

## **ONE VOICE WALES - representing community and town councils**



### **What are community and town councils?**

There are 736 community and town councils in Wales; they are corporate bodies and local authorities. They have a powerful voice to represent local people.

#### **What do these councils do?**

Community and town councils are the part of local government closest to the people. They serve the smallest area and are responsible for the most local of matters. Very importantly, these councils can “precept” - raising a sum collected with the council tax each year to improve facilities and services for local people.

In Wales they are known as community councils, or town councils if they cover a largely urban area. In England they are called parish councils. In both England and Wales they are elected units of local government whose activities are controlled by Acts of Parliament.

Town and community councils have a number of basic responsibilities in making the lives of local communities more comfortable, many of which are often taken for granted. Essentially these powers fall within three main categories: representing the whole electorate within the community; delivering services to meet local needs; and striving to improve quality of life in the community.

Individual powers include the provision and maintenance of community transport schemes, traffic calming measures, local youth projects, tourism activities, leisure facilities, car parks, village greens, public lavatories, litter bins, street lighting, street cleaning, burial grounds, allotments, bus shelters, commons, open spaces, footpaths, bridleways, and crime reduction measures.

Community and town councils can also comment on planning applications - they are statutory consultees (they have to be consulted if they so wish) and can be represented at public inquiries.

A Shared Responsibility, the Welsh Assembly Government’s policy statement on local government issued in 2007, announced the intention to extend the power of well-being to community and town councils. This is part of the government’s initiative to revitalise local democracy and will enable the sector to do more to improve the local social, economic and environmental situation of an area.

#### **What do elected representatives do for me?**

Community and town councillors represent the people living in their local area at the closest level to the community. When decisions are being made they are there to put your views across.