Engaging Young People in Local Democracy

A Toolkit



Section 1 An Introduction for Facilitators

Introduction

Decisions made by Local Government affect the day to day lives of young people, their families and their communities. The Councillors making these decisions should represent the people they serve, yet the average age of a Councillor elected in 2017 was 53 and just 5.9% were under 29. A strong youth voice is missing from local decision making. Similarly, following the 2017 election, only 29% of Councillors were women and ethnic minorities and people with disabilities had limited representation.

Our young people are far from apolitical. 52% of young people volunteer in their communities and a survey by YWCA-The Young Women's Movement found over two thirds of young women between 18-24 considered themselves to be politically engaged, keeping up to date with politics and political parties and voting but also with an interest in wider issues like austerity, feminism and the environment.

Despite this passion for political issues limited numbers of young people get involved in Local Government where decisions on them can be made. Anecdotally, Local Authorities report a drop off in engagement, a disconnect where youth engagement, volunteering and action fail to progress into political leadership. The Status of Young Women in Scotland report 2018 found that 67% of young women consider themselves politically engaged but only 25% would consider standing for political office in the future.

There are undoubtedly multiple factors that prevent young people from getting involved in local politics but fundamental to the involvement of more young people is an improved understanding of Local Government, of how to ensure your voice is heard within it and the confidence to share it.

This toolkit provides information and interactive resources on the topics of Local Government and Councillors whilst focusing on building the necessary skills and confidence to navigate local democratic processes.

Critical skills

The exercises within this toolkit are intended to be delivered in a way that fosters confidence in democratic processes and builds the skills required to engage with them:



Communication Skills listening, public speaking and debate



Partnership Work working proactively to build positive relationships with others



Critical Friend Skills
helping others think things through
by asking the right questions



Leadership

engaging with the community, finding out what they need, and considering how to take it forward



Political understanding

actively developing political intelligence (understanding of the local and national political landscape)

Resource requirements

The exercises outlined require minimal resources. To complete all the exercises you will need:

- A safe, private space for discussion. Try to make this a different space to that which you usually use or set the space up in a different way. This will challenge the group to think differently.
- Paper and drawing materials.
- PowerPoint and video capacity.
- A computer with access to wifi.

You may wish to deliver one session at a time or break them down to individual exercises depending on your group and the time available.

Skills development

Skills that are most likely to connect with an exercise can be identified using the icons on the previous page. Facilitators should seek to encourage and develop these skills throughout preparation, planning, facilitation and follow up.

Key considerations

In addition to considering skills development highlighted on page two, facilitators should also ensure:

- equal opportunity to participate for all interested children and young people
- equal respect for children of all ages, abilities, ethnicity or social background
- all children's views are taken seriously
- involvement is voluntary
- decision-making required in the exercises is shared equally.

Recognition and reward

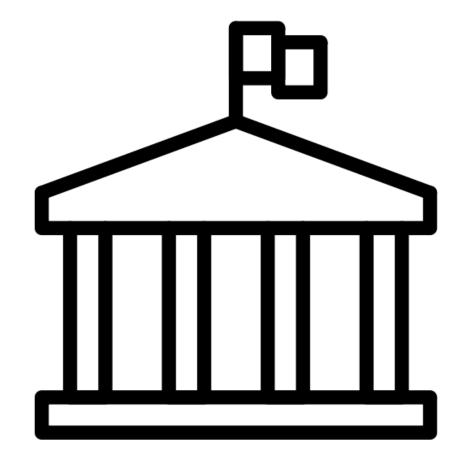
The work undertaken on exercises within this toolkit is eligible for recognition through YouthLink Scotland's Participative Democracy Certificate. This award is worth 2 credits at SCQF level 5. A limited number of free places are available per Local Authority area when delivered through youthwork or community learning and development. More details on the certificate can be found here

Section 2 Session Plans and Exercises

Session A What is Local Government?

Local Government is responsible for a range of vital services for people and businesses in defined areas. Among these are well known functions such as social care, schools, housing and planning and waste collection, but also lesser known ones such as licensing, business support, registrar services and pest control.

Completing the exercises within this session will increase participants' understanding of Local Government services and how they support us.



Exercise One





The following presentation and short film provide an overview of the role of Local Government:



Local Government in Scotland

What the Council does for me

View the Film

Exercise Two



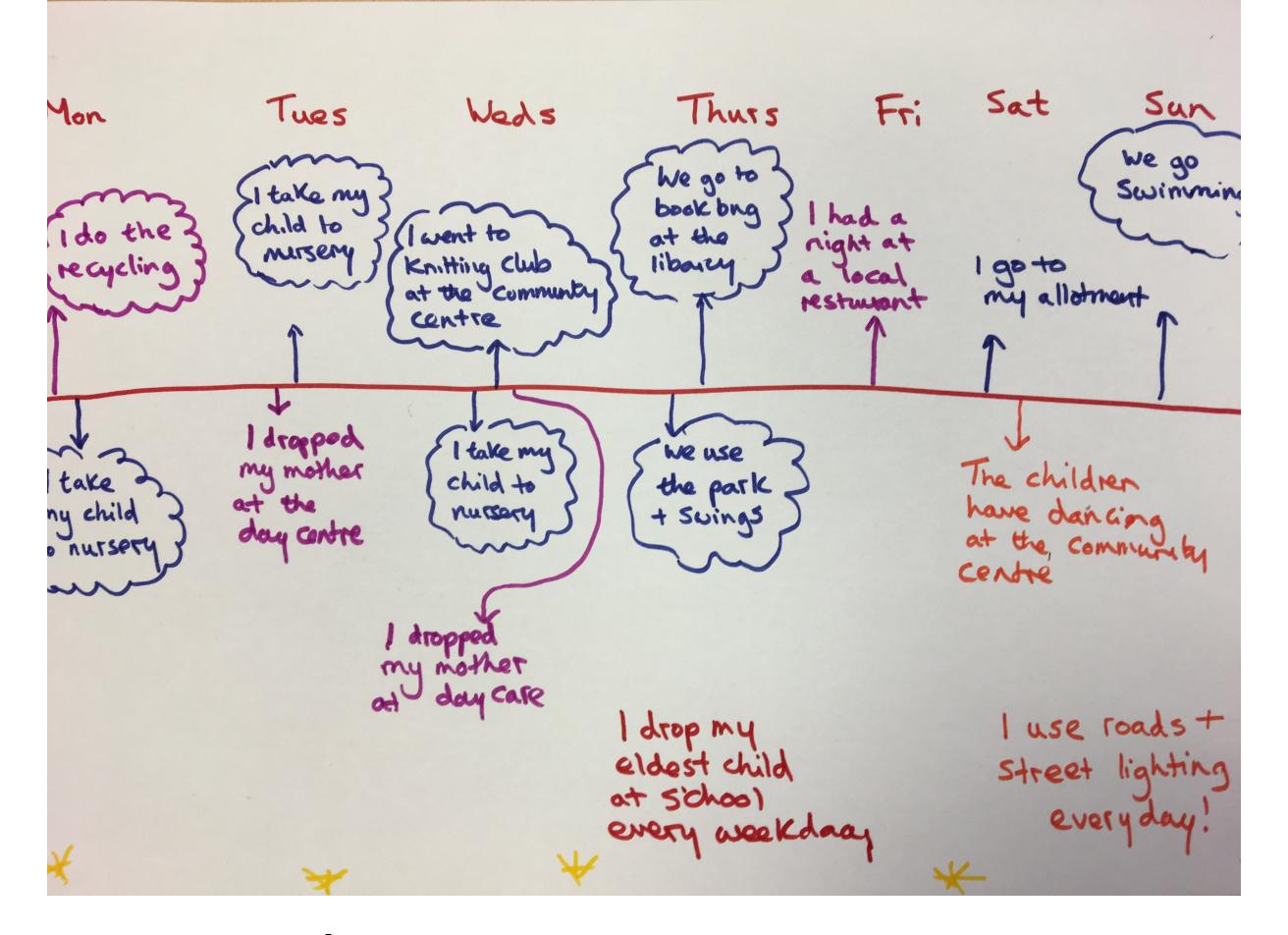




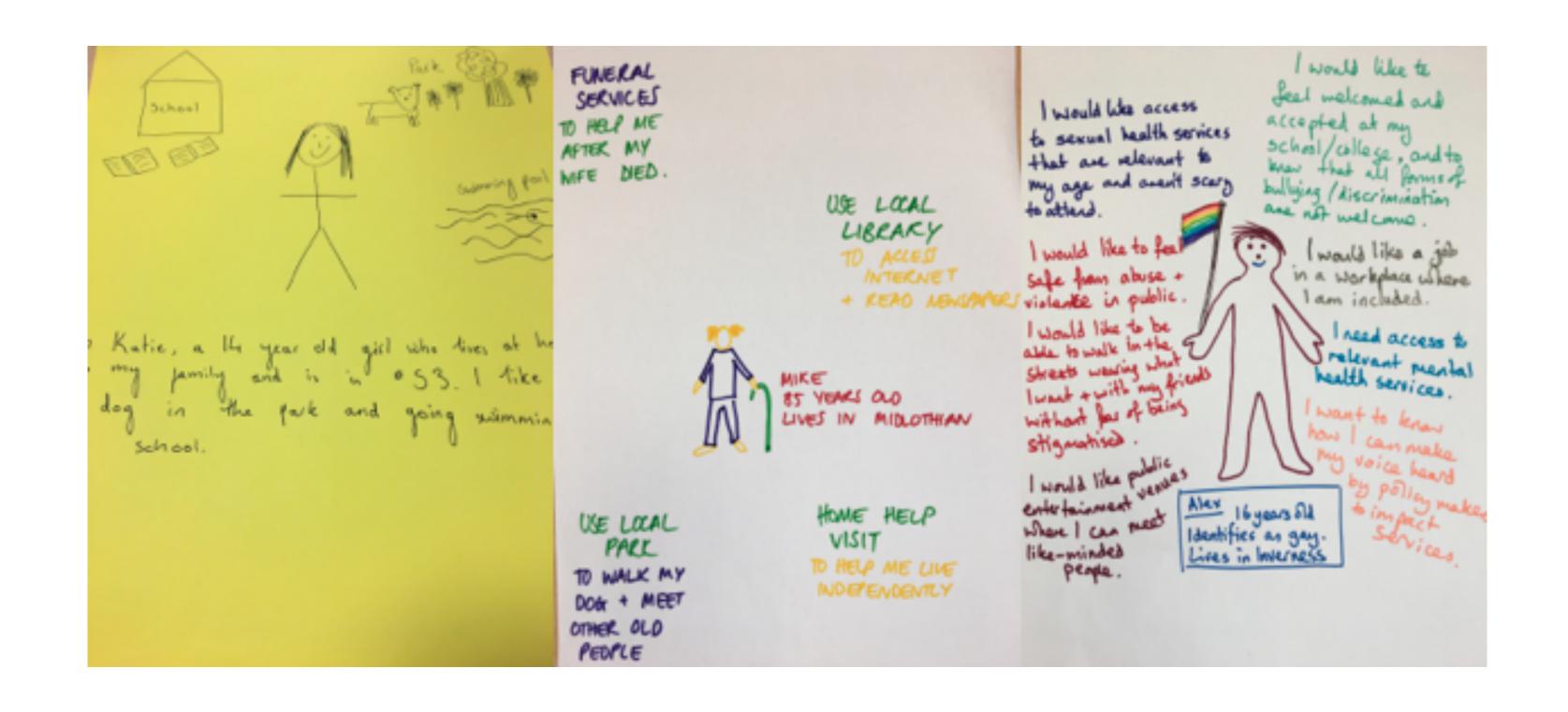
Consider how you and others engage with Council services.

A. In pairs, participants think about how have they used Council services in the last week and draw a **timeline** each showing when they have used what service. This could include using roads, school facilities, sports clubs etc. Note that some engagement with Council services might be personal and participants need only include interactions they feel comfortable sharing.

B. Participants create an **empathy map**; drawing someone in the community that differs from them. How might they use Council services? Participants note this on their empathy map.



Timeline Example



Empathy Map Examples

Exercise Three

Look at the cards on the following pages of the toolkit. These represent Council Services. Discuss as a group:

A. What service is represented by each card? Did you know these services were run by your Local Authority?

B. Having discussed these services would you add anything to your timeline or your empathy map?

Exercise Four

The cards provided represent current Council services but our world is changing.

A. In pairs discuss what future challenges might impact your local community? Examples might include climate change mitigation or an aging population. How will a local Council manage these?

B. Participants draw new cards that represent the services you would design to manage emerging issues and share these with the group.









Care Homes



Roads and Lighting



Licensing



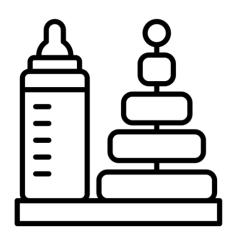


Parks

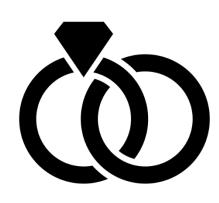




Funeral Care



Early Years and Childcare



Registrar Services



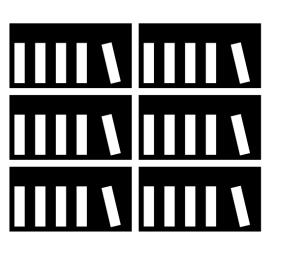
Leisure Services



Housing



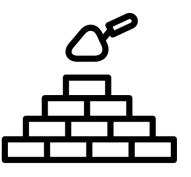
Education



Libraries



Recycling



Planning







Jobs

Exercise Four

The cards represent the following services:

Community Centres: Community centres are often run by Councils to provide a local place for people to meet for social activities, adult education classes, meetings and other purposes.

Care Homes: A care home is where people live in a residential or homely setting and have care provided for them, they can be for older people, adults or children. Some Local Authorities own and run care homes, they also commission care home places from charities or the independent sector.

Roads and Lighting: Local Authorities maintain and manage all roads in their local area that are on the list of public roads. They also provide the lighting for these roads where they ought to be lit.

Licensing: Councils have a wide range of licensing responsibilities, making appropriate licensing arrangements according to local needs and circumstances and their own legal advice. They grant licences for selling alcohol, entertainment venues, caterers, taxi drivers, window cleaners, tattooists, kennels and catteries, horse riding premises, for the sale of hazardous goods like knives or fireworks and in many other circumstances. The purpose of licensing is to ensure fair trade and the health and safety of the local community.

Family Support: Local Authorities have 'corporate parenting' responsibilities for looked after children, young people and care leavers. This means they must listen to them and consider their needs, ensuring they promote their wellbeing and provide opportunities for them. Working in partnership with other organisations, Local Authorities may provide many other services for families depending on what their communities need, for example family centres, breastfeeding support groups or drug rehabilitation services.

Exercise Four

Parks: Councils look after local paths and greenspaces and provide allotments for people in their communities.

Supporting Local Businesses: Councils support local businesses with advice and support through services like Business Gateway which also helps people start businesses. They sometimes give local businesses money through grants or loans to help them grow and expand, creating new products or entering new markets, especially if that means new jobs for the area. Councils also work with local businesses to help people who may find it more difficult to get a job.

Funeral Care: Councils work with funeral directors to provide funeral services for people in their areas. Most often it is the Local Authorities that own and run cemeteries and crematoriums. Local Authorities support people on lower incomes to manage what can be quite high costs which often are not planned for.

Early Learning and Childcare: Councils are responsible for ensuring that all children aged 3-4, and eligible 2-year olds, can access 600 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare each year. This is set to increase to 1140 hours a year from August 2020. Funded hours may be delivered directly in Local Authority-run ELC settings or by private or third sector providers who work in partnership with the Council. Local Authorities may also offer additional hours at a specified rate.

Registrar Services: Councils can help people through the legal process of getting married, and to register that marriage as well as births and deaths in their families. The Registrar can help to connect people with other services when they most need them, and when someone close in your family passes away, they can make some of the arrangements to ease the burden on those who are having a difficult time.

Leisure Facilities: Councils play a major role in physical recreation and are responsible for a high proportion of Scotland's sports and recreation facilities. Councils also directly deliver recreation and leisure services, e.g. football classes, and engage other organisations to do so on their behalf.

Exercise Four

Housing: Council Housing departments work with Scottish Government and other partners such as housing associations to develop programmes for the building of social and affordable housing, based on the needs of the local community.

Education: The Council must make sure there are enough places available in local schools for all eligible pupils within the Local Authority. This may sometimes mean extending or building new schools. Councils are responsible for hiring teachers and deciding how many there should be. They also provide additional educational opportunities like evening classes.

Reuse and Recycling: Councils collect and dispose of household rubbish and some commercial waste. Councils are committed to recycling and will provide local advice on what can be put in their recycling bins.

Planning: Councils need to lay plans and make decisions for major projects like the Commonwealth Games and big issues such as climate change and housing shortages. They also need to consider the design and layout of towns and villages and even the size and location of a house extension.

Rights and Advice Services: Most Councils either directly provide or fund other services to give people advice on the help and benefits they are entitled to, how others can help to represent their interests, and to help them to manage their money and their debts.

Jobs: Most Councils run employment support programmes to help local people to progress towards jobs. They especially help those with the greatest needs or who find it hardest to get jobs. Other parts of Councils work with local businesses to help develop local economies so that there are good job opportunities.

Session B



What is a Local Councillor?

Councillors are elected by local people to represent their area and the people who live in it. They keep residents informed about issues that affect them and advocate for them at Council meetings. They assist in developing a vision for their community, formulating and developing Council policies and strategies that reflect the views of local people. Councillors might also sit on planning and licensing committees and contribute to decisions around building local housing and granting licenses for pubs, restaurants and music venues.

In completing the following exercises participants will learn more about the role of a Councillor.

Exercise One

The following presentation provides an overview of how to stand for election.



How is a Councillor elected?

Why not arrange a visit to Council Chambers?

Exercise Two

In the follow pages of the toolkit, Councillors share a week of their diary and talk about their day to day work.

- A. Read the Councillor's descriptions of their role and look at their calendars.
- B. Discuss the information as a group.
- What are the Councillors doing?
- Is the role as you expected?
- Is there any element of the work that surprises you?
- What part of their role most interests you?







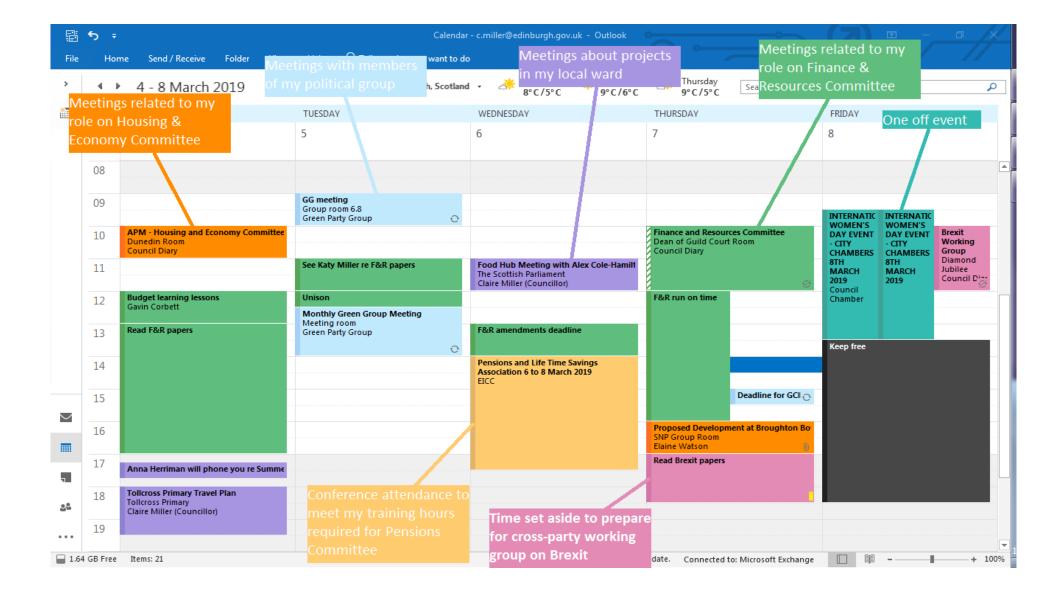


Councillor Claire Miller

The example of this week shows the variety of different responsibilities that we have as Councillors to a range of different people including residents in our wards, colleagues in our political parties, and outside organisations.

The Green group of Councillors in Edinburgh have two seats on each executive committee, and we divide up the responsibilities to lead on different aspects of the decisions being made there. In my role on the Finance & Resources Committee, I mainly deal with the human resources side of things, which includes liaison with the main unions for the Council's workforce, employment issues like Brexit, and scrutiny of our performance as an employer on key indicators like gender pay gap and wellness.

The Pensions Committee is a bit different to other committees, because councillors are there to ensure the best interests of the beneficiaries of the Lothian Pension Fund (which includes more than just the council itself). That means we need to learn a great deal about the technicalities of the pension fund and what is best for the current and retired members.





Councillor Ben Lawrie

My weekly diary is colour-coded to help me stay organised. The green items are for my second job; I work as a peer worker for Penumbra. It is common for Councillors to have a second job; when I was first elected in 2017 I was a full time student and balanced my role with my studies.

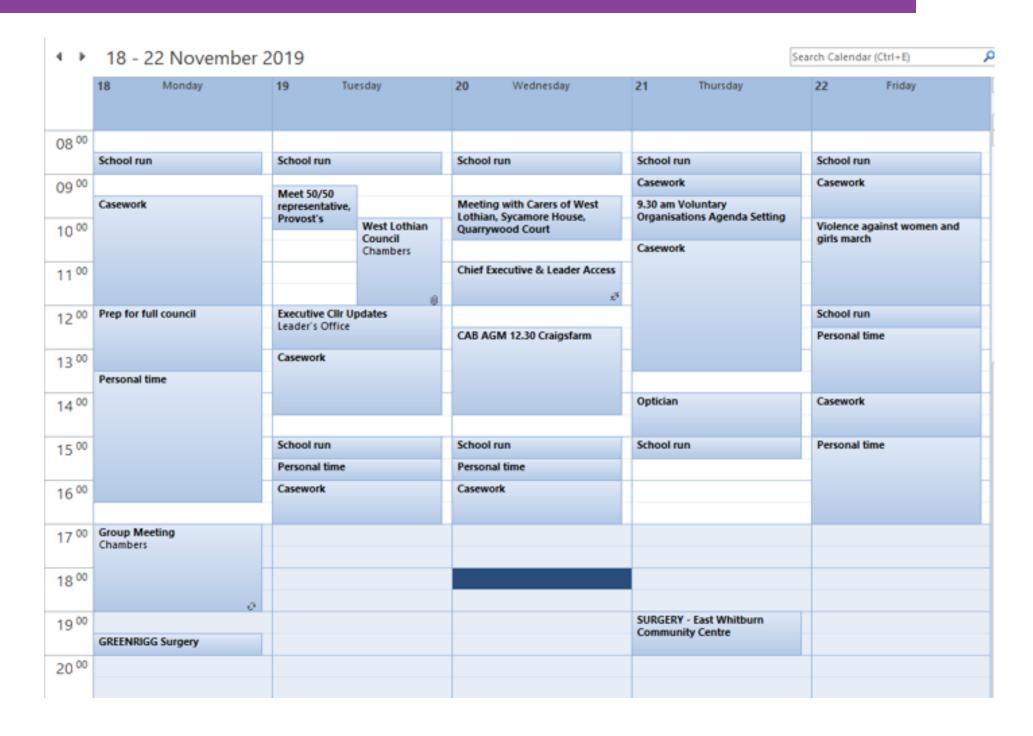
The blue items are related to my role as a Councillor. I work flexibly from home, reading papers for meetings, responding to queries from constituents and investigating their concerns about things like schools or litter. There are regular meetings of Committees and Full Council where policy decisions are made. I sit on three committees; Children & Learning, Scrutiny & Audit, and Policy & Resources. Every Councillor attends Full Council meetings.

The yellow items are related to my political party. Councillors often have a political affiliation and some Councillors organise local party activity. This however is separate from my work as a Councillor and not all Councillors are necessarily members of political parties, opting instead to serve as 'independent' Councillors.

4	▶ 13 - 19 January 2020		Forfar, Scotland - South ▼ Today Tomorrow Wednesday 50°F/42°F Today Tomorrow 50°F/43°F		
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	13	14	15	16	17
09			Penumbra Arbroath	Meeting re admin prioritie AngusH Rm S2 (Cap:10) HammondJ	
10	Dealing with Constituent Casework	Choice Based Lettings - Update and Demo Council Chamber, The			
11	⊕	Cross, Forfar WarburtonLC		Dealing with Constituent Casework	Penumbra Arbroath
12		Elected members session			
13	Reading Committee Papers	Council Plan Canmore Room, Forfar HallyL			â
14		2			
15		Special Council T&C Hall			
16		Group Meeting Canmore Room	 •		
17					
18		ASLDC Teleconference			
19					Angus & Mearns Lib Dems AGM
20		â			<u>a</u>



Councillor Kirsteen Sullivan



My diary for this week shows the range of areas that I am involved in with my various roles at West Lothian Council, namely, Depute Council Leader, Executive Councillor for Voluntary Organisations, Chair of the West Lothian Community Planning Partnership and as one of 4 ward councillors for Whitburn and Blackburn.

I juggle my Council duties with being a mum of 3 primary school aged children and generally do as much as I can within school hours whilst working remotely at other times. I hold evening surgeries to speak with people in my community and attend other meetings like community councils, community development trust meetings etc. in the evening as required.





As a Councillor I am constantly juggling lots of different things which can change week to week. My diary for the week I have shown you is obviously taken up with a lot of campaigning for the General Election. However I have to juggle my Council meetings, prep for these meetings and constituents enquiries as well as my other job as an Office Manager for an MP! Every week can be different though, some weeks I have a lot more meetings than this with committees that I sit on being on an 8 week cycle! It's never boring!

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
2	3	4	5	6
				LINE OF THE STATE
				MP's Office- Work
Mp's Office- Work				
	LICENSING COMMITTEE CR1	Emails In Council office		
			Rural Task Force Committee Room 5	
			Burke, John P	
Lanarkshire Valuation Joint	Campaigning for GE	Campaigning for GE	Campaigning for GE	
Board Committee Room 1, Council MacRae, Pauline Admin in Council Office				
MacKae, Pauline	MP Office- work	MP's Office- Work		
Comparing for CE	Compaigning in CE	Compaigning for CE		
Campaign for GE	Campaigning in GE	Campaigning for GE		
			Carluke Community Council	

Exercise Two

Key learning from this exercise should be:

Councillors undertake a range of different duties

- They do 'casework', meeting people from their local communities to hear about their concerns and investigating how they can help.
- They attend committees to make decisions on local issues. Some Councillors will attend focused committees like those that make decisions on services for young people. Big decisions, like setting the budget, are made at Full Council meetings which all Councillors attend.
- They may attend events to support their local community and raise awareness of particular issues.

The role of a Councillor is flexible and people manage it in different ways. Many do this managing other jobs, caring responsibilities or study.

Many Councillors are part of a political party but they do not have to be. If a Councillor is part of a political party they will also attend party meetings and work to support the party locally, campaigning etc.

Exercise Three

Each local area can have more than one Councillor. Find out who your Councillors are and how you and your youth group can ensure your views are heard.

A. In pairs, participants research online and find the answers to the questions on the worksheet opposite. The answers may be different for each person within a pair.

B. Give a small prize to the first team to correctly complete the exercise.

C. Share your findings as a group.

Display the names of local Councillors and their contact information



Worksheet

- Who are your local Councillors?
- How can you contact them?
- What local issues are particularly important to them?
- · Do they sit on any Committees? Which ones?
- Does your Council have a Councillor who specifically represents young people? Who is it?
- Where does your Council meet?
- When is the next meeting of the Council?

Exercise Three

In completing this exercise, ensure that young people know who their Councillors are and how to contact them but also that they know where to find information on their local Council online in the future.

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Session C



Be a Councillor

So what does it take to be a Councillor?

In completing the following exercises participants will develop understanding of what it might be like to be a Councillor and what unique qualities they as individuals might bring to the role.

Why not invite your local Councillor to co-deliver this session?

Exercise One

A. <u>View this film</u> of a Councillor discussing standing for office.

B. Discuss as a group the qualities you think a Councillor needs to fulfil their role.

C. In pairs take turns to identify what qualities you have that would make you a good Councillor. Partners should help each other by pointing out each others positive qualities where an individual finds this difficult or misses some.

Take the opportunity to discuss online safety

Exercise Two

A. Each young person should conduct a survey of family and friends focused on the following questions:

In your community:

- What is the biggest problem?
- Why does it matter?
- What needs to happen to make it better?

Young people can conduct their survey in the manner they feel most comfortable. For example, they may choose to:

- Interview family and friends
- Prepare written surveys
- Do a social media survey

B. Each young person should find out more. Is the problem they identified just an issue in a street, or does it affect the whole town? Is it a national problem? An international problem? How have people fixed the problem elsewhere?















Exercise Three

Individuals present their findings back to the group. They should answer the questions:

What did you do? What did you find?

Findings can be presented in a way that best suits the young person: as a speech, a PowerPoint, a series of pictures, a film etc. The young person can speak as little or as much as they like providing their points are communicated.

Exercise Four

The group discuss the issues raised by every individual.

Are they a real problem in their area?

Can they do anything to fix it themselves e.g. organise a litter pick / fundraiser / get involved in a voluntary project?

Or

Should they use the political structures they have learnt about to make sure local politicians know what is needed locally? E.g. write a letter to your Councillor? Invite the Councillor to visit to hear what they have learnt.









Embedding Democratic Processes

Following these exercises, how can young people within the group continue to be supported to participate in local democracy? Consider taking some small actions within day to day practice. Why not:

Display the name, picture and contact details of your local Councillors and refer to them frequently.

Have a space where young people can note down what they would like to change in both the group and the wider community.

Repeat exercises two to four (session C) frequently, introducing relevant knowledge and democratic behaviours to new group members.

Take group members to Community Councils and Council meetings to feed in the group's views.

Seek out other opportunities to allow young people to act on and influence issues that matter to them like volunteering, campaigning and participatory budgeting.

Participatory Budgeting

Mainstream Participatory Budgeting (PB) is developing democracy in Scotland. Councils have agreed with Scottish Government that they will commit to at least 1% of Council budgets being subject to participatory budgeting by 2021. PB gives citizens the opportunity to have a say in how part of a council's budget is allocated to ensure meaningful outcomes for communities and citizens.

PB will look different across Scotland's 32 local authority areas, based on local priorities and community needs. At its heart, PB is about empowering people so that all members of a community have an equal right to participate and to have their voices heard in the decision-making process.

For more information visit your council website or www.pbscotland.scot

References and Resources

The status of young women in Scotland 2018, The Young Women's Movement.

The Political Skills Framework, a Councillors Toolkit, Local Government Association.

Participative Democracy Certificate Guidance Notes, YouthLink Scotland.

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