

Becoming a Councillor – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Aren't I too young / too old ?

All kinds of people can become great councillors. Having people of different ages and from different backgrounds can lead to more informed decisions, based on real life experience and ensures that the Council better reflects the local community. If you are aged eighteen and over, you are old enough to be a Councillor.

2. What's the point of just joining a talking shop, they don't do anything.

Have you ever been to a meeting? Basing your judgement on watching 'The Vicar of Dibley' is definitely not valid. The role of Local Councils (towns and parishes) is growing. They are being given more powers and can consider taking on more services from Council Council. You would be involved in making important decisions directly for the benefit of the Community.

4. How many meetings would I have to attend

You will be expected to attend a Council meeting every 4-6 weeks and, in addition, only those committees on which you serve. Meetings are rarely more frequent than one evening a week and missing the occasional one is acceptable. Most meetings only take a couple of hours. You will receive a copy of the agenda and background papers ahead of the meeting and you will be expected to have read and understood the matters to be discussed.

5. Do I get paid ?

No ! This is entirely a voluntary role. Some expenses are payable, if for example you needed to travel for council training.

6. How would I juggle this with my paid work?

Many Councillors work, which is why meetings are often in the evening. It might be worth asking your employer as many give some time off for voluntary work or council duties. Being a local councillor is a definite plus point to add to a CV – it shows you can make decisions, work in a team, are community minded and proactive.

7. I am not sure I'm eligible as I haven't lived here long

*If you are a Commonwealth/EU citizen and **have lived or worked in the parish for a year** or already have your name on the electoral roll, you are eligible.... Being new to an area may mean you see things more objectively.*

8. If there are other applicants, how will you make a decision?

You will be invited along to a council meeting to make a short presentation. The Councillors can ask you questions. They will then vote in private. A copy of the full procedure is included in this bundle. If you weren't successful, you may well be approached if a vacancy occurs in the future and have to opportunity to be co-opted to the council.

9. I have never been a councillor before, won't I be confused if I don't know what's going on?

You will be eased in gently; there is help, advice and training available. The Council has a number of staff who will be able to explain how the Council works and offer guidance and advice.

10. Would it mean that there would be limits on other work I could do and would everyone know all about my business and personal affairs?

You complete a declaration of interest form at the outset, which asks you to list business interests within the parish area, to guard against bias when parish issues are debated. When you're acting in your role as Councillor, there are standards you're expected to follow but when you're off duty, councillors are entitled to a private life, like everyone else.