

What are Local Councils

“Local councils” is a universal term for parish/town councils. They are the first tier of local government and therefore closest to the communities they serve and are elected by residents every 4 years. They can raise their own precept – a form of council tax. There are 10,000 local councils in England and 120,000 councillors who serve on these local councils.

What do Local Councils do?

Local councils were created in law back in 1894, they can only act within the law by exercising their powers and functions which have been conferred on them by Statutes (Acts of Parliament). Anything a local council tries to do outside of these powers is ultra vires, in other words, outside the law.

They deliver particular services and improve the quality of life of their residents by being responsible for:

- Parks and open spaces
- Playing Field – Upkeep, mowing and play equipment)
- Defibrillator and costs associated.
- Village Green maintenance and grass cutting

They also give communities a voice through representing the parish or town:

- Raising things to CDC, (Bins, street names,)
- On planning matters with principal authorities and developers
- To parliamentarians and government

Where does the council get their funding from?

Each year a sum of money called a “precept” is collected through resident’s council tax. This money is invested back into the community to improve facilities within the parish. It can also apply for grants and loans and if they own any property can receive money from rents or leases.

Withington Parish Council and the Roles within

Withington has 7 Councillors including the Chairman (this number is fixed by the District Council) Cllr David Craig, Cllr Glenys Webb, Cllr Bruno Brenninkmeijer, Cllr Nicky Lowe, Cllr Alex Barrell & Cllr Catherine Boyce. An additional Councillor is currently being sought.

- Chairman (the main rules of law governing the role of the chair of a local council are set out in the Local Government Act 1972) – Currently held by Dr David Craig
 - Ensures that Councillors are involved in discussion.
 - Ensures that effective lawful decisions are taken at meetings.
 - With the Clerk ensures effective and orderly conduct in pursuit of the Parish council’s duties and purposes

- Has a casting vote. The first vote is a personal one as an ordinary Councillor. If there is a tied vote the Chairman (as Chairman) can have a second or casting vote.
- Is often the public face of the Council and often speaks on behalf of the Council. However, they must remember to express the views of the Council and not their own personal position.
- Must ensure that Councillors and the public keep to the point.
- Signs all meeting minutes once accepted by the Council.
- Summarises the debate facilitates the resolving to clear decisions.
- Actively encourages participation of, connect with and represent the views and concerns of the residents of the Parish to the Parish Council.
- Reports back to residents on issues affecting the Parish.
- Finance Officer – Currently held by Cllr Alex Barrell
 - Liaises with appointed advisors.
 - Advises the Council on all financial matters.
 - Oversees the application of proper financial controls designed to prevent and detect fraud and tackle bad debts.
 - Signs off the banking sheet.
- Tree Officer – Currently held by Cllr Brenninkmeijer
 - Takes the lead and provide advice to the Council in relation to tree matters.
- Vice Chairman – Currently held by Cllr Brenninkmeijer
 - Acts a chairman in the absence of the Chairman.
 - Advises the Chairman and Councillors where deemed necessary.

Council Staff

The Council employs a part time, Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer who is Sue Hughes (Green).

Her responsibilities are:

- Managing the day-to-day business of the Council.
- Implementing Council decisions.
- Managing and reporting on the Council's finances
- By direction of the Council the clerk must keep the parish or community documents and records in their custody.
- Is required to sign certain notices and summonses. (To meetings and for casual vacancies)
- Is the Proper Officer – responsible for making sure the Council complies with the Account and Audit Regulations
- Manages the accounts (balancing payments made with invoice received)
- Ensures the Council's accounts are prepared for audit.
- Is not answerable to any individual Councillor, not even to the Chairman.
- They are an independent objective servant of the Council.

- Can be asked to research arrange topics of concerns to the Council and provide unbiased information that helps the Council make appropriate choices.
- Must be objective and responding to the interaction between Councillors
Recognise that the Council is responsible for all decisions, and they take instructions from the Council as a body.
- Whilst the Chairman should be consulted on the content of the agenda, it is the clerk who has the legal signatory who has the final say to its content.
- Aids and guide the Chairman and Councillors on the conduct of Parish Council duties.

Cotswold District Council Cotswold District Council (CDC) is the second tier of local government.

It is responsible for:

- Collecting council tax and local business rates
- Council managed leisure centres and swimming pools
- Environmental health services
- Helping the homeless and those at risk of homelessness
- Operating council managed car parks
- Planning services, including development management, strategy, planning enforcement, heritage and conservation and tree protection
- Providing support with rent payments and council tax for low-income households
- Public conveniences
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and environmental crime
- Street cleaning and litter bins
- Supporting arts, sports and cultural activities including museums
- Supporting development of affordable housing including council housing
- Supporting tourism, economic development and regeneration
- Waste & recycling collections

Withington Parish falls within Sandywell ward which is represented by Cllr Jeremy Theyer (Email: jeremy.theyer@cotswold.gov.uk)

Gloucestershire County Council is the third and final tier of local government.

It is responsible for:

- Adult and children's social care, Libraries
- County planning services, Fire and public safety
- Education, Public transport and highways
- Waste disposal & Trading Standards

Withington Parish falls within Cotswold division (Bourton-on-the-Water and Northleach) which is represented by Cllr Paul Hodgkinson (Email: paul.hodgkinson@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

UK Parliament is the body providing the government of United Kingdom within the limits of parliamentary sovereignty

It is responsible for:

- Checking and challenging the work of the Government (scrutiny)
- Making and changing laws (legislation)
- Debating the important issues of the day (debating)
- Checking and approving Government spending (budget/taxes)

Withington Parish falls within Cotswold Constituency which is represented by Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP (Email: cliftonbrowng@parliament.uk)