

Guide To Becoming A Councillor

This guide provides information about becoming a Local Government Councillor and standing for election in Aberdeen City



Forward

If you are interested in becoming a councillor in Aberdeen City, this guide provides an insight into:

- the process for standing for election;
- eligibility requirements to be a Councillor
- the role and responsibilities of a Councillor
- what is involved in being a Councillor and the skills, experiences and personal qualities that are needed to fulfil that role.

Contents

	Page
Are you considering standing for election at the Local Government By-Elections?	4
How do I become a Councillor?	4
What is the process for being nominated?	5
Here is the key stages in the nomination process	5
What is the role of a Councillor?	5
What skills does a Councillor need?	6
What support do Councillors receive?	7
Do Councillors receive training?	7
Frequently Asked Questions	8 - 9

Are you considering standing for election at the local government by-elections?

Councillors represent the local people in their ward, and the residents of Aberdeen City as a whole by making decisions in the Council or at Committees.

Aberdeen City Council currently has 45 Councillors representing 13 wards. These are known as multi-member wards as each ward has more than one elected member, or Councillor.

Full information regarding the election process and further information about standing for election as a Councillor can be found on our website.

How do I become a Councillor?

Anyone can stand for election as a Councillor as long as they are:

- 18 years of age or over;
- British, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen (someone who does not need leave to enter or remain in the UK or has indefinite leave to remain) or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union; and
- meet at least one of the following:
 - be registered to vote in the Council area;
 - have lived in the Council area during the whole of the last 12 months;
 - had main or only place of work in the Council area for the whole of the last 12 months; or
 - have occupied any land or premises in the Council area during the whole of the last 12 months.

Some people are not eligible to be Councillors for legal reasons or because they are disqualified under the nomination criteria. Further information can be found on the Electoral Commission website

https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdf_file/Parliamentary-By-Election-Overview.pdf

What is the process for being nominated?

To become nominated as a candidate at a Council election, you will need to submit a completed nomination form, which needs to be signed and witnessed.

Here is the key stages in the nomination process

Every candidate who is nominated to stand at an election may appoint an election agent, although there is no obligation to do so. The election agent is responsible for the proper management of your election campaign, particularly its financial management. You can be your own election agent if you wish. If you appoint another person to be your election agent, the person must agree in writing to being appointed.

Once all the nominations are confirmed, a notice of poll will be published, confirming the details of every candidate standing for election in each ward. From then it is up to you to campaign for votes in your ward.

What is the role of a Councillor?

Being a local Councillor involves holding a position of trust and can be a rewarding experience. The role requires both commitment and hard work and Councillors have to balance the needs and interests of residents, the political party they represent (if any) and the Council.

An Elected Member is expected to serve the interests of constituents and represent them in Council meetings. Your role will be to listen, explain Council policy and make sure that policy has been carried out fairly and according to official procedures. Your role on the Council is to plan, run, monitor and develop Council business. Councillors are essential in deciding what is in the public interest in the midst of a range of conflicting issues and views.

The role will place a number demands on a Councillor's time, on top of their personal and professional lives and therefore, it is beneficial to discuss your aspiration to become a Councillor with your family and friends to make sure you, and they, understand the requirements of the role.

Demands will increase if the Councillor is appointed to a leading position within the Council such as a Chair of a Committee and in some instances (such as Council Leader or Provost) is likely to require a full-time commitment.

What skills does a Councillor need?

A Councillor does not need to have any specific qualifications; however the following skills/knowledge are beneficial for Councillors to have or to develop. A Councillor is not expected to have all these skills when first elected. Development and training support is provided to all Councillors to assist them in undertaking their role.

Beneficial skills/knowledge includes:

- A commitment to public service and representing constituents
- The ability to focus on what best improves communities and the city as a whole
- The ability to consider a wide range of information
- Maintaining an objective and analytical mind
- Being a decisive and quick thinker
- The ability to scrutinise information/data and to provide clear and reasoned decisions
- The ability to communicate with constituents in an equal, polite, fair and transparent manner
- Being an effective communicator and presenter and adopting appropriate style for different audiences
- The ability to negotiate and be diplomatic
- An understanding of the Council's budgeting and financial systems
- An understanding of the role of the Council and its governance arrangements
- The ability to work with others
- Knowledge of IT systems such as email and Microsoft Office

What support do Councillors receive?

The Members Support Team support Councillors in their busy roles by helping them to run their offices and prepare for meetings and events. The team helps Councillors with the following:

- Administrative support (Non-Party Political)
- Arranging Members Surgeries
- Registering of Members' Interests and Gifts and Hospitality
- Research, information, guidance, advice and protocols
- Providing training on Council systems
- Arranging travel and accommodation
- Preparing and submitting travel expenses

Once you are elected as a Councillor, you will be assigned a dedicated Members Support Assistant and they will meet you to discuss your support needs.

Do Councillors receive training?

The Members Support team look after the development and training of Councillors. The development offered to each Councillor will be tailored so that it is relevant to the person, their skills and their role. The development that we offer will support the profiles of the roles that a Councillor might undertake, as identified by the national Improvement Service for local government in Scotland.

The Members Support team will contact newly elected Councillors individually to discuss your continuing professional development needs. This is likely to be after the summer recess; however you can contact the team directly if there are specific areas you wish to discuss before that.

You will also have access to training and development sessions that are open to other Council employees, so you can take part in any sessions which are of specific interest to you.

We can deliver training and development in a variety of different ways – including one to one sessions and online courses as well as the more traditional methods – to suit different learning preferences.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I have to be a member of a political party?

- No, you can be nominated and elected as an independent Councillor.

How much time would I have to commit to the role?

- This varies depending on the amount of Council, constituency and political party business that applies to you. Council meetings are generally held during the working day and can last several hours.

Can I be employed and also be a Councillor?

- Yes, although it will be up to you to balance your workload to ensure you are able to fulfill your responsibilities and commitments as a Councillor. It is important that you discuss this issue with your employer.

Will my employer have to release me for Council duty?

- Employers are required under the Employment Rights Act 1996 to provide reasonable time off work for public duties but you should discuss this with your employer. However, you should note that there is no legal requirement for an employer to pay a Councillor for the time they take off to carry out their Councillor role.

Where and when are Council meetings held?

- Meetings of the Council and its committees are held in the Town House, located on Broad Street in Aberdeen city centre. Although you may have to attend meetings in other Council buildings across the city as well attend meetings out with the city on Council business. Meetings of the main Committees are held around every eight weeks. There is a timetable of meetings available to view on the website.

Is there training and support for Councillors?

- Yes, there will be induction training shortly after the 2019 by-elections on how the Council works and your responsibilities as a Councillor. Training will also be made available for elected members on an ongoing basis. For more information on training, development and general support for Councillors, please see the website.

Do Councillors get paid and can they claim expenses?

- Councillors are paid an annual salary and are entitled to claim for expenses if the cost relates to the undertaking of Council business.

Will I be provided with equipment?

- All Councillors will receive a laptop computer and have access to standard office equipment.

Contact Us

If you have any queries, please get in touch:

Email: committeeservices@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Telephone: 03000 200 291

