

Working with Local Government

Ag Obair le Rialtas Áitiúil

Why is this important?

Local government plays a central role in life across Ulster. So too do the politicians who run it; County and District Councillors. What Councils do 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 | COUNTY | COUNCILS |
|----------------|---|------------------|--|
| Antrim | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mid Ulster - Belfast City Council - Causeway District Council - Antrim and Newtownabbey Council - Mid and East Antrim | Down | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - North Down and Ards Council - Belfast City Council - Lisburn and Castlereagh Council - Newry Mourne and Down Council - Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council |
| Armagh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Armagh, Banbridge and Craigabon District Council - Newry, Mourne and Down | Fermanagh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Omagh and Fermanagh District Council |
| Cavan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cavan County Council | Monaghan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monaghan County Council |
| Derry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Derry & Strabane District Council - Mid Ulster Council - Causeway Council | Tyrone | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Omagh and Fermanagh District Council - Mid Ulster Council - Derry and Strabane Council |
| Donegal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Donegal County Council | | |

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 broadly Councils are responsible for the following:

| COUNTIES: Armagh, Antrim, Derry, Down, Fermanagh and Tyrone | COUNTIES: Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Planning and Development ■ Building Control ■ Roads and Transport ■ Urban Regeneration ■ Community Planning ■ Housing ■ Local Economic Development ■ Local Tourism ■ Leisure Facilities and Amenity ■ Sports Development ■ Environmental Protection ■ Water Protection and Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leisure and Recreation ■ Culture, Arts and Community Services ■ Waste Collection and Management ■ Street Cleaning ■ Building Control ■ Environment Health ■ Tourism ■ Local Economic Development ■ Registration and Licensing ■ (Consulted on Planning, Roads, Water and Housing) |

Local Government and Sport

All GAA Clubs should contribute to the local government community plan and keep a constant link with any rural development groups or community development associations. The GAA Club is more than a sporting Club it is a Community, Cultural and Social Hub that makes a strong contribution to the locality and its people.

County 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 & 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, publically 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 “GAA proofed” and are circulated through 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 to 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 territory, such as;

- Community support
- The Arts
- Cultural Activities
- Museums and Heritage
- Social Inclusion

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 agenda's 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. Councilors 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 volunteer 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.

Don't 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 County in land-use terms. They decide on things such as where housing growth will be concentrated what community provision there will be and where; and how and where housing growth will be concentrated, what community provision there will be; 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's in its County Development Plan and be prepared to make an input when it's up for review. The Plans must be reviewed every six years and

Clubs should make sure they make an input to the planning process- your future depends on it!

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.
- 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 Scor 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.