

What Can Local Councils Do?

The 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.

The powers are listed alphabetically. Where a power is marked with an asterisk the council may, in addition to exercising the power itself, help another body to act by giving financial assistance.

- 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 (which in modern terms may mean a launderette).
- 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 Power to contribute to the costs of a churchyard in use and 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, on churches or elsewhere.
- Commons Power to protect any finally 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. (This includes maintaining bands or orchestras and providing for dancing.)
- *Halls Provision of buildings for public meetings and functions, for indoor sports or physical 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 litterbins in streets and support for anti-litter campaigns.
- Open Spaces Provision and maintenance of public open spaces, pleasure grounds and public walks.
- Parking Places Provision and management of 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.
- Post and Telephone Power to guarantee the postal or telephone authorities against a loss on a facility.
- 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 £3.50 per local government elector in the parish or town or community