The law gives councils choice in activities to undertake; but the crucial question is ‘does the council have the power to act?’

As a local council you have both ‘powers’ and ‘duties’.  A ‘power’ is something you can do whereas a ‘duty’ is something you must do.  Local Councils actually have very few duties and most of these are procedural i.e. the appointment of a proper officer and responsible financial officer, the election of the chairman etc

The list below states the powers and duties of local councils.  You should refer to list whenever you are considering doing something new as a council to ensure that you have the power to do so.  If you cannot find a power for your activity, contact us for further information as we may be able to find a power you can use.

Other general powers available to local councils are [Section 137](https://devonalc.org.uk/knowledge-bank/powers-and-duties/section-137/) and the [General Power of Competence](https://devonalc.org.uk/knowledge-bank/powers-and-duties/general-power-of-competence/). More information about both of these can be found on their pages (linked at the bottom of this page) or in [NALC’s advice note on the general powers available to local councils.](https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/local-council-general-powers-england.html)

Different tiers of local government do different activities. Check out our [Who Does What](https://devonalc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Who-Does-What.pdf) sheet for a brief introduction to what different tiers are responsible for.

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| **Function** | **Powers & Duties** | **Statutory Provisions** |
| **Allotments** | Powers to provide allotments.Duty to provide allotment gardens if demand unsatisfied and if reasonable to do so | [Small Holding & Allotment Act 1908 s.23](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/8/36) |
| **Borrowing Money** | Power for councils to borrow money for their statutory functions or for the prudent management of their financial affairs | [Local Government Act 2003, Sch 1, para 2](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/26/contents) |
| **Baths (Public)** | Power to provide public swimming baths | [Public Health Act 1936, s.221](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5and1Edw8/26/49/contents) |
| **Burial grounds, cemeteries and crematoria** | Power to acquire and maintainPower to providePower to contribute towards expenses of cemeteries | [Open Spaces Act 1906, s9 and s10](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/6/25/contents)[Local Government Act 1972, s.214](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/214)[Local Government Act 1972, s.214(6)](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/214) |
| **Bus Shelters** | Power to provide and maintain shelters | [Local Government (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1953, s.4](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/1-2/26/contents) |
| **Byelaws** | Power to make byelaws for: Places of public recreationCycle parksPublic swimming bathsOpen spaces and burial groundsMortuaries and post-mortem rooms | [Public Health Act 1875, s.164](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/38-39/55/section/164)[Road Traffic Regulation Act](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/contents)[Public Health Act 1936, s.223](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5and1Edw8/26/49)[Open Spaces Act 1906, s.15](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/6/25/contents)[Public Health Act 1936, s.198](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5and1Edw8/26/49/section/198) |
| **Charities** | Duties in respect of parochial charitiesPower to act as charity trustees | [Charities Act 2011, s.298-203](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/25/contents)[Local Government Act 1972, s139(1)](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/139) |
| **Clocks** | Power to provide public clocks | [Parish Councils Act 1957, s.2](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/5-6/42/section/2) |
| **Closed churchyards** | Powers to maintain | [Local Government Act 1972, s.215](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/215) |
| **Commons and common pastures** | Powers in relation to inclosure, regulation, management and provision of common pasture | [Inclosure Act 1845](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/8-9/118/contents)[Small Holding & Allotments Act 1908, s.34](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/8/36) |
| **Conference Facilities** | Power to provide and encourage use of facilities | [Local Government Act 1972, s.144](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/144) |
| **Community Centres** | Power to provide and equip buildings for use of clubs having athletic, social or educational objectivesPower to acquire, provide and furnish community buildings for public meetings and assemblies | [Local Government Act 1972 (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 s.19](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/57)[Local Government Act 1972, s.133](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/133) |
| **Crime Prevention** | Power to spend money on crime detection and prevention measures | [Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.31](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/29/section/31) |
| **Ditches and ponds** | Power to drain and maintain ponds and ditches to prevent harm to public health | [Public Health Act 1936, s.260](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5and1Edw8/26/49) |
| **Entertainment and the arts** | Provision of entertainment and support the arts | [Local Government Act 1972, S.145](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/145) |
| **Environment** | Power to issue fixed penalty notices for litter, graffiti and offences under dog control orders | [Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/16/contents), s.19, s.30, part 6 |
| **General Power of Competence** | Power for an eligible council to do anything subject to statutory prohibitions, restrictions and limitations which include those in place before or after the introduction of the General Power of Competence | [Localism Act 2011, s1 – 8](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/section/1) |
| **Gifts** | Power to accept | [Local Government Act 1972, s.139](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/139) |
| **Highways** | Power to repair and maintain public footpaths and bridle-waysPower to light roads and public placesPower to provide parking places for vehicles, bicycles and motorcyclesPower to enter into agreements as to dedication and wideningPower to provide roadside seats and sheltersPower to consent to a local highway authority stopping maintenance of a highway or stopping up/diverting a highwayPower to complain to district council about the protection of rights of way and roadside wastePower to provide certain traffic signs and other noticesPower to plant trees and shrubs and to maintain roadside verges | [Highways Act 1980, s.43](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/43), [s.50](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/50)[Parish Councils Act 1957, s3](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/5-6/42/section/3); [Highways Act 1980, s.301](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/301)[Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, s.57](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/section/57), [s.63](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/section/63)[Highways Act 1980, s.30](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/30), [s.72](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/72)[Parish Councils Act 1957, s.1](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/5-6/42/section/1)[Highways Act 1980, s.47](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/47), [s.116](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/116)[Highways Act 1980, s.130](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/130)[Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984, s.72](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/27/section/72)[Highways Act 1980, s.96](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/66/section/96) |
| **Honorary Titles** | Power to admit to be honorary freemen/freewomen of the council’s area persons of distinction and persons who have, in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent services to that place or area. | [Local Government Act 1972, s.249](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/249) |
| **Investments** | Power to participate in schemes of collective investment | [Trustee Investments Act 1961, s.11](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/9-10/62/section/11) |
| **Land** | Power to acquire by agreement, to appropriate, to dispose of | [Local Government Act 1972, s.124](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/124), [s.126](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/126), [s.127](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/127) |
| **Litter** | Provision of bins | [Litter Act 1983, s.5, s.6](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1983/35) |
| **Lotteries** | Powers to promote | [Gambling Act 2005, s.252](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/19/section/252), [s.258](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/19/section/258) |
| **Markets** | Power to establish or acquire by agreement markets within the council’s area and provide a marketplace and market building | [Food Act 1984, s.50](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/30/section/50) |
| **Mortuaries and post-mortem rooms** | Power to provide mortuaries and post-mortem rooms | [Public Health Act 1936, s.198](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5and1Edw8/26/49/section/198) |
| **Neighbourhood Planning** | Powers to act as lead body for a neighbourhood development plan or a neighbourhood development order | [Localism Act 2011, s.9](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/section/9); [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 s61](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/section/61) e- q; [Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, s.38A](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/section/38) |
| **Newsletter** | Power to provide information relating to matters affecting local government | [Local Government Act 1971, s.142](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/142) |
| **Nuisances** | Power to deal with offensive ditches | [Public Health Act 1936, s.260](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5and1Edw8/26/49/section/260) |
| **Open Spaces** | Power to acquire and maintain land for public recreationPower to acquire and maintain land for open spaces | [Public Health Act 1875, s.164](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/38-39/55/section/164)[Open Spaces Act 1906, s.9](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/6/25/section/9), [s.10](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw7/6/25/section/10) |
| **Parish property and documents** | Power to receive and retainDuty to deposit certain published works in specific deposit libraries | [Local Government Act 1972, s.226](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/226)[Legal Deposit Libraries Act 2003, s.1](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/28/section/1) |
| **Public buildings and village hall** | Powers to acquire and provide buildings for public meetings and assemblies | [Local Government Act 1972, s.133](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/133) |
| **Public conveniences** | Power to provide | [Public Health Act 1936, s.87](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5and1Edw8/26/49/section/87) |
| **Recreation** | Power to provide a wide range of recreational facilitiesProvision of boating pools | [Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s.19](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1976/57)[Public Health Act 1961, s.54](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/9-10/64/section/54) |
| **Right to challenge services** | The right to submit an interest in running a service provided by a district, county or unitary authority | [Localism Act 2011, s81 – s.86](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/5/chapter/2/enacted) |
| **Right to nominate and bid for assets of community value** | The to nominate assets to be added to a list of assets of community value and the right to bid to buy a listed asset when it comes up for sale | [Localism Act 2011, s.87 – s.108](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/5/chapter/3/enacted) |
| **Town and Country Planning** | Right to be notified of planning applications if right has requested | [Town and Country Planning Act 1990 sch.1, para 8](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/schedule/1/paragraph/8) |
| **Tourism** | Power to encourage tourism to the council’s area | [Local Government Act 1972, s.144](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/144) |
| **Traffic Calming** | Power to contribute financially to traffic calming schemes | [Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.30](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/29/section/30) |
| **Transport** | Powers to spend money on community transport schemes | [Local Government and Rating Act 1997, s.26-29](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/29/part/III/crossheading/transport-etc) |
| **War Memorials** | Power to maintain, repairs, protect and adapt war memorials | [War Memorials (Local Authorities’ Power) Act 1923, s.1](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/13-14/18) |
| **Water** | Power to utilise wells, springs or streams for obtaining water | [Public Health Act 1936, s.125](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5and1Edw8/26/49/section/125) |
| **Websites** | Powers for councils to have their own websites | [Local Government Act 1972, s.142](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1972/70/section/142) |