

Community Councils

Frequently Asked Questions

What are Community Councils?

Community Councils bridge the gap between the Council and communities and help to make public bodies aware of the opinions and needs of the communities they represent. The main purpose of Community Councils is to find out and express the views of the community to the local authority and other public bodies. They are the most local tier of elected representation in Scotland.

How many Community Councils are there?

There are 18 Community Councils in Shetland, made up of people who care about their communities and want to make their area a better place to live.

You can find your local Community Council here:

- [Find a Community Council | Community Council](#)

How often do Community Councils meet and what happens at meetings?

Each community council must hold at least six ordinary meetings per year. However, meetings are held as often as necessary to fulfil duties, usually every 4 to 6 weeks, lasting a few hours each time.

Agenda items can include consideration of planning applications, requests for feedback from public bodies on service delivery proposals or changes, and a range of community issues raised through correspondence. The local Elected Members of Shetland Islands Council may attend meetings and there are regular reports and inputs from Police Scotland and other local service providers, such as NHS Shetland.

How are Community Councils funded?

Community Councils receive annual funding from the Shetland Islands Council to assist with annual running costs. This includes funding to support community groups and projects, administration and environmental costs.

How many people are on each Community Council?

The size of Community Council membership varies; Skerries Community Council is the smallest with 5 members and Lerwick Community Council is the biggest with 16 members.

Where do Community Councils sit democratically?

Community Councils are the most local tier of statutory representation in Scotland. They sit between communities and the Local Authority, giving residents a direct voice on local issues. While they don't have decision-making powers like councillors at the Local Authority, they can help to influence decisions, represent community views, and work in partnership with the Council and other organisations.

What are my responsibilities as a Community Councillor?

You are responsible for representing the interests and views of your local community. You must commit to the role and uphold the standards and values of the Community Council. This involves being accessible to residents, understanding their concerns and advocating for various issues. Additionally, you are required to participate in Community Council meetings and help shape decisions related to local matters.

I am already part of a local community group. Am I also allowed to become part of the Community Council?

Yes, you can be involved both in a community group and your Community Council. However, you may have to declare any conflicts of interest that arise during meetings and withdraw from discussions and/or decision making, as necessary.

Can I be a Community Councillor alongside other commitments?

Yes. Community Council meetings take place once every 4-6 weeks, lasting a few hours, meaning it is a flexible position alongside work commitments or other responsibilities. The time you put in outside of meetings is up to you and will depend on the projects and issues you choose to get involved with.

How can I get involved?

Outside of election times, you can get involved with your Community Council through a process called co-option. If there are vacancies within the Community Council, you may be co-opted as a member. Community Council meetings are open to the public, so if you are interested in seeing what happens feel free to go along to observe.

How long would I be a Community Councillor for?

Community Council elections generally take place every 4 years, however you can step down at any time if you have a change in circumstances.

Is it a paid position?

No, being a Community Councillor is an unpaid position.

Can I attend meetings remotely?

Yes, there is the possibility to attend meetings remotely. Speak to your local clerk to discuss arrangements.

Do I need any previous experience or qualifications to stand for Community Council?

No, you do not need any experience or qualifications.

All you need is:

- To be at least 16 years of age
- Appear on the electoral register within the Community Council area you wish to represent

To become a Community Councillor, you need to submit a nomination form for yourself when the nomination period opens. The nomination period is publicly posted, including details on how and where to submit nomination forms. See SIC website for more information

www.shetland.gov.uk/community

What kind of projects do Community Councils get involved in?

Community Councils are involved in a variety of projects within their local community. From improving public spaces and organising community events, to supporting local services and representing residents' views on planning and development issues. Community Councils can also provide small sums of grant aid to support initiatives that benefit their community.

Examples of the types of projects that Shetland Community Councils have been involved in:

- Gulberwick, Quarff & Cunningsburgh Community Council funded the purchase of iPads for Overtonlea care home during the Coronavirus pandemic, allowing residents to stay in touch with friends and family during lockdowns
- Lerwick Community Council install interpretation boards at a number of popular locations around Lerwick
- Sandsting & Aithsting Community Council purchased and installed benches in various locations within the Sandsting & Aithsting area
- Scalloway Community Council purchased and installed cycle stands in Scalloway
- Whalsay Community Council developed a "Welcome to Whalsay" sign

Will there be training?

Yes, there are training materials available for Community Councils. Staff from Shetland Islands Council routinely deliver training courses and workshops to Community Councillors and clerks.

What other support is there to help me?

If you need support or help in the role, you can speak to your local Community Involvement and Development Officer, contact or the Community Council Liaison Officer for assistance.

Contact details are as follows:

Community Involvement & Development Officer – South Mainland & Fair Isle

Officer: Ana Arnett

Tel: 01595 744532

Email: ana.arnett3@shetland.gov.uk

Community Involvement & Development Officer – Central & West Mainland, Foula, Papa Stour & Whalsay

Officer: Roselyn Fraser

Tel: 01595 743879

Email: Roselyn.fraser@shetland.gov.uk

Community Involvement & Development Officer – North Mainland & Skerries

Officer: Lynsey Hall

Tel: 01595 744510

Email: lynsey.hall2@shetland.gov.uk

Community Involvement & Development Officer – North Isles

Officer: Frances Browne

Tel: 01595 745717

Email: frances.browne@shetland.gov.uk

Community Council Liaison Officer

Officer: Michael Duncan

Tel: 01595 743828

Email: michael.duncan@shetland.gov.uk