

Community Councils



dumgal.gov.uk/communitycouncils

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Community Council?

Community Councils give local people a say about what goes on in their area. In the most basic sense, a Community Council is an unincorporated, constituted group made up of volunteers who are elected to the Community Council through a formalised election process.

There are rules and regulations that govern Community Councils in the form of a legal document called 'The Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils in Dumfries and Galloway' (known as the Scheme) which is the responsibility of and administered by the local authority. In Dumfries and Galloway, we have the potential for 106 recognised communities to form a Community Council. Currently, 87 Community Councils are active with a total of 705 people volunteering in their community.

In Dumfries and Galloway, an administration grant is paid by the local authority to every Community Council to help with running costs. Community Councils work in partnership with the local authority, voluntary groups, statutory organisations and the local community.

The Scheme has **16** sections with **3** schedules and is also the **Constitution**. You can view the Scheme [here](#)

Why do we need Community Councils?

Community Councils form a tier of democracy at local level that encourages interaction between the Community Council, Local Authority and the Scottish Government. Community Councils can feed back on national and local consultations, **planning and licencing applications** and **host consultations** to find out the views of the community on matters of importance. This is referred to as **Community Engagement** within the scheme and plays a large part of the responsibilities of a Community Council. In addition, Community Councils have access to external funding through **Windfarm Benefits** and other external funding streams eg Big Lottery, Awards for All etc

View the Standards for Community Engagement [here](#)

What difference do Community Councils make?

As a consulting body, a Community Council can collectively voice the opinion of the local community on a wide range of issues of public concern including planning and licensing issues and make representation to the Local Authority, other public sector bodies and private agencies. With Windfarm benefits they can support local voluntary groups through monetary awards and continue to maintain their community where in the past this may have been carried out by the local authority. Through regular engagement with the local community, the Community Council can address issues of importance and listen to and consider the views of the community, finding positive solutions where possible.

I live in Stranraer and am interested in Community Councils – where do I find out more?

Dumfries and Galloway Council website www.dumgal.gov.co.uk/communitycouncils provide a dedicated section on Community Councils. By searching the find my community council section you can call up the page on Stranraer Community Council. This provides information on the Community Council and who to contact to take your enquiry further. There is also a boundary map which defines where the boundary line occurs between Community Councils. If you would prefer to speak with someone about Community Councils, you can contact your [Ward Officer](#) or call Dumfries and Galloway Council direct on 03003003000.

There is also a wealth of information on various websites including:-

www.communitycouncils.scot Scottish Government Community Council website. The site has up to date information on news, events, guidance and grants as well as advice on how to be a Community Councillor. Check out the help and support section [here](#)

www.dumgal.gov.uk/communitycouncils Useful information for Community Councils in Dumfries and Galloway including Find my Community Council.

Many Community Councils also use **social media** and have Facebook and Twitter accounts as well as dedicated websites. Google online to find out more.

I would like to join the Community Council, what do I need to do?

To meet the requirements of the scheme, anyone joining a Community Council must be a minimum age of 16 or above, included on the Register of Electors and reside within the Community Council boundary. Contact with the Community Council is essential as, if there are current vacancies within the Community Council, there is a formalised procedure to complete. This includes completing a **co-option application form** and having a member of the community sign on your behalf to propose your application.

What about the Community Council elections, what happens then?

Every 5 years, the local authority require all Community Councils in Dumfries and Galloway to stand down and a new Community Council is elected. This usually takes place in October and follows the rules and regulations of the scheme which is the same process carried out for local elections. If the number of Community

Council applications exceed the number of vacancies, a contested election will take place. This is where the community vote for their preferred candidate at the ballot box and provision for this to take place in Dumfries and Galloway is the responsibility of the local authority. Staff from DGC will administer the election process including any contested elections, to ensure a smooth, professional approach.

Does this mean I have to stay on the Community Council for 5 years?

Every year the Community Council will hold an AGM (Annual General Meeting) and this allows for any changes to office bearer roles or for anyone to formally exit from the Community Council. However, as the role of a Community Councillor is voluntary, you can leave at any time.

What about meetings?

The Scheme requires a minimum of 6 meetings per year, one of which must be an AGM. Community Councils may wish to meet more frequently depending on the roles and responsibilities they perform on behalf of the local community.

Will I get a job to do?

Community Council have a specific 'line up' and this includes members who are nominated to office bearer roles. This includes the Chairperson, Secretary and the Treasurer. They all have very specific roles to undertake to meet the requirements of the Scheme. The Chairperson is the spokesperson, the Secretary takes care of all the administration and the Treasurer looks after the finances. Other members of the Community Council may have a specific role, for instance, to deal with planning and licencing applications or windfarm issues, to deal with social media, ensuring consultations are on the agenda and community engagement is regularly carried out in the community.

Do you need to have a 'specific skills' set to become a Community Councillor?

Community Councils are inclusive and comply with the Equality Act 2010, which means, if the criteria to become a Community Councillor is met, you can become a Community Councillor. The Equality Act 2010 refers to the nine protected characteristics – age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Community Councils should make the effort to engage with all members of the community to encourage election of a diverse body of members. This can be achieved through **regular community engagement** which is one of the main functions of a Community Council.

Can I get help if I need it?

Training is available and provided by DGC for Community Councils as a group or on an individual basis. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of the Scheme is important and the training is focussed on this. Feedback on training sessions has been very encouraging with several Community Councils and individuals taking part.

What kind of things can a Community Council do?

Here are some examples of ‘good practice’ and how being a Community Councillor can make a difference.

Training Opportunities - Community Councils have welcomed the opportunity to participate in training sessions being delivered by DGC. Sessions are delivered at a convenient date, time and location for all, feedback has been very positive with a request for ‘refresher sessions’ to be available.

Filling Vacancies by Casual Vacancy Election - Since the Ordinary Elections were held in October 2019, a number of Community Councils have been keen to increase their numbers through the use of the Casual Vacancy Election process as set out at Section 7.9.1 of the Scheme. It is a straightforward process that enables Community Councils to fill vacancies with Elected Members between Ordinary Elections.

Working Together in Partnership - The Community Resilience Plan for Upper Nithsdale involves positive partnership working between Kirkconnel and Kelloholm Development Trust (KKDT), together with Kirkconnel and Kelloholm and Sanquhar Community Councils. Activities include provision of food parcels, organising community resilience volunteers, mobilising community resources and securing additional funding to provide food and activities to support mental health and wellbeing in the community.

Resilience Activities - Covid-19 Local Response – The vast majority of Community Councils have embraced the challenge to work alongside Dumfries and Galloway Council and other partner agencies to ensure a local response to local needs during the COVID-19 crisis.

Working with Young People

Royal Burgh of Annan Community Council working with local young people at Annan Academy, recently provided kits for the newly established Basketball Team. The gesture was very much appreciated by the young people.

Community Engagement

Dalbeattie Community Council recently hosted a community engagement event in Dalbeattie Town Hall. Focus was on the proposals for the development of the pond in the local park. Over 60 people attended and valuable feedback from the community was recorded

What happens next?

democracy.matters@gov.scot The Scottish Government are interested in wider discussion with communities around Community Councils and their views on the roles of community Councils in the community. This year, the Scottish Government will continue the Democracy Matters conversations, with communities, on the future of local decision-making. The people of Scotland will be invited to help design good community-led decision-making processes which can deliver benefits for everyone. Details on how to get involved will be shared in the coming weeks on the Democracy Matters webpages. Find out more [here](#)