

Becoming a Councillor – Frequently Asked Questions

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

Have you ever been to a meeting? The role of Town and Parish Councils is growing. They are being given more powers and can consider taking on more services from the principal authority (now Somerset Council). You would be involved in making important decisions directly for the benefit of the Community.

2. How many meetings would I have to attend

The Council holds three meetings a month always on Tuesday: Full Council, Finance and General Purposes and Planning. All Councillors are required to attend Full Council and Finance and General Purposes. Planning is a committee for which Councillors can volunteer, but it is not a requirement for Councillors who are not committee members to attend unless they so wish.

In addition to the above, the Council has a number of advisory groups, you are expected to attend only those advisory groups on which *you choose* to serve. Though the times and days of these meetings are somewhat flexible, advisory groups generally take place during standard office working hours, to accommodate Council staff who may be attending the group meeting.

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, questions are always welcome prior to and during the meeting.

3. 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, most of which is now done online.

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

Many Councillors work, which is why meetings are often in the evening. Many employers 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.

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

If you are over 18, a citizen the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Commonwealth Citizen or Citizen of Spain, Portugal, Luxembourg and Poland and **have lived or worked in the parish for a year** or already have your name on the electoral roll, you are eligible.

6. 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, Councillors can ask you questions. They will then vote in private.

7. 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.

8. 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?

To guard against bias when parish issues are debated you will be required to complete a declaration of interest form on which you must list business interests and memberships of organizations. You can choose whether or not your home address is published on your Councillor profile or not. All Councillors are bound by the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct, which are published on the Council's website.