

# Influencing Locally

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# Local life matters

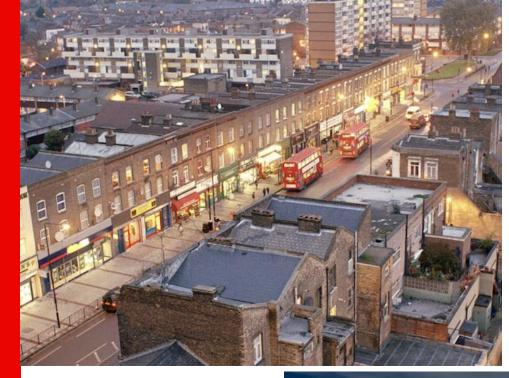


The local influences the national



### WHERE POWER LIES

### **Everywhere** is different





## Local Government in England

Three types of Local Authority in England:

- County Councils: whole-county, provide about 80% of services in the area including education, transport, care
- 2. District Councils: smaller area within a county, more local services (housing, planning, waste)
- 3. Unitary Authority: one level of government responsible for all services (London Boroughs, Metropolitan Districts, UAs)

#### The rest of the UK

Unitary, single-tier councils

- Scotland: 32
- Wales: 22
- Northern Ireland: 11

Also devolved parliaments and assemblies in the Scottish Parliament, Senedd Cymru and the Northern Ireland Assembly Parish, Town and Community Councils Operating at the level below Local Authorities /Boroughs/etc. Varies place to place but usually responsible for:

- Fines for litter, graffiti etc
- Allotments, community centres and play areas
- Bus stops
- Town Clocks
- Small grants

About 10,000 in England, 1,200 in Scotland, 730 in Wales and none in NI

### Council Structures

If in doubt, local councils' How We Work or Democracy website pages are useful.

#### THE LEADER AND CABINET MODEL

- Council Leader runs the council, appoints cabinet
- Mayor/Provost/Chair mostly ceremonial, chairs council meetings
- Cabinet 'portfolio' areas like health, culture, housing
- Committees issue-focused groups of councillors, often led by cabinet members
- Councillors vote in all-council meetings, also elect council leaders and mayors

#### ELECTED MAYORS

- Directly elected political personalities, so usually(!) more flexible/experimental
- Often a louder voice in national policy discussions
- Many are metro mayors, who run combined authorities

### Council Officers

Employees of the council. While councillors are supposed to represent the public and provide political leadership, officers:

- Implement policies agreed by councillors
- Organise and deliver services, manage staff
- Advise and support councillors
- Are "politically impartial"

Do some digging on the most relevant councillor and officer to your work, e.g. the Cabinet Member for Communities and the local Cohesion Officer.

### **HOW TO INFLUENCE**

### **Reaching out**

#### • Find contact details

- Most councillors have to list their contact details on the council website
- For officers, try googling john.doe@council.gov.uk, j.doe@, johndoe@, etc
- Most organisations have one email pattern, if you have john.doe@council.gov, try googling jane.doe@council.gov
- Once you have an email, google again to try and find a number
  - More likely to answer the phone than an email, particularly in the first and last hours of the day

#### Know who NOT to contact

- Councils are very risk averse, more so the higher up you go
- A lot of good projects have been scrapped because an Executive Director found out before it gathered
  12
  momentum

### **Reaching out**

- Find your allies have you worked with anyone in the council before?
  - Even if your ally doesn't work in your policy area, they can coach you on how to influence the council
  - Is there a campaign that has worked locally? Can you take the campaign organiser for a coffee?
  - What about wider civil society? Existing groups local unions, community groups, pressure groups, membership organisations etc. Find the organised people on your side

### Understanding your leverage

- SOLUTIONS SOLUTIONS SOLUTIONS!
  - Make their life easy. What's the problem, and what can they do to fix it?
- Put yourself in the Council's shoes and do a cost-benefit analysis
  - Where are the power/pressure points? Are you more effective being a collaborator or a pain in the neck?
- If you do take an adversarial tone, give them a way out!
  - Keep inviting them to the table, make sure there's a clear way for them to avoid being a sore loser or get a PR win in conceding
- Create shared wins wherever you can:
  - Read your council's business plan/organisational strategy
  - Read the last local election's manifestos

Engaging the public

#### Listening exercises

- Street stalls, Presence at local events
- Door-to-door

#### Local social media groups

- Informal distribution networks for news and event invites
- Sometimes a good way of building a community around your issue

#### Local media

- The local papers are hugely understaffed. If they get a relatively polished article from a charity or community group, they'll usually just publish it in full
- Even if only 10 people read your free local paper, 1 is a councillor and the other 9 are the sort of people who regularly write to councillors
- Local media is good content to build up a presence on social media



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