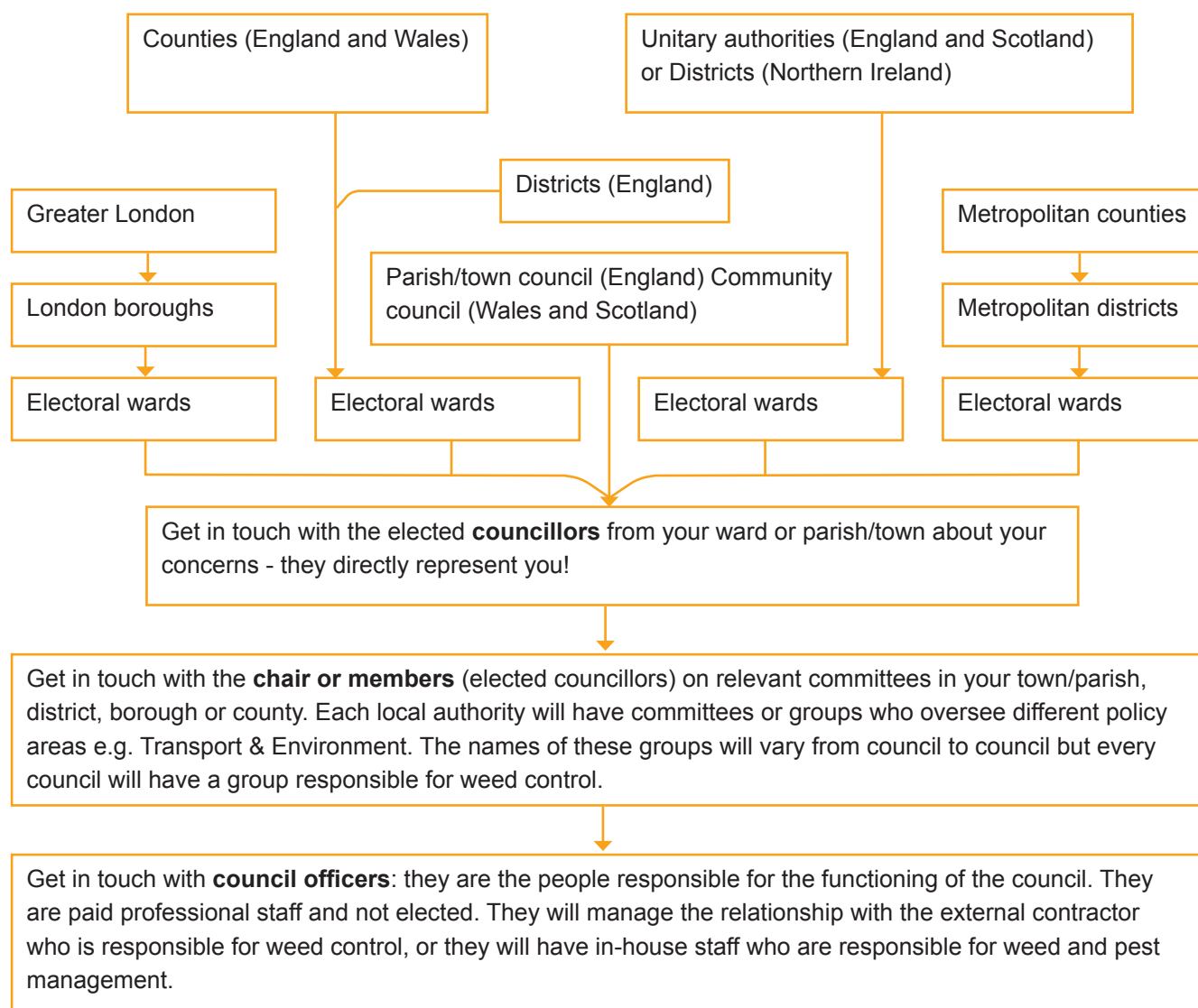




# Understanding your local council

Local authorities (also known as local councils) can be confusing to navigate. Whilst every council is different, here is a rough guide to how they work, and who is worth reaching out to as part of your local Pesticide-Free Towns campaign.



## Key parts of your local council

- 🔥 **Councillors** – Councils are made up of councillors (also called elected members) who are voted for by the public in local elections, which generally take place every four to five years. Councillors decide on the overall direction of policy, so they are vital for creating political support for a pesticide-free town/city. They are also the only people who can introduce a Motion to be debated and voted on.
- 🔥 **Council officers** – Councillors are supported by permanent council staff (called officers). Council officers implement policy initiatives decided on by councillors and are responsible for delivering services on a daily basis, so they will be vital for the practical planning of the transition to a pesticide-free town. Whilst council officers are not able to submit a Motion, they can still demonstrate their department's support for the objectives by working with elected councillors to input into the contents. Relevant council officers are also sometimes able to be present in order to give supporting evidence when the Motion is debated.
- 🔥 **Full Council** – The full council is made up of all elected councillors, usually belonging to a range of different political parties. The full council debates and decides upon policy based on reports from the committees. They usually meet four times per year.
- 🔥 **Committees** – Councillors on committees monitor and review the council's performance and decision-making process in order to ensure it is accountable to the public. Most councils will have committees divided by subject areas. The majority will have an 'Environment and Transport' committee (or similarly named), but some may separate the two. Many councils will also have an 'Overview and Scrutiny Committee' which can review any matters which affect the Council, its area or local residents, supposedly providing greater transparency and accountability in the delivery of services locally.
- 🔥 **Cabinet** – A cabinet is like the government of the council, usually formed by the political party that has most elected representatives. Just like in the House of Commons, the cabinet can often push through initiatives such as going pesticide-free because they hold a majority of the seats in the council.

- 🔥 **Elected Leader or Mayor** – The political leader of a council is responsible for the overall performance of the council as well as its strategic direction and its relationship with central government. The majority of leaders/mayors are elected by councillors but a minority are directly elected by residents (for example the Mayor of London and Greater Manchester).

PFT campaigners all have different experiences with gaining local authority support. Here are some case studies of successful campaigns at all levels of local government:

- 🔥 **Bristol City Council:** local residents ran a sustained campaign which began in 2015. They finally won over the council in 2019 when a Motion was brought forward committing to a three-year phase out of pesticides.
- 🔥 **Glastonbury Town Council:** banned glyphosate after town councillors brought the issue to the fore in 2015. Councillors passed a Motion which requested that the subcontractors employed by Mendip District Council stop the use of all products containing glyphosate due to the associated health and environmental risks and in order to be in line with the town's Environmental Charter.
- 🔥 **Hammersmith and Fulham Council:** the council's Chief Executive took the decision to ban pesticide use in green spaces after seeing a petition. No Council Motion was necessary
- 🔥 **Lewes District Council:** local campaigners got in touch with the council's head of parks and worked with its contractor to make sure they could supply non-chemical alternatives. Campaigners also set up a petition calling for the council to go pesticide-free. Only then did the council take it on.
- 🔥 In many cases, distinct authorities will control different areas treated with pesticide. For example, the district council might take care of roadside verges and some other road edges, whilst the town council is more likely to be responsible for parks and pavements. Make sure to contact your council(s) to find out who is responsible for what, so you're sure you are speaking to the right people.



**It doesn't have to be this way...**

Help PAN UK make our towns and cities pesticide-free