

# Your Branch Toolkit



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## **1) Introduction**

The role of each branch is to support and serve SLCC members in their area and to develop and promote relations with other bodies in the local council sector. Branch meetings provide an invaluable resource to local members by offering training, friendship, support, and the sharing of informal advice and good practice.

Branches appoint their own branch officers and organise their own meetings and events.

They receive modest funding in the form of an annual grant – called a capitation fee - to cover branch expenses, which is based on the number of members in the branch. Branches should, as a minimum, hold an annual meeting, and appoint a chairperson, secretary, treasurer, new clerks' mentor, and a representative and reserve representative on the National Forum.

SLCC has a set of model Branch Rules which branches may adopt if they wish. These are guidelines and can be adopted in their entirety or modified according to what best suits the needs of your branch

## **2) Branch Officer Roles**

### **a. Branch Secretary**

The main role of the branch secretary is to be the first point of contact for their branch members and potential branch members. The secretary works in conjunction with the other branch officers to increase the branch membership and is responsible for organising, promoting and attending branch meetings and taking the minutes of the meeting.

The branch secretary liaises with the SLCC Head Office on a regular basis to update them on their planned branch events.

The branch secretary takes reasonable steps to ensure that any vacancy for the post of National Forum Branch Representative or National Forum Reserve Branch Representative is brought to the attention of branch members and, wherever possible, that an item about forthcoming elections is included on the agenda of the relevant branch meeting. The branch secretary will also pick up on local concerns raised at branch meetings and pass them to the branch representative on the National Forum.

### **b. Branch Chair**

The chair presides over the branch meeting and manages and provides leadership to the branch. The Chair ensures that the meetings run smoothly and remain orderly, and works at achieving a consensus in AGM decisions.

### **c. Branch Treasurer**

The treasurer oversees the financial administration of the branch, manages the branch funds and advises the branch on financial strategy. The treasurer is responsible for submitting the branch accounts for the previous year every January, in line with the SLCC financial year.

**d. Branch Membership Officer**

It is recommended that, where possible, the branch enrolls a membership officer to maintain a list of new clerks in the county by liaising with various local sources including Monitoring Officers and County Associations. The information on the new clerk should then be communicated to SLCC Head Office in order for a new clerk pack to be sent and membership discussions to take place.

**e. National Forum Branch Representative**

The National Forum comprises of one member from each county branch. It can submit matters to the Board from branches, and in turn receives reports from the Board for consideration and action. It scrutinises Board decisions and if it feels the Board has made a significant error of judgment it can request the Board to review its decision. The National Forum also performs an important role in providing the opportunity for representatives from each branch to meet together and develop shared knowledge and good practice, and so assists in developing and improving the branch network. The National Forum normally meets twice a year.

Branches can pick up on local concerns and raise these at national level through their branch representative on the National Forum. They may also submit motions for consideration at the SLCC's AGM.

**f. National Forum Reserve Branch Representative**

Each branch appoints one representative to serve on the National Forum, plus a reserve representative to attend if the main representative is unavailable. These must be full members of SLCC and members of the branch from which they are appointed, but cannot also be Directors on the Board. The term of office of the branch representatives (and reserve) commences immediately following the SLCC's AGM and ends at the conclusion of the SLCC's AGM a year later. Each branch therefore needs to appoint its National Forum representative (and reserve) at a branch meeting prior to the SLCC's AGM of that year.

Should a vacancy for a branch representative (or reserve) occur during the year, the branch can appoint a replacement branch representative (or a reserve) to serve until the conclusion of the SLCC's next AGM.

Branches should inform the SLCC by email of the name and membership number of its representative and reserve representative as soon as practicable following any new appointment. Please send this information to [kate.shlusar@slcc.co.uk](mailto:kate.shlusar@slcc.co.uk)

**g. Branch Mentor**

Branch Mentors were implemented under the 'New Clerk Support' scheme, the aim of the initiative is to help new clerks settle into the profession and to reduce the turnover of clerks. Initially underwritten by the government via the National Training Strategy, this project is designed to assist clerks in their first 12 months in the profession. The initiative is now solely funded and organised by SLCC and is available to all - not just members of SLCC. The training initiative comprises of four pillars one of which include a Branch Mentor who enables clerks in their first 12 months to find the best way of managing their role, responsibilities and working relationships.

The mentors are a head office appointment and therefore, despite the role name, are not a branch officer.

The mentor should be engaged in guiding branch activities i.e. putting forward topics for speakers, highlighting key issues experienced by clerks etc. Visit [www.slcc.co.uk/mentor](http://www.slcc.co.uk/mentor) to watch the mentoring video and download the information pack.

**h. Your SLCC Contact**

SLCC Head Office is based in Taunton, Somerset and your main contact is Roxanne Langdon, Membership Officer on [membership@slcc.co.uk](mailto:membership@slcc.co.uk) 01823 253646

**i. The governance structure of SLCC**



SLCC's governance structure puts members at its heart. Ensuring that all members have a say in how their SLCC is run is critical in it being a genuinely member-led organisation.

Our vision and ethos is to provide training, guidance, advice and support to members so that they can develop the professional skills, knowledge and experience necessary for them to best serve their councils and communities; and through this develop the overall recognition and status of their profession.

**3) Branch Members**

**a. Branch member lists**

A list of current and lapsed members will be emailed to all branch officers and mentors at the end of every month. The list will be sent by the Roxanne Langdon, Membership Officer, and will contain the member email address, council, address and telephone number.

If you would like to share your members' email addresses with the branch please ensure that you gain permission from members beforehand, this could be in the form of an email to all members.

**b. Branch data sharing agreement & GDPR**



The Branch Data Sharing Agreement requires branch officers to comply with all relevant data protection legislative requirements relating to any personal data they may hold or process in their capacity as branch officers. The document lists the officer responsibilities and must be signed by **all** branch officers and returned to [membership@slcc.co.uk](mailto:membership@slcc.co.uk)

As a national membership body, SLCC must demonstrate best practice in the management of members' data. The introduction of the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2019 have made the administration of branch members' email addresses more onerous than in the past. In order to balance the legal requirements with the burden of the practicalities of branch administration, we advise branch officers to do the following:

- When emailing multiple members, ensure all email addresses are hidden from recipients by blind copying all email addresses.  
Or  
, if members would like to view their colleagues' email addresses
- Obtain prior consent from all members for their email to be shared with branch colleagues
- Promote the use of .gov.uk email addresses and discourage the use of personal email addresses for business use

#### **4) Your Branch Correspondence**

##### **a. Branch logo and use of**

Your branch logo can be obtained from [membership@slcc.co.uk](mailto:membership@slcc.co.uk) and can be used on your Branch social media pages and email signature in place of the SLCC logo if desired.



##### **b. Company font**

Please ensure that you use the company font Calibri in size 12 or 14 on all correspondence. If Calibri is not available then Arial can be used in its place.

##### **c. Brand colours**

The SLCC blue should always appear as the following colour:

Pantone reference 7687C

CMYK 98 80 0 0

RGB 33 66 148

#214294

The SLCC red should always appear as the following colour:

Pantone reference 032C

CMYK 0 88 68 0

RGB 232 59 59

#E83B3B

##### **d. Company Limited by Guarantee**

The SLCC is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Therefore, we are legally required to state our company registration number, 10566132, on all correspondence including email

signatures, letterheads and invoices. Please use the branch letterhead template and include the following line on your email signature:

'The XXXX Branch is part of the SLCC of Local Council Clerks, a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, number 10566132. Registered office: Suite 2.01, Collar Factory, 112 St Augustine Street, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 1QN.

**e. Email Signature**

Please use the following signature and amend to your details:

<Full Name>

**Cheshire Branch Secretary**

Phone: 01823 253646

Mobile: 07817 138 672

Website: [www.slcc.co.uk](http://www.slcc.co.uk)



Follow us on Twitter [@CheshireSLCC](https://twitter.com/CheshireSLCC)

The XXXX Branch is part of the SLCC of Local Council Clerks, a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, number 10566132. Registered office: Suite 2.01, Collar Factory, 112 St Augustine Street, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 1QN.

**f. 10 things to do when you become a branch officer**

1. Notify SLCC Head Office with your name and contact details so they can be added to the website.
2. Sign and return the Branch Data Sharing Agreement.
3. Discuss with your branch to understand if your branch officers have taken advantage of the one free place (per calendar year) at your local Regional Training Seminar.
4. Advise SLCC Head Office of your Branch events so they can be advertised in The Clerk magazine and on the website.
5. Setup your branch social media account or, if already setup, ensure you follow the SLCC - @SLCCNews
6. Email your branch members to introduce yourself as the new branch officer.
7. Email your neighbouring branch officers and County Association Officer to introduce yourself.
8. Ensure that your branch treasurer has supplied your branch financial information for that year to Head Office, [finance@slcc.co.uk](mailto:finance@slcc.co.uk)
9. Arrange to call your new branch members and new clerks once a month to introduce yourself, the branch and let them know of your next branch meeting/event.
10. Arrange to call your lapsed members once a month to find out why they have left membership.

**g. Branch rules**

Model branch rules are available here: [www.slcc.co.uk/governance/](http://www.slcc.co.uk/governance/)

Branches are strongly encouraged to adopt the rules as it makes running the branch easier.

#### **h. Guidance for WhatsApp**

Whilst SLCC is aware that WhatsApp is used by branch officers to create group chats with SLCC members, this is not recognised as an official channel of communication - it is used at the branches' discretion as an informal group.

Messaging through WhatsApp offers several advantages, such as immediate communication and the ability to reach multiple members simultaneously. However, we also want to highlight some potential drawbacks, including the exposure of telephone numbers and the necessity of obtaining consent before adding participants to the group. The following provides guidance for branch officers on setting up and managing a WhatsApp group:

1. **Obtain Consent:** Before adding any member to a WhatsApp group, ensure you have their explicit consent to do so. This respects privacy and complies with data protection regulations. **Please ensure you have made all participants aware of the impact before they are added to the group.**
2. **Privacy Considerations:** Be aware that WhatsApp displays participants' phone numbers to all group members. Make sure members are comfortable with this before adding them to the group.
3. **Group Purpose and Rules:** Clearly define the purpose of the group and establish ground rules for communication. This includes setting expectations for the type of content that is appropriate to share.
4. **Admin Responsibilities:** Assign one or more administrators to manage the group. Admins should monitor conversations to ensure compliance with group rules and handle any issues that arise.
5. **Sensitive Information:** Avoid sharing sensitive or confidential information through the group. Encourage members to use direct messages or other secure methods for such communications.
6. **Regular Updates:** Keep the group updated with relevant information but avoid spamming members with too many messages. Aim for a balance to keep members engaged without overwhelming them.
7. **Feedback and Improvement:** Regularly solicit feedback from group members on the effectiveness of the group and be open to making improvements.

### **5) Branch Events**

#### **a. Who attends**

An SLCC member can attend meetings of any one branch (usually the Branch for the area where they are employed). Full Members, Principal, Fellow, Past Service Members and Honorary Vice Presidents of the SLCC are welcome to attend meetings unless there is a specific reason for them to be precluded.

The branch may agree to allow an Affiliated Member of the SLCC to be a member of and attend meetings of the branch, provided that the Affiliated Member is not a member of any other branch.



## **b. Tips for Holding an Effective Branch Meeting**

### **1. Advertise the exciting stuff**

Never use formulaic agendas which look boring and put people off. Things like minutes, reports of officers are best avoided. There is nothing in the Articles of Association which says branch meetings must be conducted like a council meeting. Instead just advertise all the exciting/informative things which will be happening, speakers, topics to be discussed etc.



### **2. Welcome new members**

Make sure new members and new attendees are properly welcomed and everyone introduced. You could implement a strategy where you go around the room and ask each attendee to introduce themselves and then say what their biggest work challenge is.

### **3. Delegate to your supporters**

Many branches work well with a small group of supporters but if a couple leave/retire the whole branch can collapse. Ensure you engage members, especially new ones, and ask them to get involved with specific jobs/tasks. For example, invite a new member to help organise a training day.

### **4. Ask exhibitors to fund lunch**

A few commercial companies would be willing to pay a small fee in return for a speaking slot at your meeting, this money can then fund room hire, refreshments etc.



### **5. Hold Wednesday meetings**

Mid-week day time meetings are by far the most successful, avoid weekends which for many affects caring responsibilities.

### **6. Include food**

A 10.30 to 12.30 meeting works well followed by a light lunch, also have drinks available on arrival. The branch chair should be there first to welcome everyone. You are able to use your branch capitation to cover the cost of lunch or if you have a sponsor for the event, they may pay for refreshments.

### **7. Create a relaxed atmosphere**

Sit in groups around tables not in rows, this encourages engagement and creates an informal atmosphere.



### **8. Get a county specific speaker**

There are lots of county specific speakers who will be popular with members – local

MPs, Police and Crime Commissioner, County Planning Officer, County Highways Officer, Chief Constable.

**9. Give a clear brief to your speaker**

Provide the speaker with information about your expected delegates to ensure they can provide a suitable and effective session.

**10. Invite the CALC officer**

As a courtesy, this will help relations and reduce local tensions. To find your County Association contact details please visit [www.nalc.gov.uk/about-county-associations](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/about-county-associations) or if you are in Wales, contact your One Voice Wales Area Committee Member <http://www.onevoicewales.org.uk>

**11. Give your members notice**

Your members need to be given notice of your meeting/event to ensure they can arrange work/family commitments. Use your January meeting to plan the dates of your next meetings for the rest of the year, you don't need to book the room/location of the meeting until nearer the time. Please always inform Head Office of your meeting date so we can ensure our CPD courses do not clash with your event.

**12. Consider a joint event**

To increase the amount of members and reduce your event costs why not consider partnering with your neighbouring branch for a joint training event? Also, ensure your event is in a different location and at a different time to your local Regional Training Seminar, the list of Regional Training Seminars can be viewed on the SLCC website – [www.slcc.co.uk/events/](http://www.slcc.co.uk/events/)



**13. Have a back-up plan**

Prepare for the worst scenario by having a back-up speaker in mind for your event, this could be a case study from one of your delegates.

**c. Promoting your Event**

You can promote your event using a variety of different media, all of the following are free of charge and just require some admin time:

**1. Social media**

Create your branch X account, follow your members, your members' councils, SLCC (@SLCCNews) and the other SLCC branches. Make your members aware of your X account by announcing your handle/username at the beginning of meetings, adding it to your email signature and to your correspondence including emails and minutes.

Post your upcoming meeting dates on X and, if acceptable by your members, take photos of your meetings and post them on the day of the event. Ensure that you include @SLCCNews in your post and the SLCC will repost

your post.

Examples of other branch X accounts are @NorfolkSLCC, @CheshireSLCC and @WiltsSLCC.

## **2. Email**

Every SLCC branch has a dedicated SLCC email address which we encourage all branches to use. To receive your login details please contact Gemma Rickard, [gemma.rickard@slcc.co.uk](mailto:gemma.rickard@slcc.co.uk)

When using this address to send bulk emails to your members, please ensure that you break your email list down into lists of up to 30 email addresses.

This is to ensure your email address is not flagged as a spam. [More information on creating a distribution list is available here.](#)

[You can also click here to access the Branch email policy which must be adhered to when using SLCC email.](#)

## **3. Calling**

You may wish to call your new members and your new clerks to invite them to their first branch event. Speaking to the clerk directly is a great way of opening up dialogue and making the clerk feel welcome.

If you have sent an email using Mailchimp or via SLCC, you will be able to view a report to see who has not opened the email. You may wish to call the members who have not opened to email to check that it has been delivered.

## **4. The Clerk magazine & SLCC website**

Keep SLCC Head Office updated with your branch meeting dates to ensure they are published in The Clerk and on the SLCC website.

### **d. Internal speakers for your event**

SLCC advisors can be booked for your branch meeting, you will need to pay for their travel, subsistence and if applicable their accommodation charge. Please contact Helen Watson, Senior Advisor, [helen.watson@slcc.co.uk](mailto:helen.watson@slcc.co.uk) for more information.

The current SLCC President can also be booked to attend your meeting. Please contact Kate Shlusal, PA to Chief Executive, [kate.shlusal@slcc.co.uk](mailto:kate.shlusal@slcc.co.uk)

### **e. External speakers for your event**

External speakers can be sourced to cover a range of topics including youth councils, general clerking, data protection, social media, open spaces, Historic England etc. Case studies and articles within The Clerk magazine will provide you with a hub of potential speakers.

There are also lots of county specific speakers who will be popular with members including local MPs, Police and Crime Commissioner, County Planning Officer, County Highways Officer, Chief Constable etc.

Here is a sample of external trainers used by the SLCC:

Trainer Name	Training Subject	Based	Email
Somerset Business Agency	First Time Managers, Quotes, Tenders & Contracts, Project Management, Leadership Skills	Somerset	Patricia@sbacic.org
Beckie Whitehouse	Mental Health Awareness, Managing Anxiety,	Cambridgeshire	beckienet@gmail.com
Becky Walsh	AI, How to Use Chat GPT, Canva	Somerset	becky@beckywalsh.com
Chris Powell	How to Organise Safe & Successful Community Events	Wiltshire	chris.powell@theeventexpert.co.uk
Dr Amanda Gummer	Practical Advice for Owners / Operators of Public Play Spaces		chair@api-play.org
Tyler Harris	Allotment Management	Northamptonshire	Tyler@nsalg.org.uk
Mia Neupauerova	People Management	Sussex	mia@neupauer.org
Carbon Literacy Qualification, Getting Qualified to Tackle the Climate Emergency	Allan Wilson / Richard Watkins	Shropshire	allanwilson@saveourshropshire.org / richard@saveourshropshire.org
Charitable Trusts, Common Land, Rights of Way, Village Greens	Roger Taylor	Surrey	Roger.Taylor@wellerslawgroup.com

If you need support in finding a speaker, please contact [events@slcc.co.uk](mailto:events@slcc.co.uk)

#### **f. Potential exhibitors for your event**

For a full list of commercial companies in your area please visit the Supplier Directory on the SLCC website - [www.slcc.co.uk/supplier-directory/](http://www.slcc.co.uk/supplier-directory/)

### **6) Branch Incentives**

#### **a. Free place at Regional Training Seminars**

Each Branch is allocated one free place per year for a branch officer to attend their local Regional Training Seminar. To book the free place we ask that the branch officer calls Head Office on 01823 253646. This place is usually used by the branch secretary but can be passed to any branch officer.

## **7) Branch finance**

### **a. Your Branch Capitation and Branch Officer Support**

Your Branch capitation is dependent on the number of Branch members at the end of December and the level of Branch funds at 31 December. Capitation normally = number of members at 31 December x £6.25. However, if the level of Branch funds held at 31 December exceeds the threshold of £12.50 x number of members, the payment is reduced to £1 per member rather than £6.25. (This measure is in place to encourage branches to spend their capitation funding in-year).

In addition to capitation funding, Branches will also receive £2 per member for Branch Officer Support. Branches are able to determine locally how this funding is applied. Following a decision by the NEC in 2014, this replaces the Branch Secretary's Honarium and gives Branches more autonomy in managing their financial affairs.

The above payments are triggered when Branch accounts are provided to the SLCC's Head Office, [finance@slcc.co.uk](mailto:finance@slcc.co.uk). The Branch accounts should run from January to December in line with the SLCC accounts and every effort should be made to supply the accounts as soon as possible after the year-end.

### **b. Additional Branch funding**

We want to encourage Branches to use their capitation towards providing free lunch/refreshments to attract more members at meetings. If the Branch wants to put on a special event for their members which cannot be funded within existing resources, SLCC has a small budget for Branch activity which will usually match the Branch funding for the event, i.e. if the Branch provides £250, SLCC will match this funding (up to the value of £500). However, as funding is limited, applications are processed on a 'first come, first served' basis. For more information on match funding please contact [gemma.rickard@slcc.co.uk](mailto:gemma.rickard@slcc.co.uk)