DOMINICA

SUMMARY

Dominica is a democratic republic with two spheres of government: national and local. There is no provision for local government in the constitution and the main governing laws are the Town Council Act 1937, the Village Council Ordinance 1954, the Carib Council Act 1978, the City Council Act 1984 and the Canefield Urban Council Act 1984. The Ministry of Social Services, Community Development and Gender Affairs (MSSCDGA) is responsible for overseeing all local government, which comprises one city, one town and one urban council, 38 village councils and the Carib Council. In 2017 elections, 35.0% of councillors elected were female, and in 2013/14, local government expenditure was 0.9% of total government expenditure. Councils are empowered to levy house and land taxes and borrow a limited amount of money, while the national government's contribution includes a revenue-matching grant and a standard grant. The main service for which local government is responsible, and which constitutes the major part of local government spending, is road maintenance.

1. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Dominica has a unicameral parliament known as the House of Assembly. The head of state is the non-executive president, who is appointed by parliament after nomination by the prime minister in consultation with the leader of the opposition, for a maximum of two five-year terms. The House of Assembly has 30 members and one ex-officio member, all of whom serve for a five-year term. Twenty-one members (representatives) are directly elected by universal adult suffrage to single-member constituencies. Nine further members, known as senators, are appointed by the president; five on the advice of the prime minister and four on the advice of the leader of the opposition. The president appoints the prime minister, who is usually the leader of the majority party and, on the advice of the prime minister, appoints other ministers to the cabinet.

2. LEGAL BASIS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2.1 Constitutional provisions

There is no provision for local government in the constitution.[13.2]

2.2 Main legislative texts

- Town Council Act 1937
- Village Council Ordinance 1954
- Carib Council Act 1978
- City Council Act 1984
- Canefield Urban Council Act 1984.

2.3 Proposed legislative changes

A report on proposed local government reforms was submitted to cabinet for its approval in 2015. The legislative review includes the formulation of a national policy on local government, a comprehensive local government Act, and harmonised by-laws. As of August 2017, the local government reform process is still ongoing; however it is envisaged that it will be complete by the financial year 2018/19.

2.4 National urban policy

There is no national urban policy; however, there is a national tourism policy, which includes a tourism masterplan for Dominica. The tourism masterplan outlines proposed development for the island's urban centres, namely the capital Roseau and the town of Portsmouth.

KEY FACTS

POPULATION (2017 estimate):
73,925

AREA (UN 2006):
751 sq km

CAPITAL:
Roseau

CURRENCY:
East Caribbean dollar (XC$)

HEAD OF STATE:
President Charles Savarin

HEAD OF GOVERNMENT:
Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit

FORM OF GOVERNMENT:
parliamentary democracy

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:
unicameral

STATE STRUCTURE:
unitary

LANGUAGES:
English (official)

NATIONAL ELECTIONS:
last: December 2014, turnout: 57.0%; next: 2019

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT (2014):
25.0%

LOCAL ELECTIONS:
last: rolling cycle, turnout: 18.0% (2014–17 average); next: rolling cycle

WOMEN COUNCILLORS (2016/17):
35.0%

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE as a percentage of total government expenditure 2013/14:
0.9%

Table 13.1a Distribution of councils and population

Parish	City	Town	Urban	Village	Carib	Population 2011 Census	Population 2017 estimate	% rural (2010)
St George	1	1	-	3	-	21,241	na	na
St John	-	-	-	2	-	6,561	na	na
St Peter	-	-	-	2	-	1,430	na	na
St Joseph	-	-	-	2	-	5,637	na	na
St Paul	-	-	1	2	-	9,786	na	na
St Luke	-	-	-	2	-	1,668	na	na
St Mark	-	-	-	1	-	1,834	na	na
St Patrick	-	-	-	6	-	7,622	na	na
St David	-	-	-	9	1	6,043	na	na
St Andrew	-	-	-	9	-	9,471	na	na
Total	**1**	**1**	**1**	**38**	**1**	**71,293**	**73,925**	**32.8**

Source: MSSCDGA communication with CLGF and 2011 Census[12.3a]

Table 13.1b Women councillors and mayors elections 2011/12-2016/17

Election	2011/12		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17	
Councillors	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total female councillors								
Female councillors	na	~40	14	35.0	46	42.2	28	35.0
Male councillors	na	na	26	65.0	63	57.9	52	65.0
Total councillors	**na**	**100**	**40**	**100.0**	**109**	**100.0**	**80**	**100.0**
Town councillors								
Female town councillors	na	~30	na	na	na	na	na	na
Male town councillors	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Total town councillors	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100**
Urban councillors								
Female urban councillors	na	~43	na	na	na	na	na	na
Male urban councillors	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Total urban councillors	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100**
Village councillors								
Female village councillors	na	~43	na	na	na	na	na	na
Male village councillors	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Total village councillors	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100**
Carib councillors								
Female Carib councillors	na	~14	na	na	na	na	na	na
Male Carib councillors	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Total Carib councillors	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100**
Chairpersons								
Female mayors/chairpersons	na	na	na	na	13	30.2	15	34.9
Male mayors/chairpersons	na	na	na	na	30	69.8	28	65.1
Total mayors/chairpersons	**na**	**100**	**na**	**100.0**	**43**	**100.0**	**43**	**100.0**

Source: MSSCDGA correspondence with CLGF

3. STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

3.1 Local government within the state

Local government is uniform and there are seven districts containing a network of town, village and urban councils.

3.2 Ministerial oversight

The Ministry of Social Services, Community Development and Gender Affairs[13.3b] (MSSCDGA) is responsible for overseeing any local government legislation. A handbook on the roles and responsibilities of local government practitioners is currently being developed.

3.3 Council types

There are five council types: a city council for the capital Roseau, a town council for the second largest urban centre Portsmouth, an urban council for the third largest conurbation Canefield, the Carib Council which covers the Carib territory, and village councils. These latter are the smallest unit of local government, with 38 across the country.

3.3.1 Roseau City Council representatives are elected for a term of three years. There is a membership of 13: five nominated members and eight members directly elected by residents. The council's chairperson is designated mayor. The council is empowered to regulate activities in the town by making by-laws and enforcing them within the municipal area. Although the council has increased in size and the municipality has expanded, its functions have been reduced by the establishment of national government utility statutory bodies. As a result, many of the services once provided by the council are now mandated to national specialised agencies.

3.3.2 Portsmouth Town Council also operates with a three-year term of office and has a membership of 13: eight elected and five nominated members. The chairperson also assumes the title of mayor.

3.3.3 Canefield Urban Council has eight members: five elected by the residents and three nominated by the minister with responsibility for local government. Members serve for a period of three years. The council is empowered to pass by-laws similar in scope to those of Roseau and Portsmouth councils for the good government and improvement of the area.

3.3.4 Village councils also have eight members: five elected and three nominated. Each council is elected for a term of three years and is authorised to make by-laws to govern affairs in its village district. The ability to enforce many of these by-laws is affected, however (as for other councils), by the centralisation of many services.

3.3.5 The Carib Council governs the Carib territory, an area in the island's east set aside for the indigenous Carib people, with a population of around 2,500. In most respects the Carib Council has powers similar to those of Roseau and Portsmouth councils. However, except in cases where insufficient persons are elected, no provisions are made for nominated members on the council. Additionally, the Carib Council functions as the official representative of the Carib people and its members serve for five years. The day-to-day affairs of the territory have become part of its responsibility, as well as the administration of the unique Carib communal land system.

4. ELECTIONS

4.1 Recent local elections

Council elections take place on a rolling basis, with each council election occurring separately. Of the 19 village council elections held between 2014 and August 2017 and whose results are available on the election commission's website, turnout averaged 18.0%[13.4a], ranging from 44.6% in the Coulibistrie/Morne Rachette village election to 7.25% in the Trafalgar/Shawford/Fond village election. This is down from an average turnout of 20% for the 23 council elections which were held in 22 villages and one town in 2011/12.

4.2 Voting system

Elections to city, town, urban and village councils are held every three years. The Carib Council is elected every five years. Each urban and village council has five elected members and three non-elected members, the latter appointed by the minister with responsibility for local government from nominations put forward by the elected members.

4.3 Elected representatives

Leaders of urban and village councils are called chairpersons. Leaders of the

two towns, Roseau and Portsmouth, are called mayors. The serving members of the council elect mayors and chairpersons indirectly. In the case of the Carib Council, the people elect a chief who becomes the chairperson of the Carib Council, serving a five-year term. Village councils, which cover a relatively small population and have limited powers, make all decisions through the whole council and have no sub-committee system.

4.4 Women's representation

In 2016/17, female councillors were 35.0% of total councillors (28/80) across both urban and rural councils, down from 42.2% in 2015/16. The proportion of mayors/chairpersons who were female in 2016/17 was 34.9% (15/43), up from 30.2% (13/43) in 2015/16. In 2011/12, women made up 30% of councillors in town councils, 43% in village councils, 37% in urban councils and 14% in the Carib Council.

5. SYSTEMS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Legal requirement

Councils are mandated to meet with residents and form committees.

5.2 Implementation

Councils consult residents each quarter on plans and programmes, and monthly council meetings are also open to residents. Several national initiatives requiring community involvement are held, such as National Clean-Up, overseen by the Ministry of Health.

5.3 ICT use in citizen engagement

No information available.

6. ORGANISED LOCAL GOVERNMENT

6.1 National local government association

The Dominica Association of Local Community Authorities[13.6] (DALCA) represents local government in Dominica. All authorities and district associations are members, though membership is voluntary. Some of the seven districts have their own organisations, called district council associations, to bring together local authorities in their area.

6.2 Other associations of local government

The National Local Authorities' Clerks' Association was inaugurated in 2003. This body represents the interests of clerks. See Section 9.5 for details of clerks' roles.

7. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

The local government commissioner is invited to attend meetings of DALCA. Individual authorities, district associations and DALCA all make delegations to MSSCDGA to discuss and lobby on particular issues. The local government commissioner is responsible for the promotion of intergovernmental relations.

8. MONITORING SYSTEMS

Councils are audited by the district development officer and the National Audit Department. Citizens also have redress to the Minister for Social Services, Community Development and Gender Affairs or direct to the local government.

9. FINANCE, STAFFING AND RESOURCES

9.1 Local government expenditure

The proportion of local government expenditure in total government expenditure in 2013/14 was 0.9%, down from 1.6% of total government expenditure in 2011/12. In certain circumstances town and urban councils may set deficit budgets.

9.2 Locally raised revenue

Councils are empowered to levy house and land taxes and borrow a limited amount of money. Other sources of revenue include special projects and fundraising through events.

9.3 Transfers

The government's contribution to local government spending comes in the form of a revenue-matching grant and a standard grant, including grants for specific activities such as road maintenance, office running costs, the remuneration of councillors and funding for housing and other community-based infrastructure development projects. Negotiations are ongoing between DALCA and the ministry with regards to payment of outstanding matching grants to councils. These negotiations are proving fruitful and gradual payments are being made.

9.4 Loans

Local government organisations are not able to take loans from the market. However, the three municipal councils are permitted to operate an overdraft facility at the indigenous bank (National Bank of Dominica).

9.5 Local authority staff

The Public Service Commission recruits local government staff centrally. It also has powers to discipline and dismiss staff. Occasionally national government staff are seconded to local authorities; usually these are specialist staff. Each authority must have a village clerk; in the case of Roseau a city clerk. This person is the head of the paid service. Most councils are quite small and usually have only two members of staff. Roseau, in addition to the city clerk, has a finance director and four wardens who are responsible for the four wards in the city.

Table 13.2a Aggregate income and expenditure for local government 2014/15

Income	XC$ (m)	Expenditure	XC$ (m)
Transfers		Administration	
Centre–local transfers	1.6	Staff	0.9
International	0.5	Elected representatives	0.9
TOTAL INCOME		**Services**	
Locally raised revenue		Road maintenance	2.5
Local property tax	0.5	Social security	0.2
TOTAL INCOME	**2.6**	**TOTAL EXPENDITURE**	**4.5**

Source: MSSCDGA communication with CLGF

Table 13.2b Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure 2014–17

	2014/15 estimated XC$m	2015/16 estimated XC$m	2016/17 budgeted XC$m
Total government expenditure	513.6	na	na
Total local government expenditure	4.5	na	na
Local government expenditure as a percentage of total government expenditure	**0.9%**	**na**	**na**

Source: Compiled by CLGF from communication from MSSCDGA and the national budget statement 2014–15[13.9]

10. DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE DELIVERY RESPONSIBILITY

10.1 Overview of local government service delivery responsibility

All local authorities are charged with the good governance of their communities. The main service for which local government is responsible, and which constitutes the major part of local government spending, is road maintenance. However, councils also have some responsibilities for parks and open spaces, sports and leisure, and cemeteries and crematoria. The main role for local authorities at present is an enabling one, acting as a champion of local causes for their areas. However, there is pressure to expand their functions to give them a greater role in service delivery. The urban councils' tasks include, for example: contributing to educational and charitable ventures; acquiring land or buildings for public use; establishing and regulating markets; altering or extending waterworks; and providing and maintaining parks, gardens and other places of recreation.

10.2 ICT use in service delivery

No information available.

10.3 The role of local government in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The government is vigorously pursuing strategies to promote the SDGs.

This effort is spearheaded by the Ministry of Finance and Planning. From a local government standpoint, DALCA is currently pursuing a pilot project funded by the EU through the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. DALCA, in collaboration with the LG division of MSSCDGA is piloting localising the SDGs in selected councils.

REFERENCES AND USEFUL WEBSITES

13.1a Government of Dominica www.dominica.gov.dm

13.1b Women in national parliaments. Inter-Parliamentary Union www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm

13.2 Constitution of Dominica www.dominica.gov.dm/laws/chapters/chap1-01.pdf

13.3a 2011 Census www.dominica.gov.dm/cms/files/2011_census_report.pdf

13.3b Ministry of Social Services, Community Development and Gender Affairs http://socialservices.gov.dm/index.php

13.4a Electoral office http://electoraloffice.gov.dm

13.4b Calculated by CLGF from data from Electoral Office of Dominica on village councils' elections http://electoraloffice.gov.dm/village-council-elections

13.5 No reference for this section

13.6 Dominica Association of Local Community Authorities www.calga.org/dalca

13.7 No reference for this section

13.8 No reference for this section

13.9 Based on figures provided by MSSCDGA for Table 2 and total expenditure of XC$513.6m as drawn from the national government budget 2014/15 http://finance.gov.dm/phocadownload/budget_addresses/budget_address_2014_2015.pdf

13.10 No reference for this section

13.11a UN statistics surface area http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2006/Table03.pdf

13.11b Commonwealth Local Government knowledge hub www.clgf.org.uk/resource-centre/knowledge-hub

13.11c UNDP HDR Dominica country profile http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/DMA

Annex 13a Summary of service provision in different spheres of government in Dominica

Services	Delivering authority				Remarks
	National government	Urban councils	Village councils	Carib Council	
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION					
Police	⬛				
Fire protection	⬛				
Civil protection	⬛				
Criminal justice	⬛				
Civil status register	⬛				
Statistical office	⬛				
Electoral register	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
EDUCATION					
Pre-school (kindergarten and nursery)					
Primary	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Secondary	⬛				
Vocational and technical	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Higher education	⬛				
Adult education	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
SOCIAL WELFARE					
Family welfare services	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Welfare homes	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Social security	⬛				
PUBLIC HEALTH					
Primary care	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Hospitals	⬛				
Health protection	⬛				
HOUSING AND TOWN PLANNING					
Housing	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Town planning	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Regional planning	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
TRANSPORT					
Roads	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Transport	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Urban roads	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Urban rail					
Ports	⬛				
Airports	⬛				
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC SANITATION					
Water and sanitation	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Refuse collection and disposal	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Cemeteries and crematoria	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Slaughterhouses	🟦	🟩	🟩	🟩	
Environmental protection	⬛				
Consumer protection	⬛				
CULTURE, LEISURE AND SPORTS					
Theatres and concerts		🟩	🟩	🟩	
Museums and libraries	⬛				
Parks and open spaces	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	
Sports and leisure facilities	⬛	🟩	🟩	🟩	
Religious facilities					
UTILITIES					
Gas services	⬛				
District heating					
Water supply	⬛				
Electricity	⬛				
ECONOMIC					
Agriculture, forests and fisheries	⬛				
Local economic development/promotion	⬛				
Trade and industry	⬛				
Tourism	⬛	🟩	🟩	🟩	

⬛ sole responsibility service   🟦 joint responsibility service   🟩 discretionary service