



Bridgend Town Council
Induction Pack for Youth Members
2021

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Introduction

Welcome and congratulations on your election to serve as a Youth Member of Bridgend Town Council.

This guide is to help you understand:

- Your role as a Youth Member
- The council's rules and procedures for the conduct of its business.
- Bridgend Town Council staff and current projects

This guide also contains details of the Council's Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other documents which you will find offer helpful guidance.

If you have any queries during your term of office please do not hesitate to contact the Town Clerk who is always willing to help.

Standing Orders

Standing orders are the written rules of a local council. They are used to confirm a council's internal organisational, administrative and procurement procedures and procedural matters for meetings. They are not the same as the policies of a council but they may refer to them.

Meetings of full council, councillors, the Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer are subject to many statutory requirements. A council should have standing orders to confirm those statutory requirements. A council should have standing orders to control the number, place, quorum, notices and other procedures for committee and sub-committee meetings because these are subject to fewer statutory requirements.

Standing orders do not include financial regulations. Financial regulations are standing orders to regulate and control the financial affairs and accounting procedures of a local council. The financial regulations, as opposed to the standing orders of a council, include most of the requirements relevant to the Responsible Financial Officer.

- *The Standing Orders for Bridgend Town Council are attached in Appendix 1*
- *The Financial Regulations for Bridgend Town Council are attached in Appendix 2*

Code of Conduct

All Council members are required to consider matters with an open mind, in an open and transparent process free from an interest.

The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for its Members, which reflects its statutory requirement to promote and maintain these high standards of conduct as required by the Localism Act 2011.

The Code applies to Members when they are acting as a councillor or the public perceive them to be acting as a councillor and it is essential that you become familiar with its contents.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct may be reported to the Monitoring Officer of Bridgend County Borough Council who has the duty to consider and investigate potential breaches of the Code.

Declaration of Interests

During your term as Youth member you will from time to time have close links to items being discussed.

The Council's Code of Conduct requires you to consider these links and if necessary declare a level of interest in the matter and leave the room when the matter is being discussed.

There will be an opportunity at the beginning of the agenda for all council meetings to notify the Town Clerk of any potential interest but you also have a duty to declare an interest as soon as you become aware of it later on. This may mean declaring the interest during the discussion rather than at the start of the meeting.

You must state the level of interest and the nature of the interest and ensure that these are recorded on a Declarations of Interest form.

Full details regarding Declarations of Interest are provide on page 13 – 14 of The Good Councillor Guide.

Understanding Bridgend Town Council

Bridgend Town Council is one of four Town Councils and sixteen Community Councils in the County. Located in the south of the borough, it adjoins seven community councils; Brackla, Coychurch Lower, Ewenny, Merthyr Mawr, Laleston, Newcastle Higher and Coity Higher and the Vale of Glamorgan County Borough.

The population of the immediate town is approximately 15,000, distributed over three wards; Morfa, Oldcastle and Newcastle.

Bridgend Town Council is an elected body of 19 councillors. Business discussed at a Town Council meeting is primarily of local Bridgend Town importance – but sometimes can include discussions on issues which are at regional or national importance.

The Town Council fulfils its statutory duties and uses its powers to provide a wide range of services to meet local needs and improve the life of residents in the local community.

Meetings are open to the public and press who are entitled to record and report on anything that may be said in debate.

Bridgend Town Council Staff

Town Clerk:	Mrs Leanne Edwards
Deputy Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer:	Mrs Debra Jones

Please see separate Staff Structure document for a full summary of BTC staff, job titles and hours worked.

Bridgend Town Council Contact Details

Address: Bridgend Town Council
 Carnegie House
 Wyndham Street
 Bridgend
 CF31 1EF

Telephone Number: 01656 815757

Email address: bridgend.tc@bridgend.gov.uk

The Town Clerk is normally available during office opening hours 9am – 2pm, however you are requested to make an appointment in advance for any face-to-face meetings you require.

The Town Clerk is your first point of contact for all matters including any complaints, or requests for agenda items or matters concerning the business of the Council.

Council Meetings

Full Town Council meetings take place in the Council Chamber at Carnegie House. Meetings typically start at 7pm unless the agenda states otherwise. If there is an invited guest to speak to the Town Council prior to dealing with Town Council business, meetings will start at 6.30pm.

Committee meetings of the Town Council typically take place in the first floor Board Room at Carnegie House. Please note that committee meetings can be held during the day and you should always check the date, time and venue before attending any meeting.

This information will be at the top of the summons to attend.

An agenda is produced by the Town Clerk for each meeting and copies of the agenda and supporting material are despatched to Members before the date of the meeting, giving you the statutory 3 clear days' notice.

Attending your first Council meeting

An agenda and papers will be sent to you at least 3 working days before the meeting and you should familiarise yourself with the items for discussion.

If you have any queries regarding any item on the agenda please do not hesitate to contact the Town Clerk for further information.

Calendar of Meetings

The full Council meets monthly on the third Monday of every month except Bank Holidays. A calendar of meetings will be sent to you separately.

In addition the Mayor/Mayoress may call additional meetings of full Council as required. These are known as Extra Ordinary meetings and may be called giving 3 clear days notice.

The Annual Meeting of the Council

The Annual Meeting of the Council is held in May. The agenda for this meeting includes:

- The election of Mayor/Mayoress and Deputy Mayor/Mayoress for the year
- Appointment of members to the various council committees
- Appointment of representatives to outside bodies

Constitution of Committees and Committee Structure

The council committee structure is detailed in Standing Orders. You will not be able to participate in committee meetings unless you have been appointed to the Committee by the Council or specifically invited to attend. You can however attend any meeting to observe proceedings.

Agenda, Reports and Minutes

The statute requires that Councillors are 'summoned' to attend a Council meeting. This formal notice provides the date, time and place of the meeting and will include an agenda to give details of the items to be discussed and the level of discussion to take place i.e. whether Council are considering what action to take, receiving a report or resolving to take action.

It is important that you take the time to read these papers before attending the meeting to familiarise yourself with the issues to be discussed.

When you receive the agenda and reports for meetings, you will sometimes find a report marked "CONFIDENTIAL". Confidential matters are typically be printed on PINK paper.

As a Youth members you will not be sent any confidential papers and may be asked to leave the meeting temporarily whilst confidential matters are discussed.

After each meeting Minutes are prepared by the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk. The Council agenda, together with the Minutes of the last meeting and minutes of any other meetings of Committees form the basis on which the Council conducts its business.

The Council also has an opportunity to allow for public participation at the full Town Council meetings, where members of the public can speak to items on the agenda.

If you wish to have an item put on the Agenda for discussion, please contact the Town Clerk.

The Role of Members

Councillors are collectively responsible for making Council policy, for which they are accountable to the electorate.

Councillors are not directly involved in the day-to-day provision of services to the public. This does not of course mean that there should be no contact between Councillors and the Town Clerk on such matters and indeed, Councillors may often find that they are asked by electors to pursue matters on their behalf. However, Councillors have no executive authority, and will need to deal with all matters either through the Council meetings or in liaison with the Town Clerk.

It therefore follows that there are no circumstances where an individual Councillor can issue an instruction to the Clerk or a Contractor.

Likewise, a Councillor must never act “on behalf of the Council” in the organisation of any function or service. Particular care should be taken in letters, emails, social media and comments to the Press, to ensure they understand that Members speak as a “Councillor” and not on behalf of the Council as a whole.

Generally, the Town Clerk on behalf of the Council issues official Bridgend Town Council correspondence and press statements.

Youth Members

A Youth Member is a community youth representative with no voting rights.

A community youth representative is a person between the ages of 15 and 26 whom the council considers to be suitable to act as a community representative, namely to represent the interests of individuals under the age of 26 who live, work or receive education or training in the council’s area.

It is important to explain the limited statutory rights that non-councillors have at the meetings of Council. This means that although you will be invited to express your view on topics at Council meetings, you will not be eligible to participate in the decision making or voting process.

Although you cannot vote on council business, you can effectively represent to the council the views of young people in the area.

The Role of the Town Clerk

The Town Clerk is the Proper Officer of the Council and has a statutory duty to carry out all the required functions of the role; and in particular to serve or issue all the notifications required by law of a local authority's Proper Officer.

The Clerk is a professional advisor to the Council on matters of policy and the Clerk is also responsible for ensuring that the instructions of the Council in connection with its functions, are carried out.

The Clerk is expected to advise the Council on, and assist in the formation of, overall policies to be followed in respect of the Authority's activities and in particular to produce all the information required for making effective decisions and to implement constructively all decisions.

The Clerk is accountable to the Council for the effective management of all its resources and reports to the Council as and when required.

How These Roles Work in Practice

Councillors take decisions on matters of major policy at full meetings of the Council, after having considered the recommendations of any Committee if needed. Any Committee will, in turn, have considered the recommendations of the Town Clerk.

Councillors take decisions on matters of more limited significance at meetings of any Committees, after having considered the recommendations of the Town Clerk and depending on their delegated powers.

Within the framework of policies decided by Councillors, either at full Council or Committee level, the Town Clerk, sometimes in consultation with the Mayor/Mayoress, will take many decisions every working day. Most of these decisions will be concerned with but not limited to the day- to- day management of the office and services to the public.

Statutory Powers and Duties

The Council derives its powers from statute. A few of these are mandatory but most are discretionary. In all cases, both Councillors and Officers must work within the law.

The Town Clerk will act as advisor to the council to ensure that it acts legally at all times. From time to time this may mean the Clerk advising members during a meeting to alert members to possible legal issues in the decision making process.

A full list of the legal duties and powers of a Town Council can be found on Page 32 – 38 of The Good Councillor Guide.

In summary:

- Councillors are responsible for making Council policy, but do not have executive authority.
- The Clerk is responsible for advising Councillors on the making of Council policy and for ensuring that such policy is carried out.
- The Council's Standing Orders determines which Committee, if any, deals with particular matters, and at which level decisions are taken.
- Many matters are delegated to the Town Clerk, who can make decisions on them working within established Council policies.
- The day-to-day management of services is the responsibility of the Town Clerk.
- Both Councillors and the Town Clerk must work within the law.
- Mutual respect between the Town Clerk and Councillors is essential in order for the Council to function effectively. Personal attacks on Officers should be avoided (and would be contrary to the Code of Conduct), as, under the convention of Local Government, Officers are unable to defend themselves from such comments in public.

Elections, The Town Council & The Mayoral Role

Election procedures

To vote in a local government election in Wales you must:

- be 16 or over on the day of the election ('polling day')
- be registered at an address in the area you want to vote in
- not be legally excluded from voting
- be registered to vote

You must also be one of the following:

- a British citizen
- an Irish or EU citizen
- a qualified commonwealth citizen
- a citizen of another country living in Wales who has permission to enter or stay in the UK, or who does not need permission

In Wales, there are 22 unitary authorities (county and county borough councils) and over 735 community and town councils.

Unitary authorities

The unitary authority in Bridgend is Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC). This Council delivers services such as education, town and country planning, refuse collections and recycling, transport and highways, housing and social services.

Community and Town Councils

Community and Town Councils are the tier of government closest to the people. They are responsible to their local residents and seek to serve and represent the needs of the local community.

In Bridgend County Borough area, there are 4 Town Councils and 16 Community Councils.

Local government councillors in England and Wales are elected using the First Past the Post system. You vote for one candidate in your local area and the candidate with the most votes wins.

In Bridgend Town Council, residents are represented by 19 Councillors covering the three wards of Morfa, Oldcastle and Newcastle. In Morfa and Oldcastle, the first 6 candidates past the post are elected and in Newcastle it is the first 7 who are elected.

Terms of Office for Councillors

In Bridgend local Councillors are elected every 5 years. The last election was held in May 2017.

Councillors are elected to represent the particular interests of residents within their wards and the general interests of Bridgend Town as a whole.

Should a vacancy arise mid-term then the post is advertised and a request for an election to fill the said vacancy is made in writing. If an election is not requested, the Community Council will co-opt a person to fill the vacancy as soon as practicable.

Election Procedures for the Mayor

Bridgend Town Council select the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the forthcoming Mayoral year at the April Town Council Meeting.

The Mayor is always a member of the council who is nominated for the position by fellow councillors.

If more than one councillor is nominated, a vote is held between the 19 councillors. The candidate with a clear majority of votes (over 50%) is elected to the role. The councillors nominated are able to vote for themselves and in the case of an equality of votes the outgoing Mayor has a casting vote.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor Elect make their formal declaration of acceptance of office and commence their role at the Annual Meeting of Council, which is traditionally held in May.

Unless The Mayor resigns or becomes disqualified, they continue in office and preside at the annual meeting of Council until his/her successor is takes on the role the following May.

Term of Office for the Mayor

The term of office for the Bridgend Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor is traditionally one year May – May.

Bridgend Town Council – Projects & Services

In Wales, Town and Community Councils can exercise a range of statutory powers and duties to deliver a wide range of services and provide local amenities. They typically provide services such as the provision and maintenance of recreational spaces, registered public footpaths, war memorials, allotments, floral displays, seasonal events and other community services.

Bridgend Town Council use its powers to provide a wide range of services and undertake projects to meet local needs and improve the life of residents in the local community. These include:

- Managing the Carnegie House public building, which includes an Arts and Culture Hub, Community meeting spaces, Council Chamber and staff offices.
- Operating a programme of seasonal events, classes and workshops at the Arts and Culture Hub.
- Managing five allotment sites with 125 plots.
- Considering and providing comments on planning applications as statutory consultees.
- Installing and maintaining a wide range of street furniture, bins, picnic benches, bus shelters, winter grit bins and telephone kiosks within the wards.

- Maintaining registered footpaths within the Town Council area.
- Controlling dog fouling with 25 bins throughout the area and a weekly dog waste collection service.
- Arranging summer floral displays and small landscaping projects in Bridgend Town.
- Providing an active grant programme, providing financial support to many community and charity groups in the area.
- Administering a Blue Plaque Scheme to recognise significant contributions made to the area and commemorate notable people, places and events within the wards.
- Arranging and financing the Remembrance Parade and Service and Armed Forces Day.
- Supporting local tourism with the provision of free large scale annual town centre events such as 'Wartime Bridgend', 'Bridgend Light Festival' and 'Bridgend Christmas Lights Switch-on'.
- Responsibility for providing the Christmas trees and all the Christmas Illuminations in Bridgend Town.
- Supporting Town Twinning with towns in Germany and France.
- Custodians of the Town Centre War Memorial, Randall Memorial and Ruhamah Burial Ground
- Co-ordinating a team of Outdoor Maintenance Workers that carry out general maintenance of Town Council buildings and assets including the Town Centre war memorial and Randell memorial. The team also work to improve the street scene in the town centre and tackle issues such as graffiti, litter, weed and gum removal.

The Town Council manage these projects and services with robust Corporate Governance through Full Council meetings and a number of Committees and Working Groups including:

- Full Council
- Finance Committee
- Planning Committee
- Personnel Committee
- Regeneration Committee
- Community Engagement & Well-being Committee

Life during the pandemic

Decisions about Town Council business are taken at public meetings of the Council. Although the Town Council buildings are currently closed to the public, the Council has adapted to life in the pandemic. Office staff are currently working from home whilst the Outdoor Maintenance Team are working individually to continue to deliver essential services throughout our wards. Council meetings are now taking place remotely. The public are welcome to view these meetings online. The meeting agenda's and links to the remote meetings can be found on our website

www.bridgendtowncouncil.gov.uk

In 2021 Bridgend Town Council are also working on the following projects:

- Refurbishing a building and opening a new Town Hall with community facilities in Bridgend
- Developing a new Town Council website to improve communications with local residents
- Introducing a new Tree planting scheme
- Installing new Community Notice Boards in the wards
- Refurbishing finger post signs in the Town Centre
- Reinstating the Arts & Culture programme and arranging town centre events when Covid-19 restrictions are lifted

Councillors also sit on numerous charitable committees and various School Governing Bodies.

A New Town Hall for Bridgend

The Town Council has occupied Carnegie House - the former Public Library Building in Wyndham Street, Bridgend, since 2013. The ground floor is used as an Arts Centre whilst the first floor accommodates the Council Chamber, Committee Room and Staff Offices. The Council has grown significantly over the past seven years and after successful negotiations with BCBC, Bridgend Town Council have acquired the Ty'r Ardd building in Sunnyside for community use and extension of public services. Over the coming months the building will undergo refurbishment works and will become a new Town Hall for Bridgend. The Town Hall will accommodate the Council Chamber and staff offices as well as accessible community spaces for the residents of Bridgend. The Council is delighted to welcome former Evergreen Hall users to the Town Hall, where a range of activities, classes and clubs to enrich the lives of older and vulnerable people in Bridgend will continue. Local residents will also have access to room hire for local community groups. Subsequently this move will free up the first floor of Carnegie House which will be used as a flexible Heritage Space in the town centre to host local as well as travelling exhibitions. We look forward to sharing further details of this exciting project later in the year.

Training

The Council recognises that members and the clerk should attend regular sessions to update and improve their understanding of matters affecting local government.

It supports and encourages councillors and the clerk to attend training events, conferences and seminars provided by organisations including One Voice Wales, the Society of Local Council Clerks and Bridgend County Borough Council.

Examples of training available include:

- Code of Conduct
- Councillor Skills
- Chairmanship
- Planning
- Finance including budgeting, audit and risk management

Useful websites:

Bridgend Town Council

www.bridgendtowncouncil.gov.uk

Carnegie House Arts Centre

<http://www.carnegiehouse.co.uk/>

Law Wales

<http://law.gov.wales/constitution-government/government-in-wales/local-gov/communities/>

Welsh Local Government Association

<http://wlg.wales/home>

One Voice Wales

<http://www.onevoicewales.org.uk>

Bridgend County Borough Council Planning Portal

<http://planning.bridgend.gov.uk/>