

## Do you want to be a Councillor?

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### Ever thought of standing for election to Worcestershire County Council?

- Are you interested in helping your local community and influencing the way things are done in your area?
- Do you have the ability and skills to listen, debate and make a sound decision?
- Have you got the confidence to stand up and speak in public?
- Are you prepared to develop and extend your skills and knowledge?
- Could you devote time to and provide leadership within your community?

**If you have answered, “yes” to the above questions, the following information may help you decide whether you want to be a County Councillor.**

County Council elections take place every four years and will next be held on Thursday, 4 June 2009, when all 57 seats will be contested.

### What does the County Council do?

The County Council is responsible for the providing a wide range of services to more than 550,000 residents and spends hundreds of millions of pounds on these residents a year. It works with partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors to make Worcestershire a better place for people to live and work. It has specific responsibilities to provide:

- Schools and other educational opportunities
- Social care services for young and older people
- Libraries, Museums and other cultural activities
- Trading Standards Services
- Waste Disposal
- Highways and other public rights of way
- Planning advice and determining planning applications

### What do County Councillors do?

The Council is made up of 57 Councillors who represent 52 Electoral Divisions across the County. All Councillors are expected to represent and champion the interests of the community, businesses and constituents in their area. To achieve this as a Councillor you will need to:

- Keep yourself informed about the needs of you area
- Represent your community within the County Council and other bodies

- Be accessible to the people in your area through regular surgeries, electronic communication and on the telephone
- Play a leading role in your area and keep in contact with local groups and societies and, where they exist, parish councils
- Keep the residents in your electoral division informed about your work

As well as the local representational role, Councillors participate in the political management of the council. This will be as member of the council where all 57 Councillors agree the budget and the council's policy framework. Additionally, you may also serve as a member of the Cabinet, a Committee or be involved in the Council's Scrutiny arrangements.

Most meetings are open to the public and you are welcome to attend if you would like to see how the council's political structures operate. A timetable of meetings is available on the council's website.

Councillors may also be appointed to represent the council on a wide range of local, regional and national organisations.

### **Personal conduct**

The way Councillors act in office, particularly over matters where they have a financial or personal interest, is governed both by the law and by a Code of Conduct.

If elected, you will be required to sign a declaration stating that you undertake to observe the council's Code of Conduct for Councillors, a copy of which is available on our website. You will also be required to declare certain financial and other interests which you may have.

### **Who can become a Councillor?**

Almost anyone can stand for election, you do not have to live in the Electoral Division you are seeking to represent, but you must be:

- at least 18 on the day of nomination
- a British subject or EU citizen, a citizen of the Irish Republic or a qualifying Commonwealth citizen
- an elector within the County or have lived, worked or owned a property in Worcestershire for at least 12 months immediately preceding nomination and election

A candidate can be disqualified if:

- they are an undischarged bankrupt
- they have a criminal conviction, which carried a prison sentence of three months or more, in the previous five years
- they work for Worcestershire County Council, or hold a politically restricted post with another authority

### **How much do I need to know?**

The County Councillor Role Description, which is available on our website, will give you some guidance. However, you do not need any previous experience, but an

understanding of how a Council works would be helpful. The key qualities required are a willingness to learn and an interest in developing as a community leader within your electoral division. If you are elected you would be offered training to help you carry out your duties and support from the Council and your political group (if appropriate).

The Council places a great emphasis on training/development and expects Councillors to actively participate in appropriate opportunities, which can help develop the skills and abilities necessary to remain an effective Councillor.

### **What training and development can I expect to receive?**

The Council believes that effective political management relies on the skills and performance of individual councillors and has developed and introduced a Councillor Review Scheme. This process will help to review the effectiveness of councillors and to focus on the councillor's personal development needs, building on strengths and addressing areas for review. Councillor Review Scheme interviews will be arranged, on an individual basis, for all Councillors early in the life of the new council.

There will also be a programme of induction and training sessions for new Councillors after the elections.

### **What is the time commitment?**

This will depend on your roles and responsibilities; the work of a Councillor can vary from a few hours each week to several hours each day according to the commitments you take on. In addition to your work in the community, there will be Council meetings, briefings and training and development events to attend, most of which will be held at County Hall in Worcester. The majority of meetings take place during the working day so, if you are in employment, you will need to discuss the time commitment with your employer.

For most of the meetings you attend there will be associated papers, which you will need to read beforehand. In line with the council's policy on sustainability and commitment to the use of ICT, many of these will be circulated electronically. Other calls on your time may involve evidence gathering and research in respect of scrutiny exercises.

### **What support can I expect to receive?**

The council's Member Support Team provide secretarial and administrative support services for all Councillors. They are also responsible for the upkeep of the various facilities available for Councillors.

Infonet Bulletins are produced by the Member Communications Officer and circulated electronically to keep Councillors briefing on forthcoming meetings and events and other matters of interest. The Community Engagement team are available to assist with your community leadership role, acting as your link both with council directorates and partner organisations.

### **Information Technology**

The majority of council business is now being transacted electronically. To ensure that you are kept fully involved and informed, you will need to utilise these systems. The IBS team are available to assist with any questions you may have in relation to ICT equipment.

An allowance for ICT, at a rate determined by the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel, is paid to Councillors to cover the cost of equipment and consumables.

### **Will I get paid?**

Councillors are not paid a salary, but receive a Basic Allowance (currently £9,019.84), paid in monthly instalments, for the time and expense incurred whilst on Council business. It also covers incidental costs such as the use of your home, ICT equipment, handheld devices and telephone.

In addition you are able to claim travel and, in some cases, subsistence, for your attendance at certain "approved events". A Carers and Dependents Allowance can also be claimed to recompense those Councillors who incur expenditure for the care of children or other dependents. Full details of the Councillors' Allowances Scheme are available on the County Council's website.

Some Councillors also receive a Special Responsibility Allowance in recognition of particular responsibilities they hold.

### **Still Interested?**

If you are thinking of standing as a candidate for a particular political party, then you should first get in touch with that party's local organisation. If you plan to stand as an independent candidate, your local Elections Officer, details below, will be pleased to give you further information. Again, this information is available on the Election pages of the County Council's website.

Approximately five weeks before the election, Public Notices are issued and these will give you information about what you need to do to get your name on the ballot paper.

### **Council Website**

The Council's website provides information on council activities. Further details on the democratic structures and arrangements can be found under the section "Your Council". The Council's website can be accessed at [www.worcestershire.gov.uk](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk)