

Job Description

Councillor



Council areas are divided into wards. Each ward has a number of councillors (usually two or three), who are elected to represent people in that area. Labour Party branches usually correspond with ward boundaries so if someone is a Councillor in South Elmsall ward, their Labour Party branch is probably (but not always) South Elmsall Labour Party branch.

Many people think that being a councillor is about making stirring but while this talent might come in handy occasionally, the most important skills have to do with communicating with people, being interested in what is going on in your ward and linking your constituents to sources of help.

The most important requirement is that you like listening to people and helping them. If you have this talent, you can learn the rest with our help.

As well as helping people and being an advocate for your local area, as a councillor you get to participate in decisions about the running of the council.

The job of the council is to run the council area, including social services, parks, pools, libraries, housing, streets, planning, council tax collection and much more. Decisions in these areas directly affect people where you live; there is a real chance to make a difference by being part of the decision making process.

What you have to do as a councillor can differ from council to council and especially on whether Labour is in control of the council or in opposition. There are, however, some general responsibilities that will need to be undertaken:

- **Campaigning regularly** – good councillors will campaign in their local area throughout the year and regardless of whether there is an election. Some Councils will require their councillors to attend a minimum number of canvass sessions per month or to sign a councillor contract that should be adhered to.
- **Attending council meetings** - Councillors will be required to attend council meetings. These will differ in frequency and length on different councils but are often in the evening and at least weekly.
- **Holding 'surgeries'** - these are sessions where your constituents can come to you for face-to-face help and advice. Many councillors hold these on a weekly or fortnightly basis and coordinate them with fellow co-councillors.
- **Completing casework** – casework is what results from enquiries you get from surgeries and constituents in general. Casework can be any problem raised by a constituent that falls into an area of council responsibility. It can be anything from a problem with a noisy neighbour to the state of the roads to school places.

The position of councillor is usually part-time. Councillors are paid a basic rate to cover expenses which differs by council but in all instances, councillors are required to contribute to Labour Party campaign funds from that payment. In many areas there are additional funds for chairing committees or taking on scrutiny or cabinet responsibilities.

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