

## **WHAT IS A LOCAL COUNCIL?**

There are over 9,000 parish, town, community, neighbourhood and village councils (local councils) across England. They represent around 15 million people and represent communities in both rural and urban areas. They have powers to raise money locally (the precept), all of which is invested back into the community. Local councils are providing communities with a voice in their local area, delivering a variety of services and working hard to improve local quality of life. Local councils, often in partnerships with other local bodies including the local district, borough or unitary council, might provide, maintain or contribute to any of the following services (although the list is far from exhaustive): Allotments, Leisure facilities, Local youth projects, Community safety schemes, Parks and open spaces, Crime reduction measures, Cycle paths, Community centres, Public lavatories, Street cleaning, Street lighting, Tourism activities, Festivals and celebrations, Markets, Community transport schemes, Local environment.

## **WHAT DO LOCAL COUNCILS DO?**

Local councils are involved in a wide variety of different activities bringing real benefits to their communities. Most importantly the activities are undertaken to target local needs. Local councils are very active in ensuring that young people are listened to and engaged. Many local councils have set up youth councils made up of young people from the local area to help to ensure that the needs of young people are catered for. Local councils also provide or support the provision of playgrounds, youth clubs, youth cafes, skateparks, sports facilities, arts and crafts and youth outreach. Many local councils own, manage or support community or arts centres. Community centres can form an invaluable hub for local people as a place to meet or engage in a variety of activities. Crime is a concern for everyone, but local councils can ensure safer streets through crime reduction measures. For example, funding Police Community Support Officers (PCSO), investing in street lighting or even CCTV.

## **THE ROLE OF LOCAL COUNCILLORS**

Local councils are made up of a number of councillors who meet regularly to make decisions on the work and direction of the council. They are local people who have stood for election to the local council. Local councillors have three main areas of work: Decision-making: through attending council meetings and committee meetings with other elected members, councillors decide which activities to support, where money should be spent, and which services should be delivered. Monitoring: Councillors make sure that their decisions lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how well things are working. Getting involved locally: As local representatives, councillors have responsibilities towards their constituents and local organisations.