Establishing a New Local Council – Northants CALC Perspective

Steps to form a successful local governance body

Why New Councils?

Local Government Reorganisation

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is crucial for ensuring local voices are heard in governance structures.

Loss of Local Voice

Historic towns and cities face the risk of losing their ultra-local voice in larger unitary authorities.

Establishing New Councils

The establishment of new parish, town, or city councils serves as a powerful solution to address local governance issues.

Communicating the benefits to principal authorities

Role of Local Councils

Local councils play an integral role in fostering vibrant communities by collaborating with the voluntary sector.

Enhancing Wellbeing

Local councils aim to improve the social, environmental, and economic wellbeing of their communities through strategic initiatives.

Community Representation

Councils represent the community's interests and work towards fulfilling local needs effectively.

Principal council support

- Each borough council was approached in the same way

- Outcomes were very different

Outcomes

Fully supportive

Northants CALC worked with officers and were fully funded with support from working groups of councillors and officers

Supportive but not fully engaged

Northants CALC worked with officers and were partially funded with support from officers

Supportive and stand alone

Support from Northants CALC was declined

Fully supportive

Advantages:

- Clear project goals

- Support of councillors and officers

- Ability to engage additional support

- **Disadvantages:**

- Regular meetings with tight timeframes

Supportive but not fully engaged

Advantages:

- Dedicated officer support

- Not as time consuming

- Managed the clerk recruitment process

- **Disadvantages:**

- Less overall control

- Proposals not always accepted

Supportive and stand alone

Advantages:

- Much less time consuming in the creation phase

- **Disadvantages:**

- No direct route to officers

- Suggestions not taken onboard

- VERY time consuming after creation

Critical Steps for Establishing a New Local Council

Start the Process NOW

Urgency of Action

Acting quickly is crucial to ensure the success of the governance process before it's too late.

Community Governance Review

Starting a Community Governance Review before the formation of the council is essential.

Engaging the Community

Community engagement remains vital for fostering buy-in and ensuring successful implementation of changes.

Define the Role and Communicate Benefits

Council's Purpose

Clearly communicating the council's purpose is crucial for establishing its role and garnering support from the public.

Winning Public Support

Winning public support involves explaining the accountability of agencies and the council's protective role for local services.

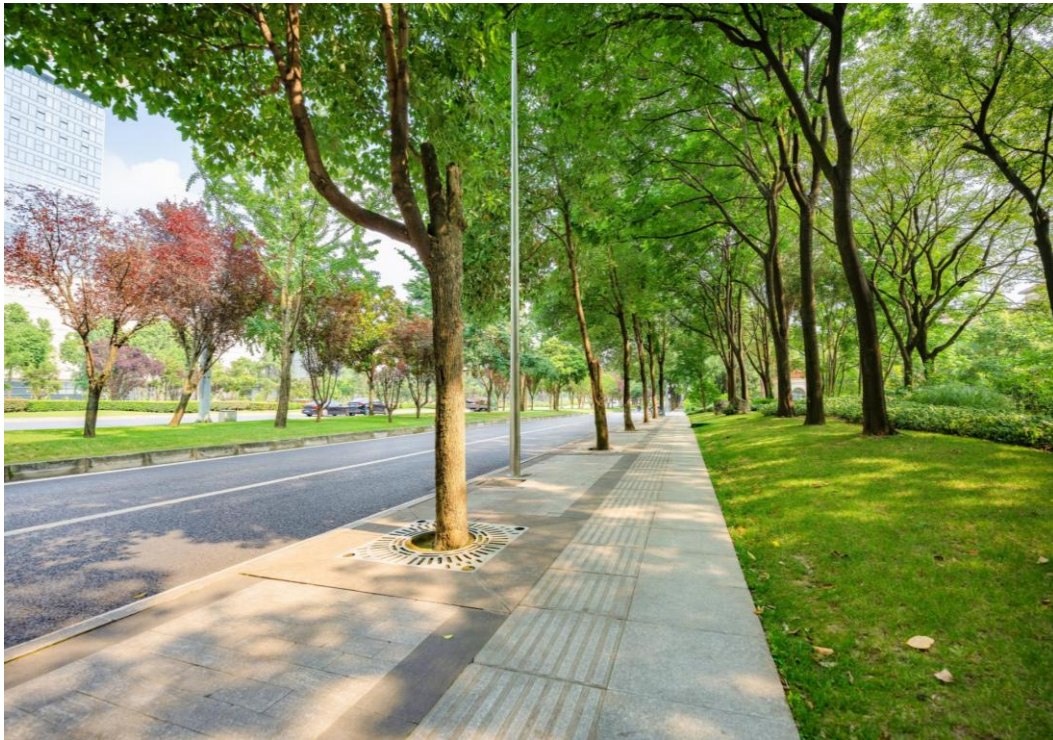### Safeguarding Community Character

Emphasising the importance of safeguarding community character helps establish trust and encourages local identity.

Factual Messaging

Using clear, factual messaging is essential to rally support and effectively deliver services reflecting local needs.

Secure Assets and Services

Mapping Community Assets

Identifying and mapping community assets is essential for understanding local resources and services valued by residents.

Integrating Assets into Vision

Assets and services should be integrated into the council's vision, ensuring they align with community needs and priorities.

First Refusal on Community Assets

Communities should demand the right of first refusal on assets of community value to ensure local control.

Budgeting for a New Local Council

Set a Realistic, Sustainable Budget

Importance of a Strong Budget

A weak budget can lead to ineffective governance and a struggling council, highlighting the need for a robust financial plan.

Flexibility in Initial Budgets

Initial budgets come with uncertainties and must allow for flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.

Benchmarking Against Successful Councils

Benchmarking data from thriving councils helps set realistic budget expectations and identify areas for improvement.

Budgeting Details

Operating Costs

Operating costs include staff salaries, office supplies, utilities, and insurance, forming the core budget expenses.

One-off Setup Costs

One-off setup costs for the first year include recruitment, IT equipment, and branding expenses.

Other Budget Costs

Other costs include significant election expenses, building reserves, and grants to community groups.

Budget Impact

The overall budget significantly impacts the precept requirement and influences council tax calculations.

Financial considerations

New councils do not have a bank account......

Worked with Unity Trust Bank to set up an account prior to councils being created

New councils do not have insurance......

Worked with Clear Councils to insure councils from vesting day

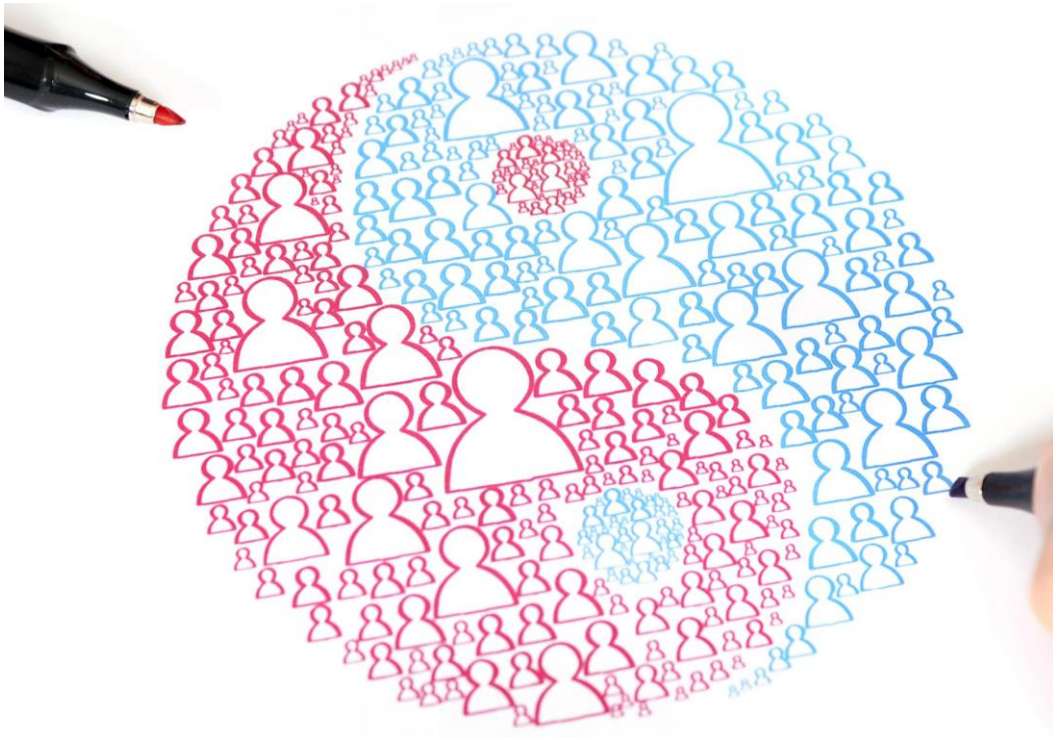# Learning from Proven Success Stories

Examples of Successful Town Councils

Learning from Success

Analysing successful town councils provides valuable insights into effective governance and service management.

Examples of Notable Councils

Member visits to Weymouth and Leighton-Linslade Town Council as examples of councils that excel in local service management.

Maintaining Local Control

Successful councils maintain control over ultra-local services, ensuring they meet the needs of their residents effectively.

Diverse Service Management

These councils adeptly manage diverse services necessary for residents, reflecting their commitment to community well-being.

Appointing Key Personnel

Interim Officer

Need for Experienced Guidance

Appointing an interim officer ensures experienced guidance from the outset, which is crucial for effective leadership.

Understanding Local Councils

An interim chief officer has a deep understanding of local councils, facilitating smoother operations and decisions.

Support for Shadow Council

An interim officer can effectively support the shadow council, driving progress and preventing delays in decision-making.

Chief Officer

Importance of Leadership

Effective leadership is crucial for the success of an organisation, guiding teams toward achieving their goals.

Skills Required

A Chief Officer must possess proven management, communication, and strategic skills to navigate organisational challenges.

Competitive Salary

Attracting top talent requires offering competitive salaries, especially in larger councils where compensation can be significant.

Forming and Structuring the Council

Form a Shadow Council

Composition of Councillors

The Shadow Council should be composed of principal councillors from the area to ensure effective representation and oversight.

Oversight of Decisions

The council oversees critical early decisions that shape the direction and effectiveness of the team's initiatives.

Securing a Budget

Securing a vital setup budget is essential for ensuring the new council can operate effectively from the start.

Establish an Executive Committee

Delegating Management Tasks

Establishing an executive committee allows for effective delegation of management tasks essential for smooth operations.

Operational Areas of Focus

The committee should oversee key operational areas including IT systems, finance, staffing, and policies for efficient management.

Expert Support Utilisation

Utilising expert support, such as governance checklists from SLCC and NALC, ensures best practices in management.

Transition & Secure Status

Preserving Civic Identity

Councils can petition to transfer historic armorial bearings and civic rights, ensuring the retention of their unique identity. This proved to be very important to all new town councils
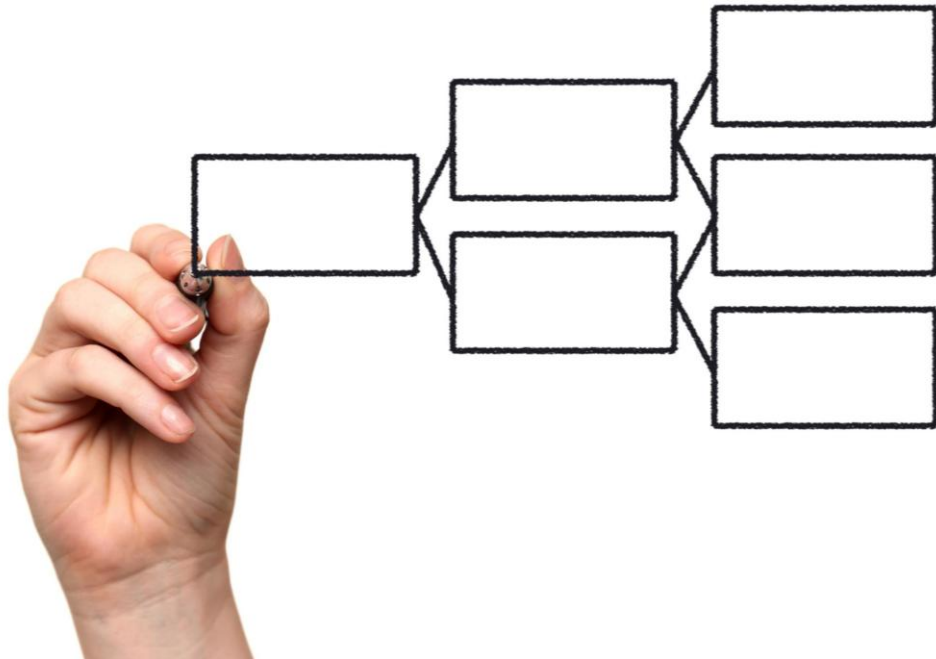
Phased Establishment Approach

Phases of Establishment

Phase 1: Set Up

The initial setup involves agreeing on the creation, preparing for elections, and recruiting members.

Phase 2: Establishment

During establishment, elections occur, councillors take office, and an annual meeting is held.

Phase 3: Development

This phase focuses on staffing, candidate interviews, and the transition of leadership roles.

Phase 4: Operation

The final phase involves the dissolution of the principal council and transfer of services and assets.

| TASK NAME	START DATE	DUE DATE	DAYS	DONE	DESCRIPTION
Decision to form NTC	20/01/2020	20/01/2020	1		Formal agreement to create Northampton Town Council
Meeting with NBC & Northants CALC to formally begin project	23/01/2020	23/01/2020	1		Meet with LG to formally begin the project
Identify critical dates for election deadlines	24/01/2020	31/01/2020	7		To understand and work to critical dates
Agree dates for working group meetings	23/01/2020	31/01/2020	8		Vital to have dates in the diary to allow decisions to be made
Agree project timetable	27/01/2020	07/02/2020	11		
Prepare Reorganisation Order	21/01/2020	14/02/2020	24		
Reorganisation Order approved by Council	01/02/2020	28/02/2020	27		
Elections	27/01/2020	08/04/2020	72		Elections to NTC
Pre-election period	30/03/2020	07/05/2020	38		No major policy decisions and no major announcements
Website and Branding - see post election gantt chart	27/01/2020	30/09/2020	247		Vital to advertise NTC and to advertise elections
Staff recruitment - see post election gantt chart	03/02/2020	30/09/2020	240		Required to employ a permanent clerk and RFO plus additional staff
Office premises - see detailed gantt chart	03/02/2020	11/05/2020	98		NTC requires its own premises
Purchase of office equipment - see detailed gantt chart	30/03/2020	05/05/2020	36		NTC requires its own office equipment
Framework	21/01/2020	25/05/2020	125		Required to provide rules and regulations for NTC
Engage with NALC	21/01/2020	25/05/2020	125		
Prepare all policies and procedures for shadow council adoption	10/02/2020	20/03/2020	39		
Policies and procedures adoption by shadow council	20/03/2020	30/03/2020	10		
Audit notification	01/04/2020	01/04/2020	1		PKF-Littlejohn notification of a new council
Continued support to new council	11/05/2020	31/03/2021	324		
Finance	23/01/2020	30/09/2020	251		
Decisions required as to how budgets can be accessed	23/01/2020	14/02/2020	22		
HMRC/PAYE - see detailed gantt chart	01/04/2020	31/05/2020	60		
Advise HMRC of new employer status	01/04/2020	07/04/2020	6		NTC will be an employer from 1 April 2020
Mayoralty	21/01/2020	30/09/2020	253		
Agree way forward to transfer Mayoralty	03/02/2020	30/06/2020	148		

Impact and Growth Time

Year 1: Planning Phase

The first year is primarily focused on planning and deciding priorities for the new councils.

Year 2: Project Initiation

In the second year, councils begin projects and grow into more confident organisations.

Year 3: Focus on Growth

From the third year onwards, the focus shifts to growth and further development of the councils.
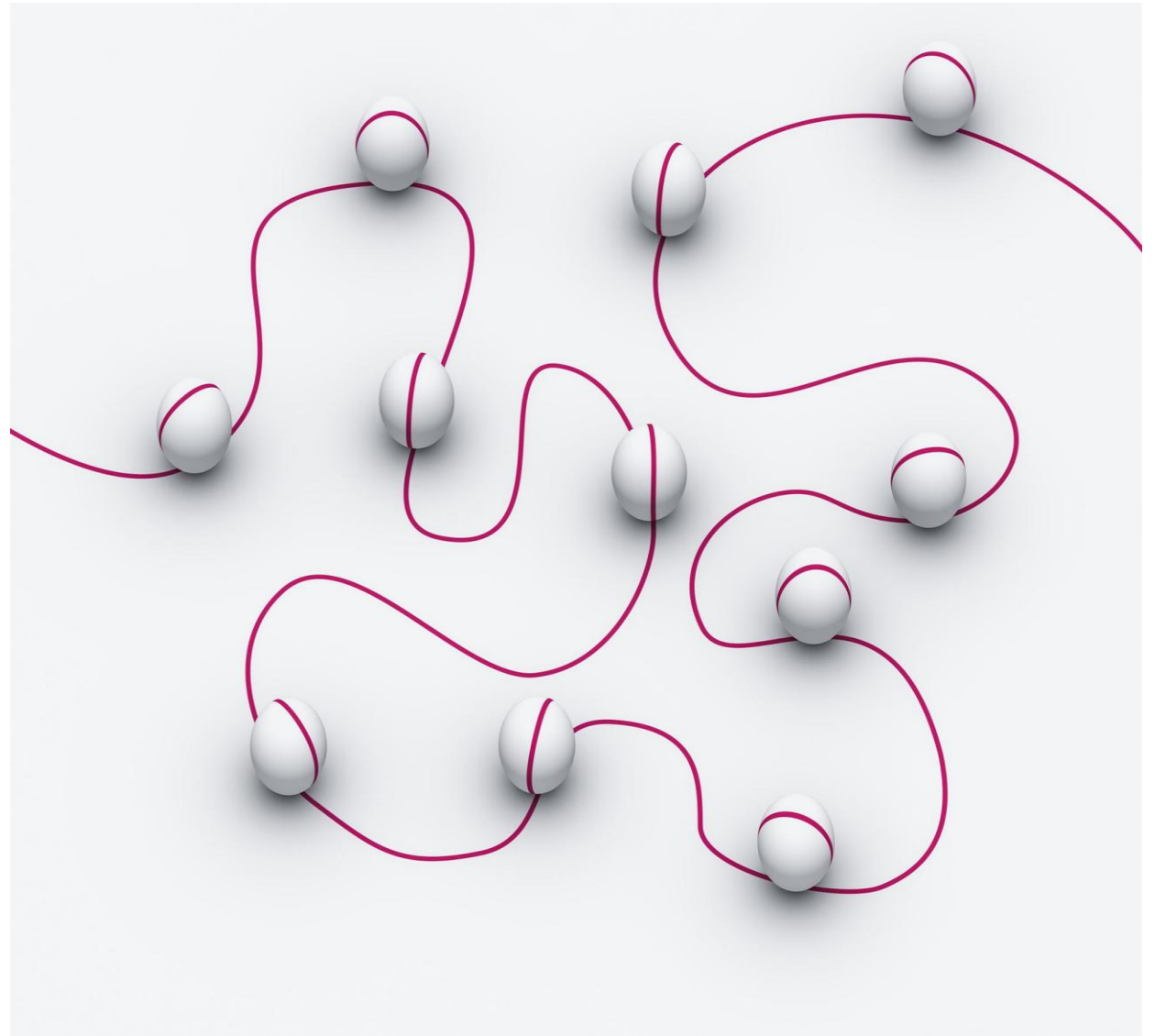
Conclusion

Multifaceted Process
Establishing a new local council involves multiple layers of planning and strategy to be effective.

Community Engagement
Effective governance requires active participation and engagement from community members throughout the process.

Effective Governance
Successful councils are built on effective governance that reflects the community's needs and aspirations.