

Article 2 - Councillors

This article explains who Councillors are, what they must do and how long they serve.

Information about Councillors and the wards they represent and how to stand for election as a Councillor is on the Council's website and at Council contact centres.

2.2.1. Number of Councillors and areas they represent

The Council has 51 elected members called Councillors. Each Councillor represents an area of the district known as a ward. The voters of each ward elect a Councillor to represent them.

2.2.2. Who can be a Councillor?

Anybody may stand for election as a Councillor provided they are:

- a) registered to vote in local government elections in the district, or have lived or worked there for the 12 months preceding the day of election, and are
- b) not stopped by law from holding office as a Councillor

2.2.3. Elections

Anyone over 18 residing in the district is entitled to vote and be included on the electoral register.

The running of the elections is the responsibility of the Returning Officer. Electoral registration is the responsibility of the Electoral Registration Officer.

The Chief Executive of the council is the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer. The Council has an elections office that helps the Chief Executive discharge these functions.

Electoral registration and elections are subject to strict rules and further information can be obtained from the Council's elections office or the Electoral Commission.

2.2.4. When elections happen and how long Councillors are elected for

Elections for one of the three seats in each ward will usually take place on the first Thursday in May every year. People elected as Councillors commence office on the fourth day after being elected and finish on the fourth day after four years.

2.2.5. Roles and functions of all Councillors

All Councillors must:

- a) together be the makers of overall policy for the district in relation to its functions
- b) contribute to plans and policies jointly with partners in matters that require cooperation and collaboration between those partners

- c) represent, and speak up for their communities
- d) deal with individual casework and speak up for citizens
- e) balance different interests within their ward and represent it as a whole
- f) be involved in Council decision making
- g) be available to represent the council on other bodies; and
- h) maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics
- i) together be the corporate parents for children looked after by the council.

2.2.6. Rights to information

Councillors have rights of access to council information in accordance with the access to information rules (part 4).

2.2.7. Responsibilities

Councillors must follow the Councillor code of conduct (part 5 section 1) and must follow this constitution and the rules, principles and codes within it whilst conducting Council business.

2.2.8. Allowances

Councillors will be entitled to receive allowances in accordance with the Councillors' allowance scheme (part 6).

2.2.9. Ceasing being a Councillor

A Councillor will cease being a Councillor if:

- a) they resign by giving written notice, or
- b) they fail to attend meetings of the Council for a period of six months without prior approval of the Council meeting, or
- c) if they are stopped by law from holding office, or
- d) the period for which they were elected has come to an end and they have not been re-elected.

2.2.10. Political or other groups

Councillors may join a political group of two or more Councillors who belong to the same political party or have some other common interest. Political groups are recognised by law and in the constitutional arrangements within the Council.

The number of places that each political group has on the Council determines how many places are allocated to members of that political group on Council committees and other bodies.

There is no constitutional or legal requirement that a member of a group must vote on any matter in the same way as their political group. Usually on policy matters a political group will have a collective view and will vote together on the issue.

There are certain functions of the Council that are regulatory or quasi-judicial e.g., planning. A political group may not direct its members how to decide such matters. Similarly, the political group should not direct its members how to decide matters for consideration at any of the Council's three scrutiny committees.