

# Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors

# mycouncillor

## User Guide

Version 1.0 – 15 September 2007

## Welcome to mycouncillor.org.uk!

Thank you for choosing to use **mycouncillor** for your councillors website. As councillors its vital that we communicate with, and listen to our communities and our electors. As all of us will know the internet is part of daily life for many people and for most companies and services. A good councillors website can be a useful part of your communication with voters. But remember its an extra tool, not a substitute for leaflets, letters surveys and good old 'face to face' contact.

**mycouncillor** uses an off-the-shelf website platform called WordPress Multi-User (MU). Those of you who have been familiar with WordPress or other “blogging” software (e.g. Blogger or Blogspot) will already be familiar with much of the way the system works. If you're new to websites there's some learning to do, but well worth the effort for a good website.

**mycouncillor** works fine for a standalone website for a single councillor. But it works even better if council colleagues across a ward, and even better a whole council group use the system together. **mycouncillor** shares local contact information and news stories across ward colleagues sites, and across council group colleagues sites. All of us have our busy periods, but if our ward colleagues are all adding to the system now and then, everyone's site can stay up to date. A ward colleague who isn't very IT 'savvy' can even have a functioning website that is sustained and kept up to date with content from their colleagues without ever touching a computer keyboard!

The system is designed to be a Councillors website. It isn't designed as a local party website, or a website for a PPC or MP. Other website providers exist in the Party to provide these services ([www.libdemsonline.org.uk](http://www.libdemsonline.org.uk) have a list of providers). You could use the system for a council candidate (just change “Lib Dem Councillor to Lib Dem Campaigner” for a certain ward, that's up to you.

ALDC hopes that you find the facility useful. Over the coming months and years we will be improving and adding to the facility. The internet is a fast changing technology and we hope to be continually keeping the facility up to date. Your ideas and suggestions on what improvements we can make will be much appreciated. Please remember that any changes to the system have a development time, and cost, associated to them. We won't be able to make all changes that people might want straight away – so please be patient!

Remember this is a service ONLY for ALDC's members. We've no plans to make it available to anyone else, if they want it they can join! We hope you find it a useful additional benefit of ALDC membership.

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact the office:

[info@aldc.org](mailto:info@aldc.org)

01422 843 785

Or you can use the online support forum (and help others with their queries) at [www.mycouncillor.org.uk](http://www.mycouncillor.org.uk)

NB – the screen images and notes in this guide are based on using Microsoft's Internet Explorer software to access the internet (the default system that comes with windows computers. It works fine with other browsers (e.g. Mac's Safari), but the screen will look slightly different.

## What's Your Website For

Different councillors will use their website in different ways.

Some councillors will want to use the site for news about campaigns, council meetings, success stories and more – almost like a Focus leaflet online. Remember anything you write for a focus leaflet should be put on your website.

A good example of someone using the site as a news and campaigning site is [www.vicdalbert.mycouncillor.org.uk](http://www.vicdalbert.mycouncillor.org.uk)

Other councillors might use their site more as a "blog". A blog is a public journal that you write in regularly with comments on what's been happening that day – either in your local area or life in general.

A good example of a site being used as a blog is [www.richardbaum.mycouncillor.org.uk](http://www.richardbaum.mycouncillor.org.uk)

If you're going to "blog", you need to commit to updating your site practically every day.

However you use your site somebody needs to keep it up to date regularly. There is **nothing worse** than an out of date website! Once someone looks at your site and sees that the latest news is from a year ago, they won't come back!

**If you're using the site with your ward colleagues or across a council group you can help each other by sharing content. This will help all of you keep the sites up to date. You can have a perfectly effective site which you never contribute to, as long as your ward colleagues are.**

# Getting to Know Your Website

mycouncillor websites consist of a number of fixed features that make up the website.

Its probably best to have a look at a site that's up and running to appreciate what's on available – e.g. [www.timpickstone.mycouncillor.org.uk](http://www.timpickstone.mycouncillor.org.uk)

## The appearance

We currently offer 8 standard layouts for the websites. Half are in “focus leaflet Orange” and half are in Lib Dem 'Gold' (yellow). You can choose which layout or colour scheme you want for your site and change them as often as you like.

Fixed width Yellow 1.0



Focus Orange Banner, White Bird 1.0



Focus Yellow Banner, White Bird 1.0



Some of the layouts allow for an additional image in the top right of banner – this could be used for a local picture, pictures of you out campaigning or a 'bar chart' squeeze message.

We will add more layouts as the months progress.

## The top banner



The top banner consists of your name and your byline (e.g. “Liberal Democrat Councillor for Gorton North Ward”). These are set up for you when you register for the site, but you can change them later as you wish.

In some layouts, you can add a picture to the top banner.

## Main Story Column

The large central column (in the middle on most layouts, but it can be on the left) is where

all your news stories can be displayed. This will be the news stories added by you, or if more of your council group have websites by your ward editor or area editor.

**Tim Pickstone**  
Liberal Democrat Councillor for Holyrood Ward

**What`s Inside**  
Report a Problem  
How You Can Help  
Meet the Team  
About Me  
Our Area

**Blue Bin Success Story**  
September 8th, 2007 by timpickstone  
In March 2007 the Liberal Democrat team on Bury Council successfully proposed a budgetary amendment which extended the "Blue Bin" recycling scheme to every house in the Borough.

**Tim Pickstone**

The most recent six stories (by date posted) are displayed. You can add photos to stories as you wish.

### The Left Hand Sidebar.

The left hand sidebar (on the left on most cases, but on some layouts it can be in the middle of your page!)

Report a Problem  
Focus  
A bit about me

**Useful links**  
ALDC  
Liberal Democrats  
Maidstone Council  
Maidstone Lib Dems

**Archives**  
10th September 2007  
9th September 2007

**Categories**  
Environment (1)  
Local Issues (1)  
Local Services (1)  
News (1)  
Stuff and Nonsense (1)  
Transport (1)

**Support Us**  
Help with the costs of this site by buying online through these links.

amazon.co.uk

### Your Pages

As well as your "front" page, your website can contain an unlimited number of secondary pages. We supply you with two pages as standard:

- "report a problem" an online version of a 'grumble sheet' for local residents to report problems or issues that they wish you to follow up
- "how you can help" an online version of a 'how you can help' for on your focus giving people the opportunity to offer to join or help locally.

You can also add your own pages. You'll see on Tim Pickstone's site examples of this:

- meet the team (details of other councillors, PPCs and MEPs).
- About me – more information about you
- About our area
  - etc etc

If you had an important local campaign (e.g Save our Post Office) it might be a good idea to have a special page devoted to your campaign. At election time you could use this facility to have a special page for your local manifesto or action plan.

### ***Local Information***

The site has a facility for local information about your ward. This could be a directory of local schools, community groups, advice lines etc. You don't have to use this, but it's there if you want it. If you have ward colleagues who also have websites, then the local information is shared across all your sites.

### ***Links***

Use this space to provide any useful links that people might want to use. This could be your local party, the websites of ward colleagues or of local organisations that you support or are involved in.

We provide you with ALDC and the Liberal Democrats nationally to start with, but you can delete and add to these as you wish.

### ***Archive***

This is an automatic listing of previous news stories from your site – this is one way which will help readers of your site find useful content.

### ***Categories***

When you add a news story to your site, you can specify one or more categories (e.g. "Planning applications", "transport"). This is another way that readers of your site can find useful content.

### ***Sponsor Links***

ALDC provides the **mycouncillor** sites free for its members, obviously there are internet hosting costs associated with the service. The links to Amazon, iTunes and Ecotricity are links to external commercial organisations – if your readers buy books, music or electricity by clicking on the links from your site ALDC receives a small donation (e.g. 2% of an iTunes purchase). This helps pay for the costs of the service to you. Please encourage your users to follow the links – it doesn't cost you anything more to buy through the links – we just get some money!

## The Right-hand Sidebar

Unlike the left hand sidebar, you can customise the righthand sidebar to add or delete features to your site. (n.b “your details” and the log in button are fixed, the rest is up to you). As a default, the site contains the following:

### **Your details**

Your name, your address, phone number and email address.

These are set up for you on registration, but you can change them yourself.

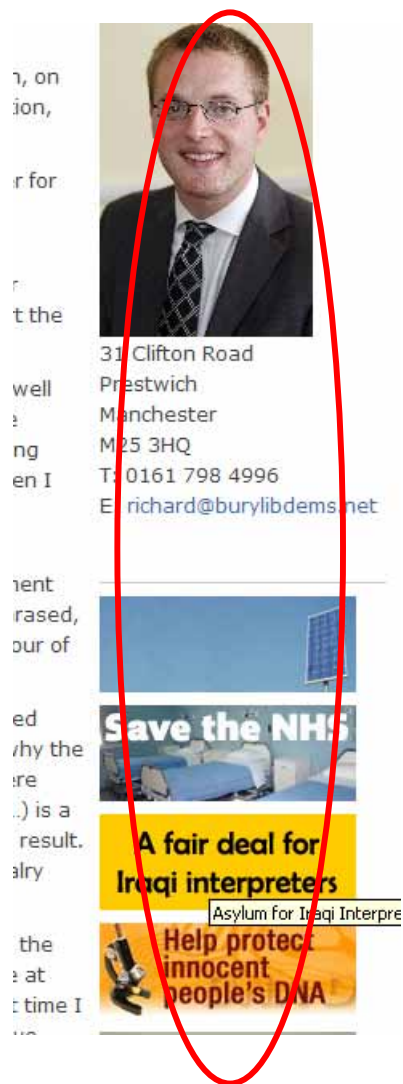
Plus your photo. You will need to upload this yourself.

### **Lib Dem Campaign Buttons.**

These are campaign buttons from the National (Federal) Party. These are updated regularly as campaign themes change

### **Your log in button.**

Use this link to log into your site and reach the administration part of your screens.



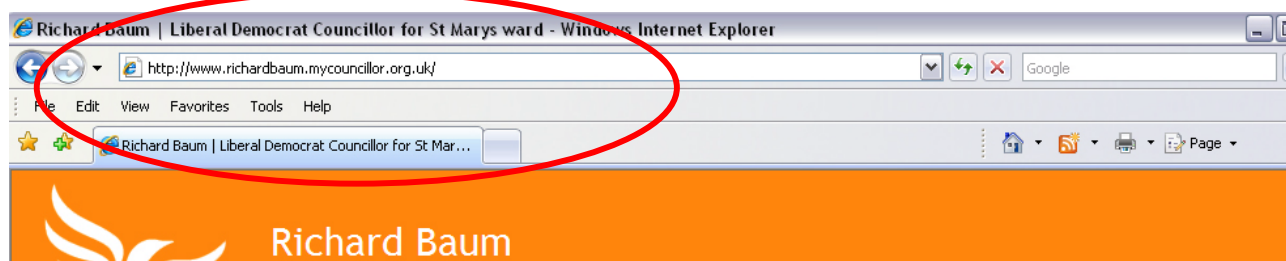
The image shows a vertical sidebar from a website. A red circle highlights the top section, which includes a profile picture of a man with glasses, a dark suit, and a patterned tie. Below the photo is contact information: "31 Clifton Road", "Prestwich", "Manchester", "M25 3HQ", "T: 0161 798 4996", and "E: richard@burylibdems.net". Below this are three campaign buttons: "Save the NHS" (with a hospital bed image), "A fair deal for Iraqi interpreters" (with a yellow background), and "Help protect innocent people's DNA" (with a microscope image). A small text box "Asylum for Iraqi Interpre" is visible over the second button. To the left of the sidebar, fragments of text from the main page are visible, such as "r, on", "ion,", "r for", "t the", "well", "Manchester", "ng", "en I", "ent", "rased,", "our of", "ed", "hy the", "re", "is a", "result.", "alry", "the", "at", "time I", "re".

## Your Website Name

Your **mycouncillor** website comes ready with its own [mycouncillor.org.uk](http://mycouncillor.org.uk) website address.

This is

[www.yourname.mycouncillor.org.uk](http://www.yourname.mycouncillor.org.uk)



(where “yourname” is the name you have been given by ALDC for your website. Normally this will be your first name and your family name (e.g. [www.sheilablack.mycouncillor.org.uk](http://www.sheilablack.mycouncillor.org.uk)). If two Liberal Democrat councillors with websites have the same name then we will have to be a little more creative!

## Getting a Shorter Website Name

It's well worth having your own shorter website name for your website – e.g. [www.sheilablack.co.uk](http://www.sheilablack.co.uk) – from an external web domain company.

We've used [www.1and1.co.uk](http://www.1and1.co.uk) and [www.123-reg.co.uk](http://www.123-reg.co.uk) to register domains. British domains (e.g. .org.uk, or .co.uk cost around £2.60 a year to register. International domains (.org .com .net cost £8.50 a year). We would encourage you to use the .org.uk and the .co.uk style domains as these help identify you geographically for Internet Search Engines.

Once you've registered a domain name follow the instructions at the company you've used to “point” the domain at your my councillor website.

Please remember this is something you need to do yourself, and isn't part of the service provided by ALDC.

# Managing your Website

## 1 Your Username and Password

Your username is the name of your councillor website (e.g. For [www.sheilablack.mycouncillor.org.uk](http://www.sheilablack.mycouncillor.org.uk) it's "sheilablack").

Your password is given to you by ALDC when we set up your website.

**It is important that you change your password to something that only you know and that cannot be easily guessed.** We'll show you how below.

## 2 Logging on to the System

Whenever you need to change your website, you need to log in to the Administration section of the website.

You do this at the "login" link at the bottom right of your website. You'll need your user name and password.



You can ask for your user name and password to be remembered by your computer permanently. This is up to you – if your computer is used by more than one person then it is probably not a good idea, if you're happy with the security on your computer then it's probably fine.

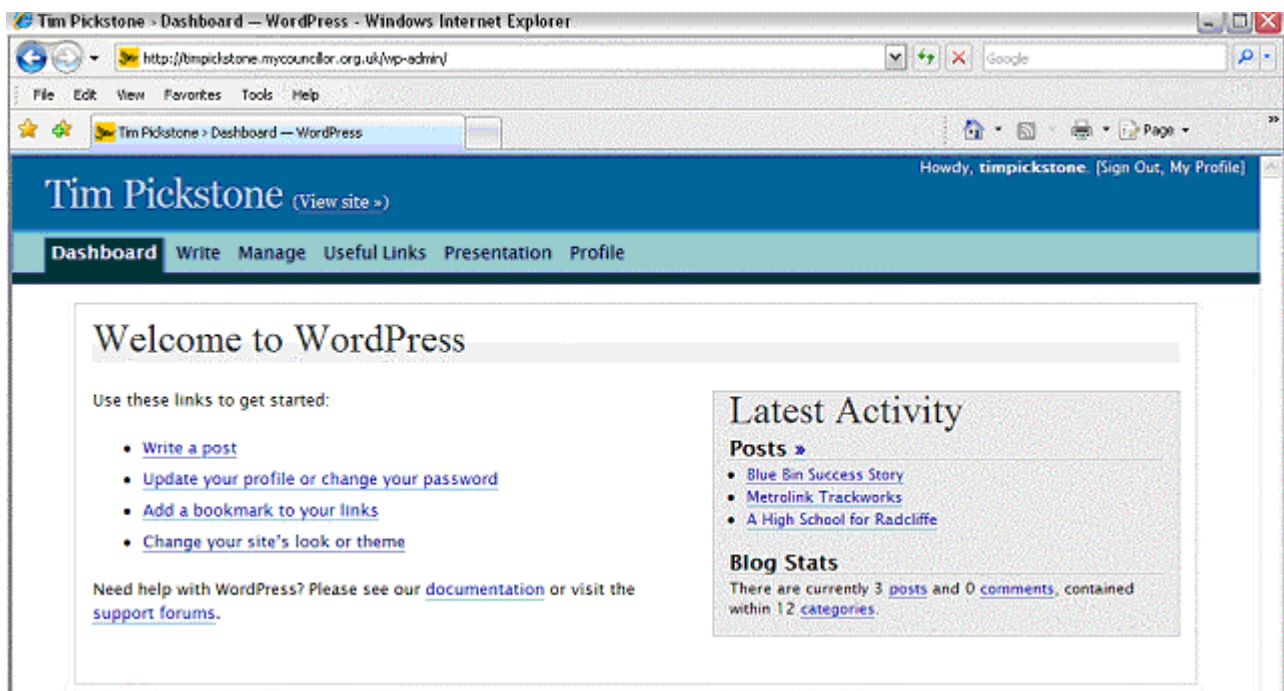


### 3 Accessing the Admin Section

Once you've logged on you're taken to the Admin section of the website. This is an area that is only accessible for you, and can provide you with all the tools to make changes to your website.

If you stay logged on, you'll notice that a new link has been added at the bottom right of the site, "site admin" which will take you straight to the site admin without having to log on again.

The blue screen you can see below is called your "dashboard".



The front of your dashboard contains links to four common tasks you probably need most often, it's perhaps best to start with these four tasks.

Clicking on "view my site" at the top of the page will always take you to your site so you can see any changes that you have made.

## 4 Changing Your Password

Click on “update my profile or change my password” on the dashboard or click on the “profile” link at the top of the dashboard.

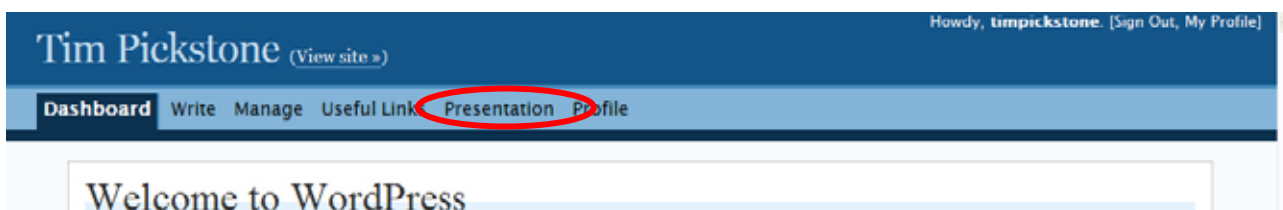


(Ignore the other boxes on this page! They're part of the WordPress system that is not being used by the **mycouncillor** sites.)

## 5 Changing the Appearance of Your Site

Either click on Change your site's look or theme on the dashboard.

Or click on “presentation”



Here you can choose what your site looks like from the eight different designs currently on offer from ALDC. To select a new look, click on the design you prefer. You can look at how site now looks by clicking on “view my site”. If you're not happy you can change back!

If you select one of the themes entitled 'banner image' you will need to upload an image to your site to go along the top. This could be a local scene, campaign pictures of you or a bar chart for third party squeeze.

The image can be uploaded in the “manage” “aldc” section of the admin site.

More appearances will be developed over time, please let us know if you have any suggestions. Our web developers are more than happy to design a specific theme for your local council area sites if you wish (e.g. A special look for all the Mid-Suffolk Lib Dem Councillors, perhaps with a local image). There would be a small fee for that, details on request.

## **6 Sidebar Widgets**

At present one automated “widget” is provided in the right hand sidebar automatically (the Lib Dem Campaign Buttons). You can change this by clicking on “sidebar widgets” in the appearance section of dashboard.

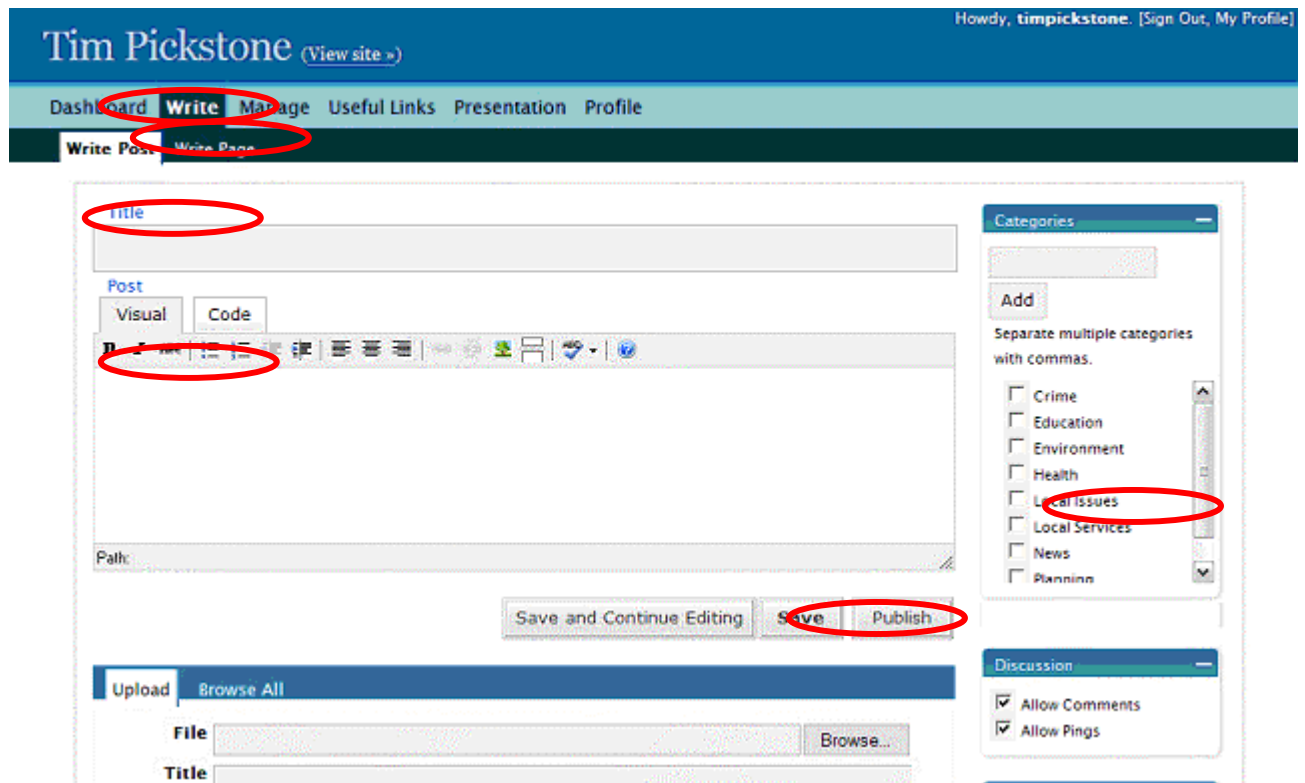
You can only change the content of your right hand sidebar (not the left which is set). At present you can add the Lib Dem TV widget, the e-supporters list budget, a join the lib dems link and the Campaign Buttons.

More widgets will be added over time.

## 7 Adding a News “post”

News posts are the central part of your website. This is your main section for communicating with the community.

Click on “write a new post” in your dashboard, or click on “write” and then “post”



Basic 4 simple steps:

a – give your post a title – this will appear at the top of the story  
e.g. “Lib Dem's Save Post Office”

b – write your news story  
this can be as long or short as you wish – just type away!

c – add categories to your news story  
It's a good idea to add some categories to your story – as many as you wish. When your site gets bigger this will make it easier for people to find relevant information.

d – click on publish

Now click on view site at the top of the page to see how your story looks on the website.

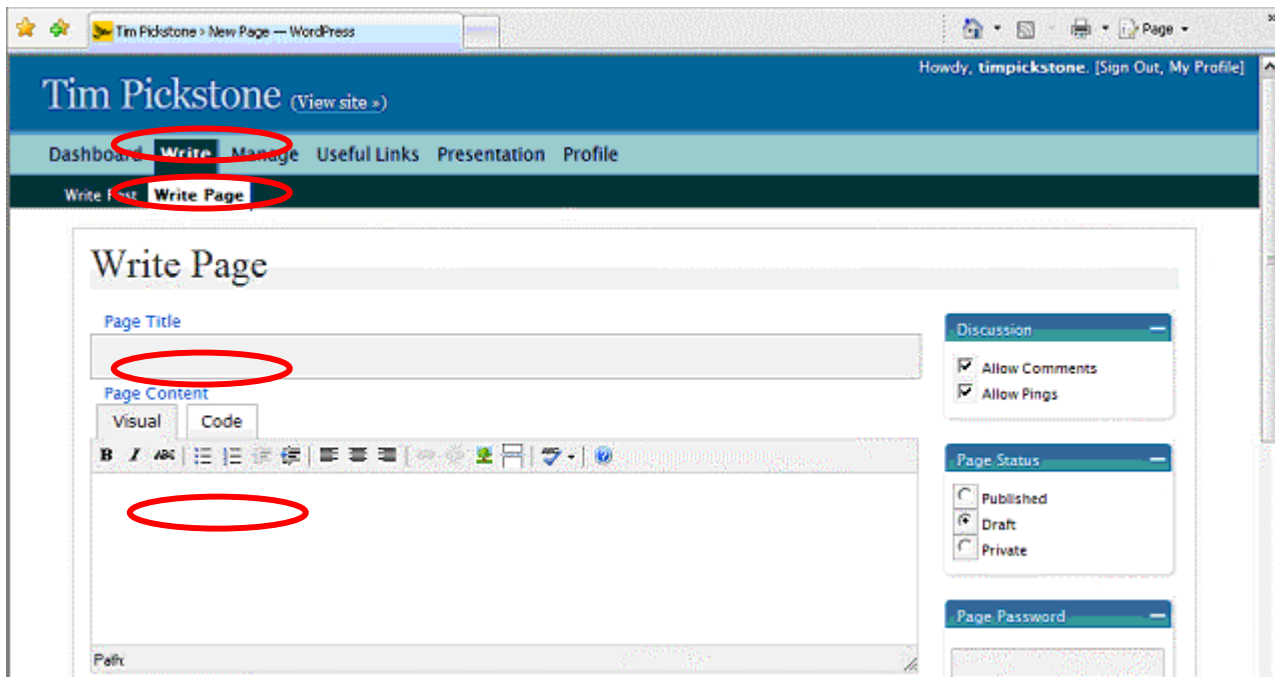
## 8 Creating a New Page

Pages are very similar to news posts, the main difference is where they appear on your website. Pages appear permanently in the list of pages on the top-left.

Use News Posts for news and stories

Use Pages for permanent information about you, your team, campaigns or issues.

Click on “write” then “page”



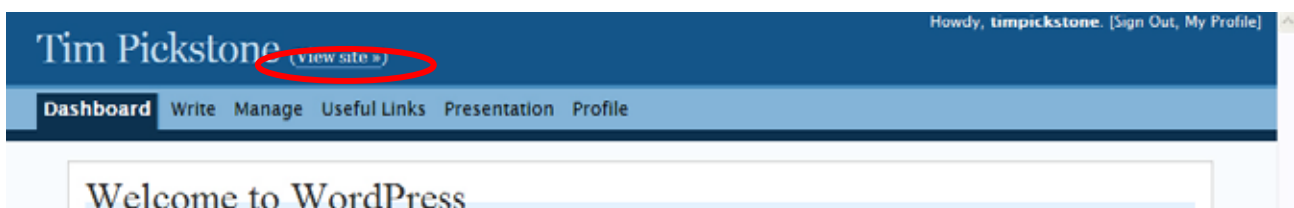
### 3 simple steps:

a – give your page a title KEEP IT SHORT! - long page titles will make your website look messy as it goes over one line.

B – write the content of your page in the text box  
Write as little or as much text as you like

C  
Click “publish”

Now click on view site at the top of the page to see how your story looks on the website.



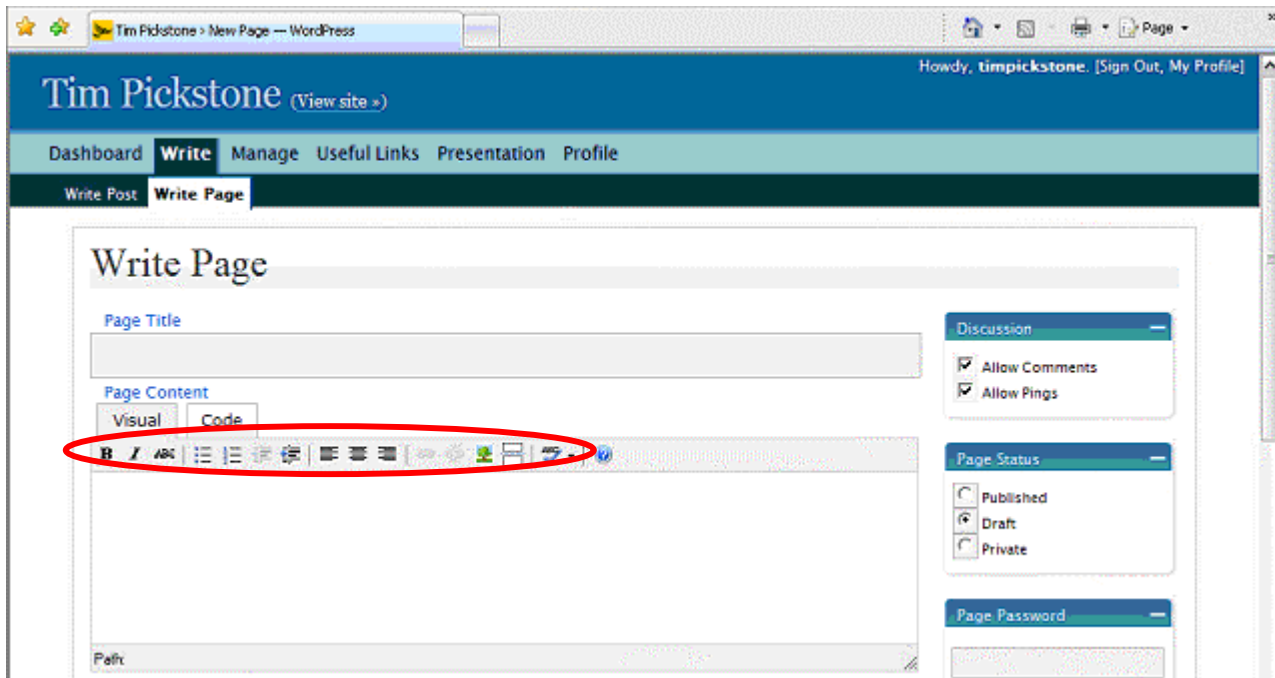
## 9 More about Posts and Pages

You can do much more on your posts and pages than write text:

To go back and edit, change or delete a post or a page select “manage”, then “post” or “page”.

### Add Textual Features

Highlight text and make it bold, underline, italics etc by clicking on the buttons above the text box (similar to a word-processor like Word).



### Add a Hyperlink

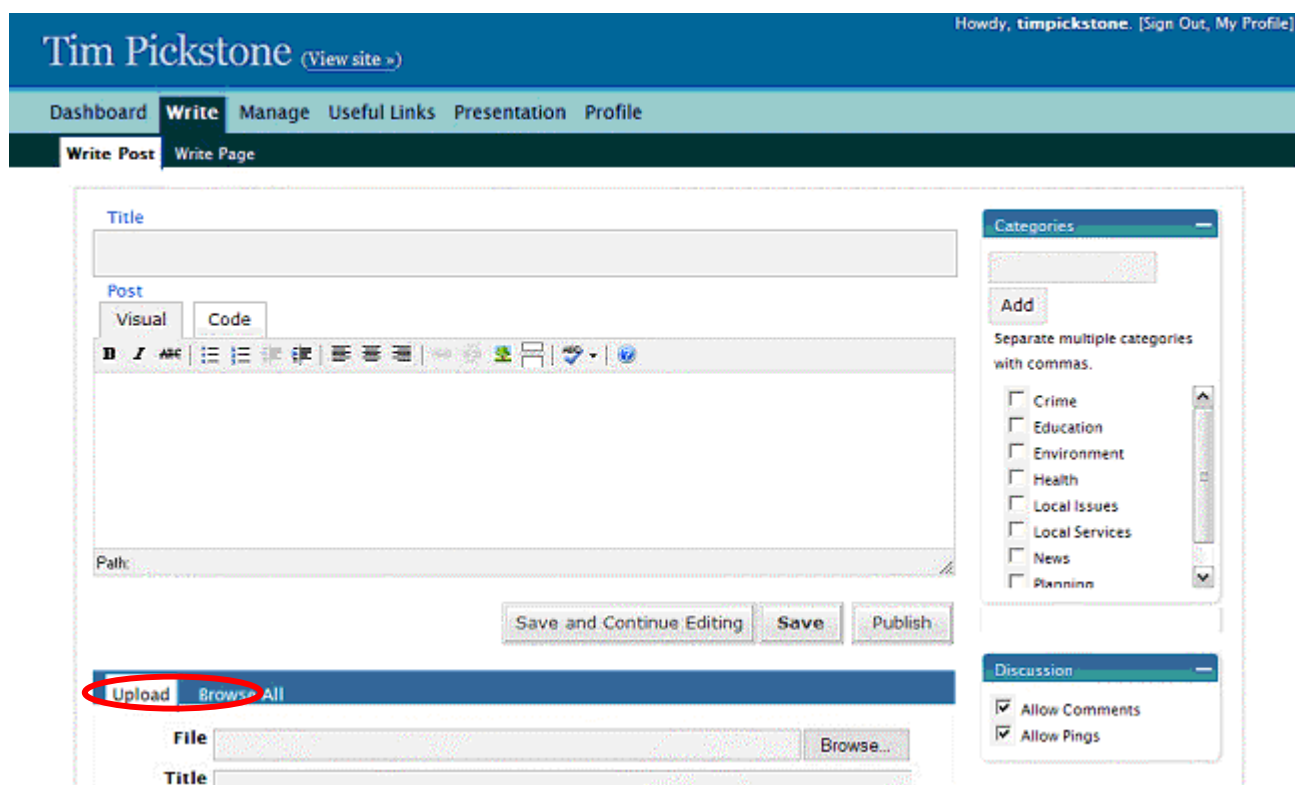
Its a good idea to link to other websites or pages if you mention them in your post or page.

For example if you refer to Nick Clegg MP in your story, it would be a good idea to enable people to go to his website by clicking on his name (people understand that an underlined word means that it is a link to another site).

Highlight the words **Nick Clegg MP** – then click on Link, then type in the website address in this case <http://www.nickclegg.org.uk/> (use the whole address that you see in the address box of your web browser – ie include the <http://www> etc!)

You can also use this system to link back to older stories in your website e.g. <http://timpickstone.mycouncillor.org.uk/ward/2007/08/24/Bury-Hospital-Let-down-by-Labour>

## Add a photo

The screenshot shows a web editor interface for a user named Tim Pickstone. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Dashboard', 'Write', 'Manage', 'Useful Links', 'Presentation', and 'Profile'. Below this, there are sub-navigation options for 'Write Post' and 'Write Page'. The main content area is divided into a 'Title' field, a 'Post' editor with 'Visual' and 'Code' tabs, and a 'Path' field. To the right, there is a 'Categories' section with a list of categories like 'Crime', 'Education', 'Environment', 'Health', 'Local Issues', 'Local Services', 'News', and 'Planning'. Below the categories, there is a 'Discussion' section with checkboxes for 'Allow Comments' and 'Allow Pings'. At the bottom, there is an 'Upload' button circled in red, followed by a 'Browse...' button and a 'Title' field.

Below the text entry screen click on “upload”  
search for the photo that you wish to upload on your computer  
click 'choose'

Next you need to be careful. If you've taken the picture yourself on a digital camera, it is likely that the picture size is far too large for the website.

You have two options

- you can either reduce the size of the picture on a photo editing software (see section 12) so that the picture can appear on the website fully in its new reduced size. To fit on the site, a picture would need to be no more than 400 pixels wide.
- Or you can select the 'thumbnails' option for your photo, this will show a small photo on the website, which if you click on it will display the larger photo.

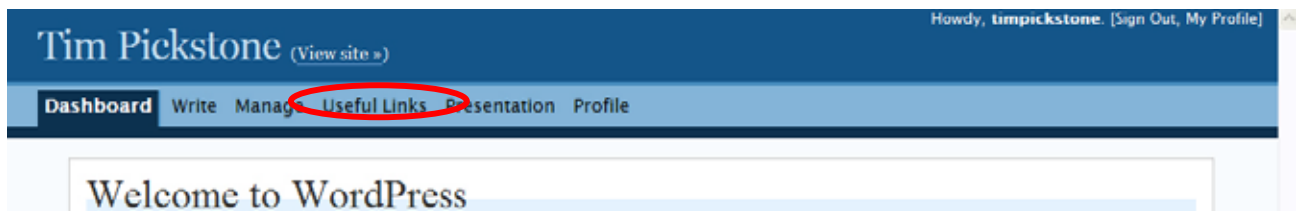
## Copying and Pasting Text

You can copy text from another programme – Word, an email, PagePlus etc and paste it into your website post or page.

Be careful about formatting – the website will copy the formatting of the text from its original source which might make your site look odd (e.g. It might copy the font and text size that are different to the regular ones your system uses). You're best to copy text in an unformatted way – e.g. Plain text.

## 10 Adding Links to your Site

Either click on “add a new link” on your dashboard, or on “Useful Links”



Here you can add and delete the links that are displayed on the left hand column of your site.

Click on “new link” then four simple steps

- a – The title of your link “Rochdale Lib Dems”
- b – the web address – e.g. <http://www.rochdalelibdems.org.uk>
- c – description “Rochdale Lib Dems”
- d – press “add link”

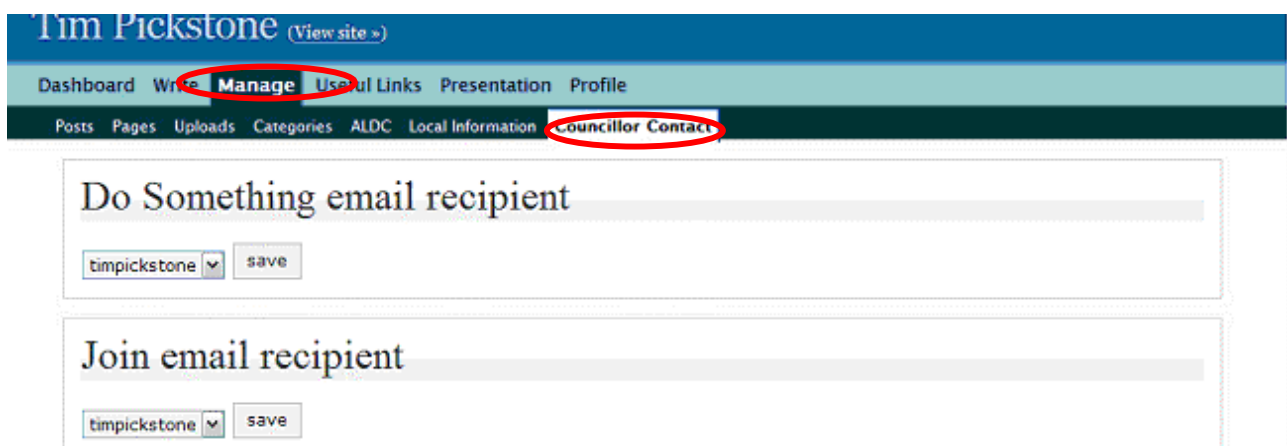
Tips:

- keep the title of your link as short as possible, long names will go onto two lines and make your site look messy!
- Too many links might be off-putting to the viewer, if you've got 100s of links you might like to put them on a separate page.

You can edit and delete links on the main “useful links” section. You can also alter the order they appear in.

## 11 Manage Email Contact Addresses

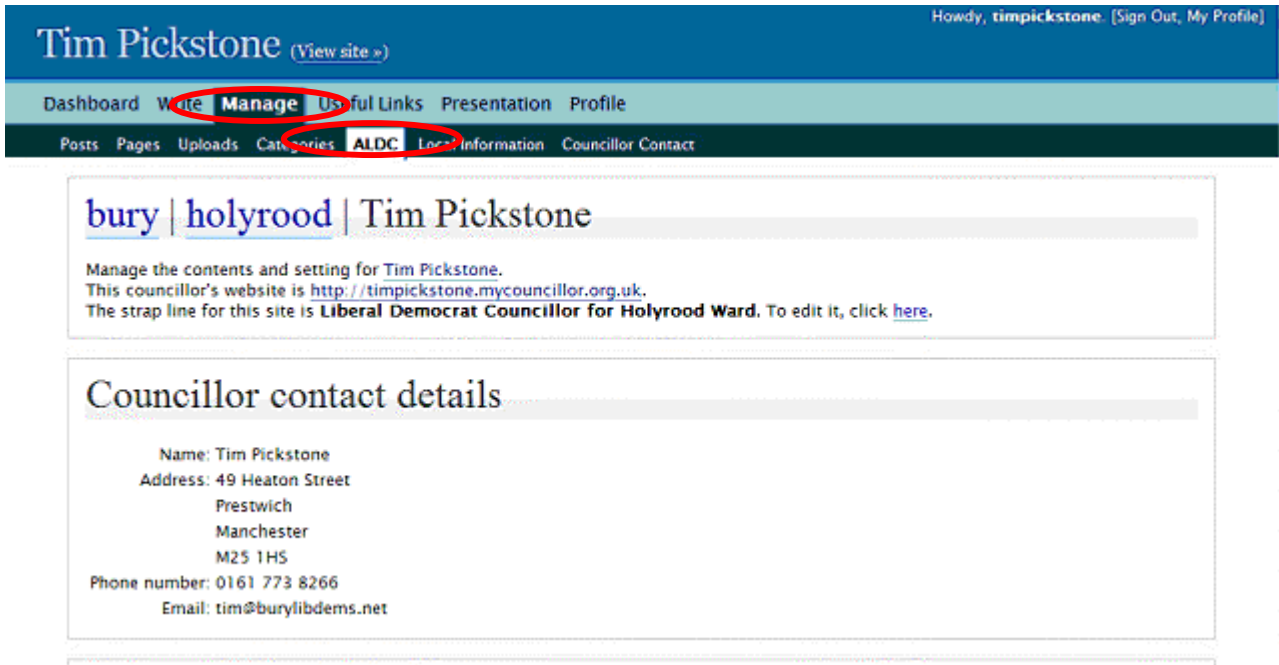
Click on “manage”, then “councillor contact”



Here you can change who receives the emails from the “report a problem” and “how you can help” pages. By default it is set to you (the councillor), but you can change this (e.g. if you wanted all help offers to go to one central person who was dealing with this.) The person needs to be a user on the **mycouncillor** system.

## 12 ALDC System Management

A specific ALDC management system is included in your dashboard for some of the aspects of your site specific that are unique to the **mycouncillor** system.



Tim Pickstone (View site ») Howdy, timpickstone. [Sign Out, My Profile]

Dashboard Write **Manage** Useful Links Presentation Profile

Posts Pages Uploads Categories **ALDC** Local Information Councillor Contact

bury | holyrood | Tim Pickstone

Manage the contents and setting for Tim Pickstone.  
This councillor's website is <http://timpickstone.mycouncillor.org.uk>.  
The strap line for this site is **Liberal Democrat Councillor for Holyrood Ward**. To edit it, click [here](#).

Councillor contact details

Name: Tim Pickstone  
Address: 49 Heaton Street  
Prestwich  
Manchester  
M25 1HS  
Phone number: 0161 773 8266  
Email: [tim@burylibdems.net](mailto:tim@burylibdems.net)

### Updating your information

Here you can update the strapline that appears at the top of your site and the address, phone and email information that appears on the top right of your site.

### Adding a Photo

It's a good idea to upload a photo of yourself to your site. You might want to avoid your standard council "mug-shot" – remember you need to look human!

The system allows you to upload a photo that is on your computer. You can change this at any time.

Your photo **must not be larger** than 200pixels high and 140 pixels wide. If it is the system will "crop" the picture and you will look very strange!

If you haven't got a picture the right size, you will need to use some photo editing software. Serif, the company that produce PagePlus (the desk top publishing programme the Party recommends) produce some free photo editing software "PhotoPlus". This can be downloaded from [www.freeserifsoftware.com](http://www.freeserifsoftware.com).

## 13 Local Information

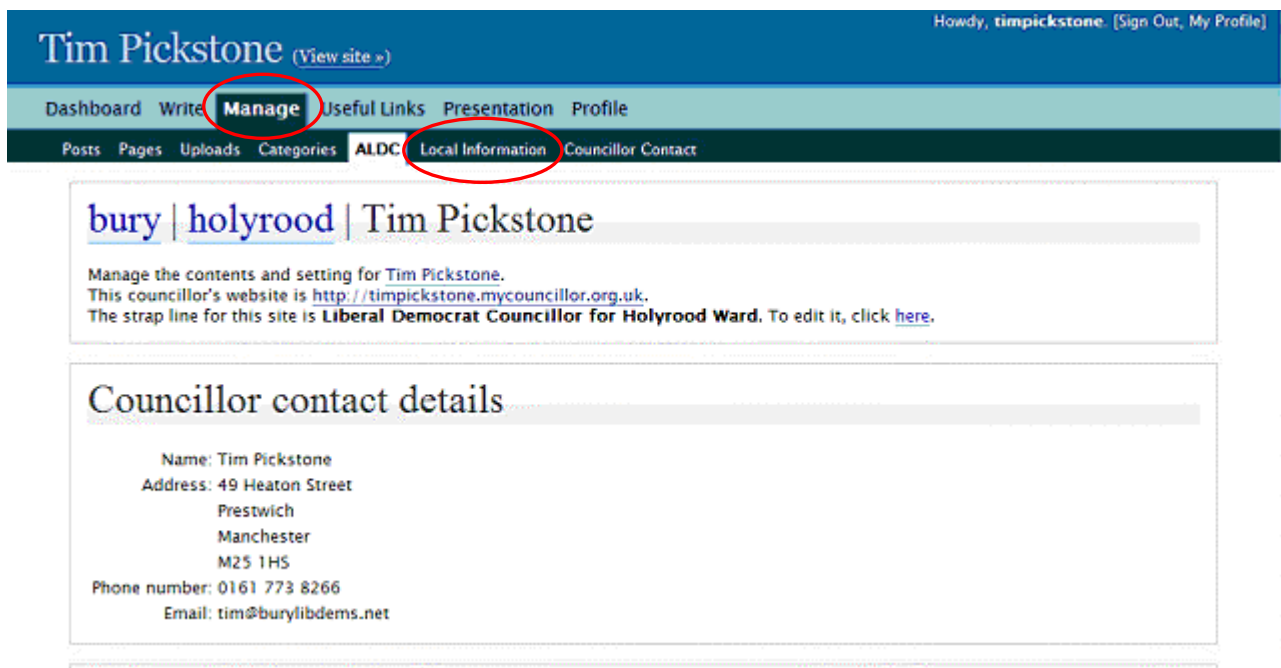
Your website contains the potential for a **local information directory**. You might want to use this as a useful resource for residents on local schools, community groups, sources of advice etc.

Any information you enter onto the directory is automatically shared with any ward colleagues who also have **mycouncillor** sites. (Remember you can only update Local Information if you are a ward **Editor** – see below)

### Adding Local Information

Click on “manage”

Then “local information”



The screenshot shows the user interface for a councillor's website. At the top, the name 'Tim Pickstone' is displayed with a '(View site »)' link. To the right, it says 'Howdy, timpickstone. [Sign Out, My Profile]'. Below this is a navigation bar with links: 'Dashboard', 'Write', 'Manage', 'Useful Links', 'Presentation', and 'Profile'. The 'Manage' link is circled in red. Below the navigation bar is another set of links: 'Posts', 'Pages', 'Uploads', 'Categories', 'ALDC', 'Local Information', and 'Councillor Contact'. The 'Local Information' link is also circled in red. The main content area has a header 'bury | holyrood | Tim Pickstone' and a sub-header 'Councillor contact details'. The contact details include: Name: Tim Pickstone, Address: 49 Heaton Street, Prestwich, Manchester, M25 1HS, Phone number: 0161 773 8266, and Email: tim@burylibdems.net.

Here you can to the content of your directory – feel free to add to the categories that we’ve provided.

# Using the Site Across your Ward or Council Area

## 1 Levels of Users

There are 3 levels of user that can be assigned to a person using **mycouncillor**. These are called AreaEditor, Editor, Councillor and Contributor.

When ever a new site is created, a Councillor user is always created for that site.

A **Contributor** is somebody you allow to make postings to your site (e.g. your local IT officer, or a volunteer or helper you assign this task to.

A **contributor** is assigned to a specific site and they can:

- write posts and pages
- edit posts and pages created by themselves
- delete posts and pages created by themselves
- edit their own profile

A **Councillor** is the site owner.

**Councillors** are assigned to a specific site and they can do everything that a Contributor can do plus:

- add and delete Contributors
- add, edit and delete posts and pages written by Contributors
- change the site's appearance or 'Theme'
- add, edit and delete 'Useful Links'
- edit the contact details displayed on the site
- change the councillors photo
- change the banner photo (if the Theme is photo enable)
- change the recipient email for the 'How You Can Help' and 'Report a Problem' forms
- add, edit and delete Categories that can be applied to Posts

An **Editor** is responsible for a whole ward. This might be one councillor in the area, or you may want to make all your ward councillors Editors.

An **Editor** can do everything a Councillor can do plus:

- add, edit and delete Local Information entries
- write posts and pages for all Councillor sites in that Ward or Area

An **AreaEditor** is responsible for the whole area. Unless you tell us otherwise, this is ALDC.

**AreaEditors** can do everything an Editor can do plus:

- add, edit and delete Editors and Councillors
- write posts and pages for all Areas, Wards and Councillor sites

## 2 Adding Ward Stories

A Ward site isn't a publicly visible website. It is used to add posts that will be seen by all Councillor sites within that Ward.

If you are a ward **Editor**, you can access the ward "level" of the system through "manage" "ALDC" section of the site.



Click on your ward name.

On the next screen click on "manage the contents and settings of wardname"



You are then at an exact copy of your councillor management system, but this time for your ward.

The posts appear in chronological order in amongst the other posts added directly to the Councillors site.

Ward posts are added in exactly the same way that ordinary Councillor posts are added. The only difference is that you need to visit a Councillor's site to see the post as the Ward doesn't have a publicly visible website.

## 3 Adding Area Stories

An Area site isn't a publicly visible website. It is used to add posts that will be seen by all

Councillor sites within that Area.

Access your area level in the same way as you access the ward level above.

The posts appear in chronological order amongst the other posts added directly to the Councillors site and those added at the Ward level.

Area posts are added in exactly the same way that ordinary Councillor posts are added.

The only difference is that you need to visit a Councillor's site to see the post as the Area doesn't have a publicly visible website.

## Do's and Don'ts

- Never use your site to publish material which is potentially defamatory. You do not want to get into legal battles about libel – they are very expensive. ALDC will take down any libellous material that it is notified about.
- Do remember to include a small allocation for the cost of your website in your election expenses – this could be a proportion of your ALDC membership fee (e.g. £10).

## What's Next for mycouncillor?

We hope to constantly improve on the service we are able to offer to members.

Please let us know what additional features you would like in the system, we will do our best to help but it might not always be possible to help on every occasion. Do allow us time to plan the improvements.

We are already planning the first set of updates to **mycouncillor**.

What will be included is:

- the ability to turn comments "on". This will allow site users to turn on the comments facility on their news posts.
- campaign buttons for Wales and Scotland
- the ability to incorporate a party news feed into their right-hand side widget (or Scottish or Welsh news).

### Copyright

Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors September 2007

**The Birchcliffe Centre  
Hebden Bridge  
West Yorkshire  
HX7 8DG  
01422 843 785  
info@aldc.org**