

# Did you know?

There are **10,000** parish and town councils in England. They are the first tier of local government and represent **35 million** people with **16 million** electors, raising around **£900 million** in precept and investing over **£2 billion** in communities.

Some of the largest councils have a precept of over **£1 million** a year. **100,000** councillors spend over **14 million** hours a year serving those councils to help change their communities. Over 300 new parish and town councils have been created in rural and urban areas in the last decade.

# About

## **National Association of Local Councils**

Since 1947, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has been the only recognised national membership organisation for 10,000 community, neighbourhood, parish and town councils. Parish and town councils are the first tier of local government and are statutory bodies. These councils are at the forefront of community development, ensuring that local needs are met and the community's voice is heard, ultimately enhancing the community's quality of life and wellbeing. NALC works with a network of 43 county associations to support, promote, improve and create sustainable councils. NALC believes these vibrant and dynamic parish and town councils are at the centre of community effort, delivering services and giving their communities a democratic voice.

## **Society of Local Council Clerks**

Founded in 1972, the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) has gone from strength to strength, starting with just 50 members and now representing clerks to over 5,000 parish, town and community councils in England and Wales. As the professional body for clerks and senior council employees, SLCC ensure its members are equipped with the necessary knowledge, training, and skills to thrive in their roles and best support their council and community. Their vision and ethos is clear: Inspiring professionals and empowering councils and communities. SLCC recognises the importance of support and recognition throughout a clerk's professional journey. Whether members are seeking expert advice, looking to develop their careers, or aiming to build connections with fellow clerks, SLCC is dedicated to offering the support and recognition they deserve.

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# Foreword

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) are committed to a strong and effective partnership to support councils, councillors and clerks in delivering for their places – building stronger, more resilient communities.

Because our country faces challenges national government alone can't solve. Delivering its missions cannot be delivered by national government on its own. It is local government working together at all levels which is the key to tackling these challenges.

This includes our most hyperlocal level of government - England's 10,000 parish, town and community councils and their 100,000 unpaid councillors and thousands of professional staff. They are local leaders with skin in the game who know their places best and what they need. They have an important part in working with the national government and wider local government to make a success of devolution.

NALC and SLCC are ambitious for the sector and confident that it can contribute significantly to addressing issues ranging from health to housing, the climate emergency and cost of living crisis. We also know that a growing number of hyperlocal councils are taking on additional responsibilities from financially challenged principal councils to safeguard community assets and local services.

That's why we are committed to working together to ensure that the role of parish, town and community councils as the first tier of local government is recognised at the local, county, regional and national level. That councils engage effectively with their communities, empowering residents and community groups and supporting them to deliver community objectives and to ensure councils have the capacity and capability to deliver their changing role and fulfill their potential.

This publication shines a spotlight on this increasingly vital part of local government through key data and examples of how hyperlocal councils are supporting and improving their communities.

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# Did you know...



NALC's manifesto for building stronger communities across England sets out an offer to the government with its policy asks to strengthen local leadership through parish, town and community councils. With diverse funding and building their capacity and capability, parish, town and community councils can empower rural and urban communities and help them level up their areas. **Scan the QR code** to read more.



Learn more about our plans to enhance the visibility of parish and town councils at the Local Government Association Annual Conference. Visit Stand C45, attend our fringe event on devolution and reorganisation, and explore the Falmouth Town Council Innovation Zone session. **Scan the QR code** and find out more.



You can stay in the loop and never miss out on the latest NALC updates, events, valuable insights and the weekly chief executive's bulletin by subscribing to our mailing list today! Join our community of subscribers and elevate your experience and knowledge of the parish, town and community council sector. **Scan the QR code** to sign-up.



Would you like to hear more from SLCC? Visit the SLCC website to sign up for updates on the latest events and educational news. **Scan the QR code** to register.



SLCC's Local Council Consultancy (LCC) aims to be the first-choice provider of locum clerk and consultancy services to parish, town and community councils. It provides value for money for sector-specific consultancy expertise and professional clerks to councils across England and Wales. **Scan the QR code** to find out more.

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**DID YOU KNOW?**

Over 1,750 parish, town, and community councils have signed up for the Civility and Respect Pledge, enabling them to demonstrate their commitment to standing up to poor behaviour across the sector and driving positive changes to support civil and respectful conduct.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Parish, town and community councils think globally and act locally to tackle climate change. Take Star Council Awards Climate Response of the Year 2024 winner, Exmouth Town Council in Devon, which established a dedicated Climate and Ecological Emergency Working Party. Thame Town Council in Oxfordshire developed a Green Living Plan, and Kibworth Beauchamp Parish Council in Leicestershire installed charging points for electric vehicles.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Over 300 new parish, town, and community councils have been established in rural and urban areas over the last decade, with new councils being created every year including through local government reorganisation. This includes London's first-ever parish council, Queens Park Community Council in Westminster.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Young people are the future of our communities! Parish, town, and community councils support young people locally by curating green spaces and holding events, funding youth groups, installing playgrounds and skate parks, providing bursaries for students and grants for school uniforms, running fitness and activity sessions, working with stakeholders, creating youth councils, and providing youth clubs and services.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Star Council Awards Clerk of the Year 2024 winner James Hardy of Penzance Town Council in Cornwall has transformed local services through inclusive leadership and a strong public service ethos. In a short period working with councillors and council staff, he has improved access for digitally excluded residents, rebuilt trust in local government, and led the reopening of a council hub in the historic market house with town deal funding.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Many parish, town, and community councils nationwide have stepped up to support their communities in the cost-of-living crisis. Northwood Parish Council in the Isle of Wight provides warm spaces. Coxhoe Parish Council in Durham has opened a community pantry, and Haywards Heath Town Council in West Sussex has launched the Haywards Heath Coat Exchange to provide winter coats to those in need.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Local Council Clerk Week is a celebratory week designed to raise the profile of this vital profession and the work clerks do on behalf of parish, town, and community councils.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Health and well-being are essential parts of everyday life and integral to leading a happy and healthy lifestyle. Parish, town, and community councils are supporting just that, such as Peterlee Town Council in Durham, which introduced Taste Buddies to encourage members of the community experiencing loneliness to come together weekly and Alcester Town Council, which created a health and well-being board bringing together key local partners and appointed a health and well-being co-ordinator to develop many projects including a gone fishing club.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Clerks are usually trained and qualified professionals in community governance and council administration. They juggle various skills, from finance and accounting to staff management and HR, to understand and interpret relevant and ever-changing legislation. In 1991, only approximately 33% of clerks reported having received specific training for their roles, a marked contrast to the 89% who reported having received specific training for their posts in 2019.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Parish, town, and community councils nationwide are winning awards! Take Nettlestone and Seaview Parish Council, Swanage Town Council and Weymouth Town Council, who won Keep Britain Tidy's prestigious Blue Flag and Seaside Awards. Lowestoft Town Council, whose Love Parks Week campaign was honoured at the Keep Britain Tidy Awards. Sevenoaks Town Council were awarded Platinum at the Loo of the Year Awards. Oswestry Town Council, Shrewsbury Town Council and South Molton Town Council were all crowned at the Great British Market Awards.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Parish and town council clerks advise their councillors, ensuring that council business is conducted correctly. From lobbying MPs, working with principal authorities to change speed limits and car parking charges, reporting potholes, applying for grants, leading local climate change initiatives, organising civic celebrations, and researching complex planning applications.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

When parish, town, and community councils actively engage with young people, it brings fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and creative solutions. It builds trust and confidence in local government initiatives. Weymouth Town Council has established and supports a youth council, led by a dedicated core of 12 to 15 young people who represent the voices of Weymouth's youth community. This enables them to discuss relevant issues and participate in the decision-making process.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

The average world temperature increase of 1°C over the past 70 years is unprecedented in terms of timescale. Parish, town, and community councils play a crucial role in local projects, including the tree-planting initiative by Mistley Parish Council, Bollington Goes Green Week organised by Bollington Town Council, community polytunnels developed by Whitehill Town Council, and the renewable energy system project undertaken by Yate Town Council.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Star Council Awards Council of the Year 2024 winner, Great Linford Parish Council in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, has demonstrated outstanding commitment to community engagement and partnership working. By restructuring its team and appointing dedicated roles for community liaison, communications, and programme delivery, the council has built a network of over 50 partners and launched forums that bring together residents, authorities, and service providers to share concerns and solutions.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Neighbourhood planning empowers communities to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape future growth. A government database indicates that there were approximately 2,800 neighbourhood plans in place at the end of 2021, with around 90% of those plans led by parish, town, and community councils.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Parish, town, and community councils play a significant role in creating inclusive environments and supporting LGBTQ+ communities. For example, Crewe Town Council honoured older LGBTQ+ community members at their Silver Rainbow Pride, Leighton-Linslade Town Council held a Pride Working Party that served as a platform for brainstorming inclusive policies, Hertford Town Council held a Family Pride Day designed to educate the public about LGBTQ+ issues, and Corby Town Council holds one of the most significant Pride events, which is getting bigger every year.