

# Be a Councillor Make a Difference

Local Elections in Wales 2017  
Candidates' Guide



WLGA • CLILC



# Contact

## Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)

The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) represents the interests of local government and promotes local democracy in Wales. It represents the 22 local authorities and the 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities are associate members. The WLGA's primary purposes are to promote better local government and its reputation and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public services and democracy.

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This publication has been produced by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) for candidates contesting the county and county borough councils elections in May 2017. Further information available at - [www.wlga.wales](http://www.wlga.wales)

Electoral regulations and procedures guidance is available from the Electoral Commission [www.electoralcommission.gov.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.gov.uk)



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# 1. Introduction

- Do you care passionately about your local community?
- Is there something you want to change?
- Are you ready to take challenging decisions?
- Why not stand for what you care about and become a local councillor?

People decide to become councillors for a variety of reasons. Often it is because they are active in their community, have a commitment to a particular political party or because they see something locally that needs changing. Whatever the reason, it's fair to say that they are often surprised by the range and volume of work required but find that they love what they do, even if it's usually more challenging than they expected.

Councillors (sometimes referred to as members - as they are elected members of a local authority) have to juggle a number of roles and responsibilities. They have to balance the needs and interests of their community, their political party or group (if they are a member of a political party) and the council as a whole. Being a councillor takes commitment and a significant amount of time, on top of personal and employment commitments. However, becoming a councillor is a rewarding and privileged form of public service and, if elected, you will be in a position to make a difference to the quality of people's lives.

This guide is intended to be used as a quick introduction to the basic information that you need to consider when planning to stand for office. There are links throughout to more detailed information on the Internet and insights from serving councillors to help you decide if being a councillor is for you.

This guide has been developed by the Welsh Local Government Association and all the local authorities in Wales. The WLGA is the body that represents the interests of local government and promotes local democracy in Wales. It represents all the local authorities, fire and rescue and national park authorities.

“As a former employee of a local authority and someone who cares a great deal about my local community, standing for election as a local councillor was an obvious step for me. Having served as a local councillor for four years I was given the opportunity to be part of the Cabinet and relatively recently I have become Leader of the Council.

From local councillor to Cabinet Member to Council Leader, each role comes with its challenges, however, opportunities to have a positive impact in my ward, county borough and the wider region have, and continue to be, substantial.

As Leader I have the opportunity to help shape the future direction of the Council and the County Borough and the wider region. The last few years have been challenging for local government and, as a Cabinet Member and Leader, I have had to make some difficult decisions about the services the Council delivers. Having said that, I am glad I put myself forward for election as a local councillor as if I hadn't, I would undoubtedly have had a strong opinion on how these challenges should be tackled without having the opportunity to influence.”

**Council Leader**

## 2. What do councils do?

Local authorities (councils) play a central role in governing Wales as they provide the local leadership and services necessary for their communities.

At the moment there are 22 local authorities in Wales but things may change during the next few years; this is covered later. Wales' councils deliver over 700 local services, including:

- **Education** for example providing schools, transport to get children to school and providing opportunities for adult learning.
- **Housing** such as finding accommodation for people in need and maintaining social housing.
- **Social Services** for example caring for and protecting children, older people and disabled people.
- **Highways and Transport** including maintaining roads and managing traffic flow.
- **Waste Management** including collecting rubbish and recycling.
- **Leisure and Cultural Services** for example providing libraries, leisure services and arts venues.

- **Consumer Protection** such as enforcing trading standards and licencing taxis.
- **Environmental Health and Services** for example making sure that the food provided in pubs and restaurants is safe to eat, and controlling pollution locally.
- **Planning** including managing local development and making sure buildings are safe.
- **Economic Development** for example attracting new businesses and encouraging tourism.
- **Emergency Planning** for things like floods or terrorist attacks.



As well as delivering local services, councils are by far the biggest employer in their area and contribute significantly to the local economy.

Councils have to provide certain statutory services. These are set out in legislation and cover services like social care, environmental health inspection and planning. They can provide other services such as leisure and art centres at their discretion.

Councils provide some services directly, work in partnership with other organisations to provide others and can commission organisations in the private and voluntary sectors to provide services on their behalf.

Councils are not motivated by profit although they do provide some trading services such as catering, and services for which there are private sector alternatives such as leisure centres.

Councils also have wider statutory duties, such as those to advance equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination. They are also legally required to make sure that every decision they make takes account of the needs of future generations as well as the existing population.

If you are elected, you will need to understand what your local authority has the power to do and its limitations, as this will affect your ability to take decisions and work on behalf of the public.



### 3. How might councils change?

With various plans for local government reform having been outlined by Wales' political parties in their 2016 election manifestos, there will be much that needs to be decided during the next term of the National Assembly for Wales.

The current structure of 22 local authorities has been in existence since 1996. The Welsh Government believes that local government should now be reformed to meet the financial and demographic challenges currently facing the public sector.

The Welsh Government's plans have been informed by the work of the Williams Commission (which reported in January 2014) which suggested that governance was complex and scale was a problem which impacted on leadership and service performance. Williams recommended a merger of existing authorities down to between 10-12 authorities.

The Welsh Government originally proposed 12 authorities but announced proposals for between 8-9 authorities in June 2015. A Draft Local Government Bill was published in November 2015 outlining further details on the Welsh Government's proposals.

If you stand for election in 2017 you will join local government at a time of significant change, and you will contribute directly to reforming how local public services are delivered for communities in Wales.

The next local elections (based on the current map of 22 councils) will be in May 2017. Should the current Welsh Government plans be implemented later this year, local elections will then take place in 2019 on a new local government map of 8 or 9 councils, with new merged authorities coming into

being in 2020. It is likely that there will be around a third fewer councillors in the new authorities.

This section will be updated in Summer 2016.

Open [here](#) for further details about the Williams Commission and Welsh Government proposals.



## 4. How are councils funded?

Although most people think that council tax is the main source of funding for councils, on average across Wales, it contributes only around 20% of council income. Indeed, most people don't realise that the 'Council' tax bill they pay each year also contributes to local police, community and town councils and fire and rescue services.

The vast majority of local councils' funding comes from the Welsh Government, by means of a Revenue Support Grant (RSG). The Welsh Government also provides grant streams for specific programmes, projects or to meet specific targets. Councils will receive over £4bn from the Welsh Government in 2016-17.

Councils face growing challenges due to a continuing programme of UK public sector austerity and the lingering effects of recession. Councils' budgets are shrinking, at a time when needs are increasing and demographic pressures including an ageing population are growing. Councils are having to make difficult decisions around service cuts and job losses. They are also exploring new ways of delivering services.

Although councils have local flexibility around how they prioritise and spend their resources, some of the most expensive and statutory services like education, social services and housing must be funded to a level which delivers certain standards. This means that other discretionary services, those which are often most valued by the public, such as the local environment, libraries, leisure centres and the arts suffer when money is short. Councils also generate a small amount of income through charges and fees, such as car parking, leisure centre charges or planning fees.

Open [here](#) for more details about how local government is funded.



“Agreeing a budget has never been easy but local councillors play a hugely important role in helping to prioritise and balance community needs against the money that is available. It is a difficult but vital role. We are faced with a reduction in budgets year after year resulting in cut after cut in services, especially in the non-statutory sector which involves services valued by so many of our constituents i.e. public toilets. We were elected to represent our community and to improve services, the lack of funding inevitably causes stress and bitterness especially when it affects your community or services close to one's heart.”

# 5. Who else do councils work with?

Local councils work with a range of local and national partners and bodies in delivering local services, providing democratic representation and providing strategic leadership.

Many of these partners will be local third sector or community groups, but a range will be public sector bodies or other levels of government.

There are five tiers of democracy in Wales:

## European Parliament

4 Welsh MEPs

Website [www.europarl.europa.eu/](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/)

## UK Parliament

40 Welsh MPs

Website [www.parliament.uk/](http://www.parliament.uk/)

## National Assembly for Wales

60 AMs

40 constituency AMs / 20 Regional AMs

Website [www.assembly.wales/](http://www.assembly.wales/)

The National Assembly is often confused with the Welsh Government; the Assembly is the Welsh parliament, the Welsh Government consists of Welsh Ministers and sets the national agenda for Wales in the areas of (for example) social services, education, the environment, planning, transport and economic development.

Website [www.gov.wales/](http://www.gov.wales/)

**Local authorities** (also known as unitary authorities, county or county borough councils). There are currently 22 local authorities in Wales with some 1254 councillors. Following the changes to local government outlined previously there are likely to be both fewer authorities and fewer councillors in 2020.

**Community and Town Councils** (735 councils and around 8000 councillors). In some cases councillors sit on both a unitary authority and a community or town council. Local authorities often work closely with their local community and town council. At the moment community and town councils deliver services such as maintaining playing fields, parks and open spaces, village halls, allotments and cemeteries. One Voice Wales, the organisation that represents them has more information on their website [www.onevoicewales.org.uk/](http://www.onevoicewales.org.uk/)



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



Un Llais Cymru



One Voice Wales

Councils also work with public service partners such as:

- **Fire and Rescue Authorities**
- **Police and Crime Commissioners**
- **National Park Authorities**
- **National Resources Wales (NRW)**

Councils work closely with neighbouring councils in designing, commissioning or delivering joint services. In this way they make sure that services are delivered in the most cost effective and efficient ways possible.

Councils also convene statutory partnerships for their area, known as Public Service Boards. These Boards include representatives from other public sector bodies and from the third and community sector. They undertake wellbeing assessments and produce a wellbeing plan during each municipal term.

Councils also work with the **Wales Audit Office (WAO)**, **Estyn** and the **Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW)** - these organisations audit, inspect and/or regulate local authorities and their services, and report on the standards of service, how they are governed and how they spend public money.



As a councillor you may be appointed to a Fire and Rescue or National Park Authority. As a member of these bodies you would be expected to represent them in the community, make decisions and oversee performance in the authority at their meetings and report back to your council on any relevant decisions or activities.



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## 6. What do councillors do?

Councillors are elected to represent their local community in the running of their local council. Councillors help determine how local services are provided, funded and prioritised.

It is estimated that on average, councillors spend the equivalent of three days a week on council business, but many describe the job as full time. Many employers recognise the value of the work of councillors and the skills that their employees will gain in the role. Therefore they provide time off or flexible working for employees who are also councillors.

More information for employers is available at the businesses supporting communities website, open [here](#).

Being a councillor requires commitment, patience and resilience and can be demanding and stressful but very rewarding and interesting too.

All councillors are advocates for their communities and are 'case workers' for their individual constituents when advice or support is requested. Much of a councillor's time is spent within their communities speaking and working with members of the public and community groups. This role is usually known as community leadership. For the individual councillor, being a community



leader can mean a number of things. Acting as an advocate for the best interests of your electoral division; lobbying for local concerns; influencing partner organisations to work to a common vision; resolving conflict amongst community organisations; encouraging community organisations to develop solutions in their own communities; balancing competing demands for resources when making decisions in the best interests of the whole authority area.

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Since being elected, I have really enjoyed the variety that being a councillor offers. No two days, issues or meetings are the same and when the phone rings, I receive an email or someone comes to see me, I never know what action will be required. Working alongside our many excellent officers, I am proud that in numerous small ways I have been able to help improve things in my ward, including getting new bins in place, roads resurfaced, a street adopted and an hourly bus service reinstated. I am also pleased that through casework, I have been able to help many individual residents.

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To be an effective community leader, councillors need to speak to the community and really understand the needs and feelings of their constituents. Councillors will not be able to help everyone in the way they would want but need to be honest and open about their decision making and make sure residents' views are heard - councillors are their voice in the council. Councillors will also need to be able to convey the policies and standpoint of the council to the community, making sure that people understand why decisions - sometimes unpopular ones - have been taken.

To engage effectively as a councillor you would be expected to:

- **Know about your local community** (also known as a ward or electoral division). What type of people live there? What do they do? What do they need?
- **Communicate with people regularly and often.** You'll need to make sure that people can meet with you face to face and chat on social media. You'll also need to make sure that people know who you are and what you are doing on their behalf. Some councillors deliver newsletters and write annual reports for the council website to keep everyone informed.
- **Network,** get to know your area, the community groups and organisations and be visible.

- **Undertake casework on behalf of individuals and groups.** This might be sorting out a local problem or putting people in touch with the council or other organisations that can help. You'll need to understand how far your role will allow you to help and when people should be referred to council officers.

There is a huge range of information and intelligence about your local area and community available online. The Local Government Data Unit has demographic information about your area on the [infobasecymru](#)—open [here](#). It will tell you about the people who live in your area, about their education, health, ethnicity, age and much more. The **My Local Council** website will also tell you how well your local council is doing and what people think about it. Open [here](#).



“

I was elected in 2012 with a mandate to sort out local parking and traffic issues. Despite many meetings and emails I have been unable to resolve these issues for my residents. I was equally elected on a green agenda and in this I have been more successful. I have actively engaged with and improved local community gardens and allotments and applied the lessons learnt across the city, encouraging growing in the city. Local government works frustratingly slowly at times and often what you were elected to do is not possible or easy to accomplish but given enough energy and enthusiasm even the most stubborn issues can be solved.

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### Meetings, meetings!

The stereotypical view of councils is that councillors spend a lot of time in long stuffy meetings. Councillors are expected to attend all the meetings of the committees or groups to which they are appointed, as well as spending time in their communities, meeting with local people at local events or community meetings or working with council officers and partner agencies on local matters.

When you attend council meetings, there are some rules that you'll need to understand. These are set out in the council's **constitution**. This document sets out how

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In County Hall, I have been active within my political group, and on a number of committees and working groups. I have recently proposed a motion that has been passed by council. Being a councillor has been a sharp learning curve and really interesting, with the chance to meet lots of different people and do lots of different things. However, the cuts to local government funding and austerity have been difficult and look set to bite even harder over the coming years, meaning that the council is always under pressure to do more with less.

”

decisions are made, the responsibilities of each committee and how meetings should be run. The constitution will also set out the important rules which apply to the financial business of the council.

Most council meetings are open to the public, and many meetings are broadcast on the Internet. However on occasions, meetings or parts of meetings need to be held in private if confidential or sensitive information is being discussed.

Every committee has a chair and a vice chair. These councillors make sure that the business gets done and the meeting rules are followed. Committees also have officers who

support their work by for example undertaking research and taking minutes.

**Here is an overview of the committees that councillors might sit on:**

### **Council**

All councillors are members of the full council. The full council debates and decides upon policy based on reports from the committees and agrees the main policies of the council and its budget. The full council typically meets every 4-6 weeks.

### **Cabinet**

A small number of senior councillors will form the cabinet or executive board led by the leader of the council. The cabinet is like the government of the council, usually formed by the group that has most members on the council or a coalition. It takes the decisions about the day to day running of the council. Each cabinet member usually takes responsibility for a specific area called a portfolio for example, education, the environment or social services. The cabinet will usually meet once a week.

### **Overview and Scrutiny**

All other councillors are active in the overview and scrutiny of the performance of the council and other public bodies

whose work affects local communities. Overview and scrutiny is vital, as it scrutinises the decisions made by the cabinet and the effectiveness of the council's policies and performance. Scrutiny members also play a valuable role in reviewing and developing policies as well as investigating issues of concern to the local community. Although scrutiny committees do not make decisions, they carry out investigations and make important recommendations to the cabinet. Scrutiny committees typically meet once a month with extra meetings for smaller groups carrying out investigations. Councillors usually sit on more than one scrutiny committee depending on the number of councillors and committees. More information about scrutiny is available on the Centre for Public Scrutiny. Website [www.cfps.org.uk/](http://www.cfps.org.uk/)

### **Regulatory Committees**

Many councillors also sit on committees which deal with planning and licensing. This means that you could be taking decisions about buildings and local development or taxis and licensed premises across the council area. Typically a regulatory committee will meet every 2-4 weeks.

## Other Committees

Some councillors may also be members of other committees, such as the audit committee which makes sure that the financial policies and processes of the authority are in order or the standards committee which makes sure that members behave appropriately (more about how members should behave later) or ad hoc committees such as those formed to appoint new staff.

## Other Local Bodies

Councillors are also appointed to external local bodies such as school governing bodies, public service boards, and local partnerships, either as representatives of the council or as trustees or directors in their own right. Some councillors also sit on fire and rescue authorities and, where a council includes part of a national park authority, a national park.



“

I'm a scrutiny chair. We have just completed a review on the car parking charging regime. The aims of the review were to provide car parking services appropriate to local circumstances, support the vitality of town centres and local businesses, and manage car parking in a cost effective manner. We gathered evidence from the chambers of trade/commerce, councillors that had a car park within their ward, visited each car park within the County and collected data. The scrutiny exercise was useful because it meant that the community had their views heard and at the time car parks within the County were receiving a lot of media attention. The Committee made 22 recommendations to Cabinet. A report containing the response to each of the recommendations is being presented to the next Cabinet meeting. A number of the recommendations were implemented immediately whilst the others were investigated further by officers.

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If you are a member of a political party you will also be expected to attend political group meetings, party training and other events.

# 7. A week in the life of a councillor (1)

## January

**“A WEEK IS A LONG TIME IN POLITICS”** So said Harold Wilson, 50 years ago. And it can certainly feel like that for councillors who also try to hold down a full-time job.

### 18: Monday

As usual, get into work by 7am. A morning catching up on email correspondence and planning business for the rest of the week. Fortunately, my employer’s flexible working policy means I can generally arrange my work diary to allow me to attend to Council business. Today, there’s an afternoon meeting of my local Primary School governors (great staff mean that the school, in an area of multiple deprivation, is delivering excellent results), followed by a meeting of our political group of councillors. Get home by 7pm, then try to catch up on Council email, responding to constituents’ queries, chasing up action with council officers etc.

### 19: Tuesday

Work from home in the morning. In the afternoon, I attend my first meeting as a representative of the Council on the local committee of the County Association of Volunteers. So much great volunteer work going on in our county borough, making such a positive difference to communities! Next, a full meeting of the Council, with business including supplementary planning guidance, pay policy, licensing/ registration/permit fees and questions on housing and council tax benefits. Home by about 7pm again, and back to Council email.

### 20: Wednesday

A full day at work – no Council commitments today (apart from email, of course)!

## 21: Thursday

A busy morning at work, then back to the council offices for a meeting of the Community Partnership – local volunteers giving their time and effort, working to improve amenities and facilities in their deprived neighbourhood. They're the bedrock of their community and we councillors are always happy to help their work whenever we can.

## 22: Friday

A full day at work. After work, catch up on Council email, then attend my constituency party annual general meeting.

## 23: Saturday

No rest for the wicked. Our monthly ward councillors' advice surgery, held alternately at 3 different venues across the ward, giving constituents the opportunity to raise with us issues of concern. Whether it's parking or pot-holes, housing or anti-social behaviour, we're happy to take on residents' concerns and work to resolve their issues.

## 24: Sunday

Represent the Council as a local ward member at a monthly meeting of the Indoor Bowls Centre committee, giving this valuable local amenity whatever support we can. Afterwards, to the supermarket (our largest local employer) for a coffee with my wife!

# A week in the life of a councillor (2)

## March

### 14: Monday

Out this morning doing voluntary work. At 12.15pm take dog for a walk. Whilst out walking, I spot pot holes that have appeared and some paving stones that are broken. At home I send referrals to the Council to action. My local Police Community Support Officer calls to discuss local issues as I will be attending the Tuesday evening Partnerships and Communities Together meeting. In the evening attend a charity meeting.

### 15: Tuesday

Working in Bristol this morning, leave at 7.45am. Returning home I notice a warning road sign in my ward is not facing traffic so cannot be seen by drivers. At home I notify Council by email. At the same time I answer any incoming emails, log meeting dates and check that previous referrals have been dealt with. 2.30pm attend governors meeting at my local primary school. At 7.45pm leave home to attend my local PACT meeting.

### 16: Wednesday

9.15am check emails and send new referrals regarding lighting columns that aren't working. Take dog for a walk. Leave home at 12.30pm for group meeting. 2.00pm attend Pre-Council Briefing (Member Development) regarding the fire service. 3.00pm attend full Council meeting. Home by 4.45pm and out in the evening with friends.

## 17: Thursday

8.30am answer emails and enter any meetings that I need to attend into my personal diary. Attend workshop at 9.30am. 12.00 noon pop into town to do some shopping and return to council offices to attend a meeting regarding Supplementary Planning Guidance. Pick up answerphone messages from constituents and action. Attend Community Council meeting at 7.00pm.

## 18: Friday

Visit constituent at 11.00am who has rung and asked if I will call round regarding a planning application. 2.00pm working in Cardiff.

## 19: Saturday

Housework and take dog for a long walk. Ring constituents back who have left answerphone messages since I've been out.

## 20: Sunday

Spend time with family.

# A week in the life of a councillor (3)

## June

### 13: Monday

- 9.00 - 11.30: Stayed at home and read a complex report to do with housing allocations.
- 12.00: Meeting with the local school council to discuss with the children safer routes to school and the prospect of a new crossing.
- 16.30: Attend an agenda conference in the Leaders office with the Chief Executive, Head of Legal Services and other officers of the Council.
- 18.00 - 19.00: Went to the office to catch up with the work at my main employment.

### 14: Tuesday

- 9.00: Met with two constituents and our Building Control Officer over a party wall issue where neither party are accepting responsibility for a dangerous structure. I was handed a quite considerable and hefty document which will take me some time to read.
- 11.00 - 11.45: Some time at my office catching up with the day job.
- 12.00: Meeting with the Muslim Council at their Mosque to talk about issues relating to extension to the Mosque and parking issues.
- 16.00: Met with two constituents and a council officer to talk about waste management in relation to black bags being put out on the street too soon and what action the Council can take against the perpetrators.
- 18.00 - 20.00: Went to a meeting of the local community centre management committee.

### 15: Wednesday

- 09.00 - 13.30: Working at my office.
- 14.00: Meeting with officers in the Rights of Way Department to talk about a meeting which I will chair to do with public rights of way.
- 18.00 - 21.00: Attending the local Political Group meeting, as Group Secretary. I have the minutes to compile following this meeting.

## 16: Thursday

**09.00 - 10.10:** Meeting with the Sports Development Officer at a local sports club about community engagement and starting up a ladies rugby team.

**10.30 - 15.00:** Back at my own office.

**16.00:** Meeting with a constituent and the Head Teacher of a local primary school to talk about bullying as the parent is not happy with the way the Head Teacher has handled an incident in the school. We talked the issue through and we think it is now resolved.

**19.00:** Attending the Queen's beacon lighting ceremony.

## 17: Friday

**09.00 - 12.00:** Working at my main job offices again.

**13.00 - 16.00:** Attend the Pension Investment Advisory Panel meeting on behalf of the Council.

**19.00:** Attending the Mayor's fund raising dinner for two charities.

## 18: Saturday

**10.00 - 12.00:** Put together the minutes of the Political Group meeting and send out the Agenda and minutes for our next meeting.

**13.00:** Meeting with the residents of a local Conservation Area who are looking to turn their green into village green status.

**14.30:** Attend an exhibition in the Town Hall as a local artist was displaying paintings and sketches of local scenes and pictures from bygone days.

## 19: Sunday

**Day off:** I try to use Sunday as a family day. Inevitably sometimes this does not work out and I sometimes use Sunday as a day to meet constituents.

# A week in the life of a councillor (4)

## September

### 19: Monday

Write an article for my local village news booklet. The main issue being dog fouling and litter. Apart from the usual household needs, I walked my dog, which almost always means I have to deal with or offer advice to those I meet along the way, often with me needing to take some action or other. Make sure I pick up rubbish as I go. Have to leave home by 12.30 for a meeting of a Health Care Collaborative concerning our area, which means a journey of 68 miles. Returned home by about 6.30 pm. Thankfully, no evening meetings but the telephone keeps me busy. A huge amount of reading to do get through this week for an employment grievance hearing on Thursday. Will have to be very well versed particularly as I am Chairing the meeting.

### 20: Tuesday

Need to re-read the Minutes for this evening. No daytime meetings today so usual homework, there are always emails to deal with. Again walked the dog. Checked the local cemetery rubbish. The contractor who normally looks after it has gone into administration so until the contract can be re-let I have been doing what I can to keep it neat and tidy. Chaired the Special School Governing Body Meeting this evening. There are always issues to be followed up after the meeting. I will deal with them in the morning.

### 21: Wednesday

Read papers for the scrutiny working group this afternoon, the normal morning dog walking and chats with those I meet. I always collect a paper from the local shop as this is where I am made aware of any issues I may need to deal with, it's a very good source of information. Leave for County Hall for an Adult Scrutiny working group a round trip of 60 miles. Arrive home for a quick meal then attend the Community Council Meeting and although not a member of this Council, I have a very good relationship with the council and am able to offer them help and guidance. The usual emails have to be fitted in somewhere during the day.

## 22: Thursday

Early start today, so no time for dog walking, will have to rely on my husband. Today I am chairing an employment grievance hearing at County Hall (60 miles again) for a member of staff who has been dismissed, so it is a hard day. As usual emails have to be fitted in and any follow up that may be necessary. It's quite useful to be able to do these at County Hall as it is often easier to see officers if available, rather than email. Thankfully no evening meeting today, having left at 7.45 this morning and not returning home until 5.00pm.

## 23: Friday

Member training today at County Hall leaving at 8.35 (60 miles again). Meeting a fellow councillor to share transport. I do the driving, it's a full day of training with the Local Health Board giving a presentation in the morning and Social Services in the afternoon. As always emails need to be dealt with. Awaiting outcome letter from yesterday which I will need to sign off as the Chair of the Employment Grievance Hearing before it can be sent. Dash home, quick meal then off to the local theatre to introduce the Sports Awards for the year and make welcome and entertain our sponsors. Long day, didn't arrive home until 10.00pm.

## 24: Saturday

Needed to see a constituent who is experiencing some difficulty with her house numbering, had tried to fit it in during the week but it wasn't possible, I hoped it would only take a few minutes but turned out to be a couple of hours. Hopefully the rest of the day will be mine to catch up with what I can.

## 25: Sunday

It's mine I hope! - after Church where I am a Worship leader & Chalice administrator.

# A week in the life of a councillor (5)

## November

### 14: Monday

Really busy week. The meetings I need to attend will put a lot of pressure on my own work time so I need to plan my own work around this. Luckily as someone who is self-employed I can do this, otherwise it would be very difficult.

Dropped off eldest son to secondary school. Back home, I arranged to meet a constituent at 9:30 am to discuss recent speed reduction initiatives. Executive board member and traffic management officers also attended. Took pictures of rubbish in my area and sent these off to the refuse department for something to be done. Departed for work. In work made time to send letter to Welsh Water regarding concerns about a local reservoir. At 4pm attended a meeting about reforming a local community council fund. Returned home. Did some work for my own business. 7:30 pm - Attended regular meeting of the local Community Centre Committee. Some actions for me to chase up with the community council. Read papers for meeting in community council tomorrow.

### 15: Tuesday

Dropped eldest son off to school at 8:15. Back to house to work from home for my own business, need to deal with some business issues before attending a litter pick. Answered various emails from constituents. 10am - Participated in the litter pick, along with the local primary school. Tweeted some pictures about the event. Left the litter pick at 12pm, back to work. 6pm attended community council meeting. 7:30pm attended the Residents Association meeting in a local pub. Home 9 pm. Read council papers for meeting tomorrow.

### 16: Wednesday

Dropped eldest son off to school at 8:15. 9am - Attended full county council meeting. Updated website and responded to emails. Left full council at 2 pm, back to the office quickly before shortlisting for interviews in a local secondary school (as I'm an LEA Governor) at 4pm. Emailed local factory to get an update on noise initiatives being put in place. 6pm, did more work for my own business.

# November

## 17: Thursday

Grandparents had to take eldest boy to school today as I have a meeting to attend. 8:30 am - finance committee meeting at local primary school. In office at 9:45am. Full day of work today so I can catch up with my own business schedule which has been tested this week having attended so many council meetings. Worked until 5pm but found time to send in my community news section to the local paper listing local news and events.

## 18: Friday

Dropped eldest son off to school at 8:15. 8:30am took pictures and sent email about the state of council garages in my area. Responded to emails from constituents. Worked for my own business from 9am to 5pm. 6:30pm - 8pm - Volunteered at local youth Club (every week during term time). Out with some mates for Friday night beers.

## 19: Saturday

Walk around local reservoir to highlight issues that need fixing and tweet Welsh Water with pictures. Filled out assessment forms for 4 Duke of Edinburgh volunteers helping us out at the youth club. Did some work in the garden.

## 20: Sunday

Take one son to sports, and other to swimming lessons. Sunday lunch and chill out. Quick update to the website I use to keep my constituents informed.

## 8. Will I get paid as a councillor?

Councillors are entitled to receive a salary in return for the commitment and contribution they make. Councillors at all levels undertake a demanding and challenging role, which can affect their professional careers and can impact on work life balance. So it is sensible that councillors are properly recognised and remunerated for this vital and valuable contribution to public life.

All councillors receive a basic salary. In 2016-17 it is £13,300. Councillors are also entitled to travel allowances and those with caring responsibilities can also receive an additional care allowance of up to £403 per month. You can also claim your salary whilst taking family absence such as parental leave.

Those councillors who undertake specific responsibilities such as executive/cabinet members, committee chairs or leaders of their political group on the council will receive an additional payment. This is called a senior salary and is calculated based on the size of the authority and the type of additional role they undertake.

Councillors do not set their own salaries; the framework for councillors' salaries is set by a body called the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales. The amount to be paid to councillors is set out in their annual report.

More information is available [here](#).

The Council will publish the details of your salary and any allowances that you receive on its website.



# 9. Rules and regulations for councillors

All councillors are expected to uphold the highest standards of behaviour. The public needs to feel confident that you are living up to the high standards that they have a right to expect from you.

Councillors are bound by a statutory **Code of Conduct** which outlines what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and conduct; this code applies to councillors whenever they are acting or appear to be acting as a councillor. In short pretty much all of the time.

According to the Code, councillors need to act very clearly in the ways outlined below:

- Act only in the public interest - not in favour of yourself or anyone else
- Be honest and declare any interests you have
- Act with integrity - not be influenced by any people or organisations for their benefit
- Act within the law
- Use the authority's resources lawfully and prudently
- Always take decisions on merit, using all the information and evidence available

- Always show respect to other people no matter who they are and what they believe
- Be as open as possible about your actions and the actions of the council
- Be prepared to be open to the scrutiny of the public for what you do
- Lead others by example and be a positive role model for the council to the public and officers

Breaches of the Code can be referred to the *Public Services Ombudsman for Wales* and sanctions can include formal apologies, training or even suspension or disqualification from office. Councillors are expected to formally agree to the Code when signing their acceptance of office following election. You can find the full text of the model Code of Conduct [here](#).

The Welsh Government have published a set of public sector values to guide how public services work these are:

- working for the long term
- always growing and improving
- working together
- treating everyone with respect
- putting citizens first

For more information, open [here](#).

# 10. What do council officers do?

Officers are employed to manage the work of the council and help councillors put their policies into action. Some posts in the council are statutory, for example the Head of Paid Service (also known as the Chief Executive or Managing Director), the Section 151 Officer who is responsible for ensuring financial probity (usually the Director of Finance) and the Monitoring Officer who ensures that the council operates legally. The Head of Democratic Services works closely with all councillors and makes sure that councillors and committees are provided with appropriate support.

Officers are politically neutral professionals, specialists in their field, with a duty to give councillors impartial advice to help them make the right decisions so it's important to form positive professional relationships with

them and to respect their knowledge and experience even if you don't always agree with them.



# 11. How are councillors supported in their work?

When councillors are elected for the first time, it takes a while to understand what the council does and their role within it. Then there are all the laws, rules, policies and procedures to get to grips with. The people who elect you will have high expectations of their local councillor from day one.

Every council will run an orientation programme for new members to show you where and who everyone is, followed by an induction programme to help you understand your role, council procedures and the practical skills you need, for example to chair a meeting or take part in a radio interview.

You will be well supported in your daily duties and also provided with training to help you understand more complex issues. You'll be expected to attend a fair amount of training when you first start your work on the council and throughout your period of office. Some training is provided for all members and other training is provided in response to your individual needs, these are usually identified in a personal development review undertaken by leading members or officers to find out what skills you already have and where you might need some help.

**LAWS**

**RULES**

**POLICIES**

**PROCEDURES**

“

Since becoming a county councillor, I have had two children and have found the county council to be very supportive of me combining working as a councillor with raising my children. Being a councillor is challenging, varied and interesting and rewarding. I would urge anyone who is interested in helping their community, likes people, and enjoys being busy and active to consider standing in their local area.

”



# 12. How do I stand for election as a councillor?

Almost anyone can be a councillor and it's very important that a range of different people are elected to represent different communities.



Local government needs more councillors who are under 40, female, disabled, Gay or lesbian, transgender and Black or Asian and from a range of beliefs, cultures and personal circumstances. In short, more councillors who are as diverse as the communities they represent. You could be working or unemployed or in education.

The Welsh Government, Local Authorities and the WLGA are working together to increase the diversity of councillors. The Diversity in Democracy programme has provided under-represented groups with access to information, support and training to enable them to stand for office. More information about the programme is available [here](#).



The only rules about who can stand for election say that you need to be:

At least 18 years old on the day of your nomination, a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union.

AND that you need to meet at least one of the following four qualifications:

1. You are, and will continue to be, registered as a local government elector for the local authority area in which you wish to stand from the day of your nomination onwards.
2. You have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the local authority area during the whole of the 12 months before the day of your nomination and the day of election.
3. Your main or only place of work during the 12 months prior to the day of your nomination and the day of election has been in the local authority area.
4. You have lived in the local authority area during the whole of the 12 months before the day of your nomination and the day of election.

## However, you can't be a councillor if you:

1. Are employed by the local authority in which you wish to stand or hold a paid office under the authority (including joint boards or committees). Note that you may be 'employed by the local authority', for example, if you work in certain schools or in fire and rescue services. A good rule of thumb is if you work for the public sector, check with your HR department to find out if you are unable to stand. The Electoral Commission website (link below) will also give you guidance.
2. Hold a politically restricted post in a local authority (if you are employed by a council, certain posts like the Chief Executive, senior officers or officers involved in providing advice to members, are politically restricted – check with your council for further details).
3. Are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order or a debt relief restrictions order or interim debt relief restrictions order.
4. Have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (including a suspended

sentence), without the option of a fine, during the five years before polling day.

5. Have been disqualified under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (which covers corrupt or illegal electoral practices and offences relating to donations).

A person may also be disqualified from election if they have been disqualified from standing for election to a local authority following a decision of the Independent Adjudication Panel for Wales.

This and further information is available on the Electoral Commission website, open [here](#).

**You can stand for election as an independent candidate or as a group/party political candidate.** If you are a member or plan to join or stand as a member of a political party their agents will work for you. If you are standing as an independent member you will need to seek advice from different agencies.

Further details about the major Political parties are available here:

**Plaid Cymru**

[www.plaidcymru.org/](http://www.plaidcymru.org/)

**UKIP in Wales**

[www.ukip.wales/](http://www.ukip.wales/)

**Wales Green Party**

[www.walesgreenparty.org.uk/](http://www.walesgreenparty.org.uk/)

**Welsh Conservatives**

[www.welshconservatives.com/](http://www.welshconservatives.com/)

**Welsh Labour**

[www.welshlabour.org.uk/](http://www.welshlabour.org.uk/)

**Welsh Liberal Democrats**

[www.welshlibdems.org.uk/](http://www.welshlibdems.org.uk/)

If you want more information about the role of an independent councillor, the Local Government Association have a group for independent councillors.

Open [here](#) for more information on the LGA Independent Group.

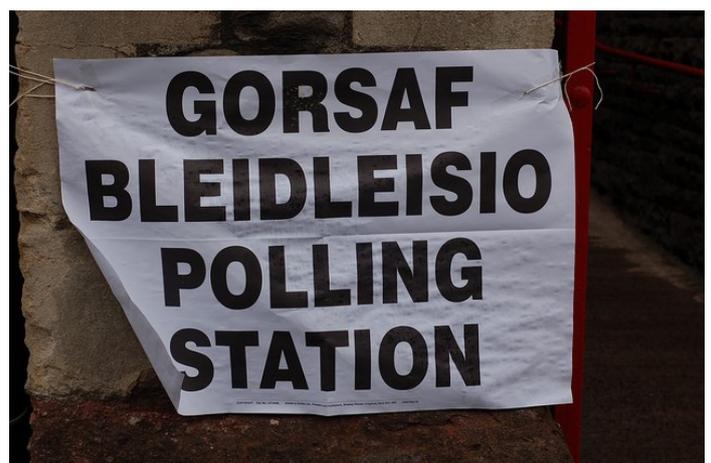
A full list of registered political parties is available from the Electoral Commission, open [here](#), where you can also find all the information you need as a candidate. i.e.

- standing for election
- campaigning
- accepting donations
- spending money
- your rights as a candidate, including access to election proceedings
- reporting after the election

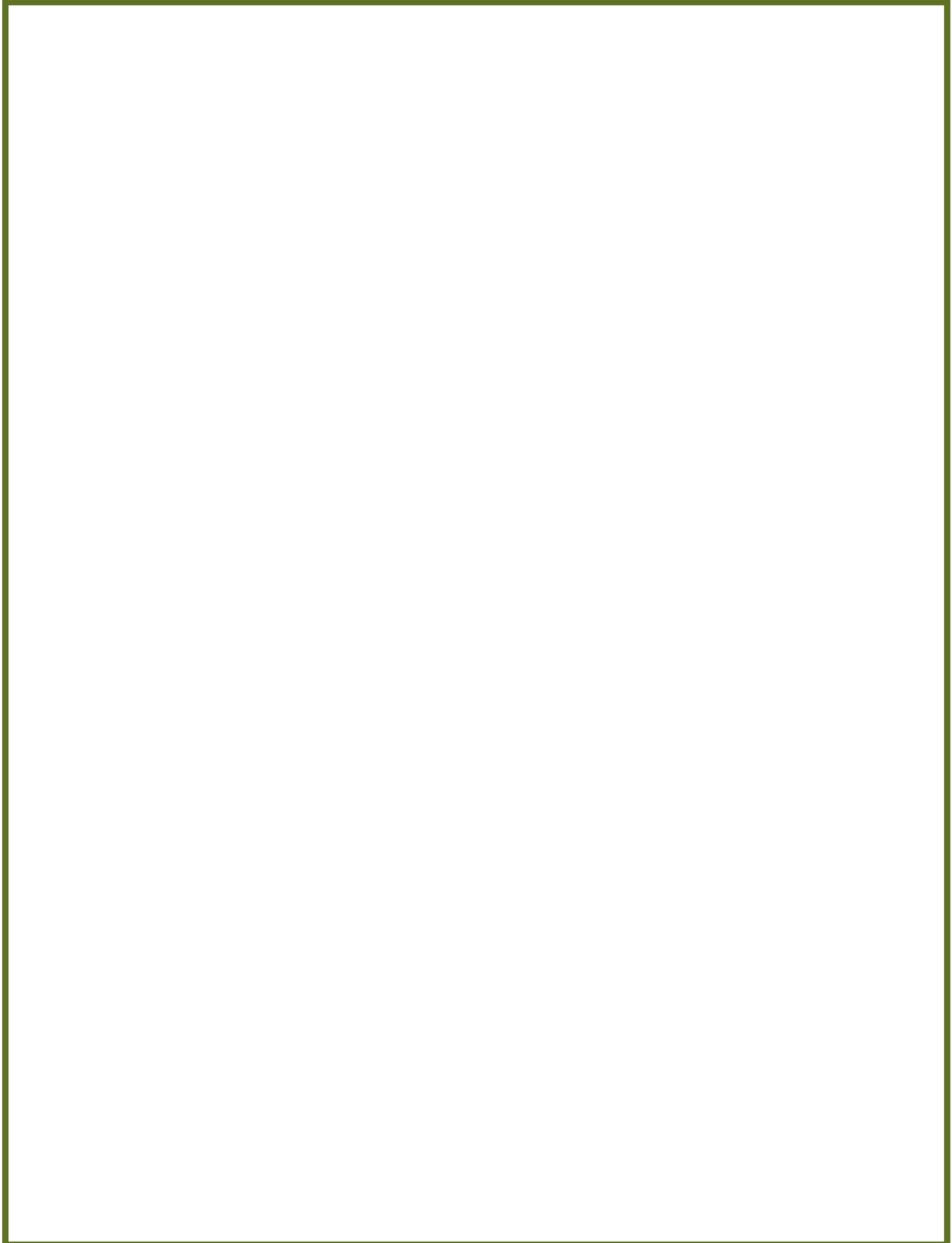
If you support a political party, they are now looking for people interested in representing them. Don't worry if you are not already a member of a party as they will be able to go through all the options with you.

As the May 2017 election draws nearer and if you have been selected by a party as a candidate or if you are standing as an independent candidate, you must make sure that you are officially 'nominated'. This means completing a nomination paper which must be signed by 10 registered electors of the electoral division (ward) where you wish to stand. These papers are available from your local council's electoral services department. You must also give your consent in writing to your nomination.

If you are a candidate for a registered political party, you must also submit a certificate from the party's nominating officer, authorising you and your use of the party's description and emblem. If you are standing independently, you can only describe yourself as 'independent' or give no description at all.



# Notes:

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