



# Working with Local Government

Ag Obair le Rialtas Áitiúil

**CLUB MAITH TOOLKIT**



## INTRODUCTION – WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Local Government plays a central role in life across Ulster. This includes the County and District Councillors who make decisions. The work of councils has an ongoing impact on GAA clubs, club members and local communities. They have a direct responsibility for a number of areas that are tied in with GAA Clubs' core business, Gaelic games and our associated activities. Every GAA Club should have a relationship and link with their local Council.

## WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY DO?

County	Councils
Antrim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belfast City Council</li> <li>• Causeway Coast and Glens District Council</li> <li>• Antrim and Newtownabbey District Council</li> <li>• Mid and East Antrim District Council</li> <li>• Lisburn and Castlereagh District Council</li> <li>• Armagh Banbridge Craigavon District Council</li> </ul>
Armagh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armagh Banbridge Craigavon District Council</li> <li>• Newry Mourne and Down District Council</li> </ul>
Cavan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cavan County Council</li> </ul>
Derry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Derry City and Strabane District Council</li> <li>• Mid Ulster District Council</li> <li>• Causeway Coast and Glens District Council</li> </ul>
Donegal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donegal County Council</li> </ul>
Down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armagh Banbridge Craigavon District Council</li> <li>• Newry Mourne and Down District Council</li> <li>• North Down and Ards District Council</li> <li>• Lisburn and Castlereagh District Council</li> <li>• Belfast City Council</li> </ul>
Fermanagh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fermanagh and Omagh District Council</li> </ul>
Monaghan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monaghan County Council</li> </ul>
Tyrone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fermanagh and Omagh District Council</li> <li>• Mid Ulster District Council</li> <li>• Derry City and Strabane District Council</li> </ul>

*Councils work best and most effectively when others develop partnerships with them. If the GAA is serious about this part of our business then there is an obligation on us to play our part.*

Council responsibilities differ depending on the jurisdiction. However, in broad terms Councils are responsible for the following.

Counties – Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down, Fermanagh, Tyrone	Counties – Cavan, Donegal, Monaghan
Planning and Development	Leisure and Recreation
Building Control	Culture, Arts and Community Services
Roads and Transport	Waste Collection and Management
Urban Regeneration	Street Cleaning
Community	Building Control
Housing	Environment Health
Local Economic Development	Tourism
Local Tourism	Local Economic Development
Leisure Facilities and Amenity	Registration and Licensing
Sports Development	Leisure and Recreation
Environmental Protection and Waste	Culture, Arts and Community Services
Water Protection and Management	Consulted on planning, Roads, Water and Housing
Arts and Culture	EU funded Peace initiatives
Community Health and Wellbeing	
EU funded Peace initiatives	

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SPORT

County Councils and District Area Councils have a statutory responsibility for supporting the development of sport and leisure. They tend to do this in three ways:

- Directly providing sporting and leisure facilities.
- By rolling out Sports Development programmes e.g. Coaching Schemes, Summer Camps, sports development workshops.
- By grant aiding local sports Clubs for capital projects and/or programmes.

Traditionally the GAA has not fully engaged with local government and it's important that Clubs establish contact with the local Sports Development Officer and elected representatives. GAA Clubs should aim to achieve the following in their local government area:

- All appropriate, publicly funded facilities are fit for purpose in terms of Gaelic Games.
- Gaelic Games and associated needs are built into all local sports development strategies.
- Coaching programmes always include a Gaelic Games component.
- GAA Clubs are included in all Council sports related circulation lists and databases.
- Council funding programmes are relevant to the GAA and are circulated throughout the GAA Communities.
- GAA Clubs ensure that they become aware of what Councils do and help Councils achieve their targets through their work.

“Fit for Purpose” Means:

- All Council owned pitches have GAA facilities or multi-sport facilities that can accommodate the playing of Gaelic Games i.e. minimum GAA size.
- Floodlighting should be appropriate for Gaelic Games (essentially higher and brighter lights than may be needed for other sports).

- Changing rooms should accommodate teams based on 15 players.
- Shower facilities should meet female requirements.
- Indoor facilities should facilitate indoor Hurling/Camogie and basic football training.
- Outdoor pitches/space should be able to facilitate Rounders.
- Facility availability and maintenance schedules should reflect GAA playing seasons.
- Handball should be accommodated.
- Hurling Walls should be provided.
- Kick-about areas should accommodate the playing of the GAA “go-games”.
- Facilities should acknowledge Gaelic Games through their décor and branding.

## BEYOND SPORT

Neither the GAA nor local government are concerned with sport or games alone. Both share a significant amount of shared interests, such as;

- Community support and community outreach
- The Arts
- Cultural Activities
- Museums and Heritage
- Social Inclusion
- Physical and Mental Health and Wellbeing

There is also significant scope for joint working and partnerships between Clubs and Councils in these areas. Many Councils have Culture and/or Irish Language Officers in place. At a minimum these officers can support Clubs and their members by:

- Support Club-based Irish Language classes or providing classes which GAA members can attend.
- Providing advice on the use of Irish, including signage in a Club setting.
- Working jointly on Gaelic (Celtic) Art programmes and projects.
- Establishing and developing local heritage programmes around townlands or local place names.
- Developing and hosting local displays and exhibitions.
- Supporting local History GAA projects
- Helping access Council facilities and premises for GAA Club events.

Councils work best and most effectively when others develop partnerships with them. It’s neither fair nor practical to expect Councils to develop these agendas on their own. If the GAA is serious about this part of our business then there is an obligation on us to play our part.

In the 26 Counties, County Councils include a number of strategic policy committees (SPC)’s These are “matched up” against groups of Council services and provide advice and policy development support for them. They contribute to Council planning and help coordinate Council work. Most Councils will have four to six SPC’s. Councillors take up two thirds of the places on the SPC but the other third are reserved for people from interested local organisations. It is important that there is a strong GAA voice in every SPC.

## LOCAL SPORTS PARTNERSHIPS AND FORUMS

Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan each have established a dedicated local company to promote and develop sport. They bring together Councils, VEC's, the HSE, FAS, Third Level Colleges and a range of community and voluntary groups. The key aims of the LSP's are to increase participation in sport and to ensure that local resources are used to best effect. The outcomes they seek to include are:

- Club Development
- Volunteer Training
- Enhanced planning of sport at local level
- School, Community, and National Governing Body links
- Increased levels of local participation, especially amongst specific target groups such as older people, girls & women. People with disabilities, unemployed people, and those who live in disadvantaged communities.

The LSP's take their advice from local Sports Forum in terms of developing their plans and setting their priorities. The three LSP's in Ulster are:

Donegal Sports Partnership- Active Donegal <http://activedonegal.com>

Cavan Sports Partnership <http://www.cavansportspartnership.ie>

Monaghan Sports Partnership <http://www.monaghansports.ie>

It is important that GAA Clubs not only have a strong link with their LSP but also actively have influence. In Antrim, Armagh, Down, Derry, Fermanagh and Tyrone there are no formal local government sports arrangements in place, however most Councils will have a local advisory Sports Forum or partnership. These bodies bring together people representing the main local sports and they help Councils in their sports planning and lobbying work.

## DONT FORGET ABOUT PLANNING

All Councils north and south have responsibility for planning. That means that they are responsible for preparing the local planning policy. Planning policy is vital and sets out the way ahead for the local areas in land-use terms. They decide on things such as where housing growth will be concentrated, what community provision there will be and where it will be located; where and how open space and recreation needs will be met. These are vitally important concerns for GAA Clubs. Each Club should be aware of what is contained within the County or Local Area Development Plan, and be prepared to get involved in the consultation process when it is up for review. Any new developments will invariably evolve out of these plans, which can be long term (15+ years). Digital copies of these plans can be found on the County Council or Local Authority websites.

Councils will also produce pitch strategies, so it is again important that the GAA voice is heard around the provision of suitable and adequate public GAA pitches.

## KNOW YOUR COUNCIL AND GET YOUR COUNCIL TO KNOW YOU

Too often Councils don't know the GAA, and in turn, the GAA doesn't know Councils. From a GAA Club perspective we should:

- Find out about your Council visit its website and read its plans.
- Invite local Councillors and Council officials to your Club Functions.
- Keep Councillors updated on your Club's plans and achievements.

- Ensure that representatives of the Club attend Council planning and consultation events to ensure that the Club's view point is included.
- Invite local councillors to participate in community consultation events when developing GAA club development plans.
- Ask for an opportunity to do a presentation to the Council if/when the Club is planning a major project.
- Always acknowledge any help or support that the Club gives the Council, and vice versa.
- If appropriate, lend support to Council programmes.

#### SOME TIPS FOR GAA AND LOCAL COUNCIL COLLABORATION

Some joint GAA and Council initiatives that have worked well are:

- Block booking arrangements for Council facilities.
- Club/Community Groups taking over the management of Council facilities.
- Discounts at Council Leisure Centres/Gyms for GAA members.
- Use of Council theatres for Scór Events.
- Use of Council premises for GAA Club launches/Events.
- Councils hosting civic receptions for successful GAA teams or individuals.
- Joint working for major events such as St. Patrick's day.