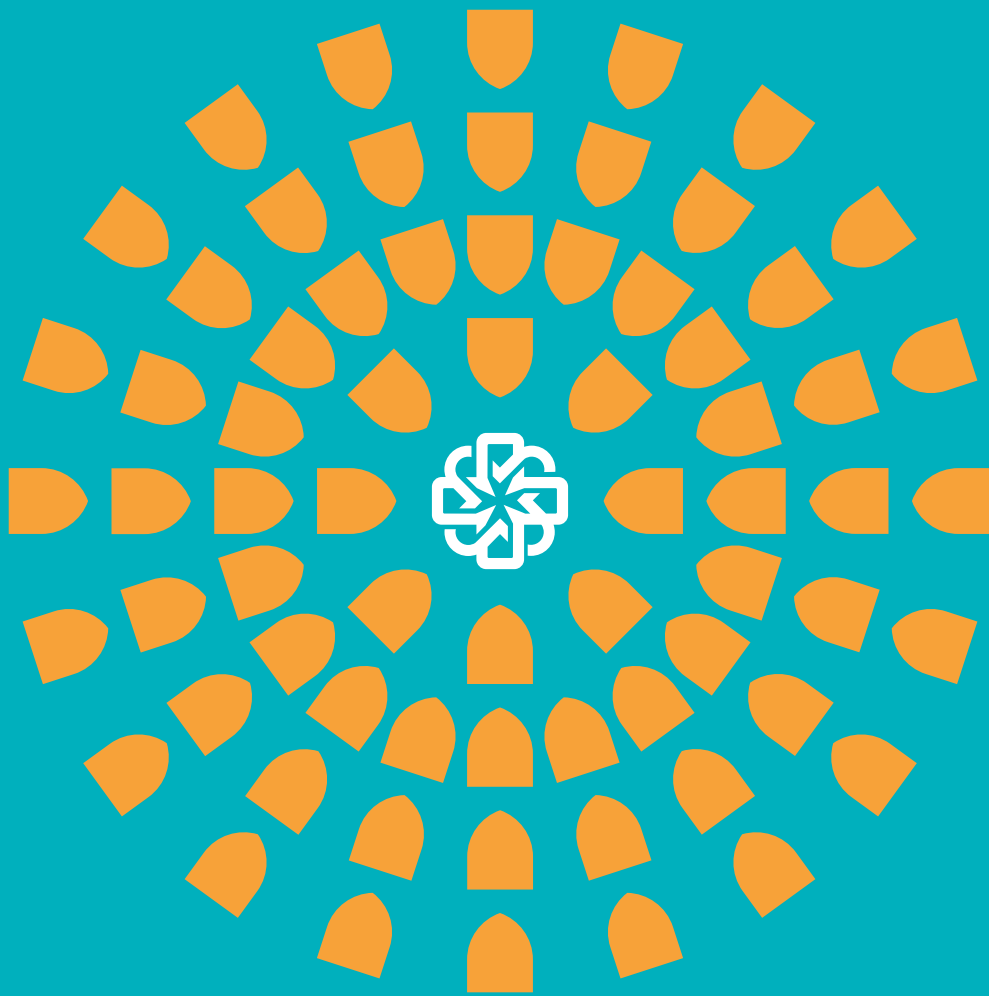


A RESET FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

From Internal Restructuring
to External Alignment



Electoral Manifesto Proposals 2026

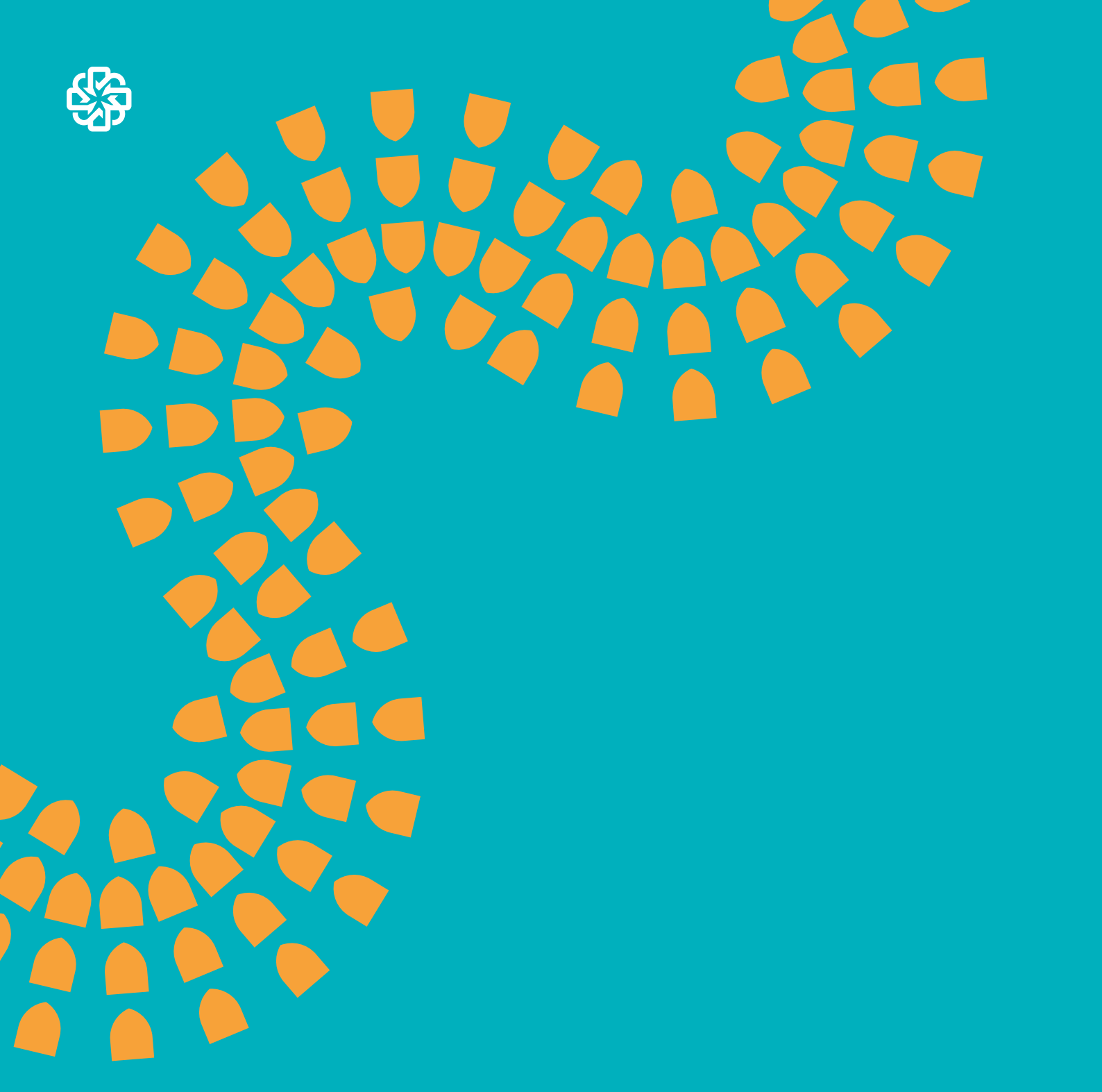
Presented to the Government of Malta

By the Local Councils' Association



**Local Councils'
Association**

Assoċjazzjoni Kunsilli Lokali Malta



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Foreword

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There comes a point in every system when experience can no longer be ignored.

After more than three decades of Local Government in Malta, we have reached that point.

This document is not the result of theory, nor is it an academic exercise. It is grounded in lived experience. It reflects years of working within the system, engaging with communities, listening to councillors, collaborating with administrations, and understanding, in practical terms, what works and what does not.

Over the years, Local Government in Malta has undergone continuous reform. Structures have been adjusted, responsibilities reassigned, and new initiatives introduced. Many of these efforts were driven by good intentions, and some have delivered improvements.

“But we must be honest. The core challenges remain”.

We are still dealing with fragmentation. We are still navigating a system where responsibility and authority are not always aligned. We are still seeing Local Councils expected to deliver without always being given the tools to do so effectively. And, most importantly, we are still facing a growing gap between what residents expect and what the system consistently delivers.

This is not a criticism of individuals. On the contrary, it is a recognition of the commitment shown by those who serve at the local level. Councillors, Mayors, Regional Presidents, Executive Secretaries, and staff continue to work tirelessly, often going beyond what is required, to support their communities.

The issue is not commitment. It is structured.

This is why this document does not propose another round of incremental reform. It calls for something more fundamental.

It calls for a stocktake of the current situation and the relevance of local and regional councils.

A reset that is not about starting from scratch, but about realigning the system with clarity and purpose. A reset that acknowledges what we have learned over the past thirty years and uses that experience to build a model that is more coherent, more effective, and more capable of delivering results.



At the centre of this approach is a principle that has guided the work of the Local Councils' Association in recent years:

Residents First – Better Quality of Life.

This is not a slogan. It is a standard against which every decision must be measured. If Local Government is not improving residents' daily lives, it is not fulfilling its purpose.

The proposals outlined in this document are therefore practical, grounded, and focused on delivery. They address autonomy, funding, service delivery, leadership, capacity building, and the role of the Local Councils' Association itself.

They also reflect a broader ambition.

Local Government must no longer be seen as a secondary layer within the national system and a customer care centre. It must be recognised as a partner in governance, a driver of community wellbeing, and a cornerstone of democratic life.

To achieve this, we must invest in Local Government. Not only in financial terms, but in trust, in capacity, and in institutional strength.

The Local Councils' Association is ready to play its part in this transformation. Over the years, we have worked to strengthen training, support collaboration, and represent Local Government both nationally and internationally. But the next phase requires a stronger, more autonomous Association that can act as a true centre of excellence and a unified voice for Local and Regional Councils.

This is not about institutional ambition. It is about system coherence.

If we are serious about improving governance, then we must be serious about strengthening the structures that support it.

Ultimately, this document is about people.

It is about the resident who expects a clean street, a safe environment, and a responsive service. It is about the community that wants to feel heard and represented. It is about rebuilding trust through consistency, clarity, and delivery.

We do not need more ideas.

We need a system that allows those ideas to work.

This document is a step in that direction.

Mario Fava

President, Local Councils' Association (Malta)



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Executive Summary

This document presents a comprehensive, structured set of proposals for the future of Local Government in Malta, developed by the Local Councils' Association, the national representative body of Local and Regional Councils.

It is grounded in a clear and evidence-based conclusion:

The Local Government system in Malta does not require further incremental reform, it requires a strategic reset.





Executive Summary CONTINUED

Over the past three decades, successive reforms have sought to strengthen Local Government. While many were well-intentioned, their cumulative effect has been to create a system that is often fragmented, overly centralised, and constrained in its ability to deliver effectively at the community level.

The result is a growing disconnect between:

- the expectations of residents
- the responsibilities assigned to Local Councils
- and the tools available to deliver
- the competencies for both the elected members and the administration

This document proposes a **coherent realignment of the system**, anchored in the vision:

“Residents First – Better Quality of Life”

This vision reframes Local Government as:

- a **delivery-driven system**, not an administrative layer
- a **partner in national governance**, not a subordinate structure
- a **driver of quality of life**, not merely a service provider

The proposals are built around five strategic pillars:

01. Investing in Leadership and Capacity

Establishing a structured national framework for training, professional development, and leadership support for councillors and administrators, led by the Local Councils' Association. We cannot lead with the current structure, and therefore we need to;

- (i) Identify responsibilities and roles
- (ii) Have clear job descriptions
- (iii) Clear sets of KPI's

02. Restoring Local Autonomy

Empowering Local Councils with real authority in decision-making, service delivery, and financial planning, guided by the principle of subsidiarity.

03. Ensuring Financial Stability and Fairness

Introducing predictable, multi-annual funding frameworks that allow for proper planning, accountability, and efficient use of public resources.

04. Strengthening Service Delivery and Decentralisation

Rebalancing responsibilities in favour of Local Government to ensure services are delivered closer to residents, with clear standards and accountability mechanisms..

05. Repositioning the Local Councils' Association

Transforming the Association into a central institutional pillar of the system, acting as:

- a unified national voice
- a training and innovation hub
- a strategic partner to the Government
- a bridge to European and international frameworks

The document also introduces a critical shift in approach:

From reform to reset. This is not a call to dismantle the system, but to **realign it with clarity, purpose, and measurable outcomes**. Ultimately, the success of Local Government must be measured not by the number of reforms enacted, but by the experience of residents:

- Are services delivered efficiently?
- Are communities well-maintained?
- Are concerns addressed in a timely manner?
- Do residents feel heard and represented?

This document provides a roadmap to ensure that the answer to these questions is consistently **yes**.



A framework
that has not kept
pace with the
expectations
placed upon it





INTRODUCTION FROM EXPERIENCE TO REALIGNMENT

A System at a Defining Moment

Local Government in Malta has reached a defining stage in its evolution. More than three decades after its establishment, the system has matured in form but remains constrained in function. It has demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and commitment across successive administrations, yet it continues to operate within a framework that has not kept pace with the expectations placed upon it.

The experience accumulated over these years, drawn from elected representatives, administrative professionals, and the Local Councils' Association itself, points to a consistent and unavoidable conclusion. The system's limitations do not stem from a lack of commitment or ideas. They arise from a structural misalignment between responsibilities, authority, and capacity.

This misalignment is not theoretical. It is experienced daily within localities across Malta. It manifests in delays, fragmentation, overlapping responsibilities, and a growing sense that Local Government is not being allowed to function to its full potential. At the same time, residents' expectations have evolved significantly. Communities today expect efficient services, responsive governance, transparency in decision-making, and meaningful engagement. These expectations are legitimate and reflect the standards of a modern democratic society.

Yet, as it stands, the system struggles to respond with the consistency and clarity that such expectations demand.



A reset does not imply starting from zero, nor does it disregard the progress achieved over the years.

Beyond Reform: The Case for a Reset

Over the past decades, Local Government has undergone multiple phases of reform. These reforms have sought to improve structures, introduce new mechanisms, and address emerging challenges. While many of these interventions were well-intentioned and, in some cases, necessary, their cumulative effect has not delivered the level of transformation required.

Instead, the system has become increasingly layered. Responsibilities have been redistributed without always being clearly defined. Functions have been centralised, weakening local responsiveness. Administrative complexity has increased, often without corresponding gains in efficiency or delivery.

This document, therefore, moves beyond the traditional reform narrative.

It recognises that the current moment requires something more fundamental: a **reset** and restructuring.

A reset does not imply starting from zero, nor does it disregard the progress achieved over the years. Rather, it represents a deliberate, structured effort to realign the system with its original purpose while adapting it to contemporary realities. It is about restoring clarity where there is confusion, coherence where there is fragmentation, and effectiveness where there are constraints.

It is, above all, about ensuring that Local Government in Malta is capable of delivering tangible, measurable improvements in residents' daily lives.



The Central Role of the Local Councils' Association

Within this process of realignment, the Local Councils' Association assumes a central and strategic role.

As the national representative body of Local and Regional Councils, the Association is uniquely positioned at the intersection of policy, practice, and representation. It brings together the collective experience of local governance across Malta and serves as a platform for articulating common challenges, priorities, and solutions.

Over the years, the Association has taken significant steps to strengthen its contribution to the system. It has played an active role in capacity building, supported dialogue between local and central government, and contributed to the development of governance frameworks. It has also extended its reach beyond national boundaries, engaging with European and international partners to ensure that Malta remains aligned with broader standards of local democracy.

However, despite these efforts, the Association's full potential remains underutilised. This document, therefore, calls for a strengthened, more autonomous, and more strategically positioned Local Councils' Association. It must evolve into a central pillar of the governance system, capable of acting not only as a representative body, but as a driver of reform, a centre of excellence, and a key institutional partner to Government.





Residents First – Better Quality of Life

At the heart of this document lies the vision developed and championed by the Local Councils' Association: **“Residents First – Better Quality of Life.”**

This vision is not an abstract concept. It is a practical framework for governance.

It recognises that Local Government is ultimately judged not by its structures, but by its outcomes. Residents do not measure governance by legislative frameworks or administrative arrangements. They measure it through everyday experiences: the condition of their streets, the quality of public spaces, the responsiveness of services, and the extent to which they feel heard and represented.

Placing residents at the centre, therefore, requires more than rhetorical commitment. It requires a system that is designed, structured, and operated with the explicit aim of improving quality of life.

Every proposal contained in this document is guided by a single, fundamental test: whether it contributes to this objective.



Capacity, Leadership, and the Human Dimension

A critical element of the reset proposed in this document is the recognition that structures alone do not deliver results. Institutions are only as effective as the people who lead and operate them.

For too long, capacity building within Local Government has not received the level of strategic attention it requires. Councillors are often expected to assume complex responsibilities without structured preparation in governance, financial management, leadership, or communication. This places unnecessary strain on individuals and limits the system's overall effectiveness.

The Local Councils' Association has already taken important steps in this area, developing training initiatives and supporting knowledge-sharing across councils. However, the scale and complexity of the challenges ahead require a more comprehensive and structured approach.

Capacity building must become a central pillar of Local Government. It must be continuous, structured, and aligned with the evolving demands of governance. It must equip councillors and administrators not only with technical knowledge, but with the leadership and communication skills necessary to engage effectively with their communities.

Towards a System That Delivers

The proposals set out in this document are therefore not isolated recommendations. They form part of a coherent and integrated vision for the future of Local Government in Malta.

They aim to:

- restore autonomy and clarity of purpose
- establish financial stability and predictability
- strengthen service delivery and decentralisation
- invest in leadership and capacity
- reposition the Local Councils' Association as a central institutional pillar
- development of SOP's
- development of Handbook

Above all, they aim to create a system that works.

A system that delivers consistently, responds effectively, and earns the trust of the communities it serves.

This is the essence of the reset.



**If Local Government
is to deliver effectively,
it must first invest
in its people**





CHAPTER 01. INVESTING IN LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY

Strengthening the human foundation of Local Government

Any system of Local Government, however well structured, ultimately depends on the people who operate within it. Policies, frameworks, and reforms can only deliver results when those responsible for implementing them are equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and clarity of purpose.

In Malta, the evolution of Local Government has brought with it increased expectations and responsibilities. Councillors, Mayors, Regional Presidents, Executive Secretaries, and administrative staff are now required to operate in a more complex environment, dealing with financial management, regulatory frameworks, community engagement, and service delivery.

However, the current structure has not evolved at the same pace.

There is a growing recognition that the system cannot continue to rely on informal learning, individual initiative, or fragmented support. Leadership and capacity must be developed in a structured and consistent manner.

If Local Government is to deliver effectively, it must first invest in its people.



The need for a structured national framework

The development of a national framework for training, professional development, and leadership support is no longer optional. It is essential.

Such a framework must be coordinated at the national level and led by the Local Councils' Association, which is best positioned to understand the realities of Local Government and respond to its needs in a practical, targeted way.

This framework should not be limited to introductory training. It must be continuous, structured, and aligned with the evolving responsibilities of those involved in Local Government.

It should provide clear pathways for development, ensuring that individuals entering the system are prepared, supported, and able to grow within their role.

Without this structure, the system risks inconsistency, inefficiency, and missed opportunities for improvement.

Identifying responsibilities and roles

A fundamental starting point in strengthening capacity is clarity.

At present, there are instances where responsibilities are not clearly defined or where expectations vary between localities. This creates uncertainty, both for those within the system and for residents who rely on it.

Clearly identifying roles and responsibilities across all levels of Local Government is essential. Councillors, Mayors, Regional Presidents, and administrative staff must each have a defined scope of responsibility that is understood, respected, and consistently applied.

This clarity reduces overlap, prevents gaps in service delivery, and strengthens accountability. It also allows individuals to focus on their role with confidence, rather than navigating ambiguity.

A system that is clear in its structure is more efficient, more effective, and more transparent.

Establishing clear job descriptions

Closely linked to the definition of roles is the need for clear and structured job descriptions.

Local Government has evolved significantly, yet in some areas, formal descriptions of roles

have not kept pace with this evolution. This can lead to inconsistencies in how responsibilities are interpreted and carried out.

Establishing clear job descriptions ensures that expectations are set from the outset. It provides a reference point for performance, supports recruitment processes, and facilitates training and development.

For elected members, while their mandate is defined through democratic processes, there is still a need for clear guidance on their role, responsibilities, and ethical obligations. For administrative staff, detailed job descriptions are essential for ensuring consistency and professionalism.

This clarity also supports better coordination within councils, as individuals understand not only their own role, but how it fits within the wider structure.

Introducing clear performance frameworks

A modern system of Local Government must also be able to measure its performance.

The introduction of clear and practical Key Performance Indicators is an important step in this direction. These indicators should not be seen as a bureaucratic requirement, but as a tool for improvement.





Well-designed performance frameworks allow Local Councils to assess how effectively they are delivering services, identify areas for improvement, and track progress over time.

They also contribute to greater accountability. When expectations are clearly defined and performance is measured consistently, it becomes easier to demonstrate results and build trust with residents.

Importantly, these indicators must be realistic and relevant. They should reflect the actual work of Local Government and the experience of residents, rather than focusing on abstract metrics.

Supporting leadership development

Leadership within Local Government is not limited to formal titles. It is reflected in how decisions are made, how challenges are addressed, and how communities are engaged.

Investing in leadership development is therefore a key component of capacity building.

Councillors and Mayors must be supported in developing skills such as communication, negotiation, strategic thinking, and community engagement. These are not always acquired through experience alone. They require structured training and ongoing support.

The Local Councils' Association can play a central role in this area, providing programmes that are tailored to the realities of Local Government and that draw on both local and international best practices.



Investing in leadership development is therefore a key component of capacity building.

Creating a culture of continuous improvement

Capacity building should not be seen as a one-time intervention. It must be embedded within the culture of Local Government.

This means creating an environment where learning is continuous, where knowledge is shared, and where improvement is encouraged.

Such a culture supports innovation, strengthens resilience, and ensures that the system is able to adapt to changing circumstances.

It also reinforces professionalism, ensuring that Local Government is recognised not only for its role, but for the quality of its work.

A critical pillar of the reset

Within the broader reset proposed in this document, investing in leadership and capacity is not an additional measure. It is a central pillar.

Without it, structural reforms risk remaining theoretical. With it, they become actionable.

A system that is clear in its roles, supported by structured training, guided by defined performance standards, and strengthened through continuous development is a system that can deliver.

Ultimately, Local Government is about people serving people.


Ensuring that those who serve are equipped, supported, and empowered is therefore essential for building a system that is effective, credible, and capable of improving the quality of life of all residents.





**Strengthening
leadership
must go hand
in hand with
strengthening
accountability**





CHAPTER 02. STRONGER LOCAL LEADERSHIP

The evolving role of local leadership

Leadership within Local Government has undergone a significant transformation over the years. The role of the Mayor is no longer limited to representation or administrative coordination. It has evolved into a position that requires vision, strategic direction, decision-making capacity, accountability, and continuous engagement with the community.

Today, Mayors are expected to respond to complex social, economic, and environmental realities within their localities. They are not only administrators of services, but also facilitators of community development, mediators of local concerns, and drivers of initiatives that directly impact residents' quality of life.

This evolution reflects the growing importance of Local Government in shaping communities and responding to residents' expectations. However, the structures within which local leadership operates have not fully kept pace with these increasing demands.

There remains a clear gap between what is expected of local leadership and the time, authority, and resources available to fulfil that role effectively. This imbalance ultimately affects Local Councils' ability to plan strategically, deliver consistently, and respond efficiently to emerging challenges.

Leadership rooted in community realities

Effective local leadership must begin with a deep understanding of the community.



Modern Local Government requires a stronger focus on community development practices that go beyond traditional service delivery. This means engaging directly with residents, understanding their needs and concerns, and identifying the social dynamics that shape each locality.

One of the most important tools in this process is social mapping.

Social mapping enables Local Councils to build a clearer picture of their communities by identifying demographic realities, vulnerable groups, patterns of use of public spaces, and the social and economic characteristics that define the locality.

This knowledge is essential for informed and evidence-based decision-making. It ensures that policies, projects, and initiatives are tailored to each community's realities rather than based on generic approaches.

Without this level of understanding, Local Government risks becoming disconnected from the communities it is intended to serve.

The case for full-time leadership

The realities of modern local governance make it increasingly difficult to sustain the role of Mayor as a part-time function.

Managing a locality today requires continuous oversight of multiple service areas, coordination with national entities and stakeholders, regular engagement with residents, project implementation, crisis management, and the ability to respond quickly to emerging issues. These responsibilities require time, continuity, and focused leadership.



Introducing full-time Mayors is therefore not simply a symbolic reform, but a practical response to the growing complexity of Local Government. A full-time structure would provide the necessary framework for Mayors to engage meaningfully with their role and offer stronger leadership within their communities.

A full-time leadership model would allow for:

- clearer strategic direction
- improved coordination between entities and stakeholders
- stronger oversight of service delivery
- better long-term planning and implementation
- greater accessibility and visibility within the community
- more consistent engagement with residents

It would also reinforce the institutional importance of Local Government within the broader governance framework.

Leadership and accountability

Strengthening leadership must go hand in hand with strengthening accountability.

A system that grants greater authority and responsibility must also ensure transparency, measurable outcomes, and responsible decision-making. Residents must be able to understand how decisions are taken, how resources are allocated, and what results are being achieved.

Full-time leadership creates clearer lines of responsibility and accountability. It allows leadership to be assessed through structured performance evaluation and measurable objectives, ensuring that accountability is not diluted.

This is essential for building public trust and reinforcing confidence in Local Government institutions.

When leadership is visible, engaged, and accountable, residents are more likely to participate actively in local governance and support community initiatives.

Collaboration within the council structure

Leadership is not exercised in isolation. Strong Local Government depends on effective collaboration between Mayors, councillors, administrative staff, Regional Councils, and external partners.

A strong leadership model must therefore be supported by clear communication, mutual understanding, and clearly defined roles within the council structure.



Councillors and administrative staff must be equipped with the necessary skills and tools to contribute effectively to governance. Investment in training and capacity building is therefore essential to ensure that Local Councils operate as coordinated and professional institutions.

Regional Councils also play an important role within this framework. They can serve as hubs for coordination, support, and shared initiatives among localities, helping strengthen cooperation and improve efficiency across the system.

A stronger relationship between Local and Regional Councils contributes to a more coherent and integrated approach to governance, particularly in addressing challenges that extend beyond individual localities.

Towards a more mature system


The introduction of full-time leadership, combined with stronger accountability, community-focused governance, and improved regional coordination, represents an important step towards a more mature and effective system of Local Government.

It acknowledges the complexity of modern local governance and provides the framework to support strategic, responsive, and community-oriented leadership.

Within the broader reset of Local Government, stronger leadership is not an isolated reform. It is a central component of building a system capable of delivering results, responding to challenges, and meeting residents' expectations.

Strong leadership is not an end in itself. It is the means by which Local Government fulfils its purpose; serving residents, improving the quality of life, and building inclusive, resilient, and responsive communities.

Councillors and administrative staff must be equipped with the necessary skills and tools to contribute effectively to governance.



CHAPTER 03. REAL POWER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Reclaiming the Core Purpose of Local Governance

The effectiveness of Local Government is fundamentally determined by its ability to act. Authority, responsibility, and capacity must align if Local Councils are to fulfil their role as the level of governance closest to the people. Where this alignment is absent, the system inevitably becomes constrained, regardless of the commitment or competence of those within it. This has resulted in a system in which decision-making is frequently diffused, implementation depends on external entities, and accountability is not always clearly defined.

Restoring real power to Local Government is therefore not a matter of administrative adjustment. It is a fundamental requirement for a system that seeks to deliver meaningful outcomes at the community level.

Subsidiarity as a Guiding Principle

At the centre of this reform lies the principle of subsidiarity, which holds that decisions should be taken at the level closest to those affected. This principle is not only embedded in European governance frameworks but also reflects a practical understanding of how effective public administration operates.

Local Councils are uniquely positioned to understand the specific needs, challenges, and priorities of their communities. Their proximity to residents allows for a level of responsiveness and adaptability that cannot be replicated at more centralised levels of governance.

However, subsidiarity can only function effectively if it is consistently and meaningfully applied. Assigning responsibilities to Local Councils without providing the corresponding authority and resources undermines the very principle it seeks to uphold.



A genuine commitment to subsidiarity, therefore, requires a deliberate rebalancing of the system, ensuring that Local Councils are not only responsible for local matters but are also empowered to act decisively within their remit.

From Administrative Dependence to Institutional Empowerment

The current model of Local Government often reflects a relationship of dependence rather than partnership. Councils frequently rely on central entities to implement functions within their own localities. This reliance introduces delays, reduces flexibility, and weakens accountability.

A reformed system must move beyond this model.

Institutional empowerment requires that Local Councils are able to:

- define priorities based on local needs
- make decisions within clearly established frameworks
- implement actions without unnecessary procedural barriers

This does not imply the absence of oversight. On the contrary, empowerment must be accompanied by robust accountability mechanisms that ensure transparency, efficiency, and responsible use of public resources.

The objective is not to diminish the role of the central government, but to establish a more balanced and coherent relationship in which each level of governance operates effectively within its respective sphere.

Operational Clarity and Responsibility

One of the key challenges within the current system is the lack of clear delineation of responsibilities. Overlapping functions and shared competencies often lead to inefficiencies, duplication of effort, and uncertainty in decision-making.

Restoring real power to Local Government requires a clear and structured allocation of responsibilities. Local Councils must have defined areas of competence within which they can operate with confidence and authority. This clarity is essential not only for internal efficiency but also for public accountability.

Residents must be able to understand which institution is responsible for which service. Without this clarity, expectations become misaligned, and trust is undermined.

The Role of Regional Coordination

In strengthening Local Government, it is also necessary to consider the role of Regional Councils. Certain functions may benefit from regional coordination, particularly when economies of scale or cross-locality considerations are involved.



However, regional coordination must be designed to support, rather than replace, local autonomy. The objective is to create a system that is both efficient and responsive, where functions are allocated to the level at which they can be performed most effectively.

This requires careful design, clear governance frameworks, and ongoing coordination between local and regional structures.

A Cultural Shift in Governance

Beyond structural adjustments, restoring real power to Local Government requires a broader cultural shift in how governance is understood and practised.

Local Councils must be recognised as integral components of the national governance system, not as peripheral administrative units. Their role in shaping communities, delivering services, and engaging residents must be acknowledged and supported at all levels.

This shift requires trust. Trust in the ability of Local Councils to manage responsibilities effectively, and trust in the principle that decisions taken closer to the people are more likely to reflect their needs and aspirations.

The path ahead

A Local Government system that lacks real authority cannot deliver real results.

The system needs;

- (i) Internal Framework
- (ii) Competency Framework – Analysing the gaps and how to fulfil these gaps
- (iii) Clear roles and responsibilities
- (iv) Clear training programmes (SOPs, Handbook)
- (v) Setting of clear KPI's
- (vi) Frequent scheduled meetings (LCA – DLG – SP)
- (vii) Adequate and fair remuneration and working conditions
- (viii) Internal Audit Reviews

Restoring power to Local Councils is therefore a foundational element of the reset proposed in this document. It enables more responsive decision-making, clearer accountability, and more effective service delivery.


It also reinforces a fundamental democratic principle: that governance should be exercised as close as possible to the people it serves.

In doing so, it returns Local Government to its core purpose, improving residents' quality of life through effective, accountable, and responsive action.



Financial stability is
the cornerstone of
any functioning Local
Government system





CHAPTER 04. FAIR AND STABLE FUNDING

The Foundation of Effective Local Governance

Financial stability is the cornerstone of any functioning Local Government system. Without it, planning becomes uncertain, service delivery becomes inconsistent, and accountability becomes difficult to sustain. Funding is not merely a technical aspect of governance; it is a structural determinant of whether Local Councils can fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

In Malta, the current financial framework for Local Councils does not fully support these objectives. While funding mechanisms exist and continue to provide essential resources, their structures often create uncertainty and limit councils' ability to plan strategically.

The reliance on fragmented funding schemes has introduced a level of unpredictability that is incompatible with the demands of modern governance. Hence, the system needs to establish the financial burdens, identify the barriers to effective and efficient performance, work on a realistic allocation, and consult biannually with the executive secretaries to determine the financial allocation.

The Limitations of a Scheme-Based Approach

Funding schemes have become a central feature of the Local Government financial landscape. While they are often introduced with the intention of supporting specific initiatives or addressing particular needs, their cumulative impact has been to create a reactive system.

Local Councils frequently find themselves adapting their priorities to fit available funding opportunities rather than developing strategies based on long-term community needs. This approach undermines strategic planning and results in inefficient resource allocation.



Moreover, the timing and scope of such schemes are not always predictable, further complicating planning. Councils are often required to operate within short funding cycles, which do not align with the long-term nature of many local projects and services.

Towards Predictable and Structured Funding

A reset of the Local Government system must therefore include a transition towards a more structured and predictable funding framework.

Multi-annual financial planning offers a clear and practical solution. By establishing funding allocations over a defined period, such as five years, Local Councils would be able to plan with greater confidence and coherence.

This approach would enable councils to:

- align financial resources with strategic objectives
- prioritise projects based on community needs
- implement initiatives in a structured and sustainable manner

Predictability in funding also strengthens accountability, as it allows for the establishment of clear performance benchmarks over time.

Aligning Resources with Responsibilities

A recurring challenge within the current system is the mismatch between the responsibilities assigned to Local Councils and the resources available to fulfil them.

As Local Government evolves, councils are increasingly expected to deliver a wide range of services, manage infrastructure, and respond to complex community needs. However, the financial framework has not always kept pace with these expectations.

A reformed system must ensure that funding allocations are directly aligned with the scope and scale of responsibilities. This requires a comprehensive assessment of the actual costs associated with service delivery at the local level.

Such an assessment must take into account:

- variations in locality size and population
- seasonal fluctuations, particularly in areas affected by tourism
- operational costs related to maintenance, enforcement, and infrastructure

Only through such an evidence-based approach can funding be allocated in a manner that is both fair and effective.

Enhancing Financial Autonomy and Flexibility

Financial stability must also be accompanied by a degree of autonomy in how resources are utilised.

Local Councils should have the flexibility to allocate funds based on local priorities, within a framework that ensures transparency and accountability. Excessive spending restrictions can limit councils' ability to respond to emerging needs and innovate in service delivery.

At the same time, flexibility must be balanced with strong governance mechanisms. Clear budgeting processes, transparent reporting, and performance monitoring are essential to ensure that public funds are used responsibly and effectively.

The Local Councils' Association can play a significant role in supporting councils in this regard by providing guidance, training, and best-practice frameworks for financial management.

A More Coherent Financial Ecosystem

The broader objective of funding reform is to create a more coherent financial ecosystem for Local Government. This includes not only national funding allocations but also access to additional resources.

European funding programmes represent an important opportunity for Local Councils to support development initiatives. However, access to such funding often requires technical expertise and administrative capacity that may not be equally available across all councils.

Strengthening support structures, including through the Local Councils' Association, can help ensure that all councils benefit from these opportunities.

Conclusion

A Local Government system cannot function effectively without a stable and predictable financial foundation.

Reforming the funding framework, together with ongoing consultation, is therefore essential to the broader reset proposed in this document. It enables strategic planning, strengthens accountability, and supports more effective service delivery.

Ultimately, financial stability is not an end in itself. It is a means to ensure that Local Government can fulfil its core purpose: delivering tangible improvements in residents' quality of life.



**A modern system
of Local Government
must be built on
competence**





CHAPTER 05.

PROFESSIONAL AND COMPETENT GOVERNANCE

Raising the standard of local governance

The effectiveness of Local Government depends not only on structures and policies, but also on the people entrusted with implementing them. Over the years, Local Councils in Malta have benefited from the dedication and commitment of many individuals who have chosen to serve their communities. However, the increasing complexity of local governance requires a more structured and professional approach.

Today, councillors are expected to deal with financial planning, procurement processes, legal frameworks, community engagement, and strategic development. These are not minor responsibilities. They require knowledge, judgement, and the ability to make informed decisions in situations that often carry real consequences for residents.

Despite this, the system has not always provided the necessary framework to ensure that those entering Local Government are adequately prepared for these responsibilities.

From goodwill to competence

Goodwill and commitment are essential, but they are not sufficient on their own. A modern system of Local Government must be built on competence. This means ensuring that those who are elected or appointed to positions of responsibility have the necessary skills, knowledge, and understanding to carry out their role effectively.

This is not about restricting participation. On the contrary, it is about strengthening the



system so that participation leads to meaningful outcomes. When councillors are well prepared, they are more confident in their decisions, more effective in their role, and better able to serve their communities.

The challenge is to move from a system that relies heavily on individual initiative to one that provides structured support and guidance.

The importance of structured training

Training must become a central component of Local Government, not an optional addition. It should begin before individuals take office and continue throughout their term.

A structured approach to training would provide councillors with a clear understanding of:

- their legal responsibilities
- the financial framework within which they operate
- the principles of good governance
- the importance of transparency and accountability
- effective communication with residents

It would also allow for the development of leadership and management skills, which are essential for those in positions of responsibility.

The Local Councils' Association is particularly well placed to lead this effort. Through its experience and its network, it can provide training programmes that are practical, relevant, and aligned with the realities of Local Government in Malta.

Continuous development

Governance is not static. The challenges faced by Local Councils evolve over time, and the skills required to address them must evolve as well.

For this reason, training cannot be limited to an initial phase. It must be continuous. Councillors and administrative staff must have access to ongoing opportunities to develop their skills, stay informed about changes in legislation and policy, and learn from best practices both locally and internationally.

This creates a culture of improvement, where learning is seen as part of the role rather than an additional burden.

Strengthening administrative capacity

Professional governance is not limited to elected members. It also depends on the administrative structures that support them.

Executive Secretaries and council employees play a crucial role in ensuring that decisions are implemented effectively and that operations run smoothly. Investing in their development is equally important.

A well-functioning Local Council is one where there is a strong partnership between elected representatives and administrative staff, each bringing their expertise and working towards a common objective.

Building trust through competence

Ultimately, professional and competent governance contributes to trust. When residents see that decisions are informed, processes are followed, and services are delivered effectively, confidence in Local Government increases.


Competence reduces errors, improves efficiency, and enhances accountability. It also allows Local Councils to engage more effectively with other institutions, strengthening their position within the broader governance framework.

A necessary step in the reset

Within the context of the reset proposed in this document, professionalisation is not a secondary consideration. It is a central pillar.

Without it, even the most well-designed reforms risk falling short in implementation. With it, the system gains the capacity to deliver on its objectives and meet residents' expectations.





**Trust is one of the
most important assets in
any system of governance**



CHAPTER 06.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Rebuilding trust through openness

Trust is one of the most important assets in any system of governance. It is built over time through consistent behaviour, clear communication, and visible results. In the context of Local Government, trust is shaped by how decisions are made, how resources are used, and how openly information is shared with the public.

Residents expect to understand what their Local Council is doing, why certain decisions are taken, and how public funds are being spent. When this information is accessible and presented clearly, it strengthens confidence in the system. When it is not, it creates uncertainty and, in some cases, suspicion.

Transparency is therefore not simply a procedural requirement. It is a fundamental condition for effective governance.

Making information accessible

One of the key challenges in improving transparency is ensuring that information is not only available, but also understandable. Publishing documents is not enough if they are difficult to interpret or inaccessible to the public.

Local Councils must adopt a more proactive approach to communication, presenting information in a way that is clear, structured, and relevant to residents. This includes:

- financial information
- project updates
- decisions taken during council meetings
- timelines for ongoing initiatives



The objective is to create a system where residents can easily follow what is happening within their locality.

Strengthening accountability mechanisms

Transparency and accountability are closely linked. When information is accessible, it becomes easier to assess performance and hold institutions accountable for their actions.

Local Councils must operate within a framework that includes clear oversight mechanisms. Institutions such as the Ombudsman and the National Audit Office play an important role in this regard, and their work should be supported and strengthened.

At the same time, accountability should not be seen as an external imposition. It should be embedded within the system itself. Councils should have internal processes that allow for regular review of performance, identification of challenges, and implementation of improvements.

The role of performance measurement

A more structured approach to performance measurement can contribute significantly to accountability. By defining clear indicators, Local Councils can assess how effectively they are delivering services and where improvements are needed.

These indicators should be practical and relevant, reflecting residents' actual experience. They should also be used as a tool for improvement, rather than simply as a reporting requirement.

When performance is measured consistently, it becomes easier to identify patterns, address recurring issues, and share best practices across councils.

Encouraging a culture of responsibility

Accountability is not only about systems and mechanisms. It is also about culture. A system that values responsibility encourages individuals to take ownership of their decisions and actions.

This requires leadership that sets clear expectations and promotes a culture of integrity. It also requires support structures that allow individuals to perform their role effectively.

When accountability is embedded in Local Government's culture, it becomes a natural part of how the system operates.



Transparency as a driver of improvement

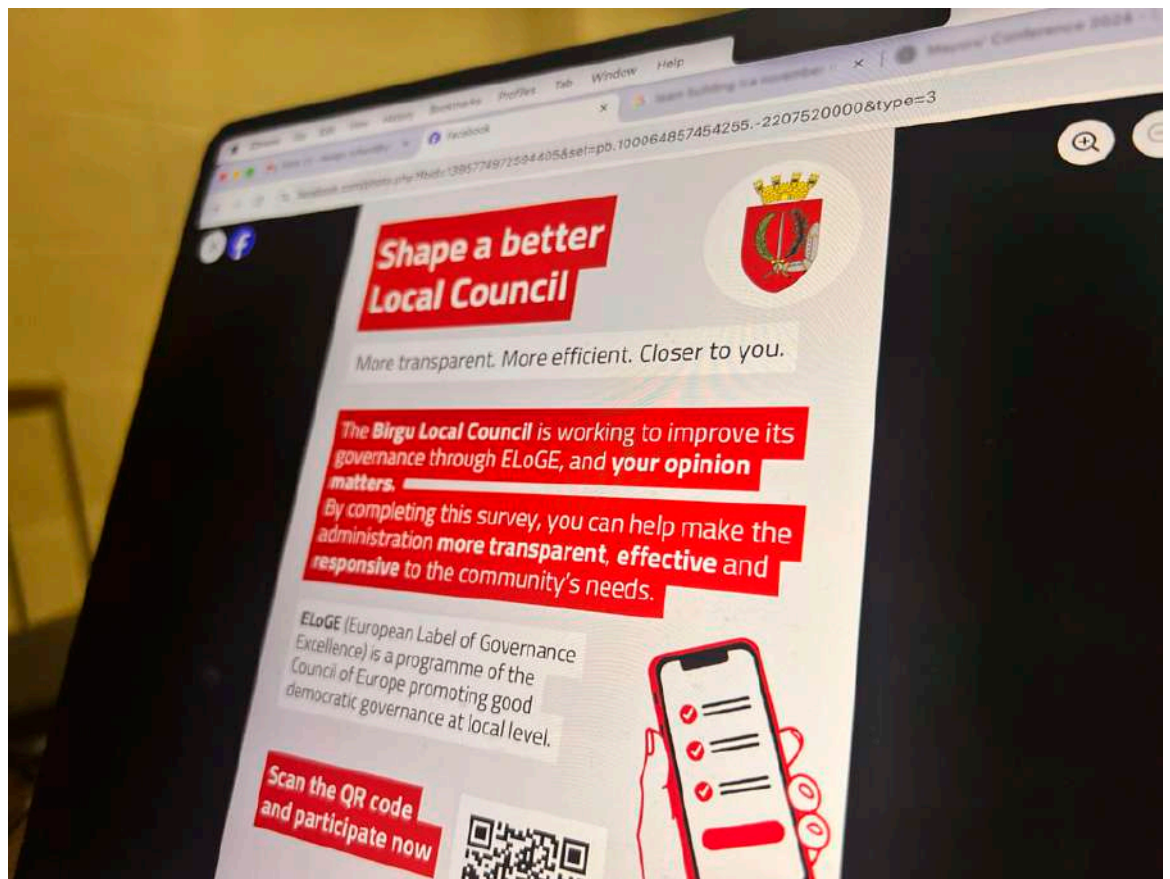
Greater transparency can also drive improvement. When information is shared openly, it creates opportunities for feedback, discussion, and collaboration.

Residents can contribute ideas, highlight issues, and engage more meaningfully with their Local Council. This strengthens the relationship between the community and the institution, making governance more participatory and responsive.

A cornerstone of the reset – A system that allows for internal restructuring

Within the broader context of the reset, transparency and accountability are essential elements. They ensure that the system operates with integrity, that decisions are justified, and that outcomes are visible.


Without them, trust cannot be sustained. With them, Local Government becomes more credible, more effective, and more closely aligned with the needs of the people it serves.





Residents should have
clear and accessible
ways to engage with
their Local Council





CHAPTER 07.

REAL RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

Moving beyond consultation

Participation is often discussed in terms of consultation, but true participation goes further. It involves creating structures that enable residents to actively contribute to decision-making, rather than simply reacting to decisions that have already been taken.

In many cases, consultation processes are limited in scope and frequency. They may provide an opportunity for feedback, but they do not always lead to meaningful influence on outcomes.

A more effective approach requires a shift in how participation is understood. It must become an ongoing process, embedded within the functioning of Local Government.

Creating structured opportunities for engagement

Residents should have clear and accessible ways to engage with their Local Council. This includes regular forums for discussion, mechanisms for submitting proposals, and opportunities to contribute to the development of local initiatives.

Participation should not be limited to specific groups. It must be inclusive, ensuring that different segments of the community can engage in ways that reflect their needs and circumstances.

This requires flexibility in how engagement is organised, as well as a commitment to reaching out to those who may not traditionally participate.



Participatory budgeting

One of the most direct ways of involving residents in decision-making is through participatory budgeting. This approach allows community members to have a say in how a portion of public funds is allocated.

It creates a direct link between residents and resource allocation, increasing transparency and accountability. It also fosters a sense of ownership, as residents can see tangible outcomes from their participation.

While participatory budgeting requires careful design and management, its potential to strengthen engagement and trust is significant.

The role of digital tools

Technology can play an important role in facilitating participation. Digital platforms can provide accessible channels for communication, allowing residents to share ideas, report issues, and follow discussions.

However, digital tools should complement, not replace, traditional forms of engagement. Not all residents have the same level of access or familiarity with technology, and a balanced approach is necessary to ensure inclusivity.

The objective is to create multiple pathways for participation, allowing individuals to engage in ways that are convenient and meaningful to them.

Building a sense of community ownership

When participation is effective, it leads to a stronger sense of community ownership. Residents begin to see themselves not only as recipients of services, but as active contributors to the development of their locality.

This has a positive impact on social cohesion and can lead to more sustainable outcomes, as initiatives are supported and maintained by the community itself.

A more responsive system

Participation also contributes to responsiveness. When Local Councils are in regular contact with residents, they are better able to understand emerging issues and adapt their approach accordingly.

This reduces the gap between policy and reality, ensuring that decisions are informed by actual needs rather than assumptions.

Participation within the reset framework

Within the broader reset, participation is not optional. It is a defining feature of a modern and effective Local Government system.

However, participation must move beyond traditional and often limited mechanisms. Relying solely on formal structures such as annual general meetings is no longer sufficient to reflect the expectations and realities of today's communities. Participation must be continuous, practical, and embedded within the everyday functioning of Local Government.

This requires a shift towards more dynamic and inclusive approaches.

Structured consultation processes must become a regular feature of local governance, allowing residents to contribute meaningfully to decisions that affect their locality. These consultations should not be reactive but planned and integrated into policy development and project design.

Placemaking activities also play an important role. By involving residents directly in shaping public spaces, Local Councils can create environments that reflect the community's identity, needs, and aspirations. This approach strengthens ownership and encourages active engagement.

Participatory budgeting represents another key tool. Allowing residents to have a direct say in how a portion of public funds is allocated creates a tangible link between participation and outcomes. It increases transparency, builds trust, and reinforces the idea that Local Government belongs to the community.

Community forums provide an additional platform for dialogue. These forums can bring together residents, local organisations, and stakeholders to discuss issues, share ideas, and contribute to solutions in an open and structured way.

Public spaces themselves should also be reimaged. They can serve not only as areas for recreation, but as centres of innovation and community hubs where interaction, collaboration, and civic engagement take place. When designed and managed effectively, these spaces become catalysts for participation and social cohesion.

Together, these approaches create a system where participation is not occasional, but continuous. They ensure that governance is not only effective, but also inclusive and representative.

Most importantly, they strengthen the connection between institutions and communities, making Local Government more relevant, more responsive, and more closely aligned with the people it serves.



**Residents today expect systems
that are accessible, efficient,
and available in real time**



CHAPTER 08. DIGITAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Adapting to a changing environment

The way people interact with services has changed significantly over recent years. Residents today expect systems that are accessible, efficient, and available in real time. Whether dealing with financial services, utilities, or public administration, the standard is clear: services must be simple, responsive, and reliable.

Local Government cannot remain outside this transformation.

While some Local Councils have taken steps towards digitalisation, progress remains uneven. This creates service delivery inconsistencies and limits the system's overall efficiency. More importantly, it risks widening the gap between what residents expect and what the local government can provide.

Digital transformation must therefore be approached in a structured and coordinated manner. It is not simply about introducing isolated tools, but about creating a system that allows Local Government to operate in a more connected, efficient, and forward-looking way.

A coordinated digital model led at the regional level

To achieve this, digital development should not be left to individual Local Councils to manage independently.

Instead, Regional Councils should assume a central role in providing the digital backbone for Local Government. This would ensure consistency, reduce duplication, and allow for more efficient use of resources.



At the core of this approach would be the development of a common digital dashboard accessible to Local Councils within each region. This platform would provide a shared interface for councils to manage services, track requests, monitor projects, and access relevant data.

The role of Regional Councils would be to provide and maintain the backend system. This includes managing the technological infrastructure, ensuring system security, and covering the costs associated with development, maintenance, and upgrades.

Local Councils, in turn, would operate as users of this system, focusing on service delivery and resident engagement without the burden of managing complex digital infrastructure. Simplifying access and improving service delivery

A unified digital platform would significantly improve access to services.

Residents would be able to report issues, request services, and obtain information through a single, structured system. This reduces complexity and ensures that interactions are recorded, tracked, and followed up on consistently.

For Local Councils, this provides a more organised approach to managing requests and responding to residents. It also improves internal coordination, as information is centralised and easily accessible.

The result is a system that is more efficient, more transparent, and better aligned with the expectations of modern society.

Building a foundation for smarter governance

Beyond service delivery, the digital framework provided at the regional level can support more advanced forms of governance.

Regional Councils can assist Local Councils in identifying and mapping their assets, including infrastructure, public spaces, and facilities. This creates a comprehensive digital record for planning, maintenance, and decision-making.

Building on this, the development of digital twin environments offers a forward-looking opportunity. By creating virtual representations of localities, councils can simulate scenarios, assess project impacts, and make more informed decisions.

This approach moves Local Government from reactive management to proactive planning.



Strengthening transparency and accountability

A shared digital system also enhances transparency.

Residents can follow the progress of requests, access project information, and gain a clearer understanding of how decisions are implemented. This strengthens accountability and builds trust.

At the same time, appropriate safeguards must be in place to ensure data protection and privacy. The role of Regional Councils in managing the backend system is particularly important in maintaining these standards.

Ensuring inclusivity

While digital systems offer clear advantages, inclusivity must remain a priority.

Not all residents have equal access to technology, and not all are comfortable using digital platforms. The introduction of digital services must therefore complement, not replace, traditional channels of communication.

Face-to-face interaction, telephone support, and other accessible options must remain available to ensure that no one is excluded.

A shared step towards modern governance

Digital Local Government, when structured at the regional level, becomes more than a technological upgrade. It becomes a shared system that supports all Local Councils, regardless of size or capacity.

Within the broader reset, this coordinated approach represents a practical and efficient way forward. It aligns resources, reduces fragmentation, and provides the tools needed to deliver services more effectively and accessibly.

While digital systems offer clear advantages, inclusivity must remain a priority.



A reset of Local
Government requires
a clearer and more
strategic positioning of
Regional Councils



CHAPTER 09.

STRONG REGIONAL COORDINATION

Repositioning Regional Councils within the system

The role of Regional Councils must evolve to reflect the changing needs of Local Government. While originally established to provide coordination and support, their potential has not yet been fully realised. In many cases, their role remains limited or unclear, leading to missed opportunities to improve efficiency and strengthen the system as a whole.

A reset of Local Government requires a clearer and more strategic positioning of Regional Councils.

They must move beyond a purely administrative function and take on a more active role as providers of shared services, coordinators of regional initiatives, and facilitators of collaboration between Local Councils.

Acting as hubs for shared services

Regional Councils are well placed to act as hubs for services that benefit from coordination across multiple localities.

The development and management of digital infrastructure is a clear example. By providing backend systems, shared platforms, and technical support, Regional Councils can relieve Local Councils of the burden of managing complex systems individually.

This approach can be extended to other areas, including technical support, project coordination, and access to specialised expertise.



By pooling resources at the regional level, the system becomes more efficient, more consistent, and better equipped to respond to challenges.

Supporting Local Councils without reducing autonomy

A key principle for strengthening Regional Councils is maintaining Local Councils' autonomy. Regional coordination must not lead to centralisation at another level. Instead, it should provide support where needed, allowing Local Councils to operate more effectively within their own remit.

This requires a clear distinction between functions that are best managed locally and those that benefit from regional coordination.

When this balance is achieved, the system becomes both efficient and responsive.

Improving coherence and reducing fragmentation

One of the main benefits of a stronger regional structure is reduced fragmentation.

When services and systems are coordinated at the regional level, duplication is reduced, and resources are used more effectively. Communication between entities becomes more structured, and responsibilities are more clearly defined.

This contributes to a more coherent system in which different levels of governance work together rather than operate in parallel.

Enhancing planning and development

Regional Councils can also play a key role in supporting planning and development.

By working across localities, they can identify common challenges, coordinate larger projects, and support initiatives that extend beyond individual boundaries.

This is particularly important in areas such as infrastructure, mobility, environmental management, and digital development, where a broader perspective can lead to better outcomes.

Strengthening the link between local and national levels

A well-functioning regional structure also strengthens the connection between Local Government and central institutions.

Regional Councils can act as a bridge, facilitating communication, aligning priorities, and ensuring that local realities are reflected in national decision-making.

This contributes to a more integrated system in which policies are informed by practical experience.

A more organised and effective system

Within the broader reset, strengthening Regional Councils is about creating a system that is more organised, more efficient, and better aligned.

It is not about adding another layer of complexity. It is about ensuring that each level of governance has a clear role and that these roles work together effectively.

By positioning Regional Councils as hubs for coordination, shared services, and innovation, the system gains the structure it needs to deliver consistently.

Ultimately, this leads to better outcomes for Local Councils, stronger coordination across regions, and improved quality of life for residents.





Effective local
leadership must
begin with a deep
understanding of
the community



CHAPTER 10.

STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL COUNCILS' ASSOCIATION

A central pillar of the system

The Local Councils' Association occupies a unique position within the Maltese system of governance. It represents the collective voice of Local and Regional Councils and provides a platform for articulating their interests, challenges, and priorities.

Despite its importance, the Association's role has not always been fully recognised or supported within the broader institutional framework. This has limited its ability to operate at the level required by a modern system of Local Government.

A key element of the reset proposed in this document is therefore the strengthening of the Local Councils' Association as a central pillar of the system.

From representation to strategic leadership

Traditionally, the Association has been seen primarily as a representative body. While this role remains essential, it must be expanded to include a more strategic function.

The Association should act as:

- a driver of reform
- a centre for policy development
- a hub for training and capacity building
- a coordinator of national initiatives
- a point of reference to the political parties
- a point of reference to the regional councils



This expanded role requires a shift in how the Association is structured, resourced, and positioned within the governance framework.

The need for autonomy

One of the key challenges facing the Association is its limited operational flexibility. Being tied to public service structures can restrict its ability to respond quickly, innovate, and engage effectively with both national and international partners.

A strengthened Association must therefore be granted greater autonomy. This does not mean removing accountability; rather, it provides the flexibility needed to operate effectively in a dynamic environment.

Autonomy will allow the Association to:

- develop and implement training programmes
- engage more effectively with European institutions
- respond to emerging challenges
- support Local Councils in a more proactive manner

This needs amendments in the subsidiary legislation.

Building capacity and expertise

As the Association's role expands, so too must its capacity. This includes investing in expertise across governance, finance, digital transformation, and policy development.

A stronger institutional base will enable the Association to provide more effective support to Local Councils and to contribute more meaningfully to national decision-making processes. It will also strengthen Malta's position within European and international networks, where the Association represents the country's local governance framework.

A unified voice for Local Government

One of the most important functions of the Association is to provide a unified voice for Local Government. This is particularly important in discussions with the central government, where a coordinated approach can lead to more effective outcomes.

By bringing together the perspectives of different councils, the Association can ensure that policies are informed by practical experience and reflect the realities on the ground.

This unified voice is essential to strengthening Local Government's position within the national framework.



Investing in local democracy

Strengthening the Association is not simply an institutional reform. It is an investment in local democracy.

A well-functioning Association contributes to:

- better coordination between the executive members
- stronger representation
- more effective policy development
- improved capacity across the system
- organising working groups and forums

It also reinforces the principle that Local Government is an integral part of the democratic structure, not a secondary layer.

A cornerstone of the reset

Within the broader reset, the strengthening of the Local Councils' Association is a cornerstone. It provides the structure through which many of the other reforms can be implemented and sustained.

Without a strong Association, efforts to improve Local Government risk remaining fragmented. With it, the system gains coherence, direction, and the capacity to evolve.





An inclusive
approach to
governance is
not simply about
policy design



CHAPTER 11.

INCLUSIVE AND PEOPLE-CENTRED COMMUNITIES

Building communities that reflect everyone

Local Government is at its most effective when it reflects the diversity of the communities it serves. Every locality in Malta has its own identity, shaped by its people, its environment, and its social fabric. Within this diversity, there are also different needs, expectations, and challenges that require careful understanding and thoughtful response.

An inclusive approach to governance is not simply about policy design. It is about recognising that certain groups in society may face barriers that limit their ability to fully participate in community life. These barriers may be physical, social, economic, or institutional, and they require targeted and sustained attention.

The Local Councils, although they are uniquely positioned, are not ready to address these challenges, even though of their proximity to residents. They are often the first point of contact for individuals who require support, and they are best placed to identify gaps in services and opportunities for improvement.

Supporting vulnerable groups

A key aspect of inclusive governance is ensuring that vulnerable groups are supported effectively. This includes older persons, individuals with disabilities, families facing economic hardship, and others who may require additional assistance.

Support in this context does not necessarily mean direct provision of services by Local Councils. Rather, it involves coordination, facilitation, and ensuring that residents can access the services they need.



Local Councils can play an important role in identifying individuals who may be at risk of isolation or exclusion and connecting them with the appropriate support systems. They can also work with voluntary organisations, community groups, and other stakeholders to strengthen the network of support within each locality.

Accessibility and the built environment

Inclusion is also closely linked to the physical environment. Public spaces, infrastructure, and facilities must be designed so that all residents can use them safely and comfortably.

Accessibility is not an optional feature. It is a fundamental requirement of a modern and equitable society. This includes ensuring that pavements, public buildings, recreational areas, and transport systems are designed with the needs of all users in mind.

Local Councils have a direct role in this area, particularly in the planning and maintenance of local infrastructure. By prioritising accessibility, they can significantly improve residents' quality of life.

Strengthening community cohesion

Inclusive communities are also cohesive communities. When people feel they belong, are valued, and have a role to play, they are more likely to engage positively with their environment.

Local Councils can support this by creating opportunities for interaction, encouraging community initiatives, and promoting activities that bring people together. These may include cultural events, social programmes, and initiatives that celebrate the local identity. Such efforts contribute to a stronger sense of community, which in turn supports more effective governance.


Aligning inclusion with quality of life

The principle of "Residents First – Better Quality of Life" is closely linked to inclusion. A community cannot achieve a high quality of life if segments of its population are excluded or underserved.

Inclusion must therefore be embedded in all aspects of Local Government, from service delivery to planning and decision-making. It must be considered not as a separate objective, but as an integral part of how governance is approached.

Towards a more equitable system

Within the broader reset, inclusive, people-centred communities are an essential objective. They ensure that Local Government is not only efficient, but also fair and responsive to the needs of all residents. By strengthening inclusion, Local Councils contribute to a system that is more balanced, more resilient, and more reflective of the society it serves.



CHAPTER 12. YOUTH AT THE CENTRE

Investing in the next generation

Young people are not only the future of the country; they are an active and important part of present-day communities. Their perspectives, ideas, and energy represent a valuable resource that should be recognised and integrated into Local Government.

However, young people's participation in local governance has traditionally been limited. While there have been initiatives to increase engagement, they have not always been structured or sustained.

A more deliberate and consistent approach is required to ensure that young people are given meaningful opportunities to contribute.

Creating structured platforms for participation

The establishment of Children's Councils represents an important step in this direction. These structures provide young people with a formal platform to express their views, contribute ideas, and engage in the governance of their locality.

However, for such initiatives to be effective, they must be properly integrated into the Local Government system. They should not function in isolation, but rather as part of a broader framework for participation.

This requires clear guidelines, support mechanisms, and a commitment from Local Councils to engage with young people's contributions.



Encouraging civic awareness

Engagement in Local Government also contributes to civic awareness. When young people participate in discussions about their community, they develop a better understanding of how governance works and the role they can play in it.

This has long-term benefits, as it encourages a culture of participation and responsibility. It also helps to build a generation that is more informed, more engaged, and more willing to contribute to public life.

Bridging the gap between generations

Youth participation also provides an opportunity to bridge generational gaps. By creating spaces where people of different ages can interact and collaborate, Local Councils can foster a more inclusive and dynamic community.

This exchange of perspectives can lead to more balanced decision-making and more innovative solutions to local challenges.

Supporting development and leadership

Involving young people in Local Government also supports the development of leadership skills. Through participation, they gain experience in communication, collaboration, and decision-making.

These skills are valuable not only in the context of Local Government but also for personal and professional development.

The Local Councils' Association can play an important role in supporting these initiatives, providing guidance and facilitating the exchange of best practices across councils.

The role of youth centres as community anchors

Alongside formal participation structures, youth centres play a crucial role in strengthening engagement at the local level.

Youth centres provide a safe, structured environment where young people can meet, interact, and develop socially and personally. They serve as spaces for informal learning, creativity, and for young people to build confidence and a sense of belonging within their community. More importantly, youth centres can act as entry points for participation. They create opportunities for engagement that are less formal but equally important, allowing young people to gradually become more involved in community life and local governance.



When properly supported, these centres can host workshops, discussions, and activities that connect young people with Local Councils, fostering a stronger relationship between youth and local institutions.

A regional approach to youth development

While youth centres are rooted in local communities, there is significant value in managing and supporting them at a regional level. Regional Councils can play an important role in coordinating youth-related initiatives, ensuring consistency in standards, and providing resources that individual Local Councils may not be able to sustain on their own.

A regional approach allows for the sharing of expertise, the organisation of larger-scale programmes, and the development of networks between youth centres across different localities. It also enables more efficient use of resources, ensuring that opportunities are accessible to a wider group of young people.

At the same time, Local Councils retain their role in maintaining direct contact with young people within their locality, ensuring that initiatives remain relevant and responsive to local needs.

A long-term investment

Placing youth at the centre of Local Government is a long-term investment. It strengthens the democratic system, encourages participation, and contributes to the development of future leaders. Within the reset framework, youth engagement is not an optional addition. It is a necessary component of a system that seeks to remain relevant and responsive over time.

By combining structured participation, community-based engagement through youth centres, and regional coordination, Local Government can create a comprehensive approach that supports young people today while shaping the leadership of tomorrow.





**Effective planning must
be grounded in accurate
and reliable information**



CHAPTER 13. SMARTER PLANNING, BETTER RESULTS

Moving from reactive to strategic governance

One of the recurring challenges within Local Government is the tendency to operate reactively. Councils often find themselves responding to immediate issues as they arise, addressing concerns on a case-by-case basis without a structured, long-term framework.

While responsiveness remains an essential characteristic of Local Government, it cannot exist in isolation. Without strategic planning, decision-making risks becoming fragmented, resources may be used inefficiently, and priorities can shift unpredictably. Over time, this limits councils' ability to deliver sustained and meaningful improvements in their localities.

A more structured and forward-looking approach to governance is therefore required. Planning must move beyond short-term responses and evolve into a continuous process that guides decision-making, aligns resources, and supports long-term development.

The role of data and evidence

Effective planning must be grounded in accurate and reliable information. Data provides the foundation for sound decisions.

Local Councils must be equipped with the tools and access necessary to understand their communities' needs, assess service performance, and evaluate the impact of their interventions. This requires a shift towards data-informed governance, where decisions are based on evidence rather than assumptions.



A key component of this approach is the establishment of structured data-sharing agreements between Local Councils and national entities and agencies. Access to relevant, anonymised data on population trends, mobility patterns, environmental indicators, social conditions, and service usage enables councils to develop a clearer, more comprehensive understanding of their local realities.

Such agreements ensure that Local Government is not operating in isolation, but is supported by the broader knowledge and data resources available at the national level.

Supporting structured research and analysis

Data alone is not sufficient without the capacity to interpret and apply it effectively.

There is a need to strengthen research structures within Local Government, ensuring that information is analysed and translated into practical planning decisions. This may involve collaboration with academic institutions, the Local Councils' Association, or dedicated research units that can support councils in identifying trends and developing evidence-based strategies.

Structured research allows Local Councils to move beyond reactive responses and adopt a more analytical approach to governance. It enables the identification of long-term challenges, the evaluation of policy options, and the development of targeted interventions that are aligned with actual needs.

Aligning plans with resources

Planning must also be realistic and grounded in available capacity.

A robust planning framework ensures that objectives align with financial resources, administrative capacity, and operational constraints. It allows councils to prioritise effectively, ensuring that projects are achievable within defined timelines and budgets.

This alignment is essential for maintaining credibility. When plans are realistic, they are more likely to be implemented successfully. When expectations are matched with capacity, outcomes become more consistent and measurable.

A structured approach to planning also supports better financial management, ensuring that resources are allocated to maximise impact.

Establishing clear performance frameworks

A key element of effective planning is the ability to measure progress.

The introduction of clear and relevant Key Performance Indicators provides a structured way to assess whether objectives are being achieved. These indicators should reflect both outputs and outcomes, focusing not only on what is delivered, but on the impact of that delivery.

KPIs should be practical, measurable, and aligned with each locality's priorities. They must also be flexible enough to reflect the diversity of Local Councils, recognising that different localities face different challenges.

A well-defined performance framework strengthens accountability, supports continuous improvement, and provides a clear basis for evaluating success.

Monitoring and evaluation

Planning is not a one-time exercise. It requires ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure that strategies remain relevant and effective.

Regular review processes allow Local Councils to assess progress, identify challenges, and adjust their approach where necessary. This creates a dynamic system where planning and implementation are closely linked.

The Monitoring Unit within the Division for Local Government plays a key role in this process. Through structured oversight, it can support Local Councils in maintaining standards, tracking performance, and ensuring that objectives are being met.

This monitoring function should be supportive rather than restrictive, focusing on guidance, improvement, and the sharing of best practices across the system.

Supporting better outcomes

The ultimate purpose of planning is to improve outcomes.

When Local Councils operate within a structured and evidence-based framework, they are better able to deliver services that are consistent, efficient, and aligned with community needs. They can anticipate challenges, allocate resources more effectively, and respond in a timely and strategic manner.

This leads to tangible improvements in residents' quality of life and strengthens confidence in Local Government.



A core element of the reset

Within the broader reset, smarter planning represents a fundamental shift in how Local Government operates.

It moves the system from a reactive model to a structured, informed, and outcome-focused one. It ensures that Local Government is not only capable of addressing immediate concerns, but also equipped to plan for the future.

By combining data sharing, structured research, clear performance frameworks, and effective monitoring, Local Government can build a system that is both responsive and strategic.

A system that does not simply respond to challenges, but anticipates them and delivers lasting results.

Not only capable of addressing immediate concerns, but also equipped to plan for the future.





CHAPTER 14.

RESTORING LOCAL OWNERSHIP OF COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Reclaiming responsibility at the local level

Community projects are among the most visible expressions of Local Government. They shape public spaces, improve accessibility, and directly enhance residents' quality of life.

Over time, however, many of these projects have been taken over by central entities. While this may have been justified on the basis of capacity or efficiency, it has had unintended consequences.

Local Councils have gradually lost their direct involvement in projects within their own localities. This has reduced their ability to influence outcomes, weakened accountability, and limited opportunities for building experience and capacity.

The importance of local knowledge and ownership in public space planning

Local Councils possess knowledge that cannot be replicated by central entities. They understand the specific characteristics of their locality, the needs and expectations of residents, and the practical realities that shape how spaces are used daily.

This knowledge is particularly important in the planning and design of public spaces.

Public spaces are not generic. Their success depends on how well they reflect the community's identity, how they respond to local patterns of use, and how effectively they



meet the needs of different groups within the locality. Local Councils are best placed to lead this planning process, ensuring that projects are grounded in real community needs rather than standardised approaches.

For this reason, the planning of public spaces should be driven at the local level.

Where national entities are responsible for the implementation and delivery of such projects, Local Councils must not be treated as external stakeholders. They must form an integral part of the process from the outset.

This includes their formal inclusion within the framework agreements through which projects are executed. By embedding Local Councils within these agreements, the system ensures that local knowledge is not only consulted but also actively shapes decision-making throughout the project lifecycle.

Such an approach strengthens coordination, reduces the risk of misalignment between design and local realities, and improves the overall quality of outcomes.

Restoring local ownership is therefore not about limiting the role of national entities, but about creating a balanced framework where planning is informed by local knowledge and delivery is supported by national capacity.

This ensures that projects are not only implemented efficiently but also relevant, effective, and aligned with the communities they serve.

Building capacity through responsibility

One argument often put forward in favour of centralisation is that Local Councils may lack the capacity to manage projects effectively. While this may be true in certain cases, the solution cannot be to remove responsibility altogether.

Capacity is not created in isolation. It is developed through experience, through involvement in real projects, and through structured responsibility. When Local Councils are entrusted with planning and implementation, supported appropriately, and held accountable for outcomes, they gradually build the competence and confidence required to operate effectively.

Removing responsibility, on the other hand, creates a cycle where capacity is never developed. It limits growth, reduces institutional learning, and over time weakens the role of Local Government.

At the same time, it is important to recognise the practical realities within Local Councils. The Mayor and the Executive Secretary, while central to leadership and administration, cannot be expected to manage all aspects of increasingly complex projects. Modern project delivery often requires specialised technical knowledge across engineering, planning, procurement, sustainability, and project management.



For this reason, building capacity must also include access to expertise.

Local Councils, either individually or through Regional Councils, should be supported in engaging qualified professionals who can provide the necessary technical input. These experts should not operate at a distance from the decision-making process. They must be actively involved throughout the implementation phase, contributing to planning, advising on execution, and ensuring that projects meet the required standards.

Their role is not to replace local leadership, but to strengthen it.

By combining local knowledge with professional expertise, Local Government can develop a more robust and capable system. Councils retain ownership of projects, while benefiting from the technical support needed to deliver them effectively.

This approach ensures that capacity is built in a structured and sustainable way. It recognises that responsibility and support must go hand in hand.

Ultimately, a system that empowers Local Councils, equips them with the right expertise, and allows them to learn from experience is one that grows stronger over time.

Strengthening accountability

When Local Councils are directly responsible for or included in projects, accountability becomes clearer. Residents know who is responsible, and Councils have a direct incentive to ensure that projects are delivered successfully.

This strengthens the relationship between Local Government and the community and contributes to greater trust in the system.

A more balanced approach

Restoring local ownership does not mean excluding central entities. There will always be a role for national expertise, particularly in larger or more complex projects.

However, this role should be supportive rather than substitutive. Local Councils should remain at the centre of project management, with access to the support they need to deliver effectively.

A key step in the reset

Within the reset framework, restoring local ownership of community projects is an essential step towards strengthening Local Government.

It reinforces autonomy, builds capacity, and ensures that projects reflect the real needs of the community.





A wider European
framework that
recognises the
importance of local
democracy as a
fundamental pillar of
governance





CHAPTER 15.

STRENGTHENING COMPLIANCE WITH THE EUROPEAN CHARTER OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Aligning practice with commitment

Malta's system of Local Government does not operate in isolation. It forms part of a wider European framework that recognises the importance of local democracy as a fundamental pillar of governance. Central to this framework is the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which sets out the principles of autonomy, subsidiarity, adequate resources, and the right of local authorities to manage a substantial share of public affairs.

Malta has committed itself to these principles. However, commitment alone is not sufficient. What matters is how these principles are reflected in practice.

Over the years, monitoring processes carried out at the European level have highlighted both progress and ongoing challenges. While improvements have been recognised, recurring observations have highlighted structural weaknesses, particularly regarding the limited scope of local autonomy and the level of central oversight.

These observations are not abstract. They reflect realities that are experienced daily within the system.

Moving towards full alignment

Strengthening compliance with the Charter requires a clear and structured approach. It is not a matter of formal adherence, but of ensuring that the principles it sets out are embedded in Local Government's functioning.



This includes recognising Local Councils as institutions with their own mandate, rather than as administrative extensions of central government. It also involves ensuring that responsibilities are accompanied by the necessary authority and resources.

A system that aligns with the Charter is one where Local Government operates with clarity, confidence, and the capacity to act independently within its remit.

The importance of consultation

One of the key principles of the Charter is that local authorities should be consulted in a timely and meaningful manner on matters that affect them.

In practice, this requires more than occasional engagement. It requires a structured approach to consultation, in which Local Councils and the Local Councils' Association are involved in developing policies and decisions that affect local governance.

Such an approach leads to better outcomes. Policies that are informed by local experience are more likely to be practical, effective, and aligned with real needs.

Strengthening autonomy and resources

Compliance with the Charter also involves ensuring that Local Councils have access to adequate resources. Financial autonomy is closely linked to institutional autonomy. Without it, councils' ability to act independently is limited.

A reformed system must therefore ensure that funding frameworks support the responsibilities assigned to Local Government, allowing councils to plan and operate effectively.

Strengthening the legal framework for Local Government

Aligning with the Charter's principles also requires a review and strengthening of the legal framework governing Local Government.

The current legislative structure, primarily based on Chapter 363 of the Laws of Malta, has evolved over time through multiple amendments. While these changes have addressed specific needs, they have also introduced complexity that can make the framework difficult to interpret and apply consistently.

There is therefore a clear need to review and amend Chapter 363 comprehensively, ensuring that it reflects the realities of modern Local Government, strengthens autonomy, and provides greater clarity on roles and responsibilities.

Such a revision should not be limited to isolated amendments but should aim to create a more coherent and accessible legal framework.

Consolidating by-laws for clarity and consistency

Another important aspect of strengthening the system is the development of a consolidated framework for by-laws.

At present, Local Councils often operate with different sets of by-laws, developed at different times and with varying levels of consistency. This can lead to fragmentation, uncertainty, and challenges in enforcement.

The creation of a consolidated set of model by-laws that can be adapted by Local Councils to reflect their specific needs would provide a more structured and consistent approach. It would also facilitate implementation, improve clarity for residents, and support enforcement mechanisms.

Such a framework would not remove Local Councils' flexibility, but would provide a strong and consistent foundation upon which local variations can be built.





Addressing fragmentation in legislation

Beyond Chapter 363, Local Government is also affected by a range of subsidiary legislation and sector-specific laws that intersect with its functions.

Over time, this has created a fragmented legal landscape in which responsibilities and procedures are not always clearly aligned. This fragmentation can lead to inefficiencies, duplication, and implementation uncertainty.

A structured effort to consolidate and streamline relevant laws and subsidiary legislation is therefore necessary. This would improve clarity, reduce administrative burden, and ensure that Local Councils operate within a coherent, easy-to-navigate framework.

Establishing a clear code of conduct

Strengthening Local Government also requires reinforcing governance and ethical conduct standards.

Establishing a clear, comprehensive code of conduct for elected members and administrative staff is essential. Such a code should define expected standards of behaviour, address issues of transparency and accountability, and provide guidance on conflicts of interest and decision-making.

A well-defined code of conduct supports professionalism, builds trust, and ensures that Local Government operates with integrity.

It also provides a clear reference point for both those within the system and the residents they serve.

A step towards stronger local democracy

Aligning Malta's Local Government system with the Charter's principles is not simply about fulfilling an external obligation. It is an opportunity to strengthen local democracy, improve governance, and build a more coherent and effective system.

Within the broader reset, this alignment provides a clear benchmark against which progress can be measured and ensures that Local Government evolves in line with recognised standards.

By combining institutional reform with legal clarity and stronger governance frameworks, Local Government can move towards a system that is not only compliant, but capable, credible, and resilient



CHAPTER 16.

ENCOURAGING GREATER PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN LOCAL POLITICS

Addressing imbalance

A representative system of Local Government must reflect the communities it serves. This includes ensuring that women are adequately represented in decision-making structures.

While progress has been made over the years, participation remains uneven. There are still barriers that discourage many capable women from entering or remaining in local politics. These barriers are not always formal. They often arise from practical realities, such as balancing public responsibilities with professional and family commitments.

Creating enabling conditions

Encouraging greater participation requires a practical approach. It is not enough to promote the idea of inclusion; the system must create conditions that enable participation.

This includes considering meeting timing, structuring responsibilities to allow flexibility, and providing adequate support for those who take on public roles.

Financial considerations also play a role. The level of compensation for councillors must be sufficient to recognise the time and effort involved, without creating barriers for those who may not have the means to participate otherwise.

The importance of structure and clarity

A well-functioning system is, in itself, one of the strongest incentives for participation.



When Local Government operates with clear structures, defined responsibilities, measurable Key Performance Indicators, and transparent processes, it creates an environment that is more predictable, professional, and manageable. Individuals are more likely to engage when they understand what is expected of them, how decisions are taken, and how their contribution fits within the wider framework.

In contrast, a system that lacks clarity or operates inconsistently can discourage participation, particularly for those balancing multiple responsibilities.

Strengthening structure is therefore not only an administrative reform. It is also a tool for inclusion.

When the system functions effectively, it becomes more attractive to a wider range of individuals, including women who may otherwise be discouraged from entering an environment that appears uncertain or overly demanding.

Supporting development and visibility

Encouraging participation also involves creating opportunities for development and visibility. Mentorship programmes, training initiatives, and the promotion of role models can help build confidence and encourage more women to step forward.

Providing platforms where women in Local Government can share experiences, support one another, and contribute to policy discussions also strengthens engagement.

The Local Councils' Association can play an important role in this area, supporting initiatives that promote inclusion and provide practical support to those entering local politics.

The role of political parties

Political parties also have a responsibility in shaping participation.



The process of identifying, encouraging, and supporting candidates begins at the party level. Political parties must actively work to attract the right cohort of candidates, ensuring that capable women are identified, encouraged, and supported throughout the process.

This requires a proactive approach in which talent is not only recognised but also nurtured. It also requires creating pathways that make it easier for women to enter and remain within local politics.

A system that relies solely on voluntary participation without structured outreach risks missing valuable talent.

Strengthening governance through diversity

Greater participation of women is not only a matter of fairness. It contributes to stronger governance. Diverse perspectives lead to more balanced decision-making and more inclusive policies. A system that draws on a broader range of experiences is better equipped to respond to the community's needs.

Inclusivity strengthens resilience, encourages innovation, and ensures that Local Government reflects the realities of the people it serves.

The role of the Local Councils' Association

The Local Councils' Association plays an important role in advocating for equality, inclusivity, and fairness within the system. Through its national platform, the Association can promote policies that support participation, provide training and mentorship opportunities, and ensure that inclusivity remains a central consideration in Local Government development.

It can also act as a voice for Local Councils in promoting a system that is accessible, balanced, and representative.

A more inclusive future

Within the reset framework, encouraging greater participation of women is an essential step towards building a more inclusive and representative system of Local Government.

It ensures that leadership reflects the diversity of society and strengthens the overall quality of governance. At the same time, it reinforces a broader principle.

When structures are clear, processes are fair, and the system functions effectively, participation follows.

Creating such a system is therefore not only a matter of governance. It is a matter of opportunity.





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CHAPTER 17.

SUPPORTING COUNCILLORS THROUGH SPECIAL LEAVE PROVISIONS

Recognising the realities of the role

The role of a councillor carries significant responsibility. It involves attending meetings, engaging with residents, participating in decision-making, and overseeing various aspects of local governance. These responsibilities require time and commitment.

However, many councillors are expected to fulfil these duties alongside full-time employment. This creates practical challenges that can limit participation and affect the effectiveness of Local Government.

Creating a fair framework

Providing structured support through special leave provisions is a practical way to address this challenge. It recognises that participation in Local Government is a form of public service that requires time and flexibility.

A clear framework for special leave ensures that councillors can carry out their responsibilities without relying solely on personal arrangements or goodwill.

Supporting participation across sectors

The issue is particularly relevant for those working in the private sector, where flexibility may be more limited. Creating incentives for employers to support councillors can help ensure that participation is not restricted to those in more flexible employment situations.



This contributes to a more inclusive system, where individuals from diverse backgrounds can participate in Local Government.

Strengthening the system

Supporting councillors in this way is not simply a matter of fairness. It strengthens the system as a whole. When councillors dedicate the time required to their roles, decision-making improves and governance becomes more effective.

A necessary condition for participation

Within the broader reset, structured support for councillors is an essential component of a system that seeks to attract capable individuals and enable them to serve effectively.

Supporting councillors in this way is not simply a matter of fairness.





CHAPTER 18.

RESPECTING THE STATUS OF MAYORS AND COUNCILLORS

Recognising local leadership

The status of Local Government is reflected not only in its powers and responsibilities, but also in how its representatives are recognised within the broader institutional framework.

Mayors and councillors represent their communities and carry significant responsibility. They are the first point of contact for residents, the face of Local Government at the community level, and key actors in delivering services and initiatives.

However, their role has not always been accorded the level of recognition it deserves. This has implications beyond protocol. It affects how Local Government is perceived, how effectively it interacts with national institutions, and how seriously its role is taken within the broader governance system.

Strengthening institutional recognition

Ensuring that Mayors and councillors are properly recognised in official functions, national events, and institutional processes is an important step towards reinforcing the status of Local Government.

Recognition is not symbolic. It reflects the value placed on local leadership and its role within the governance structure.

When Local Government is recognised as an integral part of the system, it strengthens its ability to operate effectively and to represent the interests of its communities.



Enhancing collaboration and coordination

Recognition also supports better collaboration between different levels of government. When roles are clearly acknowledged and respected, communication becomes more effective, coordination improves, and the system operates with greater coherence.

This is particularly important in areas where Local and national authorities must work together to deliver results.

The need for structured oversight and accountability

Respecting the status of Mayors and councillors must also be accompanied by appropriate accountability structures. There are situations where specific declarations or conditions require independent scrutiny. A clear example arises when a Mayor declares that the Mayor's allowance constitutes their only source of income. Such cases require verification and monitoring to ensure transparency and consistency within the system. This type of scrutiny cannot be assigned to the Executive Secretary.

The Mayor does not report to the Executive Secretary, and it would therefore be inappropriate to place oversight responsibility within that relationship. Doing so would create a conflict within the institutional structure and undermine the independence required for such processes. A centralised scrutiny mechanism is therefore necessary.

Such a mechanism, operating at the national level, would provide an independent and consistent framework for reviewing declarations, ensuring compliance, and maintaining trust in the system. It would also remove ambiguity and clearly define responsibilities.

Building confidence in the system

Respecting the status of local representatives contributes directly to public confidence. When Local Government is recognised, supported, and governed through clear and fair structures, it reinforces the perception that it is a credible and important part of the democratic system.

At the same time, when accountability mechanisms are transparent and independent, trust is strengthened further.

A reflection of maturity

A system that recognises and respects its local leadership while ensuring appropriate oversight reflects a mature and balanced approach to governance. Within the reset framework, this balance is essential. It ensures that Local Government is not only empowered but also supported by structures that reinforce integrity, transparency, and public trust.



CHAPTER 19.

RECOGNISING LONG-TERM SERVICE OF MAYORS

Valuing commitment and responsibility

Serving as a Mayor or Regional / LCA President is not a symbolic role. It is a position that carries continuous responsibility, public accountability, and a level of commitment that extends far beyond formal duties. Those who take on this role are expected to lead, respond to residents' concerns, manage complex situations, and represent their communities at all levels of governance.

Over time, individuals who serve in these positions contribute significantly to the development and stability of their localities. Their work shapes not only the physical infrastructure and services, but also the community's social and civic fabric. This level of contribution, particularly when sustained over multiple legislatures, deserves recognition in a structured and meaningful way.

Recognising this commitment is not simply a matter of fairness. It is a necessary step in strengthening Local Government as a whole.

Aligning recognition with responsibility

One inconsistency in the current system is how the Mayor's role is treated compared to that of other public offices. The allowance granted to Mayors has long been linked to that of Members of Parliament, reflecting the level of responsibility and public accountability associated with the role.



However, this alignment has not been carried through to other aspects of recognition.

While Members of Parliament benefit from structured provisions, including pension arrangements after a defined period of service, Mayors and Regional Presidents do not benefit from equivalent mechanisms, despite carrying comparable levels of responsibility within their respective spheres.

This creates an imbalance that does not reflect the role's reality.

If the system recognises the office's status through its allowance, it must also recognise it through appropriate long-term support structures.

Providing dignity through long-term support

Introducing a structured framework that allows Mayors and Regional Presidents to benefit from pension arrangements after a defined period of service would represent a fair and logical step forward.

Such a measure would acknowledge the nature of the role as sustained public service rather than short-term engagement. It would also provide a level of security and dignity to those who have dedicated a significant part of their lives to serving their communities.

This is not about creating privilege. It is about ensuring that recognition is consistent, proportionate, and aligned with responsibility.



A system that values long-term service in this way sends a clear message that local leadership is both respected and supported.

Encouraging continuity and leadership

Recognition also plays an important role in shaping the future of Local Government. When leadership is valued, it becomes more attractive to capable individuals who may otherwise hesitate to take on such demanding roles.

Continuity of leadership contributes to stronger governance. Experience matters, particularly in navigating complex administrative structures, managing long-term projects, and maintaining relationships within the community.

By providing a framework that recognises and supports long-term service, the system encourages stability while also raising the overall standard of leadership.

Strengthening the institutional framework

A system that acknowledges long-term service understands the importance of institutional memory and continuity. It creates an environment where experience is not lost, but valued. This contributes to more effective decision-making, as leaders are better equipped to draw on past experience while addressing present challenges.

It also reinforces the status of Local Government within the broader governance framework, positioning it as a level of leadership that carries real responsibility and deserves corresponding recognition.

A balanced and responsible reform

Any reform in this area must be carefully structured to ensure that it is sustainable and proportionate. The objective is not to replicate national systems without consideration, but to create a framework that reflects the specific nature of Local Government while maintaining fairness.

Within the broader reset, recognising long-term service, including through pension entitlement linked to years of service, forms part of a wider effort to strengthen Local Government and support those who lead it.

It aligns recognition with responsibility, encourages capable leadership, and contributes to a system that is both fair and forward-looking.





The introduction of
liaison officers within
key entities offers a
practical way forward



CHAPTER 20.

STRENGTHENING COORDINATION THROUGH LIAISON OFFICERS

Addressing fragmentation in the system

One of the recurring challenges within the current Local Government framework is the lack of effective coordination between Local Councils and the various public entities involved in service delivery. While each entity operates within its own mandate, the lack of structured coordination often leads to delays, duplication, and inefficiencies.

Local Councils frequently find themselves navigating a complex network of agencies, each with its own procedures, priorities, and timelines. This creates a situation where even straightforward issues can take longer than necessary to resolve. Matters are sometimes transferred between entities without clear ownership, leading to frustration not only for councillors but also for residents who expect timely action.

This fragmentation does not stem from a lack of effort. It is a structural issue that requires a structured solution.

Creating clear and effective points of contact

The introduction of liaison officers within key entities offers a practical way forward. By establishing designated points of contact, Local Councils would have direct access to individuals responsible for managing communication and follow-up.

This would simplify interaction, reduce unnecessary delays, and create a clearer pathway for resolving issues. Councils would no longer need to navigate multiple channels to identify the appropriate contact. Instead, communication would be streamlined, allowing for more efficient handling of requests.



However, for such a system to be effective, the liaison officer's role must go beyond that of a simple intermediary.

Ensuring expertise and understanding

Liaison officers must possess a solid understanding of how Local Councils operate. They must be familiar with the realities of local governance, the nature of issues raised by councils, and the practical challenges of service delivery at the community level.

Without this understanding, communication risks becoming procedural rather than effective. Officers who are not grounded in the workings of Local Government may not fully appreciate the urgency or context of the issues being raised.

Providing liaison officers with the appropriate background and training is therefore essential. It ensures that communication is not only faster, but also more meaningful and relevant.

Empowering decision-making

Equally important is the level of authority assigned to these officers. A liaison system that relies solely on individuals who act as messengers, without the ability to take or influence decisions, would not address the underlying problem.

To improve coordination, liaison officers must be empowered to act. They should have the authority to make certain operational decisions, resolve issues within defined parameters, and coordinate internally within their respective entities.



This reduces the need for repeated escalations and enables quicker, more effective responses. It also ensures that communication leads to action, rather than simply facilitating further communication.

Improving responsiveness and accountability

With properly structured liaison roles in place, responsiveness across the system can improve significantly. Issues raised by Local Councils can be addressed within clearer timeframes, and responsibilities can be more easily tracked.

This also strengthens accountability. When there is a defined point of contact with both knowledge and authority, it becomes easier to monitor progress and ensure that commitments are fulfilled.

For residents, this translates into a more responsive system that addresses concerns more efficiently and with greater clarity.

The coordinating role of the Local Councils' Association

The Local Councils' Association is well-positioned to support the development and coordination of this system. Through its role as a national platform, it can facilitate communication between Local Councils and central entities, ensure consistency in the implementation of liaison structures, and identify recurring challenges that require broader solutions.

It can also contribute to developing guidelines and best practices, ensuring that liaison officers operate within an effective framework aligned with Local Government's needs.

Towards a more connected system

Strengthening coordination through liaison officers is not a technical adjustment. It is a structural improvement that addresses a key inefficiency in the current system.

It recognises that effective governance depends not only on individual institutions performing well, but on how those institutions interact with one another.

Within the broader reset, this reform contributes to creating a system that is more connected, more responsive, and better equipped to deliver results. It ensures that Local Government is not operating in isolation, but as part of a coordinated and coherent framework that works in the interest of the communities it serves.





Predictability
in funding also
contributes to
credibility



CHAPTER 21. REFORMING FINANCIAL SCHEMES FOR STABILITY AND PLANNING

Breaking the cycle of short-termism

The current reliance on financial schemes has created a pattern of short-term planning within Local Government. Councils often find themselves adjusting priorities based on available funding opportunities rather than long-term strategic needs.

This approach may allow for the implementation of individual projects, but it does not support sustained development. It limits councils' ability to plan ahead and creates uncertainty in decision-making.

Enabling long-term thinking

A more stable funding framework allows Local Councils to shift from reactive to strategic planning. When resources are predictable, councils can develop structured plans that extend beyond immediate concerns.

This creates the conditions for more effective governance, where decisions are guided by long-term objectives rather than short-term constraints.

Strengthening credibility and trust

Predictability in funding also contributes to credibility. Residents are more likely to trust a system that demonstrates consistency in its actions and commitments.



When projects are planned and delivered within a clear framework, it reinforces the perception that Local Government is organised, reliable, and capable of delivering results.

Supporting better resource management

A structured funding approach also improves resource management. Councils can allocate funds more efficiently, avoid duplication, and ensure investments align with priorities.


This leads to better outcomes and a more effective use of public resources.

A shift in approach

Within the reset framework, reforming financial schemes is about moving away from uncertainty and towards structure. It is a necessary step in building a system that supports planning, delivery, and accountability.

A structured funding approach also improves resource management.





CHAPTER 22. RECLASSIFICATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Addressing a fundamental inconsistency

The current legal framework governing the office of the Mayor does not fully reflect the true nature of the role. While the position carries significant responsibility and public accountability, it is, in certain contexts, classified in a way that creates clear inconsistencies within the system.

These inconsistencies are particularly evident in areas related to social security and retirement. Classifying the role as a form of employment, despite its fundamentally different nature, leads to outcomes that are not only illogical but also unfair.

What should be a position of public trust and democratic representation is, in practice, treated in ways that do not align with how the role is actually exercised.

The reality faced by serving Mayors

A clear example of this inconsistency arises in relation to national insurance contributions and pension entitlement.

There are cases in which individuals who have served in the workforce for many years and have paid sufficient national insurance contributions to qualify for a pension before reaching the statutory retirement age are unable to access that pension if they continue to serve as Mayor. This happens because the role is classified as gainful employment for social security purposes.



As a result, a Mayor who has already fulfilled the contribution requirements is placed in an unreasonable position. They are effectively required to choose between continuing to serve their community or accessing a pension they have already earned through years of prior work.

This creates a dilemma that should not exist in a fair and coherent system.

A question of fairness and logic

This situation is fundamentally unfair.

The role of the Mayor does not correspond to standard employment. Mayors do not receive a salary in the conventional sense. They receive an allowance, which is not treated as income in the same way as wages or salaries. It does not provide the same level of financial security, nor is it recognised in the same way within financial or employment frameworks.

Moreover, the role itself is inherently uncertain. It depends on a democratic mandate and can be terminated at any point through political processes, including a vote of no confidence. This level of uncertainty is not consistent with the characteristics of employment as defined in labour law.

Treating the role as employment for the purpose of restricting pension access, while not recognising it as employment in other contexts, creates a contradiction that undermines the coherence of the legal framework.

Recognising the nature of public office

The office of the Mayor must be recognised for what it is: an elected public position based on democratic representation.

It is defined by accountability to residents, by leadership within the community, and by a responsibility to act in the public interest. It is not defined by contractual employment, fixed working hours, or the protections typically associated with employment relationships.

Acknowledging this distinction is essential to ensuring that the legal and social security frameworks reflect reality.

Protecting democratic continuity

Beyond the issue of fairness to individuals, this inconsistency also affects the functioning of Local Government. When Mayors are forced to resign in order to access a pension to which they are already entitled, the continuity of leadership within Local Councils is disrupted. This undermines stability and, in some cases, interrupts ongoing work important to the locality.



Local Government should not be placed in a position where experienced leaders are effectively pushed out of office due to structural inconsistencies.

Ensuring that Mayors can continue to serve without being penalised for doing so is essential to maintaining continuity and respecting residents' democratic choice.

Aligning the system with reality

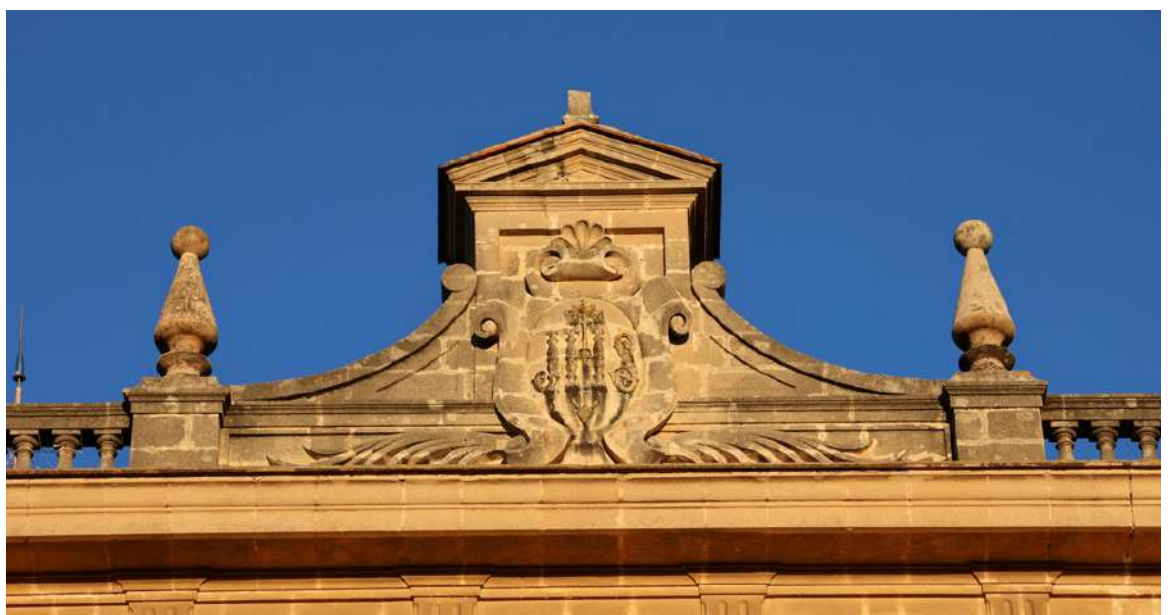
Reforming the classification of the office of the Mayor is therefore not simply a technical adjustment. It is a necessary step to align the system with the realities of Local Government. The legal framework must clearly distinguish between employment and elected public office, ensuring that Mayors are not subject to rules that were never designed for the nature of their role.

Such reform would remove the current anomaly, restore fairness, and provide clarity within the system.

A necessary correction within the reset

Within the broader reset proposed in this document, addressing this issue is both necessary and urgent. It reflects a commitment to fairness, to consistency, and to the proper recognition of Local Government as a level of governance that deserves a coherent and respectful framework.

By correcting this inconsistency, the system moves closer to one that is aligned, balanced, and capable of supporting those who serve within it





Predictability
in funding also
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CHAPTER 23. FAIR TAX TREATMENT OF HONORARIA

Recognising the true nature of public service

The honoraria received by Mayors, Regional Presidents, and Local Councillors are intended to acknowledge their contribution to public service. They are not designed to function as salaries in the traditional sense, nor do they reflect a standard employment relationship. Rather, they represent compensation for the time, responsibility, and commitment required to serve one's community.

Despite this, the current tax treatment does not fully recognise the nature of this role. Honoraria are treated in a manner that effectively places them within the same framework as part-time employment, without accounting for the fundamental differences between the two.

This approach fails to reflect the reality of Local Government. The role of an elected representative is not defined by fixed hours, contractual obligations, or employer-employee structures. It is defined by civic duty, public accountability, and a continuous commitment to the community.

Addressing the inconsistency in tax treatment

Under the current system, honoraria are added to an individual's overall income and taxed accordingly. This means that a councillor, Mayor, or Regional President who already has full-time employment or other sources of income may be subject to higher taxation on what is, in essence, a modest allowance.



This creates a situation that is both illogical and unfair.

The allowance is not intended to function as a primary source of income. It does not offer the financial stability or benefits associated with employment. Yet, it is taxed as if it were part of a standard income stream, without any distinction being made for its civic nature.

This approach effectively penalises individuals for choosing to serve their community, particularly those who are already active in the workforce.

The case for a distinct fiscal framework

A more appropriate and balanced approach would be to introduce a distinct tax framework that recognises the unique nature of elected local office.

Such a framework would treat honoraria separately from other forms of income, acknowledging that the role is fundamentally different from employment. It would ensure that individuals are not disadvantaged by a system that fails to reflect the reality of their contributions.

In this context, introducing a flat tax rate is a practical and fair solution.

Proposing a flat tax rate

It is proposed that the honoraria received by Mayors, Regional Presidents, and Local Councillors be subject to a flat 10% tax.

This approach offers several advantages.

First, it provides clarity and simplicity. A flat rate is easy to apply, easy to understand, and removes unnecessary complexity from the system.

Second, it ensures fairness. By applying a consistent rate, it avoids situations in which individuals are taxed disproportionately because of other sources of income.

Third, it reflects the civic nature of the role. Separating honoraria from standard income acknowledges that this is not employment but a form of public service.

This distinction is important, not only for fairness, but also for how Local Government is perceived within the broader system.

Encouraging participation and diversity

Tax treatment has a direct impact on participation. When the system is perceived as unfair or discouraging, it can deter capable individuals from stepping forward.

This is particularly relevant for those in full-time employment or with professional commitments. If taking on a role in Local Government results in a disproportionate tax burden, it becomes less attractive, regardless of the individual's willingness to serve.

A fair and balanced tax framework helps to remove this barrier. It encourages participation by ensuring that individuals are not financially penalised for their civic engagement.

This contributes to a more diverse and capable pool of representatives, strengthening Local Government as a whole.

Supporting the sustainability of the system

Local Government depends on individuals' willingness to contribute their time and expertise. Ensuring that the system supports this participation is essential for its long-term sustainability.

A fair tax framework is part of this support. It creates conditions where participation is accessible, where contributions are recognised, and where individuals can engage in public service without unnecessary financial disadvantage.

It also reinforces the principle that Local Government is built on civic responsibility, not financial incentive.

Aligning fiscal policy with governance principles

Within the broader reset, reforming the tax treatment of honoraria aligns fiscal policy with the principles of Local Government.

It recognises that elected office at the local level is distinct from employment. It ensures that the system is fair, coherent, and reflective of the role's true nature.


Most importantly, it sends a clear message.

Those who choose to serve their communities should be supported, not penalised.



Enforcement
at the local
level is not
an abstract
concept





CHAPTER 24. RESTORING LOCAL ENFORCEMENT POWERS

Re-establishing local authority

The absence of direct enforcement powers at the Local Government level is one of the most significant structural weaknesses in the current system. Local Councils are expected to maintain order, address community concerns, and ensure that basic standards are upheld within their localities. Yet in many cases, they lack the authority to act directly when issues arise.

This creates a fundamental disconnect between responsibility and action.

Councillors are often the first point of contact for residents facing problems within their community. They are approached when there are issues related to illegal parking, waste mismanagement, noise disturbances, or breaches of public order. However, without the necessary enforcement tools, their ability to intervene is limited.

Over time, this weakens the local government's credibility. A system that is expected to respond but is unable to act effectively risks losing the confidence of the communities it serves.

Responding to the realities of daily life

Enforcement at the local level is not an abstract concept. It is directly linked to residents' everyday experience.

Issues such as improper waste disposal, traffic violations, illegal occupation of public



spaces, and environmental neglect have immediate and visible impacts on the quality of life in a locality. When these issues are not addressed promptly, they tend to escalate, creating further complications and placing additional pressure on the system.

Local Councils are best placed to understand these realities. They are closest to the community and can identify issues as they arise. However, without the authority to enforce, they remain dependent on central entities that may not always be in a position to respond with the required immediacy.

This delay undermines effectiveness and contributes to a perception of inefficiency.

Establishing a structured enforcement presence

Restoring enforcement powers must go hand in hand with the establishment of a structured and dedicated enforcement presence at the local and regional levels.

This requires assigning specific enforcement officers who operate on a full-time basis, in direct coordination with Local and Regional Councils. These officers must not function as external or occasional support, but as an integrated part of the Local Government system. Their presence should be consistent, visible, and aligned with the needs of the locality.

Such a structure ensures that enforcement is not reactive or sporadic, but continuous and organised. It allows for better monitoring of local conditions, quicker intervention when issues arise, and a more proactive approach to maintaining standards.

Ensuring clarity of roles and responsibilities

A key element of this reform is clarity.

Enforcement officers assigned to Local and Regional Councils must operate within clearly defined roles and responsibilities. They must be accountable within a framework that ensures coordination with local authorities while maintaining professional standards.

At the same time, Local Councils must play a meaningful role in setting priorities, identifying issues, and ensuring that enforcement efforts align with community needs. This creates a system where enforcement is both structured and responsive.

Flexibility in implementation

It is important to recognise that there are different ways to implement such a system.

The objective of this proposal is to establish the principle that enforcement must be strengthened at the local level and that dedicated resources must be assigned accordingly.



The specific operational model, including the structure, management, and integration of enforcement officers, can be developed through further discussion and consultation.

This allows for flexibility while ensuring that the core objective remains clear.

What is essential is that the final system addresses the current gap and provides Local Government with the tools required to act effectively.

Improving responsiveness and coordination

A strengthened enforcement framework would significantly improve responsiveness. Issues that currently require multiple layers of communication and coordination could be addressed more directly.

It would also enhance coordination between Local Councils and other entities. With a structured presence at the local level, communication becomes more immediate, and responsibilities become clearer.

This contributes to a more efficient system, where action is taken promptly, and outcomes are delivered more consistently.

Strengthening accountability and trust

Restoring enforcement powers also strengthens accountability.

When Local Councils have the authority to act, they are also clearly accountable for the outcomes. This creates a more transparent system, where responsibilities are understood, and performance can be assessed more effectively.

For residents, this translates into greater confidence. When issues are addressed quickly and consistently, trust in Local Government increases.

A fundamental element of the reset

Within the broader reset proposed in this document, restoring local enforcement powers is not a secondary reform. It is a fundamental requirement.

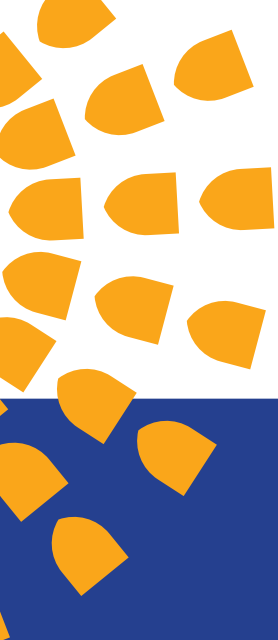
A Local Government system that cannot enforce basic standards is inherently limited in its ability to deliver. Restoring this function is essential for creating a system that is capable of acting decisively, maintaining order, and protecting the quality of life within communities.

It is, ultimately, about ensuring that Local Government is not only present, but effective.



Malta's localities
have evolved in
very different ways





CHAPTER 25.

REFORMING THE LOCAL COUNCILS' FUNDING FORMULA

Moving beyond a one-size-fits-all model

The current funding formula for Local Councils was designed at a time when the realities of local governance were significantly different. While it may have served its purpose in the early years of the system, it no longer reflects the complexity, diversity, and demands that Local Councils face today.

Over time, Malta's localities have evolved in very different ways. Some have experienced rapid population growth, others have become major tourism hubs, while some retain a more rural character with distinct challenges of their own. Despite these differences, the funding framework has remained largely uniform, applying broad criteria that do not adequately capture the specific needs of each locality.

This creates imbalances. Councils operating under very different conditions are expected to function within a framework that does not fully recognise those differences.

A reset of the system must therefore begin with a fundamental principle: funding must reflect reality.

Recognising the diversity of localities

Not all localities are the same, and the funding model must move away from the assumption that they are.



There are localities such as St Paul's Bay, Sliema, and St Julian's where the impact of seasonality is significant. During peak periods, the population in these areas increases substantially due to tourism and short-term accommodation. This places additional pressure on waste management, infrastructure, public spaces, and enforcement.

Yet, the current funding structure does not fully account for these fluctuations. Councils are required to manage peak demand with resources that are often based on static population figures. This places a strain on services and limits councils' ability to maintain consistent standards throughout the year.

Accounting for rural realities

At the same time, rural localities such as Mellieħa and Rabat face a different set of challenges. These areas often span larger geographic areas, with dispersed populations and higher maintenance and service-delivery costs.

Infrastructure in rural areas may require more extensive upkeep, and accessibility can present additional challenges. The cost of maintaining roads, public spaces, and environmental areas is often higher, even if the resident population is smaller.

A funding formula that is based primarily on population size does not capture these realities. It risks underestimating the resources required to maintain these localities effectively.

Understanding daily population flows

Another factor that is often overlooked is the daily influx of people into certain localities. Valletta is a clear example. While its resident population is relatively small, it experiences a significant daily increase in workers, visitors, and commercial activity.

This places pressure on infrastructure, cleanliness, traffic management, and public services. Similar patterns can be observed to varying degrees in other commercial or administrative centres.

A funding system that fails to account for these daily movements does not reflect the actual demand placed on Local Councils.

Towards a tailored funding approach

A more effective funding formula must therefore be tailored. It must recognise that each locality operates within its own context and faces its own challenges.

This does not mean creating an overly complex system but rather introducing flexibility that allows key factors to be taken into account. These may include population dynamics, seasonal variation, geographic size, economic activity, and service demand.



Such an approach would create a more balanced system in which resources are better aligned with actual needs.

Integrating social mapping into the funding formula

An effective funding formula must also take into account the social realities within each locality. Social mapping provides Local Councils with a detailed understanding of their communities, including demographic trends, vulnerable groups, patterns of social behaviour, and the distribution of needs across different areas.

This level of insight is essential to ensuring that funding is not based solely on quantitative factors such as population size or geographic area, but also on qualitative aspects that reflect real community pressures. Localities with higher levels of social need, ageing populations, youth vulnerability, or specific socio-economic challenges require additional support to provide adequate services and targeted interventions.

Integrating social mapping into the funding framework would allow for a more responsive and equitable allocation of resources, ensuring that funding reflects not only physical and economic realities but also the social fabric of each locality. This approach strengthens both fairness and effectiveness, aligning financial distribution with residents' actual needs.

Strengthening planning and accountability

A tailored funding model also supports better planning. When councils receive allocations that reflect their specific circumstances, they are better able to develop realistic plans and allocate resources effectively.

This, in turn, strengthens accountability. Councils can be assessed based on how well they manage resources within their context, rather than within a framework that does not fully reflect their reality.

A necessary evolution

Reforming the funding formula is not simply a technical exercise. It is a necessary evolution of the system.

It recognises that Local Government in Malta has matured and that its financial framework must evolve accordingly. It ensures that councils are equipped to meet the demands placed upon them and that resources are distributed in a fair, realistic, and effective way.

Within the broader reset, this reform is essential for creating a system that is both equitable and capable of delivering consistent results across all localities.





Tourism remains
one of Malta's
most important
economic pillars





CHAPTER 26.

FAIR DISTRIBUTION OF TOURISM REVENUE AND LOCAL ECONOMIC VALUE

Recognising the local burden of national success

Tourism remains one of Malta's most important economic pillars. It generates substantial revenue, supports employment across multiple sectors, and contributes significantly to the country's international visibility. Its success is rightly considered a national achievement.

However, while the economic benefits of tourism are largely captured at the national level, its operational impact is most directly felt at the local level.

Local Councils in tourism-intensive areas carry the daily responsibility of managing this impact. Increased footfall, higher volumes of waste, pressure on infrastructure, maintenance of public spaces, and the need for continuous cleaning and monitoring all fall within the remit of Local Government. These pressures are not seasonal anomalies; in many localities, they represent a sustained reality for significant periods of the year.

Despite this, Local Councils do not receive a direct and proportionate share of the revenue generated through tourism activity.

This creates a structural imbalance between the burden placed on localities and the resources available to manage it.

The role of the bed night tax

A clear example of this imbalance lies in the bed night tax, commonly referred to as the city tax. This tax is directly linked to tourism activity within localities. It is generated through overnight stays, meaning it is intrinsically tied to the very pressures that Local Councils are required to manage.



Yet the revenue from this tax is collected centrally and not systematically redistributed to reflect the local impact of tourism.

This disconnect undermines the principle of fairness.

If the tax is generated within localities as a direct result of tourism activity, it is both logical and necessary that a defined portion of this revenue is allocated back to those same localities. Such an approach would ensure that Local Councils are equipped with the resources needed to effectively manage the consequences of tourism.

Bridging the gap between impact and resources

The absence of a structured redistribution mechanism places Local Councils in a difficult position. They are expected to maintain high standards, preserve the attractiveness of their localities, and respond to increased demand, all within financial frameworks that are not designed to account for these pressures.

Over time, this gap affects service delivery. It limits the ability of councils to invest in infrastructure, to maintain consistency in cleanliness and upkeep, and to respond proactively to emerging challenges.

A more balanced approach is therefore required, one that establishes a direct link between tourism-generated revenue and local expenditure.

Allocating a defined portion of the bed night tax to Local Councils would represent a practical and fair solution. It would provide predictable funding that reflects actual demand and allows councils to plan accordingly.



Recognising the economic role of local councils

Beyond managing tourism, Local Councils also play an active role in generating economic activity.

Across Malta, several large-scale events organised by Local Councils have grown significantly over time. Events such as Żejt iż-Żejtun, Birgu by Candlelight, Festa Frawli, and others have evolved into major national attractions. They draw thousands of visitors, generate commercial activity, and contribute to the broader economy.

These events are not incidental. They are the result of sustained effort, planning, and investment by Local Councils. They require coordination, logistical management, and ongoing commitment from local authorities.

While the economic benefits of these events are felt nationally, particularly through increased consumption, VAT revenue, and income tax generated by businesses and workers, Local Councils themselves do not directly benefit from this revenue stream.

Aligning contribution with return

This creates another imbalance.

Local Councils are not only managing the impact of tourism; they are actively contributing to economic growth. Yet the financial return on this contribution is largely captured at the central level.

A more equitable system would recognise this contribution and ensure that Local Councils receive a fair share of the value they help generate.

This does not require a complex restructuring of fiscal systems. It requires recognising the principle that those who contribute to economic activity should be supported in sustaining and developing it.

Providing Local Councils with access to a portion of the revenue generated through major local events would strengthen their capacity to continue investing in initiatives that benefit both residents and the national economy.

Supporting sustainable local management

The allocation of tourism-related revenue to Local Councils is not only a matter of fairness. It is a strategic investment in sustainability.

When councils have the resources to maintain infrastructure, manage public spaces, and invest in long-term improvements, they are better able to support a tourism model that is both attractive and sustainable.



This benefits residents by protecting the quality of life and visitors by ensuring that localities remain well-maintained and welcoming.

Enhancing the overall experience

Tourism is ultimately experienced at the local level. The quality of that experience depends on the condition of streets, the cleanliness of public spaces, the organisation of events, and the overall environment within a locality.

When Local Councils are properly resourced, they can maintain higher standards, respond more effectively to challenges, and contribute to a more positive experience for residents and visitors alike.

This creates a virtuous cycle, where well-managed localities support a stronger tourism product, which, in turn, generates further economic benefits.

A fair and forward-looking approach

Within the broader reset framework, the fair distribution of tourism revenue, particularly through the allocation of a portion of the bed-night tax and the recognition of locally generated economic value, represents a necessary evolution.

It aligns resources with responsibilities, acknowledges the contributions of Local Councils, and strengthens localities' capacity to manage both the opportunities and challenges associated with tourism.

It is a reform grounded in fairness and practicality.

A system that expects Local Councils to carry the impact of tourism must also ensure that they share in its benefits.

Local Councils are not only managing the impact of tourism; they are actively contributing to economic growth.



CHAPTER 27.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Unlocking the full potential of local governance

A strong system of Local Government depends on the quality and diversity of the individuals who participate in it. Councils benefit when they can draw on a wide range of experience, skills, and perspectives.

However, certain restrictions within the current system limit participation. Individuals who are otherwise capable and willing to contribute may be discouraged or prevented from doing so due to regulatory or structural barriers.

This reduces the pool of talent available to Local Government and limits its overall effectiveness.

Creating a more open system

Removing unnecessary barriers is essential for creating a more inclusive and dynamic system. Participation in Local Government should be encouraged, not restricted, provided that appropriate safeguards are in place.

This requires a careful balance. The system must remain transparent and free from conflicts of interest, but it must also be flexible enough to allow individuals from different backgrounds to contribute.



Encouraging experience and expertise

Opening participation allows Local Councils to benefit from individuals with professional experience, technical knowledge, and leadership skills. This strengthens decision-making and contributes to more effective governance.

It also ensures that Local Government reflects the broader community, rather than a limited segment of it.

Supporting a culture of engagement


A more open system also encourages a culture of engagement. When individuals see that participation is accessible, they are more likely to consider contributing.

This strengthens local democracy and creates a more vibrant and active governance environment.

A necessary reset

Within the reset framework, removing barriers to participation is an essential step towards building an inclusive, representative system capable of responding to its communities' needs.





CHAPTER 28.

STRENGTHENING DATA SHARING FOR SMARTER GOVERNANCE

From information gaps to informed decisions

In today's governance environment, data is not a luxury. It is a necessity. Effective decision-making depends on access to accurate, timely, and relevant information.

Local Councils, however, often operate without full access to the data held by national entities. This limits their ability to plan effectively, anticipate challenges, and respond in a structured way.

The result is a system that is more reactive than proactive.

Creating a culture of data sharing

A more effective approach requires a shift towards structured data sharing between national and local levels. Information on infrastructure, traffic patterns, environmental conditions, and population trends should be accessible to Local Councils in a timely, usable format.

This does not simply improve efficiency. It transforms how Local Government operates. Supporting better planning and delivery

With access to relevant data, Local Councils can identify issues earlier, design targeted interventions, and allocate resources more effectively.



For example, understanding traffic flows can support mobility planning. Access to environmental data can inform sustainability initiatives. Information on population trends can guide infrastructure development.

Enabling innovation and future readiness

Data also provides the foundation for innovation. As technologies such as artificial intelligence continue to develop, access to structured data will become increasingly important.

Local Councils equipped with the right information will be better positioned to adopt new tools and approaches, thereby improving service delivery and responsiveness.

Strengthening coordination

Data sharing also supports coordination across institutions. When multiple entities have access to the same information, it becomes easier to align actions and avoid duplication.

This contributes to a more coherent system in which decisions are based on a shared understanding.

A smarter Local Government system

Within the reset framework, strengthening data sharing is a key step towards creating a smarter and more responsive system of Local Government.

It enables councils to move from reactive responses to informed decision-making, improving both efficiency and outcomes.

As technologies such as artificial intelligence continue to develop, access to structured data will become increasingly important.



CHAPTER 29.

STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

A cornerstone of effective local governance

The effectiveness of Local Government does not depend solely on elected representatives. It also relies heavily on the administrative structures that support them. At the centre of this administrative framework stands the Executive Secretary.

The role of the Executive Secretary is both demanding and pivotal. It requires a deep understanding of legal frameworks, financial management, procurement procedures, human resource coordination, and the day-to-day operational realities of Local Councils. It is a role that bridges political direction and administrative execution, ensuring that decisions made by elected members are implemented effectively and efficiently, in accordance with established regulations.

In practice, the Executive Secretary is often the Council's institutional memory. While political leadership may change over time, the continuity and stability of operations often depend on the expertise and consistency this role provides. Recognising the importance of the Executive Secretary is therefore essential for strengthening Local Government as a whole.

The complexity and responsibility of the role

Over the years, the responsibilities carried by Executive Secretaries have increased significantly. They are expected to manage complex administrative processes, oversee financial planning and reporting, ensure compliance with national legislation, and coordinate with multiple public entities.



At the same time, they are required to support elected members, often acting as advisors on governance, procedures, and implementation, while also performing front-office functions. This combination of responsibilities requires a high level of competence, adaptability, and professionalism. It also requires the ability to operate under pressure, balancing administrative requirements with the expectations of both councillors and residents.

Despite this, the system has not always provided the structured support necessary to ensure that individuals entering this role are adequately prepared.

The need for structured preparation and mentoring

One of the key challenges within the current system is the transition into the role of Executive Secretary, particularly for those entering the sector for the first time.

Newly appointed Executive Secretaries are often expected to assume full responsibility within a short period, without the benefit of structured mentoring or gradual integration into the role. This can create unnecessary pressure and increase the risk of errors, not due to lack of ability, but due to lack of support.

A more effective approach would include a structured mentoring system in which newly appointed Executive Secretaries are guided by experienced professionals during an initial period. This would allow them to build confidence, understand the practical aspects of the role, and develop the skills required to operate effectively.

Such an approach is not only beneficial for the individual, but also for the Council as a whole, as it contributes to smoother operations and better decision-making.

Lifelong learning and continuous professional development

Given the evolving nature of Local Government, the Executive Secretary's role cannot remain static. Changes in legislation, financial frameworks, digital systems, and governance practices require continuous adaptation.

This makes lifelong learning an essential component of the role.

A structured framework for Continuous Professional Development must therefore be established, including clearly defined CPD hours that Executive Secretaries must complete annually. These should cover legal updates, financial management, governance practices, digital systems, and leadership skills.

Such a framework ensures that Executive Secretaries remain up to date, professionally competent, and able to respond to evolving demands. It also reinforces professionalism and creates a culture of continuous improvement within Local Government.

The Local Councils' Association is particularly well placed to play a leading role in this area, developing and coordinating training programmes that are tailored to the realities of the sector.

Providing the necessary tools, structure, and staffing

In addition to training, Executive Secretaries must be supported by adequate administrative structures. The effectiveness of the role depends not only on individual competence, but also on the availability of a sufficient and well-structured staff complement. Local Councils must have the necessary human resources to manage administrative, operational, and service-delivery functions effectively.

This includes ensuring that all employees, regardless of their engagement, operate within a clear, structured framework. Individuals engaged through schemes such as community work programmes or similar initiatives must also be assigned defined responsibilities, operate within clear reporting lines, and contribute meaningfully to the Council's functioning.

Without proper structure, the Executive Secretary's workload unnecessarily increases, reducing efficiency and affecting overall performance.

Clear job descriptions must therefore be established for all roles within the Council, ensuring that responsibilities are understood, accountability is maintained, and operations are carried out consistently and professionally.

Clarifying the employer and governance structure

Another important aspect that requires clarity is the Executive Secretary's employment relationship. Given the unique nature of Local Government, it is essential to clearly define who the Executive Secretary's employer is, ensuring that roles, responsibilities, and reporting structures are not subject to ambiguity.

A clear governance framework must establish the relationship between the Executive Secretary, the Council, and central authorities, ensuring that the role operates with both independence and accountability. This clarity is essential not only for the effective functioning of the role but also for ensuring fairness, stability, and consistency within the system.

Recognising the value of the role through fair remuneration

The level of responsibility carried by Executive Secretaries must be reflected in their remuneration. At present, it is necessary to ensure that pay structures align with the demands of the role, taking into account factors such as the size of the locality, the complexity of operations, and the scope of responsibilities. The expectations placed on an Executive Secretary in a large, high-demand locality or within a Regional Council or the Association itself are significantly different from those in smaller contexts.



A more structured and differentiated approach to remuneration would ensure fairness, recognise responsibility, and help attract and retain capable professionals within the system.

Strengthening the administrative backbone of Local Government

Executive Secretaries form the administrative backbone of Local Government. Their work ensures continuity, supports leadership, and enables the system to operate daily.

Investing in this role is therefore not a secondary consideration. It is a strategic priority. By providing structured preparation, continuous training, adequate staffing, clear governance frameworks, and fair remuneration, the system strengthens its capacity to deliver effectively.

A key pillar within the reset

Within the broader reset outlined in this document, strengthening the Executive Secretary's role is essential. It ensures that Local Government is not only well-designed at a structural level, but also supported by the administrative capacity required to make it work.

Ultimately, a system is only as strong as the people who operate it.

Ensuring that Executive Secretaries are equipped, supported, and recognised is therefore fundamental to building a Local Government system that is capable, resilient, and focused on delivering for residents.





CHAPTER 30. THE PATH AHEAD

From experience to action

This document is the result of experience, not theory.

It reflects years of engagement within Local Government, continuous dialogue with councils and regions, and a clear understanding of the realities faced at the community level. It captures both the strengths of the system and the limitations that have become increasingly evident over time.

What emerges from this experience is not uncertainty, but clarity.

Local Government in Malta has reached a stage where incremental adjustments are no longer sufficient. The challenges that exist today are not isolated. They are structural, interconnected, and require a coordinated response.

The proposals set out throughout this document are therefore not intended as individual reforms. They represent a coherent direction for change.

A system that must be realigned

At its core, the need for a reset is about realignment.

Over the years, responsibilities have shifted, structures have evolved, and expectations have increased. However, this evolution has not always been matched by the necessary adjustments in authority, resources, and capacity.



This has created a system in which Local Councils are often expected to deliver without having full control over the tools needed to do so. It has also led to fragmentation, where multiple entities operate within the same space without sufficient coordination.

Realignment means restoring balance.

It means ensuring that responsibilities are matched by authority, that expectations are supported by resources, and that structures are designed to allow Local Government to function effectively.

The need for a robust and dynamic legislative framework

A central element of this realignment is the need for a legislative framework that reflects the realities of today's communities.

Local Government operates within a context that is constantly evolving. Social patterns, economic activity, environmental challenges, and technological advancements continue to reshape how communities function. Legislation must therefore be robust yet dynamic, capable of adapting to these changes without losing clarity or coherence.

A modern legal framework must support autonomy, enable innovation, and provide the flexibility required to respond to emerging challenges. It must not act as a constraint, but as an enabler of effective governance.



Placing residents at the centre

Throughout this document, one principle has remained constant.

Local Government must be built around residents' needs and expectations.

Residents do not engage with governance through legislation or administrative structures. They experience it through outcomes. They assess it based on how well their locality is maintained, how quickly issues are addressed, and how effectively their concerns are heard. Every proposal contained in this document has been shaped by this perspective.

Improving the quality of life of residents is not one objective among many. It is the central purpose of Local Government.

The vision of Residents First – Better Quality of Life is therefore not an abstract statement. It is a practical standard against which the system must be measured.

Understanding communities through data and social mapping

To place residents at the centre, Local Government must first understand its communities in a structured and informed way.

This requires a stronger focus on data gathering, research, and analysis. Access to reliable information enables Local Councils to identify trends, understand challenges, and design targeted, effective interventions.

Social mapping plays a particularly important role in this process. By analysing the social fabric of each locality, councils can better understand demographic patterns, community dynamics, areas of vulnerability, and development opportunities.

This approach moves Local Government beyond reactive service delivery and towards a more strategic and informed model of governance.

Combining data, research, and analytics ensures that decisions are grounded in reality and aligned with residents' needs.

Strengthening the foundations of Local Government

The reforms proposed in this document focus on strengthening the system's foundations. They address autonomy, ensuring that Local Councils have the authority to act within



A modern Local Government system must also recognise the importance of community development.

their remit. They focus on financial stability, creating a framework that supports planning rather than uncertainty. They re-establish service delivery at the local level, making it more responsive and accountable.

They also invest in people.

Leadership, training, and administrative capacity are not secondary considerations. They are central to whether the system works in practice. Strengthening the roles of councillors, Mayors, Regional Presidents, and Executive Secretaries ensures the system is supported by individuals equipped to deliver.

At the same time, the document recognises the importance of strengthening the Local Councils' Association as a key institutional pillar, capable of providing coordination, support, and strategic direction.

The role of community development and active mediation

A modern Local Government system must also recognise the importance of community development.

Communities are not static. They are shaped by social interaction, shared spaces, and the relationships between residents. Supporting this social fabric requires more than service delivery. It requires active engagement, facilitation, and the ability to address challenges at their root.

In this context, the role of active mediators becomes increasingly important.

Local Government must be equipped to manage conflicts, support dialogue, and foster cohesion within communities. Whether addressing neighbourhood disputes, social challenges, or community tensions, mediation offers a constructive, inclusive approach.

Integrating community development practices and mediation within Local Government strengthens social cohesion and contributes to more resilient communities.



From fragmentation to coordination

A recurring theme throughout the document is the need to move away from fragmentation.

A system that operates through disconnected parts cannot deliver consistently. Effective governance requires coordination, clarity, and shared understanding between institutions.

The proposals regarding liaison structures, data sharing, regional coordination, and the Association's role all contribute to this objective.

They aim to create a system in which institutions do not operate in isolation but as part of a coherent framework that works towards common goals.

Ensuring fairness and sustainability

Another central element of the reset is fairness.

This is reflected in proposals related to funding, taxation, recognition of service, and resource distribution. A system that is perceived as fair is more likely to attract participation, maintain trust, and operate effectively over time.

Sustainability is equally important.

Local Government must be able to function not only today, but in the years ahead. This requires investment in capacity, adoption of modern tools, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.





A shared responsibility

The reset outlined in this document cannot be achieved by one institution alone.

It requires commitment from all stakeholders. It requires cooperation between Local Councils, the Local Councils' Association, and central government. It requires a shared understanding that strengthening Local Government is not a local objective, but a national priority.

When Local Government functions effectively, the entire system benefits.

Communities become stronger, services improve, and trust in public institutions is reinforced.

Moving forward with clarity

The direction set out in this document is clear.

It does not seek to add complexity. It seeks to simplify, clarify, and strengthen.

It calls for a system that is:

better aligned with its responsibilities

more capable of delivering results

more responsive to the needs of residents

Most importantly, it calls for a system that works.

Final reflection

After more than thirty years, Local Government in Malta has reached a point where experience must guide the next phase of its development.

We know what works. We also know where the system falls short.

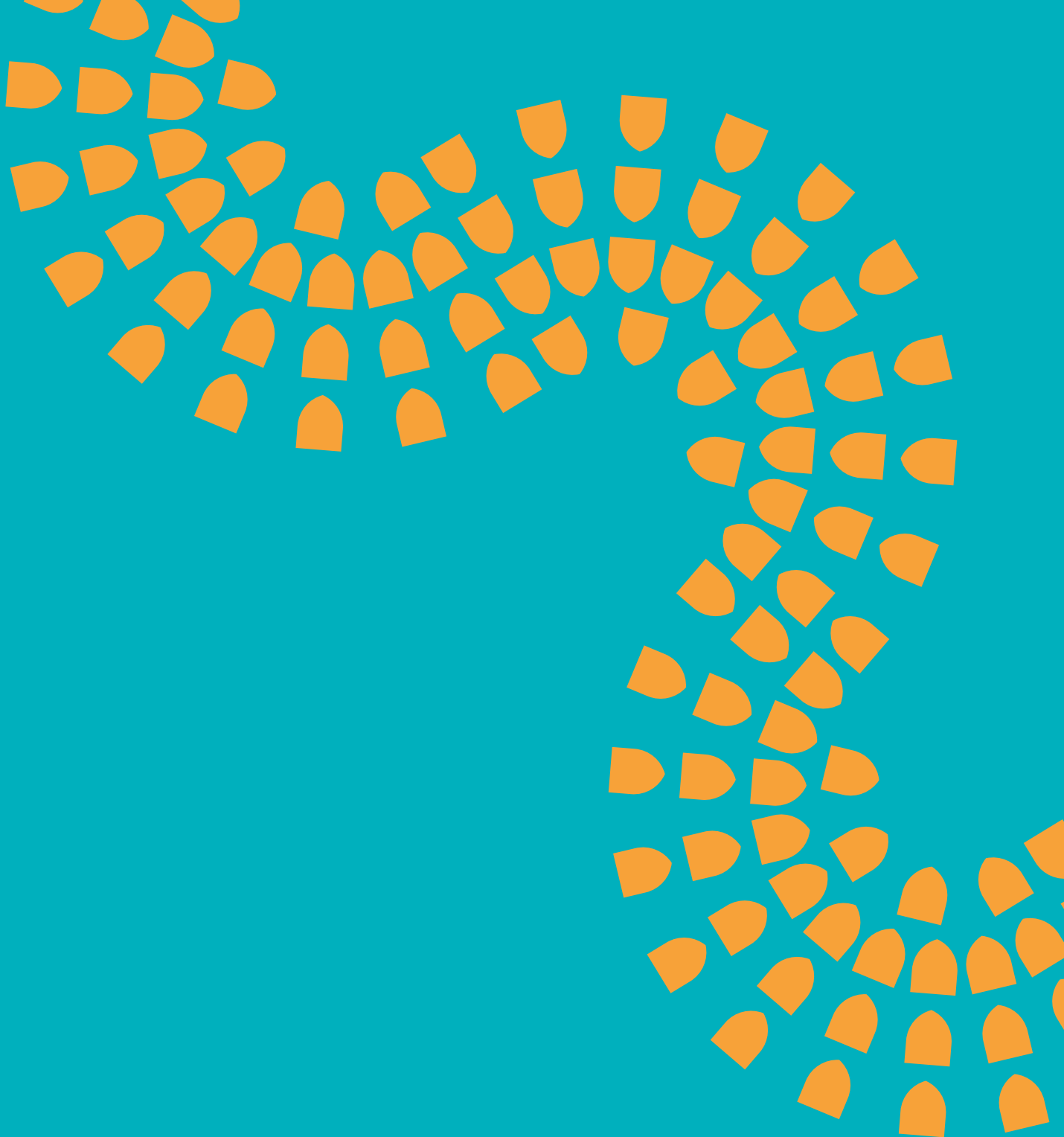
The time has come to act on that knowledge.

This document provides a structured and realistic path forward. It is grounded in practice, shaped by experience, and focused on delivery.

If implemented with commitment and consistency, it can transform Local Government into a system that is not only present, but effective.

A system that does not simply exist but delivers for the people it serves.

And that is, ultimately, the measure of its success.





Local Councils' Association

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