



LOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Louth Town Council cares for an area of 4,394 square miles with approximately 17,00 residents.

**The 21 Town Councillors form a single voice,
THE LOUTH TOWN COUNCIL**

Councillors work for the betterment of Louth, its residents and businesses. They listen to local concerns and give residents a voice on the decisions the Council makes, as well as liaising with the District and County Councils.

Louth Town Council comprises 21 Councillors, 3 for each of its 7 wards. Elections are held every four years, and, at those elections, every serving Councillor must be re-elected if they wish to stand again. Vacancies can be filled by either Election (this must be called for by at least ten residents of that Ward), or by Co-option, where those wishing to stand are voted on by current Councillors.

What does the Town Council do for Louth and its residents?

The Council liaises and consults with:

- Lincolnshire County Council – County Councillors, Highways – roads, public paths, grit bins, schools etc.,
- Lincolnshire Police – Louth Police Team and Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership
- Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- East Lindsey District Council – District Councillors, planning applications, street names and Tree Protection Orders
- The Member of Parliament for Louth & Horncastle

The Town Council works with many organisations in the town including:

- Church of England Ministry Team Parish of Louth
- Citizens Advice
- Community Pay Back Team
- Local schools
- Louth Athletics Club, Hockey Club and Louth Old Boys Football Club (collectively known as the London Road Sports Partnership)
- Louth Town Action Group (Victorian Market, Christmas Market including Christmas Lights Switch On)

- Louth Lions
- Louth Litter Pickers
- Louth Museum
- Louth Rotary
- Louth Run for Life
- Royal British Legion
- Magna Vitae
- Zero Degrees Festival

The Council maintains/provides on behalf of the town:

- Session's House (the old Magistrates Court), where the Town Council meet and work from
- London Road Cemetery: Burials, Garden of Remembrance, two Chapels and toilets
- Hubbard's Hills, a public open space for picnics and walking plus toilets
- London Road Astro Turf (leased by Magna Vitae/LRSP)
- The site for the Louth Athletic Clubs club house
- Allotment sites at London Road, Trinity Lane and Mount Olivet (managed by the Louth Cottage Garden Allotment Association)
- The War Memorial
- Bus Shelters, litter bins, seating and information boards in the Town Centre
- 7 wooden hand carved Town Signs at the entrances to Louth
- Town Centre Christmas lights, Christmas Tree and Crib
- Planters in Louth Market Place, Cornmarket, Aswell Street, Queen Street, Ramsgate and Church Street
- Funding 12 CCTV cameras (Managing in partnership with ELDC)
- Grass verge cutting on the main roads
- Interactive speed signs
- Brown's Panorama, a unique 360° painting of Louth
- The original Louth Town Charters, paintings of past Mayors, housed in Session's House
- Remembrance Sunday/Commemorative events
- Lovely Louth Competition and Award's Night
- Town Centre Hanging Baskets
- Festive Shop Window Competition

The Council awards small grants to organisations around Louth e.g.,

- Singing groups
- A Louth cancer fundraising charity
- Scout, Brownie and Rainbow groups
- A local charity for the blind
- Sports clubs
- Louth Navigation Trust

Can I stand as a Louth Town Councillor?

There are only a few rules to qualify you to stand for election. You must be:

- Registered as a local government elector for the Parish on the current Electoral Register
- Have during the whole of the previous 12 months occupied as tenant or owner of any land or other premises in the Parish.
- Your principal or only place of work in the previous 12 months has been in the Parish.
- Have resided either in the Parish or within 3 miles thereof during the whole of the previous 12 months.

You cannot stand for election if you are the subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order; or have within, five years before the day of the election, been convicted in the United Kingdom of any offence and have had a prison sentence (whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine; or have paid employment with the Council you want to become a Councillor for.

What does being a Town Councillor involve?

Councillors are the champions of their community and give residents a voice on the decisions the Council makes. Becoming a Councillor will allow you to make a real difference in the community by engaging with residents, local groups and businesses to find out their needs, making decisions on which services and projects the Council should take forward and getting involved locally to ensure the services are meeting your community's needs. Louth Town Council has a meeting, on average, once every three weeks on a Tuesday evening. Town Councillors should attend most, if not all, of these meetings, otherwise they are not representing those residents who have elected them. Voting on items on the agenda at Council meetings can only be done at meetings, as written or verbal votes are not accepted.

How much time does Council work take up?

Being a Town Councillor can be a challenging and rewarding position. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Local Councillor Census Survey found that Councillors put aside, on average, three hours a week for council work. This often includes attending meetings, engaging with residents and speaking on behalf of the Council to other bodies. Louth Town Council is a busy Council and some Councillors give more time to their Council work than the national average, for instance, Councillors who Chair committees. The Town Mayor commits a considerable amount of time to attending community events throughout the year sometimes also fundraising as well as being Chair of the Town Council and representing and acting as an advocate for the town throughout Lincolnshire.

What is the difference between Town, District and County Councillors?

Local government structures can often be confusing. Local Councils are the first tier of local government and deliver the most local form of services. Principal Authorities are the tiers above local Parish Councils, are usually bigger in size, and represent a larger area such as Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) and East Lindsey District Council (ELDC). Principal Authorities are responsible for services across counties and districts including education, transport, rubbish collections, housing, council tax collections, fire and public safety to name a few.

Thirteen excuses for not joining the parish council

1. "I'm too young."

If you are eighteen (the age limit dropped from 21 to 18 back in 2007) you are old enough.

2. "What's the point of just joining a talking shop, they don't do anything."

Have you ever been to a meeting? Basing your judgement on watching 'The Vicar of Dibley' is definitely not valid.

3. "I haven't got any planning applications in at the moment."

Putting in for planning permission has got nothing to do with sitting on the council, whatever may have happened years ago. In fact, if your own application is discussed by the council, you would be subject to the council's Code of Conduct, and national ethical standards, and have to follow the restrictions on participating in such circumstances.

4. "I'm too busy, and couldn't commit to attending every single meeting."

Meetings are rarely more frequent than one evening a month, and missing the occasional one is acceptable. Most meetings only take a couple of hours.

5. "I'm concentrating on finding a job or furthering my career."

Being a local councillor is a definite plus point to add to a CV – it shows you can make decision, work in a team, are community minded and proactive. Prospective employers will be impressed.

6. "I haven't lived here very long and don't know the area well."

If you are a Commonwealth or EU citizen and have lived or worked in the parish for a year or already have your name on the electoral roll, you are eligible.... Your views as an 'incomer' should be welcomed, as you will probably see things more objectively.

7. "I'm worried that I won't get many votes, and look silly."

Even if you are not voted on this time, you may well be approached if a vacancy occurs in the future and have the opportunity to be co-opted to the council.

8. "Our parish council is full of old fogeys."

Join up and change it then.

9. “I’d look a fool because I won’t know what’s going on.”

You will be eased in gently; there is help, advice and more formal training available. The clerk is the officer to the council, and they will be able to explain the rules.

10. “I’ll have to sign that code of conduct thing that the press keep on about.”

The code of conduct is nowhere near as onerous as made out in the press – and is there to protect you – i.e. the code stops situations like the planning one above.

11. “I’ll have to let everyone know all about my business and personal affairs.”

The declaration of interest asks you to declare business interests within the parish area, to guard against bias when parish issues are debated. As for personal affairs, get real, everyone knows about those already!

12. “I’m too lazy, and not interested in my community.”

An excellent reason for not joining.

13. “I prefer to let others do the work, and then criticise from the side-lines afterwards.”

Also a valid reason for not joining, but do bear in mind, that expounding your views in the pub, rather than the council chamber, will not change a thing in your parish – and if you can’t be bothered, does that mean it’s fair game to criticise those who do make the effort?

What rules and guidelines do the Town Council abide by?

Standing Orders - are based on a model provided by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). This lengthy document governs how the Council operates within the bounds of legislation, tailored to Louth Town Council. The document is amended as required when new legislation is issued, or when the need arises and is adopted every year at the Annual meeting.

Financial Regulations – also based on model documentation from the National body in accordance with government legislation again tailored where possible for the way that Louth Town Council operates, amended when required and adopted annually. The regulations impact on how the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and Auditor function and how the Council reduces risk by imposing and monitoring internal controls. The current RFO for Louth Town Council is the Town Clerk, and the current internal audit arrangements are via a quadripartite arrangement with Mablethorpe and Sutton, Alford, and Skegness Town Councils.

Code of Conduct – this applies to Councillors and advises on how they are expected to act whilst carrying out their role and the consequences if not followed. Louth Town Council has no formal governance regarding a dress code for Councillors, which may range from conventional to characterful; however, members are encouraged to observe standards which the public could expect of their elected member.

Louth Town Council has a very traditional civic history and routinely incorporates Robed Town Council meetings, civic parades and church services within the Council year which Councillors are expected to participate in and assist with as a corporate body. Louth also has a Conservation Area and many Listed Buildings, which means that additional planning policies must be observed by the planning authority when applications are received. Louth Town Council is also the guardian of historical assets such as Brown's Panorama, Louth Town Charters, and many other art works and valuable items which, whilst this is not a Council function, have all to be cared for appropriately and safeguarded for the town.

The Seven Principles of Public Life:

- 1. Selflessness:** Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
- 2. Integrity:** Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
- 3. Objectivity:** Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
- 4. Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
- 5. Openness:** Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
- 6. Honesty:** Holders of public office should be truthful.
- 7. Leadership:** Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Are Town Councillors paid?

No, although they are entitled to an allowance (the amount of which would be decided by an independent panel), Louth Town Councillors have voted unanimously at the start of each four-yearly term of office not to take this. Councillors will only be paid expenses, if approved in advance, if they need to make a journey on the Council's behalf or attend a training session. The Mayor may have other expenses, including invitations and Christmas cards which are sent on behalf of the Council, and the Civic Sunday that each Mayor holds during their year of Office.

Where does the Town Council get its funds from?

Each year a sum of money called a 'precept' is voted on in Council which is then collected by ELDC through the council tax. This money is then invested back into the local neighbourhood to run and improve facilities and services for the town. Income is also generated through the London Road Cemetery for burials etc., along with a small amount through rents/leasing of rooms and property/land.

More about the structure of the Town Council

Committees and meetings

Louth Town Council operates a Committee system which currently comprises three Committees; Planning; Governance and Finance and Personnel.

All Councillors are members of those committees, except Personnel, and so are required to attend every meeting. This enables every Councillor to be involved in discussions on all matters, and to also take on the opportunity of being a Committee Chairman or Vice-Chairman in perhaps a specialist area such as Finance.

Meetings take place approximately every 3 weeks on a Tuesday evening.

In addition to normal meetings the Town Council has an Annual meeting each year, where the new Chairman, who will also be the Mayor, and the Vice-Chairman who is also the Deputy Mayor, are elected by their fellow Councillors. Council meetings in Louth are usually held on Tuesday evenings with a public forum commencing at 6.45pm and meetings at 7.00pm and there may be any combination of different Council or Committee meetings on any evening. The meetings schedule for the year is usually prepared and approved in the March preceding the new Council year in May. Each Committee is re-established at the Annual meeting together with its membership (number of councillors). There are some important functions of the council that are covered by strict legislation, but most other things can be altered within governing documents. The Committees are also supported by smaller working groups such as Planning, Christmas, Floral, and Finance.

The Town Council also hosts the Annual Town meeting, which any resident can attend to have their say during the public forum on any issues in the town that they want. At this meeting the retiring Mayor also gives a report of the Council's activities and actions over the preceding year, and outlines the Council's objectives, projects, and proposals for the forthcoming year.

Guidance on the Role of Members at Meetings

While it is the role of the chairperson to run the meeting, the participation of all members is also fundamental to the success of the meeting.

To ensure an effective meeting, all participants should:

- Undertake any necessary preparation prior to the meeting.
- Arrive on time.
- Keep an open mind.
- Listen to the opinions of others.
- Participate.
- Ensure their remarks are addressed through the chair.
- Not interrupt each other.
- Accept the majority decision.
- Avoid dominating the proceedings.
- Avoid conflict situations.
- Avoid side conversations which distract others.
- Ask questions to clarify understanding.

How are meetings called and conducted?

By law, the date time and place of full Town Council and committee meetings must be posted in a public place at least three clear days prior to the meeting date. Louth Town Council displays agenda documentation at least three days prior to a meeting on the public notice board outside of the Sessions House and also uploads and displays the same on its website. Meetings are usually held on Tuesday evenings at The Sessions House, Eastgate, Louth, LN11 9AJ commencing at 7.00p.m.

Similarly, there is a duty for agenda documentation to be delivered to Councillors giving the same three clear days' notice. From April 2019 the Council agreed to receive their summons and agenda by email but a hard copy agenda will be available for collection from the office prior to the meeting. Only those relevant matters or items of business contained within an agenda can be discussed, considered or transacted at a meeting.

Town Council meetings are open for members of the public to attend; however, these meetings are not public meetings. In short, meetings are held to enable the Council to conduct its business, in an atmosphere conducive to working and the public are permitted to attend to watch and listen but not interfere with proceedings.

How can I get involved?

Louth Town Council currently has vacancies which can be filled by co-option. Anyone interested in standing for Louth Town Council should visit: <https://www.louthtowncouncil.gov.uk/councillors/> and read the documents there, especially 'About Louth Town Council' and 'Councillor Job Description Specification'. To be considered for a vacancy, please apply by sending a letter or email to the address below, registering your wish to be a Town Councillor, explaining why you would like to stand, what you feel you could bring to the Council, confirming how you meet at least one of the qualifying criteria (see relevant section above) and confirming your contact details.