

## **The Clerk And Proper Officer**

The clerk is employed by the council (under section 112 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972) to provide administrative support for the council's activities. Any other staff, although employed by the council, answer to the clerk who is their manager and is responsible for their performance.

The clerk's primary responsibility is to advise the council on whether its decisions are lawful and to recommend ways in which decisions can be implemented. To help with this, the Clerk can be asked to research topics of concern to the council and provide unbiased information to help the council to make appropriate choices. The clerk has a wide range of other responsibilities which are set out in his/her job description.

The clerk must recognise that the council is responsible for all decisions and that he/she takes instructions from the council as a body. The clerk is not answerable to any individual councillor - not even the Chairman. The Council must be confident that the clerk is, at all times, independent, objective and professional.

'Proper officer' is a title used in statute. It refers to the appropriate officer for the relevant function. In town and parish councils, the proper officer is normally the clerk. In financial matters, the proper officer is known as the Responsible Financial Officer.