



(Insert Name)
Community Council

What is involved?

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SECTION 1: WHAT IS A COMMUNITY COUNCIL?

A Community Council is a voluntary organisation set up by statute by the Local Authority and run by local residents to act on behalf of its area. As the most local tier of elected representation, Community Councils play an important role in local democracy.

Community Councils are comprised of people who care about their community and want to make it a better place to live.

As well as representing the community to the local authority, Community Councils facilitate a wide range of activities that promote the well-being of their communities. They bring local people together to help make things happen, and many Community Councils protect and promote the identity of their community. They advise, petition, influence, and advocate numerous causes and cases of concern on behalf of local communities. Here are some examples of their work from across the county:

- Carry out projects to enhance their community for all types of citizens – older people, single parents, minority groups, young people etc.
- Issue community newsletters.
- Conduct local surveys.
- Campaign on local issues
- Organise community events (such as local Gala Days)

Community Councils are the strongest means of becoming involved with your local area. It will give you a good understand of the workings of local government and what is going on locally and nationally. All local authorities in Scotland encourage citizens to become a member of their Community Council.

SECTION 2: BEING A COMMUNITY COUNCILLOR

Being a Community Councillor involves having a shared responsibility for the success of the Community Council. You must commit to the role and uphold the standards and values of the Community Council. All members should contribute to discussions and decisions concerning the work of the Community Council.

SECTION 3: WHAT ARE THE ROLES IN A COMMUNITY COUNCIL?

You can play your part in your Community Council in various ways. Each Community Council must have a Chairperson, a Treasurer, and a Secretary – the ‘office bearers’ – and these roles carry the most responsibility. The office bearers, as elected members representing their local communities, are responsible for the efficient and effective operation of the Community Council.

This does not mean to say that the office bearers must do all the work, but they are responsible for making sure that everything is done according to the Scheme for the Establishment for Community Councils in Midlothian (2025).

All members of the Community Council are equally responsible for the Community Council's decisions and actions and may take on additional activities in support of the Community Council.

The office bearers' roles are described below, followed by an outline of other potential roles within a Community Council.

THE CHAIRPERSON

The Chairperson (otherwise known as the 'Chair'), is elected in line with the rules set out in the Community Council's Constitution, which provides the framework of procedures that govern the work of your Community Council).

She / He has the most important role to play in making sure that Community Council meetings run smoothly. They are expected to know the rules by which the Community Council operates, and make sure that at all stages of its work it is operating in line with any formal procedures. The Chair can be called upon to act as an arbiter when there is a disagreement about how the rules should be interpreted.

Tasks of the Chairperson (within the meeting)

- be familiar with all agenda items.
- open the meeting.
- introduce all agenda items.
- make judgements about how much time to allocate to each agenda item.
- encourage people to make their contributions brief and to the point and when necessary, bring speakers back to the agenda.
- get through the agenda in the allotted time and make sure that decisions are taken on all of the agenda items.
- remain neutral.
- help the group to take responsibility for what it wants to accomplish.
- have an overview of the task/goals of the meeting and help to clarify goals.

To support inclusive discussion

- select speakers.
- encourage and help everyone to participate.
- encourage expression of various viewpoints
- make sure that people keep to the subject.
- suggest ways of handling conflict

Decision making and voting.

- look for areas of agreement / test to see if there is agreement.
- clarify and summarise discussion and
- end discussion
- decide when to vote and conduct the vote.
- make sure decisions are taken and agreed, and make sure that the responsibility for action is allocated and recorded.

Outwith the meeting

The Chairperson's role may extend out with Community Council meetings. They may be called upon to act on behalf of the Community Council between meetings.

They may need to represent the Community Council in dealing with outside bodies and may be involved with public relations, dealing with the press, TV, and radio.

THE VICE-CHAIRPERSON

The Vice Chairperson has no specific duties other than standing in for the Chairperson when he or she is unable to be present. In this event, they will need to have a good understanding and be familiar with the role fulfilled by the Chairperson.

THE SECRETARY

The role includes:

- arranging venues for meetings
- compiling minutes of meetings
- circulating previous minutes, meeting agendas, and circulating information to members
- answering all correspondence, writing any letters
- liaison with officials of Midlothian Council and other agencies
- occasionally they may be involved with public relations, dealing with the press, TV, and radio (may be a role for the Chairperson).

The Secretary will need access to IT resources. Duties involved in the work of the Secretary may be delegated to other members of the Community Council, for instance a Community Council member could act as Minute Secretary to take meeting Minutes.

THE TREASURER

The Treasurer is responsible for:

- managing the Community Council's bank account including maintaining financial records so that they clearly indicate the financial position of the Community Council
- issuing all cheques and/or making payments, (as per the rules in the Constitution), on behalf of the Community Council

- ensuring money is only spent in a manner approved by the Community Council members as recorded in the minutes.
- recording and reporting the financial position of the Community Council at each meeting
- keeping proper accounts of all receipts and expenditure and prepare an annual statement of accounts for the Community Council and any associated sub-groups of the Community Council, where sub-group accounts are reported and recorded separately.
- in preparation for the Annual General Meeting (AGM), Community Councils should use an independent, external examiner to check and verify the accounts as being accurate.
- Examined and verified accounts must be presented and approved at the AGM.

Generally, Treasurers should avoid paying out money except by cheque or by BACS payment. This makes accounting for expenditure much easier.

The standard statement accompanying the Annual Account will be:

I have examined the above statement of accounts of '(insert name) Community Council for the year ended (Insert date).

I certify that these statements reflect the income and expenditure of (insert name) Community Council for the year ended (insert date) and are in accordance with the records submitted by the Treasurer.

Signed: ----- **Date:** -----

Once the statement has been certified and approved, it should be sent to the local authority, as part of the process of accepting the annual administration allowance.

Other roles

Community Councils might want to consider if there is a need to create a specific role in response to an area/project that needs a lot of attention. For example, where there is a need to reach out to a specific group that is under-represented in the Community Council (e.g. young people, minority ethnic group members or people with a disability) the group may wish to create the post of Engagement Officer. They may also wish to create a role for a member to be responsible for the development and maintenance of the Community Council Social Media presence. Other roles that might be created to support the work of the Community Council, depending on its circumstances are:

- Publicity Officer
- Planning Officer
- Communications Officer
- Events Officer

SECTION 4: YOUR INVOLVEMENT

You do not have to take on a specific role to be involved in your Community Council. All members play an important part by thinking creatively about what you can do together to improve the lives of local citizens. If you do take on a role, then you do not need to feel restricted to only doing this – the main role of Community Council members is to support each other and work together to make things happen.

SECTION 5: THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL FRAMEWORK

Community Councils act as a voice for their local area. Their specific role can vary according to their local area's needs. Their size, in terms of area and population, differs across the country.

They can complement the role of the local authority but are not part of local government. They should have a positive working partnership with the local authority - therefore, they must be informed on the council's policies, and keep the council updated on their activities.

Community Councils must represent all people in the area without prejudice. Therefore, they should:

- Be non-party political and non-sectarian.
- Represent a full cross-section of the community and encourage the involvement of people regardless of gender, race, age, disability, nationality, or sexual orientation.
- Community Councils, by law, must be non-discriminatory. They should be welcoming, open, and non-judgmental toward all citizens, including young people and individuals from hard to reach or minority groups. Nobody should be blocked from Community Council activities.

For further information, see the **Code of Conduct for Community Councillors**

SECTION 6: COMMUNITY COUNCILS' ROLE IN PLANNING

Planning authorities receive comments and objections on planning applications from statutory consultees like Scottish Natural Heritage or Historic Environment Scotland, from neighbours who are given special notification, and from a wide range of interested parties.

Community Councils have a statutory right to be consulted on applications for planning permission and the Community Council has a special role, representing a broader yet still local view that can be set alongside the comments of those with a more individual interest.

Authorities are obliged by law to decide planning applications in accordance with the development plan for the area (that is, where applicable, the approved strategic development plan and the adopted local development plan or local plan, taken together) unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Coming to a reasoned judgement on

these matters lies at the heart of the planning authority's discretionary power to approve, refuse or modify applications under the law and within a framework of national policy guidance. The Community Councils' key task is helping to provide an informed local context within which appropriate decisions can be made in the public interest. In this regard, a role for a member to have a specific remit for Planning is an important one.

SECTION 7: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As representative voices for their communities, it is important that Community Councils do not just share information but also gather the views of local citizens.

Community Councils should be proactive, consulting, and engaging local residents, taking action in the interests of their communities. This will enable them to ascertain and express the views of the community to Midlothian Council and other public bodies such as Police Scotland and NHS Lothian. Other local community groups and local authorities are more likely to work with and listen to the Community Council.

Every member of your community can be a valuable member of society with something to contribute. Community Councils should attempt to engage with a wide range of people to create a large diversity of perspectives and insights that can help the Community Council to achieve more. Engaging community members in making decisions is more likely to make them more pro-active about their community's needs. Community engagement is about building open and honest relationships between citizens and the Community Councils, based on mutual trust.

Engagement can range from providing information about current work or projects, to consulting on particular issues, to full empowerment whereby the community has decision-making powers. Some engagement needs to be ongoing, some of it might be short-term, and some will involve staging 'one-off' events.

There is no one correct way for a Community Council to engage with its community. It is important to engage with your community face to face at meetings and events. However, as was the case in 2020, this may not be possible. Flyers, posters, placing Minutes and Agendas in public places such as Libraries and Notice Boards will contribute, but increasingly, the use of digital resources such as surveys or social media will reach a larger or a *new* audience.

The Internet, use of email, electronic newsletters, websites, and social media has enabled Community Councils to create new ways to engage with their communities. These methods of digital engagement are easy to use, and most of it is free or very low cost compared to other forms of engagement. For spreading information, it is more flexible and cheaper than print media, but it should not replace traditional engagement methods.

Not everyone has access to the Internet, and it is always good to speak to someone and engage in dialogue!

SECTION 8: IMPROVEMENT SERVICE COMMUNITY COUNCIL WEBSITE

The improvement service has developed a website that provides a wide range of resources and information. Click on the link below:

www.communitycouncils.scot

OTHER RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

Midlothian Council Website

Information about Community Councils in the county can be found at the web page below.
[Your local Community Council | Community councils | Midlothian Council](#)

Midlothian Federation of Community Councils (MFCC)

MFCC is a Midlothian wide forum that meets on the 3rd Wednesday of the month (7.00 – 9.00 pm) using Zoom. All Community Councils have access to the MFCC Zoom account.

MFCC has a website here: www.midlothiancommunitycouncils.org.uk where you will be able to access relevant information, meeting agendas and minutes etc.

There is a Facebook page - [Midlothian Community Councillor's Forum](#)

Free Online Training

[Open University training and skills support for Community Councillors](#)

SECTION 9: *(INSERT A COPY OF THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL CONSTITUTION)*

APPENDIX 1 – BOUNDARY MAP (*INSERT NAME*) COMMUNITY COUNCIL AREA

If a picture or image is required contact cle@midlothian.gov.uk

You can download a PDF file for your Community Council by selecting the link on this page:

[Your local Community Council | Community councils | Midlothian Council](#)

SECTION 10: MIDLOTHIAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT

The Midlothian Community Council Code of Conduct is based largely on the Code of Conduct for local authority councillors and relevant public bodies as provided for in The Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000.

Community Councillors, as elected representatives of their communities, have a responsibility to make sure that they are familiar with, and that their actions comply with, the principles set out in this Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct and its principles shall apply to all Community Councillors and those representing the Community Council. These principles are as follows:

- Service to the Community (Public Service)
- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability and Stewardship
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership
- Respect

Service to the Community

As a Community Councillor, you have a duty to act in the interests of the local community, which you have been elected or nominated to represent. You also have a duty to act in accordance with the remit of the Council's Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils in Midlothian (2025), as set out by your local authority under the terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

You have a duty to establish and reflect, through the Community Council, the views of the community as a whole, on any issue, irrespective of personal opinion.

You should ensure that you are, within reason, accessible to your local community and local residents. Various mechanisms to allow the general community to express their views, i.e. suggestion boxes, community surveys, opinion polls should, where possible, be made available.

Selflessness

You have a duty to take decisions solely in terms of the interest of the community that you represent. You must not use your position as a Community Councillor to gain financial, material, political or other personal benefit for yourself, family, or friends.

Integrity

You must not place yourself under any financial or other obligation to any individual or organisation that might reasonably be thought to influence you in your representation of your community. If you have any private and/or personal interest in a matter to be considered by the Community Council, you have a duty to declare this and if deemed necessary by other members, withdraw from discussions and the decision-making process with regard to that matter.

You should not accept gifts or hospitality that may be seen to influence or be intended to influence your opinion or judgement. The offer and/or receipt of any gifts, regardless of form, should always be reported to and noted by the Secretary of the Community Council.

Objectivity

In all your decisions and opinions as a Community Councillor, you must endeavour to represent the overall views of your community, taking account of information, which is provided to you or is publicly available, assessing its merit, and gathering information as appropriate, whilst laying aside personal opinions or preferences.

You may be appointed or nominated by your Community Council to serve as a member of another representative body. You should ensure that this Code of Conduct is observed when carrying out the duties of the other body.

You are free to have political and/or religious affiliations; however, you must ensure that you represent the interests of your community and Community Council and not the interests of a particular political party or other group.

Accountability and Stewardship

You are accountable for the decisions and actions that you take on behalf of your community through the Community Council. You must ensure that the Community Council uses its resources prudently and in accordance with the law.

Community Councillors will individually and collectively ensure that the business of the Community Council is conducted according to the Council's Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils in Midlothian (2025) and this Code of Conduct.

Community Councillors will individually and collectively ensure that annual accounts are produced showing the financial undertakings of the Community Council as set out in the Council's Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils in Midlothian (2025). They must also ensure that all resources are used efficiently, effectively, and fairly and are used strictly for the purposes of Community Council business and for no other purpose.

Minutes of Meetings recording all actions and decisions made should be produced and circulated to all members of the Community Council as soon as possible after each meeting.

Any breach of the Council's Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils in Midlothian (2025) as set out by your local authority under the terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 may be reported to your local authority to determine what action, if necessary, should be taken.

Openness

You have a duty to be open about your decisions, actions, and representations, giving reasons for these where appropriate. You should be able to justify your decisions and be confident that you have not been unduly influenced by the views and/or opinions of others.

If you have dealings with the Media, members of the public, or others not directly involved in your Community Council, you should ensure that an explicit distinction is made between the expression of your personal views and opinions from any views or statement made about or on behalf of the Community Council.

Honesty

You have a duty to act honestly. You also have an obligation to work within the law at all times. You must declare any private interest relating to your Community Council duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the interest of the community and the Community Council.

Leadership

You have a duty to promote and support the principles of this Code of Conduct by leadership and example, to maintain and strengthen the community's trust and confidence in the integrity of the Community Council and its members in representing the views and needs of the local area. You must also promote social inclusion and challenge discrimination in any form.

You should act to assist the Community Council, as far as possible, in the interest of the whole community that it serves. Where particular interest groups' concerns are in conflict with those of other groups or other areas you should help to ensure that the Community Council is aware of them.

Respect

You must respect fellow members of your Community Council and those that you represent, treating them with courtesy, respect and in a non-discriminatory manner at all times. This should extend to any person, regardless of their position; you have dealings within your capacity as a Community Councillor.

Recognition should be given to the contribution of everyone participating in the work of the Community Council. You must comply with Equal Opportunities legislation and ensure that equality of opportunity be given to every participant to have their knowledge, opinion, skill, and experience taken into account.

You should ensure that confidential material, including details about individuals, is treated as such and that it is handled with dignity and discretion and is not used for personal, malicious, or corrupt purposes.

Related Documents

- Midlothian Community Council Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Midlothian Community Council Complaint Procedure

SECTION 11: *(Insert Name)* COMMUNITY COUNCIL DETAILS

Meet on the *(Insert day \ week e.g second Thursday)* of the month, 7.00pm in *(Insert venue)*

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held in *(Insert Month)* of each year.

The Community Council can be contacted:

Position	Name
Chairperson	<i>Insert details as appropriate</i>
Vice Chairperson	<i>Insert details as appropriate</i>
Treasurer	<i>Insert details as appropriate</i>
Secretary	<i>Insert details as appropriate</i>
Minute Secretary	<i>Insert details as appropriate</i>
Email	<i>Insert details as appropriate</i>
Website	<i>Insert details as appropriate</i>