



WORKING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS AND THE LOCAL COUNTY COUNCILLOR

**December 2009
DLT/PJG**

PREFACE

“Your community or town council is the tier of local government that is closest to local people. As a community councillor, you are responsible to your local electorate for delivering a range of services and for the provision and upkeep of local amenities.

The most important external relationship for most community and town councils is with the County Council, and communication for this purpose often takes place through the local elected county councillor. A good working relationship between your council and the local county councillor is therefore essential.

This document is intended to set a framework for positive and productive working relationships between members of community and town councils and the local County Councillor for the electoral division that coincides with the area of the community council. Sometimes, there may be more than one local County Councillor serving the area. The local County Councillor might also be a member of the community council or town council.

Whatever the arrangements, all members need to understand, respect and value the respective roles of the community councillor and the county councillor, and to recognise that all councillors have a common purpose in serving the citizens of their communities.

This document compares the powers and duties of Carmarthenshire County Council with those of community councils. It explains the role of the local County Councillor. It looks at the importance of good communications between community councillors and the local County Councillor. It suggests how community council meetings can be arranged and conducted with these aims in mind.

We trust that you will find it of some assistance.”

<hr/>	<hr/>
-------	-------

POWERS AND ROLES

1. **Appendix A** provides a list of the main powers available to community councils. Decisions are made by the community council when sitting together as a full Council. Decisions may also be made by Committees of the Council, if delegated to that committee in writing by the Council. Decisions cannot be made by individual councillors. Decisions may only be made by the Clerk if delegated to him or her in writing by the Council.
2. A list of the main services provided by Carmarthenshire County Council can be found on the Council's website at www.carmarthenshire.co.uk.
3. Full details of the decision-making structure for the County Council are contained in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution (see the website), and a summary is provided at **Appendix B**. All councillors meet together as the Council to agree the annual budget and the Council's overall policies. The Executive Board is responsible for implementing policies agreed by the Council and taking decisions on matters that are not the responsibility of the Council or one of its committees. Each Executive Board Member may take decisions within their individual portfolio. Operational and management decisions are delegated from these various bodies to officers under a Scheme of Delegation.
4. **Appendix C** gives a summary of the role of a County Councillor.

WHAT MAKES FOR GOOD COMMUNICATION?

5. As a foundation for good working relationships it is important that all community councillors and the local County Councillor understand and respect both the scope and the practical limitations of their respective roles.
6. Community Councillors understand that many issues that come to their attention are the responsibility of the County Council. As a matter of good practice, all such requests and enquiries should be referred by the Community Council directly to the County Council. A copy of the referral should be sent to the local County Councillor for his/her information.
7. The Local County Councillor will try to assist in all matters referred to him or her by the community council and will keep the community council informed of the outcome, where appropriate.

8. Community councillors appreciate that many County Council functions, processes and decisions are not within the direct control or influence of the local County Councillor. Community Councillors also understand that the local County Councillor is not individually accountable for any such matters to the community council, or to any individual community councillor.
9. The local County Councillor understands that the Community council and its councillors are not accountable to the local county Councillor where the local County Councillor has referred a matter to the Community Council that lies within the scope of the Community Council's functions.

ATTENDANCE AT COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

10. Community Councillors understand that the local County Councillor is not required to attend their meetings as part of his/her constitutional role. However, both the community Councillors and the local County Councillor recognise that positive working relationships are best sustained and developed by the local County Councillor attending meetings of the community council, in their role as an elected member of the County Council.
11. The local County Councillor understands that he/she is subject to the Code of Conduct for Members as adopted by Carmarthenshire County Council whilst attending the meeting. Community Councillors understand that they are subject to the Code of Conduct adopted by their Community Council when attending any meeting of the Community Council.
12. The Community Council and the local County Councillor agree that the following general arrangements constitute good practice for meetings of community councils, subject to any individual agreement to modify or amend these arrangements:-
 - (a) In some instances an item may be placed on the Agenda entitled "Feedback on County Council Matters", the scope of which would allow the local County Councillor to address the meeting on topics of his/her choice. As an alternative to placing an item on the agenda, the local County Councillor would have an opportunity to feedback information relating to County Council issues and allow community councillors to ask questions.

- (b) When sending out the Summons to Community Councillors, the Clerk will send a written invitation to the local County Councillor (addressed to his/her home address), together with a copy of the Agenda and any reports and background papers for the meeting.
- (c) The local County Councillor will advise the Clerk whether he/she is intending to attend the meeting, prior to the meeting.
- (d) When attending a meeting, the local County Councillor will declare any personal interest or prejudicial interest in relation to any item of business at the appropriate time, and in accordance with the relevant provisions of the County Council's code of conduct.
- (e) Subject to (f) below, the local County Councillor will vacate the chamber when he/she considers that he/she has a personal and prejudicial interest in any business, prior to the start of any discussion of that business.
- (f) Where the local County Councillor has been granted a dispensation by the Standards Committee of the County Council he/she may act within the terms of that dispensation.
- (g) Subject to (e) above, the local County Councillor may speak in relation to any business conducted at the meeting. The local County Councillor may not vote in respect of any business, unless he or she is also a member of that community council.
- (h) Subject to (e) above, where the Community Council passes a resolution to exclude the public and press in relation to any business, the Local County Councillor may remain in the chamber for the duration of the item at the discretion of the community council.
- (i) Where the local County Councillor remains in the council chamber during discussion of a matter where the public and press have been excluded, the local County Councillor will agree to maintain confidentiality in respect of any such discussions and will return any papers distributed with regard to that item to the Clerk at the end of discussion of that business.

13. If you need clarification on any aspect of this document then you can speak with the Monitoring Officer of Carmarthenshire County Council or alternatively you may wish to contact One Voice Wales. Contact details are:-

Lyn Thomas
Monitoring Officer
Carmarthenshire County Council
County Hall
Carmarthen SA31 1JP

Telephone: 01267 224012

E-mail dlthomas@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

One Voice Wales
24 College Street
Ammanford
Carmarthenshire
SA18 3AF

Telephone: 01269 595400

E-mail admin@onevoicewales.org.uk