



# Councillor web sites hints and tips

## Councillor Web Sites – Hints and tips

essexinfo.net offers Councillors the opportunity to create and maintain their own websites. It has been designed to be easy to use whether you are a beginner or regular web user and is accessible anywhere via the internet: at home, via your corporate network, from an internet café.

The system is available to Councillors across Essex including County, District, Town and Parish Councillors. The sites are for Councillors personal use fulfilling their Community Leadership role. They are not tied to any particular authority, so you need only create one site whether you are a councillor for one authority or maybe represent all three tiers of local government.

Once your website is set up you can grant permission for additional people to maintain it on your behalf.

## Why have a website?

The internet is moving into all aspects of our lives, with many people using it to communicate, research or entertain, especially young people. A website can offer you an additional channel to improve communication between you and local residents, particularly the young who are the biggest users of the internet and yet the most disengaged from the political process.

Recent research from MORI identified a lack of awareness about councillors and local democracy among the general public:

- 64% of voters do not know the name of their local Councillor.
- 80% of 15-24 year-olds can't name any of their current Councillors.
- 81% of adults are interested in local issues.
- Only 17% have presented their views to a councillor in the last two to three years

Using the web as another communication channel enables Councillors to become more effective advocates for their own work in the local community.

## Content

For ideas on content to include in your website a '[Test Councillor](#)' site has been created. There is a helpsheet entitled '[Writing for the web](#)' which may also be useful. Content needs to be relevant and easy to find. Photographs boost interest in your site and help to increase the number of hits. There are also tools available in **essexinfo.net** that allow you to 'blog', to run surveys or discussion areas and to build photo albums.

Councillors in other authorities have used websites to compliment their community work by offering up-to-date information on local issues, hi-lighting local campaigns and inviting feedback from residents.

Others use their site to illustrate aspects of their role that often go unseen by the general public, such as work on committees.

There are also a number of guidelines that Councillors must abide by when creating personal websites. There is specific guidance on this in a separate [helpsheet](#). Councillors must be particularly aware of political publicity and must also note that during election times councillor websites on **essexinfo.net** will be taken down to comply with the 'Representation of the People Act'.

## Useful links:

[Councillors' websites - routes to renewal?](#) An article from the I&DeA website.

[What is community leadership?](#) An article from the I&DeA website

[What is blogging?](#) A Guide from the I&DeA website

[ReadMyDay](#). National Local eDemocracy Project using Blogs for Councillors

[ChesterBlogs](#). A Local eDemocracy Project using Blogs as a tool for Councillors.

Your District Link will be able to help you with any questions you may have about appropriate content or legal aspects of your site.

You can reach the Help Desk on: **01245 436559** or via email  
[support@essexinfo.net](mailto:support@essexinfo.net)

