

11. Campaigning and influencing

11.15 Town and Community Councils

There are 735 town and community councils in Wales with around 8,000 councillors representing the interests of the communities they serve. Not all areas of Wales have a town or community council though - the 735 councils cover approximately 94 per cent of the land area and 70 per cent of the population, although it is not difficult to set up a council in your area if you don't already have one.

Until 1974, community councils were called parish councils in Wales, but the name was changed in Wales as part of the changes brought about by the 1972 Local Government Act. Parish councils still exist in England and both parish and community councils have the same powers. Whether yours is a town or community council will depend largely on population size - the larger the community, the more likely it is to be called a town council.

This is the tier of local government that is closest to the people. Many town or community councillors represent the whole community area that the council covers, so you will be represented by all of your town or community councillors. However, some areas are split into smaller community wards and only some of the councillors will represent that smaller area.

Town and community councils have powers over very local issues, including:

- provision and maintenance of community transport schemes
- traffic calming measures
- local youth projects
- car parks
- village greens
- leisure facilities
- public toilets
- litter bins
- street cleaning
- allotments
- open spaces
- bus shelters
- burial grounds
- footpaths

There are also plans to strengthen the role of town and community councils by extending the power to promote the well-being of their communities to them as well as unitary authorities.

They are also statutory consultees on planning applications in their area.

Town and community councils have the right to raise funds for the services they provide through local taxation. A small levy, called the 'precept' is added to and collected through your council tax. Looking at your council tax bill is one way of finding out if a town or community council covers your area, because the precept will be itemised on your bill. Another way would be to contact your local council who will know about all the town and community councils in their area.

You could also visit the One Voice Wales website at www.onevoicewales.org.uk, they are the organisation that represents and provides support services to town and community councils in Wales. Their website has lots of useful information on the geographical coverage of councils in Wales, as well as information on what they do and how to set up a council in your area if one doesn't already exist.

Further information

Wales Council for Voluntary Action

Tel: 0800 2888 329

www.wcva.org.uk

One Voice Wales

Tel: 01269 595400

www.onevoicewales.org.uk

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For further information contact

Interlink



Tel: 0300 111 0124
www.wcva.org.uk