



Becoming a Councillor – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is there an age limit?

As long as you are eighteen or over, you can become a town councillor. Having people of different ages and from a variety of backgrounds can lead to more informed decisions, which are based on real life experience and it ensures that the Council better reflects their local community.

2. What does the Town Council actually do?

The role of Towns and Parish Councils is growing. As a result of devolution, they have more powers and can consider taking on more services from Cornwall Council. You would be involved in making important decisions which directly benefit your town.

3. How many meetings would I have to attend?

You will be expected to attend a Full Council meeting twice a month, except for August, and in addition, attend those committees on which you serve. Full Council Meetings are usually held on the first and third Thursday of each month and Committee meetings are usually held on the other Thursday evenings. Missing the occasional one is acceptable. 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.

4. 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.

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

Many Councillors work, which is why meetings are mostly in the evening. It might be worth speaking to your employer as many 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.

6. I am not sure if I am eligible as I haven't lived here long?

If you are a Commonwealth/EU citizen and have lived or worked in the parish for a year or already have your name on the electoral roll, you are eligible. Being new to an area may mean you see things more objectively.

7. If there are other applicants, how will you decide? (Relates to Council vacancies that occur mid-term, not at Election time)

You will be invited along to a council meeting to make a short presentation where the Councillors can ask you questions, they will then vote in private. If you were not successful, you may well be approached if a vacancy occurs in the future and have the opportunity to be co-opted to the council.

8. I have never been a councillor before; will I be confused if I don't know what's going on?

You will be eased in gently; there will be help, advice and training available. The Council has staff and there will also be other very experienced councillors available who will be able to explain how the Council works and offer guidance, support and advice along the way.

9. 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?

You complete a declaration of interest form at the outset which asks you to list business interests within the parish area, this is to guard against bias when parish issues are debated. When you are acting in your role as Councillor, there are standards you are expected to follow but when you are off duty, councillors are entitled to a private life like everyone else.