



Why be a Councillor and what do they do?

Why be a councillor?

If you ask most councillors why they chose to offer themselves as candidates it is because we feel passionately about the places we have chosen to represent and we really want to make a difference. Some of us have been keen to take up issues, others have been infuriated by injustices and others are sure they could do a better job than those in office or those who might also be standing against them! For some it's national party politics that is at the forefront of their minds but for others it's much more about what is happening on the doorstep that persuades them to get involved. Whatever motivates you to consider standing the thing that matters most is that you are committed to representing those who will be elected to serve and will do so to the best of your ability year-round.

What does a Councillor do?

Town or parish

The role of parish or town councillor is to represent those in your "ward". This will be for a three-year term of office. You will be part of a small councillor team (in many parishes / towns this could be between 3 and 17 councillors depending on the size of the local population). You will be part of a small local team making decisions on behalf of your residents. You can expect at least one council meeting a month in bigger parishes and at least one committee or working party meeting a month: these are held in the parish and could take between an hour and four hours depending on the business you need to work through. You may be asked / or volunteer to take on specific roles or lead local projects. For many councillors this is the reward for giving their time in this voluntary position for no remuneration: some councils will encourage you to claim expenses but many parish councillors don't choose to. You will pick up some local casework where people approach you with issues and challenges but in many cases the Town Clerk will take on this work or you may involve the local district and county councillor. Of course, the advantage you have of being part of our team is that we always have other team members on hand to help and support you in these roles. Your employer is legally bound to allow you a reasonable amount of time-off during working hours to perform your duties as a councillor, however, your employer does not have to pay you while you are on Council business. We spend an average of 1 and a half hours a week on parish business, fitting it around family, work and other commitments.

District

A District Councillor is also elected for a three-year period and represents the people of the District ward – this is usually a larger geographic area than a single parish. District councillors attend full Council meetings, which occur six times a year, in Huntingdon. They are also required to attend Advisory Groups and Committee meetings – we share these amongst councillors. The majority of meetings take place in the early evening, with the average length of a meeting being 2 hours. Councillors spend time dealing with the problems and issues of the people they represent. This is done through the post, via emails and phone calls or through drop-in surgeries that allow the community to air their views. You will benefit from being part of a team of us dealing with this type of 'casework': you won't be on your own. You do get a councillor allowance to help towards the time you take in representing your ward. The taxable basic allowance is currently set at £4,235 a year. We ask all councillors to contribute 10% of this back to the group to pay for election and leaflet costs. As with a parish councillor role, your employer is legally bound to allow you a reasonable amount of time-off during working hours to perform your duties as a district councillor, however, your employer does not have to pay you while you are on Council business. We spend an average of 7 and a half hours a week on District Council business, fitting it around family, work and other commitments.