



LOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

Louth Town Council cares for an area of 4,394 square miles with approximately 17,000 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.

Each Councillor is dedicated to a particular area in the town, called a Ward, and there are seven Wards, each one represented by three Councillors.

- North Holme Ward
- Priory Ward
- St. James' Ward
- St. Margaret's Ward
- St. Mary's Ward
- St. Michael's Ward
- Trinity Ward

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 two weeks on a Tuesday evening. Town Councillors should attend most, if not all of these meetings otherwise they are not representing those residents that have elected them. Voting on items on the agenda at Council meetings can only be done at the meetings, 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, vibrant Council, and it may be that some Councillors give more time to their Council work than the national average, for instance, Councillors who Chair committees will be expected to liaise more closely on projects and committee matters with the Town Clerk. The Town Mayor commits a considerable amount of time to attending community events throughout the year, fundraising for the Mayor's Charity as well as being Chair of the Town Council.

Are Town Councillors paid?

Councillors are not paid. In 2019/20 all 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.

Do I need to be a member of a political party to be a Town Councillor?

No, you don't have to be, and as like most local councils Louth is not political. In Louth Town Council many Councillors sit as independent members of the Council. If you would like to be a representative of a political party you will have to contact the party you want to represent and go through their processes.

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 tier above local councils and are often 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.

As a local council we often work in partnership with principal authorities (ELDC and LCC) and are now delivering more services on their behalf than ever before, such as the verge cutting that Louth Town Council agreed to undertake in full as from April 2018 (this was originally one of the services that Lincolnshire County Council undertook).

Can I stand as a Louth Town Councillor?

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

- A British citizen, or a citizen of the Commonwealth, or the European Union
- 18 years of age or older
- Live in the Louth area (within a 3 mile radius of central Louth).

You cannot stand for election if you:

- Are the subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order
- 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
- Work for the council you want to become a councillor for

How to stand as a Councillor

Council elections are held every four years, and the next elections for parish and town councils are in May 2019. At these elections every current Councillor has to stand again for re-election (if they wish to continue being a Councillor). If there are more candidates than seats for each ward, then the election for that ward is Contested and an election vote is held where all residents registered in that ward can vote (going to your ward's polling station to vote). If there are less than or three people standing for the election of a Ward, then this is an Uncontested place and those standing are awarded a place on the Council.

If after the elections there are still Town Council places which have not been filled, people can be Co-opted onto the Town Council. In this case, those wishing to stand are voted on by those people who are currently Town Councillors. Co-options can be undertaken throughout the year, whenever there is a Council place available due to a resignation, death or, on occasions, when a Councillor is disqualified.

What does the Town Council do for Louth?

The Town 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 and two Chapels
- Hubbard's Hills (Contributing for the maintenance through Hubbard's Hills Trust)
- London Road Pavilion and grounds (leased by the Louth Athletics Club and Magna Vitae)
- Allotments (managed by the Louth Cottage Garden Allotment Association)
- The War Memorial
- Bus Shelters, litter bins, seating and information boards in the Town Centre
- The wooden hand carved Town Signs at entrances to Louth
- Town Centre Christmas lights, Christmas Tree and Crib
- Planting baskets in Louth Market Place and main town streets
- Funding 12 CCTV cameras (Managing in partnership with ELDC)
- Verge cutting on the main roads
- Interactive speed signs
- Brown's Panorama
- The original Louth Town Charters, paintings of past Mayors, housed in Session's House
- Civic Parades
- Lovely Louth Competition and Award's Night

The Council liaise and consult with:

- Lincolnshire County Council – County Councillors, Highways – roads, public paths, trees, 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
- Member of Parliament for Louth & Horncastle

The Council award grants to organisations around Louth, in 2018/19 to a:

- Singing group
- Louth cancer fundraising charity
- Scout group
- Charity for the blind
- Sports clubs

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

- Louth Litter Pickers
- Louth Independent Traders (Victorian Market, Christmas Market including Christmas Lights Switch On)
- Louth Lions
- Zero Degrees Festival
- Louth Rotary
- Community Pay Back Team
- Louth Museum
- Local schools
- Royal British Legion
- Team Parish of Louth
- Magna Vitae
- Louth Athletics Club, Hockey Club and Louth Old Boys Football Club
- Louth Run for Life
- Citizens Advice

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 for 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, however some councils use a separate employee or external service, 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.

Every council will operate within this framework but in quite different ways that suit the locality, character and aspirations of the community. For example 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 and assist in as a corporate body. Louth also has a Conservation Area and many Listed Buildings which means that additional planning policies have to be observed by the planning authority when applications are received. Louth Town Council is also the guardian of historic assets such as Brown's Panorama, Town Charters and many other art works and valuable items which whilst not a council function they all have to be cared for appropriately and safeguarded for the town.

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 paid into the Town Council's bank account and then through the budget (voted on each year through the Council) is invested back into your 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.

Thirteen excuses for not joining the Louth Town 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 two evenings a month, and missing the occasional one is acceptable. Most meetings only take 2-3 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 decisions, 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 Town Clerk is the officer to the council, and he or she 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?

More about the structure of the Town Council

Louth Town Council operates a Committee system which currently comprises

- Planning
- Governance and Finance
- Community Resources
- Personnel

The Town Council has an Annual meeting each year at which the first agenda item must be the Election of a new Chairman, followed by the same for the Vice Chairman. As we are a town, in Louth, the Chairman and Vice Chairman may also be known as the Mayor or Deputy Mayor respectively; there is no difference in these roles although the Mayoral term may be more associated with civic and public duties, however, neither have any more powers than any other Councillor who is elected to serve Louth.

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, this allows for forward planning to ensure that important deadlines are achievable and for staff and councillors to pre plan holidays. To meet timescales set for planning application consultation responses there will be a maximum of 3 weeks between meeting dates and a shorter gap if there is a heavier workload such as budget preparation and approval or to accommodate bank holidays. The meetings schedule has to be approved again at the annual meeting in May. The Town Clerk distributes general information, community publications or other authority press releases which is usually done by email and for those who do not have internet access they can be viewed at the office or in hard copy.

Each Committee is re-established at the Annual meeting together with its membership (number of councillors), remit and delegated powers to act on behalf of the council on specified matters such as decisions on planning applications. In 2018/19 council year members voted once again for every Committee (except Personnel) to comprise 100% of councillors. This enables all Councillors to be involved in discussions on all matters and for members to take on the opportunity of being a committee chairman or vice chairman in perhaps a specialist area such as Finance. This system means that all Councillors are required to attend almost all meetings; other

Councils may operate committees with fewer numbers and therefore attend on fewer meeting dates. 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
- Finance

Some meet regularly others operate on a task and finish basis.