



The Role of Local Councils in Malta's Vision 2050



**Assocjazzjoni
Kunsilli Lokali**

Local Councils' Association Malta







As Malta charts its course toward **Vision 2050**, local government must remain at the heart of this national transformation. Local councils are the closest institutions to citizens and play a crucial role in shaping resilient, sustainable, and inclusive communities. Their direct engagement with residents, businesses, and regional organizations uniquely positions them to implement policies that reflect the real needs and aspirations of the people they serve.

The **Local Councils Association (LCA)** firmly believes that Malta's long-term vision must be built from the ground up. A sustainable and forward-thinking strategy must focus on national-level policies and empower local authorities with the necessary tools, resources, and autonomy to drive meaningful change within their localities. This document presents a set of strategic proposals designed to strengthen the role of local councils in achieving Malta's economic, environmental, and social objectives for the coming decades.

Local councils can act as key enablers of progress through targeted policies on economic development, sustainability, social inclusion, and governance. By supporting SMEs, fostering green initiatives, improving urban and rural planning, enhancing digital governance, and prioritizing resident engagement, we can create **more livable, innovative, and sustainable communities** for future generations.

This set of proposals is a vision for stronger local governance and a **call to action** for greater collaboration between local and central government, businesses, civil society, and the wider public. As we work toward a more resilient and prosperous Malta, the empowerment of local councils will be a decisive factor in ensuring that no community is left behind.

The **Local Councils Association** looks forward to working closely with all stakeholders to translate these proposals into tangible, impactful policies that will define the future of our towns, villages, and regions. Together, we can make Vision 2050 a **genuinely local, community-driven success**.

Mario Fava
President

To ensure a **better quality of life, sustainable economic growth**, and **social inclusion** in line with Malta Vision 2050, we believe that the following key topics should be prioritized:

Sustainable Economic Growth & Diversification

- **Innovation & Digital Economy:**
Expanding industries like AI, fintech, and video game development to create high-value jobs.
- **Support for SMEs & Startups:** Ensuring access to funding, digital tools, and international markets.
- **Green Economy & Circular Economy:**
Encouraging businesses to adopt sustainable practices while creating new job opportunities in green industries.
- **Future-Ready Workforce:**
Upskilling and reskilling workers to adapt to a rapidly changing job market.

Sustainability & Climate Action

- **Carbon Neutrality by 2050:**
Investing in clean energy sources like solar and offshore wind.
- **Efficient Public Transport & Green Mobility:**
Expanding sustainable transportation options and reducing car dependency.
- **Waste & Water Management:**
Improving recycling and ensuring water security for future generations.
- **Urban & Rural Development Balance:**
Protecting open spaces while promoting sustainable infrastructure.

Social Inclusion & Quality of Life

- **Affordable Housing & Community Planning:**
Ensuring housing remains accessible and urban spaces are well-designed for residents.
- **Education & Lifelong Learning:**
Aligning education with future job markets and digital skills.
- **Healthcare Innovation:**
Strengthening primary care and digital health solutions to improve accessibility.
- **Cultural & Social Cohesion:**
Promoting inclusion of all communities, including the aging population and migrant communities.







1.0 Introduction

Ensuring a Sustainable, Inclusive, and Prosperous Future for Malta

As Malta moves toward its Vision 2050, a comprehensive and forward-looking strategy is required to ensure sustainable economic growth, social inclusion, and an enhanced quality of life for all residents. This policy paper outlines key priorities that must be addressed to achieve these goals, focusing on economic diversification, environmental sustainability, and community well-being. Policymakers, businesses, and civil society are central in implementing strategic actions that will position Malta as a resilient and competitive nation while maintaining social cohesion and environmental responsibility.

1.1

Policy Priorities for Economic Diversification and Sustainable Growth

Malta's economic model must evolve to remain competitive in an increasingly digital and globalized world. Investment in emerging industries such as artificial intelligence, fintech, and digital entertainment is crucial to creating high-value jobs and reducing reliance on traditional sectors. Strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through improved access to funding, digital transformation initiatives, and international market opportunities will foster long-term economic resilience. A robust skills development framework must be established to align education and vocational training with evolving labour market demands, ensuring a future-ready workforce.

Equally important is the transition toward a greener economy, which requires policies that incentivize businesses to adopt sustainable practices, invest in clean technologies, and integrate circular economy principles into their operations. Economic diversification and sustainability must be mutually reinforcing, ensuring that growth does not come at the expense of environmental degradation but contributes to long-term national resilience.

1.2

Advancing Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resilience

Malta must take decisive steps to meet its climate commitments and align with the European Union's carbon neutrality target by 2050. This requires significant investment in renewable energy infrastructure, including solar and offshore wind, alongside a reduction in reliance on fossil fuels. A national strategy for efficient water and waste management is essential to address resource scarcity and promote circular economy principles that minimize environmental impact.

Sustainable urban development must also be prioritized, ensuring housing policies promote affordability while integrating green spaces and smart infrastructure. An improved public transport system, including more significant investment in sustainable mobility solutions, is necessary to reduce congestion, lower emissions, and enhance the overall quality of urban life. Rural areas should not be neglected in this transition; targeted policies must ensure that economic and environmental strategies extend beyond urban centers to support regional development.

1.3

Strengthening Social Inclusion and Community Well-Being

Social policies enhancing community well-being and fostering inclusivity must complement economic growth and environmental sustainability. A key priority is ensuring access to affordable and adequate housing, particularly for young professionals, low-income families, and vulnerable groups. This requires a balanced approach to urban planning that prevents overdevelopment while addressing growing housing demands.

Healthcare accessibility remains a cornerstone of social policy, and investments in digital health solutions, community-based healthcare services, and mental health support will be essential to improving long-term public health outcomes. Equally important is lifelong learning, which must be integrated into national policies to provide continuous skills development opportunities and promote workforce adaptability.

Finally, inclusivity must remain central to Malta's long-term vision. Policies must ensure that migrants, elderly citizens, and other vulnerable groups are not left behind in economic and social progress. Civil society is crucial in fostering a sense of community, advocating for fair policies, and ensuring all individuals have equitable access to opportunities and resources.

2.0

The Role of Local Government and Local Councils in Malta's Vision 2050

Local government and local councils are at the heart of community development and must play a central role in realizing Malta's Vision 2050. As the closest administrative level to citizens, they are uniquely positioned to implement policies that directly impact residents' quality of life, drive sustainable development, and foster social inclusion. Their contribution to economic diversification, environmental sustainability, and community well-being is essential in ensuring national strategies translate into tangible local action.

2.1

Strengthening Local Economies and Supporting SMEs

Local councils can play a proactive role in supporting small businesses, entrepreneurs, and local economic development. By fostering innovation hubs, co-working spaces, and digital transformation initiatives, they can create opportunities for SMEs to thrive. They can also facilitate access to funding by guiding local businesses toward available grants and investment schemes, particularly in high-value sectors such as digital technology, green industries, and sustainable tourism. Furthermore, councils can promote local markets, cultural initiatives, and creative industries that preserve Maltese heritage while boosting economic resilience.

2.2

Driving Sustainability and Climate Action at the Local Level

Sustainability starts in local communities. Local councils can lead in promoting renewable energy adoption by incentivizing solar panel installations, energy-efficient buildings, and sustainable construction practices. Waste management and circular economy principles must be integrated into local policies, ensuring that recycling programs are accessible and practical. Key priorities

should also be water conservation strategies, urban greening initiatives, and biodiversity preservation.

Transportation and mobility solutions require strong local leadership. Councils can work toward developing more pedestrian-friendly areas, expanding cycling infrastructure, and supporting efficient public transport options to reduce congestion and pollution. By implementing innovative urban planning strategies, they can ensure that communities grow in a way that prioritizes livability, sustainability, and accessibility.

2.3

Enhancing Social Inclusion and Community Well-Being

Local councils are essential in fostering inclusive communities where all residents, regardless of age, income level, or background, can access opportunities and basic and essential services. Ensuring affordable housing solutions through well-regulated urban development, promoting inclusive public spaces, and supporting community-based healthcare services are critical local government responsibilities. Education and lifelong learning must also be a local priority. Councils can partner with educational institutions and businesses to create training programs that align with regional workforce needs. Digital literacy initiatives, vocational training, and youth employment programs can empower residents to participate actively in Malta's evolving economy. Local government also plays a crucial role in social cohesion. By engaging with residents through participatory decision-making, councils can ensure that policies reflect community needs. Supporting NGOs, cultural events, and intergenerational programs helps strengthen the social fabric and encourages civic engagement.

2.4

Strengthening Governance and Resident Engagement

To effectively implement Malta's Vision 2050 at the grassroots level, **local councils must be empowered with the necessary resources, funding, and decision-making authority.** Decentralization of governance, where councils have greater autonomy to develop localized solutions, can enhance efficiency and responsiveness. Investing in digital governance tools will allow councils to streamline services, improve transparency, and engage with citizens more effectively.

Community participation is key to successful policy implementation.

Councils must foster open dialogue, involve residents in planning processes, and encourage active citizenship to ensure that development is inclusive and representative of local needs.

2.5

Placing Local Government at the Core of Vision 2050

Local government and local councils are not just implementers of national policy—they are essential drivers of Malta's long-term vision. By empowering local authorities with the tools and resources to lead on economic development, sustainability, and social well-being, Malta can achieve a more balanced, inclusive, and community-driven approach to national progress. Strong partnerships between local and central government, businesses, and civil society will ensure that every locality contributes to and benefits from Malta's transformation into a resilient and forward-looking nation.



3.0

Policy Proposal: Strengthening the Role of Local Government in Malta's Vision 2050

3.1 Introduction

As Malta moves towards its Vision 2050, local government and local councils must be central to achieving sustainable economic growth, environmental resilience, and social inclusion. Local councils are the closest governing bodies to residents, making them well-positioned to implement policies directly impacting quality of life. **However, councils require greater autonomy, resources, and strategic direction to fully realize their potential.** This policy proposal outlines concrete measures to empower local councils to drive economic development, sustainability, and community well-being at the grassroots level.

3.2 Policy Objectives

The proposed policy framework aims to:

- ✓ Strengthen local councils' role in **economic development and SME support**.
- ✓ Enhance councils' capacity to **implement sustainability and climate action policies**.
- ✓ Improve social inclusion and community well-being through **affordable housing, education, and healthcare**.
- ✓ Foster stronger **governance and resident participation** to ensure effective policy implementation.

3.3 Policy Pillars & Key Actions

Pillar 1: Local Economic Development & SME Growth

Objective:

To make local councils drivers of economic innovation, supporting SMEs, entrepreneurship, and job creation.

- **Action 1:**
Establish **Local Economic Development Units** within councils to support small businesses, startups, and self-employed individuals by offering advisory services, networking opportunities, and access to EU/national funding programs.
- **Action 2:**
Develop **co-working hubs and digital innovation centers** in every major locality to support remote workers, tech startups, and creative industries.
- **Action 3:**
Implement **Local Procurement Policies**, prioritizing small businesses for public tenders, promoting local suppliers, and fostering a strong local economy.

Pillar 2: Sustainability & Climate Resilience at the Local Level

Objective:

To integrate environmental sustainability and climate action into local governance.

- **Action 4:**
Require all local councils to create a **Sustainability and green Transition Plan** outlining targets for renewable energy adoption, waste reduction, and water conservation.
- **Action 5:**
Establish **green urban development funds, which will enable** councils to finance initiatives such as tree planting, green roofs, and solar-powered public buildings.
- **Action 6:**
Invest in **sustainable mobility solutions**, including pedestrian-friendly zones, expanded cycling infrastructure, and electric vehicle charging stations.

Pillar 3: Social Inclusion & Community Well-Being

Objective:

To ensure inclusive development and improved quality of life for all residents.

- **Action 7:**
Develop **Local Housing Affordability Strategies**, ensuring that new developments include affordable housing units and that rental markets remain fair and accessible.
- **Action 8:**
Expand **community-based healthcare services**, such as mobile health units, mental health support, and elderly care programs at the local level.

- **Action 9:**
Implement **Lifelong Learning and Digital Literacy Programs, offering free training for residents to enhance their employability and social inclusion.**

Pillar 4: Strengthening Local Governance & Citizen Engagement

Objective:

To enhance governance structures and increase community participation in decision-making.

- **Action 10:** Introduce **Decentralized Budgeting**, which would give councils greater control over local funding and allow them to invest directly in community projects.
- **Action 11:** Launch **Digital Citizen Platforms**, enabling residents to participate in consultations, submit local concerns, and track local projects in real time.
- **Action 12:** Establish **Local Participatory Committees** to ensure community representatives, businesses, and NGOs have a voice in council decision-making.

3.4 Expected Impact & Benefits

- ✓ **Stronger Local Economies:**
By supporting SMEs and fostering innovation, local councils will contribute to job creation and economic diversification.
- ✓ **Sustainable Communities:**
Investments in green infrastructure and climate resilience will reduce environmental impact and improve urban livability.
- ✓ **Improved Social Well-Being:**
Accessible housing, better healthcare services, and education initiatives will enhance the quality of life for all residents.

- ✓ **More Engaged Citizens:**
Greater transparency, digital governance, and community participation will lead to more effective and representative policymaking.

3.5 Implementation & Funding Strategy

- **Legislative Framework:**
Amend local government regulations to expand councils' economic, environmental, and social policy mandates.
- **Funding Sources:**
 - EU Structural & Cohesion Funds
 - Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)
 - National Sustainability & Innovation Grants
- **Monitoring & Accountability:**
Establish annual performance reviews for councils to assess progress on economic, environmental, and social goals.

3.6 Next Steps

Empowering local councils with the tools, resources, and authority to drive Malta's Vision 2050 at the grassroots level is crucial for sustainable and inclusive development. By implementing this policy framework, local government can become a transformative force in shaping resilient communities, fostering economic innovation, and enhancing the well-being of all residents. The next step is to initiate a national consultation process with stakeholders—including policymakers, local councils, businesses, and civil society—to effectively refine and implement these proposals.





4.0

Aligning ‘Residents First – Better Quality of Life’ with Malta’s Vision 2050

The Local Councils Association’s guiding vision, “*Residents First – Better Quality of Life*,” launched in 2019, is rooted in the principle that community well-being must be the compass guiding all local governance efforts. This resident-centered philosophy aligns seamlessly with the national priorities set out in **Malta’s Vision 2050**, particularly in areas related to inclusive growth, climate resilience, participatory governance, and community-led innovation.

As the closest tier of governance to the public, local councils are not just administrative units—they are the engines of transformation in towns, villages, and cities. The values and practices embedded in *Residents First* have laid a strong foundation for implementing Malta’s Vision 2050 at the grassroots level.

Now, as Malta charts its long-term future through Vision 2050, it is evident that the core principles of *Residents First* are not only compatible with the national agenda—they are indispensable. This chapter explores how the pillars of the Association’s 2019 vision anticipate and reinforce the strategic direction laid out in Vision 2050, with examples drawn from successful initiatives and contributions available on the Association’s official portal, ilkunsill.com

4.1 Shared Foundations and Complementary Goals

Both *Residents First* and Vision 2050 prioritize:

- **Community-Centric Development:** Placing residents' needs at the heart of local policy, ensuring that every action enhances livability, accessibility, and social cohesion.
- **Inclusive Local Economies:** Promoting SME growth, creative industries, and digital entrepreneurship that keep economic benefits rooted in communities.
- **Environmental Leadership:** Encouraging councils to lead the green transition through sustainable urban planning, waste management reform, and renewable energy initiatives.
- **Civic Participation:** Institutionalizing citizen engagement in governance through transparent, digital, and participatory mechanisms.

These areas reflect an intrinsic synergy between the two frameworks, where local actions provide the backbone of national progress.

4.2 Strengthening the Vision Together

The *Residents First* model provides a ready-made mechanism for implementing Vision 2050 at the local level. To leverage this synergy:

- **Policy Alignment:** Government should formally integrate *Residents First* as a recognized local governance pillar within Malta's long-term strategy.
- **Funding Channels:** Dedicated funding should support councils in scaling successful *Residents First*-aligned initiatives.
- **Monitoring Tools:** Well-being audits and performance dashboards from the LCA should be adopted nationally to track localized Vision 2050 progress.
- **Scaling Success:** The projects and practices highlighted on ilkunsill.com—such as community transport pilots in Dingli or civic engagement workshops in Sliema—should be documented, shared, and expanded across Malta and Gozo.

4.3 Shared Values and Strategic Synergy

Residents First (2019)

- Prioritizes the needs of residents through community-focused policy
- Advocates for local economic innovation and SME empowerment
- Embeds sustainability and quality urban development in council planning
- Strengthens local democracy and participatory governance

Vision 2050

- Commits to social inclusion, affordable living, and equitable access
- Calls for sustainable economic growth and future-ready skills
- Seeks carbon neutrality, green mobility, and resilient urban design
- Emphasizes decentralization, civic engagement, and transparency

4.4

Examples from LCA Initiatives and ilkunsill.com

- **Greener Localities:**
Projects such as tree planting in Gżira and solar-powered public lighting in Rabat reflect *Residents First* commitments while advancing Malta's Vision 2050 climate objectives. The LCA's "Green Councils" workshops trained local staff in circular economy practices and energy efficiency.
- **Smart Councils:**
LCA-developed platforms for e-governance—piloted in Żejtun and Hamrun—are building blocks for Vision 2050's call for a digitally connected and transparent administration.
- **Youth and Intergenerational Inclusion:**
The LCA's *Youth Local Council Program* and intergenerational cultural festivals (documented on ilkunsill.com) ensure that Vision 2050's social inclusion mandate is felt across all age groups.
- **Well-being Indicators:**
LCA's pilot of *Locality Well-being Audits* measured resident satisfaction in areas like transport, access to services, and green space. These tools offer a replicable framework for national quality-of-life monitoring.

4.5

The Path Ahead: Institutionalizing the Synergy

To fully operationalize the alignment between *Residents First* and Vision 2050, the following steps are recommended:

1. National Adoption of Local Quality-of-Life Indicators

Expand the well-being audit tool developed by the Association into a national framework for evaluating local progress on Vision 2050.

2. Mainstreaming Participatory Tools Across Councils

Scale up digital participation platforms piloted by the LCA to ensure uniform resident engagement in all 68 councils.

3. Integrating LCA Initiatives into National Policy Monitoring

Include outcomes from projects listed on ilkunsill.com in Vision 2050 progress reports, particularly those related to climate action, public health, and civic participation.

4. Funding the Vision Locally

Allocate a dedicated annual fund to support *Residents First*-aligned projects that meet Vision 2050 goals, including mobility, education, and sustainability pilots at the community level.

Residents First – Better Quality of Life is not a slogan—it is a tested and resident-driven framework already delivering results in Malta's localities. It offers a blueprint for embedding Vision 2050 within the daily realities of community life. As Malta advances its long-term vision, the Local Councils Association's philosophy ensures that the journey is strategic but also human-centered, inclusive, and deeply rooted in the needs of every resident.

4.6

Examples from the Association's Work and ilkunsill.com

• Community-Centered Public Spaces

The Association's *Reclaiming Streets for People* project, showcased on ilkunsill.com, emphasized pedestrian zones, inclusive playgrounds, and green spaces in localities such as Żabbar and Birkirkara. These projects echo Vision 2050's push for sustainable mobility and high-quality public realms.

- **Youth Engagement Platforms**

Through LCA-led initiatives like the *Youth Local Council Simulation*, young people have been empowered to participate in municipal decision-making—an essential aspect of Vision 2050's governance reform. Resources and case studies from these projects are highlighted in the "Education & Youth" section on ilkunsill.com.

- **Smart Local Governance**

In alignment with Vision 2050's digital priorities, the Association introduced digital platforms for resident feedback, e-service delivery, and transparent budgeting. These tools are actively promoted via ilkunsill.com and have improved accountability in councils like San Ġwann and Mosta.

- **Resilience & Sustainability Workshops**

The Association has hosted training programs on sustainable procurement, circular economy, and energy efficiency for local officials. These align directly with Vision 2050's emphasis on green transition, especially through Action 4 and Action 5 of the policy framework.

- **Well-being Audits**

Inspired by Residents First, the Association piloted "Locality Well-being Indicators" in 2022. These audits evaluated housing, accessibility, health, and cultural cohesion—echoing the Vision 2050 pillars on quality of life and social cohesion.

Residents First – Better Quality of Life is not a slogan—it is a tested and resident-driven framework already delivering results in Malta's localities. It offers a blueprint for embedding Vision 2050 within the daily realities of community life. As Malta advances its long-term vision, the Local Councils Association's philosophy ensures that the journey is strategic but also human-centered, inclusive, and deeply rooted in the needs of every resident.





5.0

Conclusion and Recommendations

To achieve Malta's Vision 2050, a multi-stakeholder approach is essential. Policymakers must implement forward-thinking strategies that balance economic growth with sustainability and social inclusion. Businesses must adopt responsible and innovative practices that contribute to national resilience. Civil society organizations must continue to advocate for inclusive policies and hold decision-makers accountable.

Malta's Vision 2050 offers a bold roadmap for a greener, fairer, and more innovative nation. However, this vision can only be realized if local government is placed at its core. Local councils are not mere implementers but key innovators, enablers, and guardians of community well-being.

Achieving a sustainable and inclusive future requires an **integrated, whole-of-society approach** where national strategies are rooted in local realities. This means devolving power, investing in capacity-building, and fostering deep partnerships across sectors.

Key recommendations include:

- 1. Developing a National Innovation Strategy** to support emerging industries, enhance workforce skills, and align with local council capacity-building and emerging economic sectors.
- 2. Strengthening Climate and Environmental Policies** to achieve carbon neutrality and promote sustainable urban planning.
- 3. Accelerate environmental reforms by mandating that all councils** implement localized climate action plans and green infrastructure projects.
- 4. Expanding Social Policies** that ensure affordable housing, accessible healthcare, and equal opportunities for all citizens.
- 5. Empowering local councils** with the tools, resources, and authority to drive Malta's Vision 2050 at the grassroots level is crucial for sustainable and inclusive development. Reforming legislation will also grant them enhanced autonomy, more explicit mandates, and greater control over local resources.

Only through **collaboration, mutual trust, and long-term vision** can Malta harness the full potential of its communities and institutions. Local councils must be equipped, trusted, and empowered to deliver real impact.

Together with residents, civil society, central government, and the private sector, we can make Vision 2050 not just a strategy but a shared reality for every locality in Malta.





**Assoċjazzjoni
Kunsilli Lokali**

Local Councils' Association Malta

**Resident
First** 

 A better quality of life