exists to serve the community to which it belongs, so it is strange if the council is inaccessible. There are many stories of people arriving for a meeting in a dark car park unable to find an entrance to the building where the meeting room is well-hidden. This is far from welcoming. When someone arrives in a hall or chamber for the first time, they will be unsure what to do or where to be; it is encouraging if someone greets them and offers guidance.

If people are to be encouraged to attend council meetings, it helps if the meeting is interesting and worthwhile. A good council provides an opportunity for the public to ask questions or make their views known in a controlled slot. The chairman can explain how the session works. If you have a big public turnout where people have come to protest, then it might be helpful to talk to them first and to have a strategy for handling the issue that is causing conflict. People need to have their say before listening as the council discusses the issue in question, and the chairman prevents interruptions. The council should provide a constructive response rather than delaying the matter, as this leaves people feeling dissatisfied. The chairman can always adjourn the meeting if matters get out of hand while help is called. If the trouble is likely to be truly disturbing then the police can be on standby.

The proceedings of a council can be confusing to a member of the public. It is the chairman's job to lead the meeting in a way that is open and transparent. For example, is the room arranged so that everyone can see and hear? Are jargon words, initials (eg RFO) and technical terms explained? Is chatting during discussion prevented? The reputation of the council depends on how observers perceive council meetings and the chairman is in charge.

Access to the clerk or staff is mainly the clerk's responsibility but the chairman can encourage greater access if necessary by discussing options with the clerk. For example, a clerk who works from home in another village can be reached by phone or e-mail only, so the chairman might suggest a weekly surgery in the village hall. Or the clerk with an office, feeling the strain of constant interruptions, might be tempted to reduce opening hours; in this case a receptionist could be employed to field enquiries.

The extent to which a council is open, approachable and accessible is the responsibility of all concerned but the chairman can, as ever, lead the way.

### **Understanding the whole community**

It is all too easy to see ‘the community’ or ‘members of the public’ as a mass who are all the same. For example, “people just aren’t interested” – “they turn up only to complain” – “it’s a very lively community you know”. In this case, there are hundreds, if not thousands of people whose views and attitudes are ignored or hijacked by the articulate few and an impression of apathy.

While people in the mass can appear unconcerned about council business, a conversation with almost any individual or group in the lane, at the school gate, at a stall in the farmers’ market or watching a cricket match, will draw out opinions on the quality of life, services and the environment in the town or village. A local community is made up of many smaller communities found in different neighbourhoods, clubs and societies, faith groups and institutions. And there are many people who don’t join in; maybe they are housebound or tired after being at work and attending to family; perhaps they have difficulty expressing themselves or they lack confidence for social activity. The barriers to participation are extensive and often difficult to overcome.

The chairman can take the lead in reaching out into the community, raising the profile of the council, explaining what it does, asking for ideas and gathering opinions. The first step is to understand the community in all its component parts, to recognise all organisations and institutions, to know where groups meet informally, to be aware of all those people who can’t, for whatever understandable reason, participate in community life.

### **Engaging the community**

Once aware of the community in all its different guises, the council (often represented by the chairman) can engage people’s interest. Armed with questions designed to tease out what people think, you can find opportunities to listen. One chairman sits at a specific bench in the High Street, welcoming the opportunity to chat. Another visits village organisations and the school to talk about the work of the council and inspire discussion. A third works with a professional youthworker to reach out to youngsters in the town.

There are many ways in which a council can encourage more people in the community to express their views. For example, a series of workshops or small group discussions is often more effective than a crowded public meeting where only the most confident speak out. A community conference, a drop-in event on a special topic, an exhibition, a citizens’ panel, a Planning for Real<sup>®</sup> exercise – all these are tried and tested ways of engaging more people. The council can seek advice on community engagement from the Rural Community Council while the websites of community development organisations and experienced councils can offer expertise.

### **Working with the media**

The media help to create the council’s reputation. They can convey an image that is innovative, active, troubled or inept. They can be an ally offering support or an enemy homing in on a damaging story. Although some

newspapers make an effort to be impartial and balanced, others might come down on one side or the other, depending on the story.

The media have several roles. They inform the public of the council's decisions and actions and sometimes, having seen the agenda, they draw the public's attention to a contentious issue. They might explore different views and suggest solutions, influencing members of the public as they decide what they think. The media acts as a watchdog and can be a forum for airing complaints about the council. Sometimes the media contact the council, asking to speak to the clerk or the chairman, to find out what the council thinks on a matter of concern. In these instances you should try to remain consistent with the views of the council as a whole and not give a purely personal view.

As chairman, it helps to get to know your local reporters and encourage the clerk to seek advice on writing press releases. New reporters attending council meetings are often young and inexperienced so the chairman will get off on the right foot by explaining what is happening. You should build a good working relationship with the media but do take care about talking off-the-record; this suggests that you might trust the reporter but one day, the reporter might let you down. It is unwise to respond to an unexpected phone call from a reporter without thinking carefully. If necessary, ask for time – and check the press deadline. Avoid offering 'no comment' which leaves the reporter with more questions and no answers.

More often than not you are working with the press, but occasionally a really good story will attract the attention of local radio or even regional television. This can be more intimidating but prepare carefully, know your facts and avoid speaking too quickly. You can always ask for time to compose yourself and before going live you can make it clear to the presenter if there is anything you will not discuss.

Of course, the council can always use the media to get its own information and views across. Its approach to the media will be part of its communications strategy.

### **A communications strategy**

Image, reputation and profile are important to the council; they might help you to get re-elected and public support for the council's spending plans and activities might depend on them. The council will benefit if it remains in control of its own reputation and ensures that it has a high profile as an active, efficient and responsive organisation serving the community. A carefully thought out communications strategy helps to achieve the right image. The first step is to consider what sort of image the council wants to represent: modern, prudent, reliable or vibrant perhaps. The next step is to work out who your audiences are including all those diverse groups and individuals living, working and visiting in your community and your partner organisations beyond the parish boundaries. You might even want to build a national reputation in a particular field.

You take into account communication in both directions, from the council outwards and from others inwards, and you assess all aspects of communication. This might include a logo, letterheads, noticeboards, signs on council property, posters, banners, market stalls, newsletters, an interactive website, e-mail, suggestion boxes, surveys, drop-in days, conferences, consultation, local magazines and many more.

Given the disability discrimination legislation, the council should take advice on how to make sure no-one is disadvantaged because of disabilities such as hearing or visual impairment. For example, websites can be designed to improve readability for people who are visually impaired or dyslexic; signs can be provided in Braille and council chambers can have hearing loops.

The council might choose a colour scheme or design style that helps people spot the council immediately. Would someone arriving in your town or village be able to find the council quickly? Would they get an immediate sense of an active council because the evidence is clear? The most obvious form of communication is action. If councillors get out into the community, turning up in all its many corners attending local events, holding surgeries and giving talks to local organisations, the profile of the council and opportunities for communication in both directions grows quickly. Once again, the chairman can take the lead in creating a council that really does want to communicate with its community.

## **Being a Good Chairman**

What kind of a chairman would you like to be? This booklet raises questions and suggestions for ways in which a council chairman can lead the team. Your first task is to understand your own role, responsibilities and duties and those of others such as the clerk and councillors. You also need to be aware of differences between being an individual councillor with a special role and a representative of the council as a corporate body. Your style has an impact on the mood of the council and on its reputation in the community and beyond.

Your most obvious task is to manage useful meetings that people are keen to attend, meetings that get things done while operating within the legal framework. You need to understand both council procedures and how to handle people if your role in meetings is to be a success. You work in equal partnership with the clerk to make sure that everything runs smoothly. You can also take the lead in building a strong relationship between the council and its community. A good council will make people feel welcome, especially at meetings and in the office. As chairman you can be seen out and about listening and talking in the community; you can suggest ways in which the council consults and engages people and you can work with the media to get them on your side. The council's profile depends on what you decide to do. Chairmanship is a challenge but if all goes well, it is most satisfying.





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## **About the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils**

The Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils is part of a national network and has been representing Town & Parish Councils and Parish Meetings for over sixty years. We provide advice and information for them, and training for councillors and clerks. We represent local council interests through partnerships with other local and regional agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors.

If you would like further details of the other courses we provide with the Oxfordshire Partnership for Local Councils please contact us at the address above.