



# **How to become a County Councillor**

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# Introduction

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## Part 1 - You can be a councillor

Anyone can become a councillor. You do not need any qualifications. Councillors come from all sorts of backgrounds and, if anything, life experience is the most important attribute you can bring to the role.

You can stand for election as a Devon County Councillor if:

- you are 18 or older on the day of nomination
- you have work connections or property in Devon
- you are a UK, Commonwealth or European Union citizen
- you have not been declared bankrupt or “otherwise disqualified” from being elected
- you are not a County Council employee.

Belonging to a political party is not necessary. Some people stand as independent candidates, separate from political parties.

## Part 2 - How do I get elected?

You can choose to stand for election as an independent candidate or as a party political candidate.

The [Electoral Commission](#) website provides information about elections in England, including guidance for potential candidates.

If you want to represent a political party you will need to contact your local branch directly to discuss becoming a candidate.

## Part 3 - What will my boss say?

The [Employment Rights Act 1996](#) requires your employer to allow you a reasonable amount of time off for your work as a councillor.

You may need to discuss this and agree the details with your employer.

Many employers recognise that the skills people develop as councillors are very useful in the workplace.

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## **Part 4 - How much time do I have to commit?**

The time you devote to the role will depend on the commitments and roles you take on as a councillor, but can range from between 5 to 20 hours per week. A Councillor who has responsibility for a Cabinet remit is likely to spend more than 20 hours per week on Council business.

There are a number of meetings which you will have to attend, which might include Committee meetings at the Councils main offices in Exeter or local / regional organisations to which you may be appointed. You will also need to spend time dealing with your constituents' queries.

The [National Census of Local Authority Councillors](#) in England provides the most comprehensive 'snapshot' of local government representation and analyses of trends over time, asking Councillors about their work as councillors, their views on a range of issues and their personal background.

Once elected to Devon County Council, you can be a councillor for a maximum of four years when elections will be held again.

## **Part 5 - Will I get paid?**

Councillors do not receive a salary. However, each councillor currently receives a basic annual allowance. If you have a position of responsibility, like the Chair of a committee, you may receive an additional allowance. Details of the [Members Allowances Scheme](#) can be found in the Constitution (section 7), which includes the amounts of both basic and special responsibility allowances payable and for which roles.

The allowance is designed to cover expenses you may incur as a councillor such as postage or telephone calls or work within your Constituency. Councillors are also entitled to claim travel and subsistence expenses for 'approved duties', for example attending a Committee Meeting at County Hall.

## **Part 6 - Will I receive support and training?**

An induction programme will ensure you are well prepared to start in your new role if you are elected. We will publish, in due course, a copy of the full induction programme as well as details of two further seminars that will take place in May 2021. This will be loaded onto our Elections 2021 pages in due course.

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You will also be given support to ensure your training and development opportunities suit your needs and develop your skills during your time as a councillor. The Council has a dedicated Member Development Steering Group, with Councillors setting the future direction of support and training, as well as a small budget to organise events to enable you to carry out your duties to the best of your ability.

The Council has been reaccredited with Charter Plus Status for Member Development.

There is also a dedicated support team for councillors, ranging from basic administrative support through to training and development and IT assistance.

Regular briefings are provided on areas of importance and often these are made available on the web, under [Briefings for Members](#).

## **Part 7 - Can I specialise in areas of interest?**

As a Councillor, your constituents will look to you to have a wide-ranging knowledge of the Council, something we will help and support you in achieving, but there are also opportunities for you to develop specialisations on topics which interest you.

For example, there are many topic-based working groups and panels, such as [Scrutiny Task Groups](#) which you may be able to participate in. The Council is also asked to appoint Councillors to [Outside Bodies](#), which can be local organisations, county wide groups or even regional bodies.

## **Part 8 - Becoming a councillor**

Local people become councillors for many different reasons, but mainly because they feel strongly about the area in which they live and they want to make a difference.

They may already work with local organisations and residents' groups with the sole aim of improving their community.

### **Existing councillors have said .....**

"I care passionately about the community in which I was brought up, and wanted quite simply to be able to put something back into that community. Ultimately I really like trying to help people."

"I wholeheartedly believe in a fair and open society with transparency of governance and

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being a Councillor is the best way to promote these principles for the benefit of my local community.”

“I feel passionate about my community and that led me to stand for the County Council. No use complaining from the side lines, you need get in there and try and make a difference”

“Having been a volunteer for years in the community and listened to many concerns I wanted to give local people a voice for change. As a Councillor I felt I could represent those with the least choice and most need, and improve council services for them.”

### **The Council is calling on you .....**

The Council is hoping to instil enthusiasm for local government, and wants the opportunity to appeal to people of all backgrounds.

The Council’s Chief Executive, Phil Norrey, says:

“The Council is only ever as vibrant, effective and relevant as the people elected to run it. The decisions made by our councillors affect residents’ quality of life in countless ways, from education, health and wellbeing and roads to supporting local businesses.”

If anything, life experience is the most important attribute a councillor can bring to the role. There are some conditions, but generally any UK, Commonwealth or EU citizen over 18 who lives or works in Devon, can stand for election as a Devon County Councillor.

They can belong to a political party, or they can stand as independent candidates, separate from political parties.

Local people become councillors for many reasons, but mainly because they feel strongly about the area in which they live and they want to make a difference.

Many of our current Devon County Councillors come from a range of backgrounds, some still in their first term while others have successfully been re-elected many times.

[See Cllr Hawkins video](#)

[See Cllr Dewhursts video](#)

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For further information about the Council and Standing for Election, please contact:  
Karen Strahan

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/democracy/>



Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager

Telephone 01392 382264

Email [karen.strahan@devon.gov.uk](mailto:karen.strahan@devon.gov.uk)

### **Other useful websites**

- LGA '[Be a Councillor](#)' Campaign - Experiences of other councillors
- [Electoral Commission](#) - Guidance for potential candidates
- [Local Government Association - Political Groups](#)
- [LGA Councillors Guide 2019/20](#)

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