



DALC
Devon Association
of Local Councils



A COUNCILLOR DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

For parish and town
councils in Devon



INTRODUCTION

Councillors play an important role in local communities.

Parish and town councils are responsible for delivering a wide range of services and projects that directly impact the lives of residents, and we believe that every councillor wants to perform their duties well.

We recognise the responsibilities associated with this role can be daunting. There are rules, procedures and legislation to understand, as well as managing community expectations and your own aspirations.

But where do you start? What support, guidance and training is available to help you to be a good councillor?

We've created our Councillor Development Framework to help meet this need. With four developmental levels, our framework can support councillors from newly elected, to effective community leaders.



“We believe training is essential for all parish and town councillors to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. Training ensures councillors are equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to make informed decisions, manage resources efficiently, and engage effectively with local communities.”

*Cara Stobart, County Officer
Devon Association of Local Councils*

Our development framework offers a variety of learning opportunities including: suggested reading, e-learning, webinars and in-person courses, to suit every council size and budget, and individual learning style.

We continue to build on the topics available, with further courses being developed and available soon.

Much of the content we deliver ourselves, through our highly knowledgeable and skilled team. Some courses we deliver through partnerships with subject experts, ensuring you get the best possible service.

All of our courses are available to book on our website devonalc.org.uk (log in required), with all suggested reading free to download.

THE COUNCILLOR DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

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LEADER

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CORE

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FOUNDATION

Read on for more information about each level.

FOUNDATION

There are some things that councillors ‘need to know’ to help them work effectively.

You don’t need to know everything, but having key knowledge and a broad understanding is an essential foundation for every councillor - and knowing where to go for more information is also important.

At the foundation level we focus upon:

- Understanding key roles and responsibilities
- Knowledge of councils and how they operate
- Exploring what councils can do for their communities
- Understanding the area you represent

We recognise that councillors bring a wide range of skills, knowledge and experience to their roles. It’s important for councillors to undertake a skills audit to better understand their own strengths and weaknesses, identify where they can add value to their council (such as membership on committees), and identify training needs to boost their confidence and effectiveness.

FIRST STEP:

Complete our **councillor skills audit** and create your own personal development plan.

Essential Reading:

The Good Councillor’s Guide

An introduction to the work of councils and the part you play as a councillor.



TRAINING AVAILABLE

Being a Good Councillor

A foundation level course providing an introduction to local councils and being a councillor.

Available as:

- ✓ Webinar series
- ✓ Face-to-face
- ✓ In-house

Code of Conduct

An overview of the rules and expectations that govern councillors, including declaring interests, dispensations and complaints.

Available as:

- ✓ Webinar
- ✗ Face-to-face
- ✓ In-house

E-learning available:

- **An introduction to local councils**
- **Standards in public life**

Self-study online modules, perfect for those with limited time but wanting to grasp the basics.



Getting to know your council is just as important as training when getting started. Be sure to engage in any induction process, read your councils policies and procedures, and ask for help from your clerk and/or experienced members when needed.

Also check out our [induction sessions](#) to learn more about DALC.

CORE

Once foundation knowledge has been attained, councillors can develop their understanding on key aspects of council business.

This next stage aims to develop subject knowledge as well as system knowledge, building a greater understanding of how the council operates and understanding the councillor's role in those areas.

At the core level we focus upon:

- The council's responsibilities as an employer
- Local council finances
- Engaging in the planning system
- Complying with data protection and information laws

Some councillors may have knowledge and skills from previous roles they have held. Whilst this is helpful, it is important to recognise the differences between local government and other sectors, and further training may still be required.

Essential Reading:

[Being a Good Employer](#)

[The Good Councillor's Guide to finance and transparency](#)

[How to respond to planning applications](#)



TRAINING AVAILABLE

Being a good employer

An introductory course to support councillor's understanding of the council's role as an employer, and employee rights.

Available as:

- ✓ Webinar
- ✗ Face-to-face
- ✓ In-house

Finance for councillors

Gain a greater understanding of local council finance including responsibilities, budgeting, precepts, audit and VAT.

Available as:

- ✓ Webinar
- ✗ Face-to-face
- ✗ In-house

Responding to planning applications

Understand the council's role in the planning system and how best to represent your community's views.

Available as:

- ✓ Webinar
- ✗ Face-to-face
- ✗ In-house

Councillors: data protection training

Understand how data protection legislation sits within your role as an elected member, and how to get things right.

Available as:

- ✓ Webinar
- ✗ Face-to-face
- ✗ In-house

YOU MAY ALSO BE INTERESTED IN:

E-learning modules*

- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Freedom of information
- GDPR
- Health and Safety

**These modules are not specific to councils.*



ADVANCED

Our advance stage is for those councillors keen to develop specialist knowledge in certain areas of council business.

We have identified a range of specialist areas which are common for local councils. The courses would be particularly useful for members on council committees where more in-depth knowledge would be beneficial for the councils operations.

At the advanced level we focus upon:

- Advanced employment
- Advanced finance
- Advanced planning

Any councillor wishing to develop their knowledge and experience further is able to attend advanced courses.

Previous attendance at core courses is not a requirement, but is highly recommended.

Suggested Reading:

The Good Councillor's Guide to Neighbourhood Planning

A guide through the process of creating a neighbourhood plan for your community.



TRAINING AVAILABLE

Managing employees through effective supervision and appraisals

Discover the importance of effective performance management and better understand the appraisal framework.

Available as:

- ✓ Webinar
- ✗ Face-to-face
- ✓ In-house

When things go wrong

Learn how disciplinary and grievance matters arise and how to manage them effectively

Available as:

- ✓ Webinar
- ✗ Face-to-face
- ✓ In-house

Finance courses

- Accounts and audit
- Budgeting for councillors
- Internal controls
- Procurement
- Transparency Code for smaller councils
- VAT

Available as:

- ✓ Webinar
- ✗ Face-to-face
- ✗ In-house

Planning courses (coming soon)

- Developer contributions
- Neighbourhood Planning

Suggested Reading:

The Good Councillor's Guide to Transport Planning

For councillors interested in transport planning and curious to know more.



LEADER

Our final stage is leader, designed for those councillors either in leadership positions, or looking to develop their leadership skills.

We recognise all councillors as community leaders, and understand the specific knowledge and skills required for those elected as chairman/mayor.

Our leader courses are open to any councillor wishing to develop their skills. Previous attendance at other courses is not required.

At the leader level we focus upon:

- Chairmanship skills
- Team leadership in the council
- Leading in the community
- Leading in challenging situations



TRAINING AVAILABLE

Chairing local council meetings

An introductory course for newly appointed or aspiring chairman, to discover how to conduct an effective meeting.

Available as:

- ✓ Webinar
- × Face-to-face
- × In-house

The experienced chair (coming soon)

A collaborative session to hone your skills through case studies to develop new strategies and share best practice.

Dealing with difficult people and conversations

Learn how to manage relationships with difficult people with practical techniques and ideas for difficult conversations.

Available as:

- ✓ Webinar
- × Face-to-face
- × In-house

Leadership in the community (coming soon)

Explore the skills needed to be an effective community leader including strategic planning, communication and partnerships.

YOU MAY ALSO BE INTERESTED IN:

Communications and engagement training

- Communicating with your community
- How to engage with young people
- Crisis communications
- Councillors: Social media skills
- Dealing with local and regional media

Also available:

Team leadership essentials (e-learning)



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