

What do Councillors do?

Councillors are elected by local people to plan, run, monitor and develop Council business.

Councillors work to improve the quality of life for people within their area and make decisions about local issues. They have to decide what is in the public interest amidst a range of conflicting issues and views.

Councillors usually represent a Political Party. However, they can be Independent. All Councillors represent all the citizens in their ward.

It is up to each individual Councillor how they work, but the main areas of responsibility are:

1. Representing the people in their area (ward)
2. Community leadership
3. Formulating Policy



1. The councillor's role as a representative

This is the Councillors' most important role. As a council representative they:

- Hold drop in surgeries, usually in a community centre familiar to local people. Here they deal with people's questions e.g. claiming a discount for council tax.
- Represent an individual or a family at special appeals, e.g. housing benefit.
- Explain council policy and make sure that the policy has been carried out fairly.
- Support local organisations.
- Campaign on local issues, championing the causes which will improve the facilities and the life of the community.
- Try to find grants/resources for their ward.
- Tell people about services in the area.
- Encourage community participation.
- Listen to the needs of local people and take their views into account when making policy decisions.



2. The councillor's role as a community leader

Councillors carry out their role as community leaders by:

- Representing the Council and constituents on local management boards and school governor committees
- Participating in the activities of any outside body to which they are appointed and reporting back to the Council
- Making sure that they know about organisations, services and activities which are important to the community.



3. The councillor's role as a policy maker

Councillors can influence local policies through:

- Their role on full Council
- Their role on committees which recommend policy developments.
- As members of management boards of voluntary bodies and school governors.
- Membership of a Political Group.



The Mayor

The Mayor must be non-political and must be seen to represent every section of the community regardless of his/her political views.

The Mayor is the Borough's First Citizen. S/he chairs the council meetings and represents the borough at many events, both inside and outside the Borough, during his/her year in office.

Within the Borough, the Mayor takes precedence over everyone apart from a member of the Royal Family and the Lord Lieutenant of the County.

The word 'Mayor' originates from the French word 'maire' which means 'head of city or town government'.

The mayoral chain may only be worn inside the boundaries of the borough/city.

The Mace originated as a 'weapon of war' and is carried before the Mayor on ceremonial occasions.

