



Being a parish or town councillor

Introduction

Councillors should represent all sectors of the community and have a dual role. Firstly they play a vital part in representing the views and concerns of the communities they serve to the parish council itself and through it to the district and county authorities. Secondly they report back to residents on issues affecting the parish.

What parish and town councillors do?

The first role is carried out by attending meetings and liaising with the clerk. Individual councillors do not have, and cannot be given, powers to make decisions on behalf of the council. This applies to the chairman as much as to the other councillors, although the chairman does have personal responsibilities in connection with the running of formal meetings.

It is the councillor's task to bring local issues to the attention of the council and help it make decisions on behalf of the local community. Through this they can help to improve the quality of life and the environment in their local area. Councillors help to influence and shape the long term development policy for the parish, and as part of the planning process, comment on planning applications in the parish.

You must not act as a councillor until you have signed a declaration of acceptance of office before taking office. Once elected, parish councillors sit on the council for a maximum of four years. If they want to stay in post they can stand for re-election.

Parish or town councils can pay an allowance to their members but no local councils in Worcestershire do this.

How you can become a councillor

Elections of local councillors take place on the first Thursday in May, every four years. Residents in parish and town councils decide who they want to represent them by voting in local elections.

To stand for election on a parish or town council you must be:

- ✓ a UK or Commonwealth citizen; or
- ✓ a citizen of the Republic of Ireland; or
- ✓ a citizen of another Member state of the European Union; and
- ✓ be aged 18 or over.

To be eligible to stand for an election for a particular parish you must:

- ✓ be registered as a local government elector for the parish; or
- ✓ have (during the whole of the 12 months before nomination as a candidate)
- ✓ occupied (as owner or tenant) land or other premises in the parish; or
- ✓ worked in the parish (as your principal or only place of work); or
- ✓ live within three miles of the parish boundary.

You don't have to be connected to a political party.

However you should not have been:

- × declared bankrupt; or
- × be a paid employee of the council that you are standing for; or
- × convicted of a crime and sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not less than three months within five years before the date of the election; or
- × disqualified under any enactment relating to corrupt or illegal practices.

Standing to be a councillor

There are four initial steps to take before standing in elections:

1. Find out when the Notice of Election is published.

Contact the Returning Officer in your District Council who can provide the timetable.

2. Get a nomination form.

Parish or town clerks hold a number of forms. Staff in the Electoral Services Office also have all the papers you need and can give you advice. Anyone who is eligible to stand can request these forms.

3. Complete your nomination form.

Put all your personal details and those of the two people supporting your nomination on the form - all three of you must sign it. All three of you must include your Electoral Register number (available from your Electoral Services Office). The technical name for the two people supporting your nomination are Proposer and Secunder.

4. Return your completed nomination form.

Don't forget to send your form back by the deadline time and date. If you don't you will not be able to stand in the election!

Another way to become a councillor is by co-option

This is where the council chooses someone to fill a vacancy and this occurs if insufficient candidates are proposed for seats at an election; either at an ordinary election, which occurs every four years, or an election when a seat falls vacant at other times. In addition, if a casual vacancy occurs between elections, the council must find out if the electors want an election before they can co-opt.

What support is available?

Worcestershire County Association of Local Councils (CALC) is a member organisation offering support, training and information to parish and town councils. If you become a councillor for a CALC member council we will help your council and do anything we can to support you.