

# Candidates for County Council Elections

## Introduction

This summary information is for people standing as candidates in county council elections and give an insight to the work of a councillor and commitments if successful at election.

### 1. What does a councillor do?

As a councillor you will work to reflect the views of your local communities. The people you represent will look to you for help in dealing with their problems, even if these do not involve the work of the council. You are likely to receive a lot of post, emails and many telephone calls.

The Council has developed a councillor role profile which indicates the sort of things a councillor may do. You will not necessarily do everything in the councillor profile, but it does reflect the sorts of work which you could expect to be doing over your term as a councillor.

Some councillors have additional responsibilities assigned to them, either by the Council, or by their Political Group, after they are elected.

You can find out more about each of these roles by clicking on the link below

[Information about being a councillor](#)

You will need to attend council and other meetings which may be held during the day or in the evening. Many councillors represent the Council on one or more outside bodies. For most of the meetings you attend there will be papers which you will need to read beforehand.

If you are thinking of becoming a councillor and would like to know what committee and council meetings are like, you are welcome to come and see. Look at the following section of the Council's website for more information on these: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/the-council-and-its-committees/committees/>

Councillors are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the local agreed [Code of Conduct](#) which is part of the council's [constitution](#).

By law, you will need to provide a record of your financial interests in a public register.

## **2. How much of my time will it all take up being a councillor?**

According to the commitments you take on, this can vary from a few hours each week to several hours each day.

## **3. What Impact has the Covid-19 pandemic had on the role?**

Since the national lockdown in March 2020, councillors have carried out their roles from home. This is in line with County Council staff who are able to work from home. Staff with front-line roles have continued to work within the community, following the appropriate guidelines. Residents are still able to contact councillors by e-mail or phone. Councillors have been able to access staff using the IT equipment and software available to them. Formal Council, Cabinet and committee meetings have been held using Microsoft Teams. Full training and support will be available as required. Meetings in person will resume when Government guidelines allow.

## **4. What training will be available for me?**

There will be a programme of induction and training sessions for new councillors after the elections. As well as the induction training, there is on-going development training to support councillors to be effective in their roles.

There is a small group of councillors who oversee the training and development programme on behalf of all councillors.

## **5. What resources does the council provide?**

The Council encourages councillors to use information technology to send and receive e-mails and phone calls and text messages.

During your induction you will have the opportunity to speak to our IT team to establish whether using your own equipment, or council provided equipment is best for you. If you use the council provided equipment it is fully supported by the Council's IT team who will be able to help and provide advice on any issues. Appropriate training will be given for any equipment the Council provides.

The councillors' area at Endeavour House, the Council's headquarters in Ipswich, has phones, monitors, keyboards, and printers for councillor to connect their council provided equipment for use during extended office hours (8.00 am to 7.00 pm Monday to Friday).

All equipment provided by the Council should only be used for Council business and should not be used for political campaigning.

## **6. What other support does the council provide?**

The Council's intranet helpful information for councillors and staff, and there is a dedicated area Councillors. You should soon be able to confidently find the main contacts and information you need, but if you need additional help you can ask one

of the staff in Democratic Services Team who will be happy to point you in the right direction. If you are a member of a political group with 8 or more councillors, the group may also have a Political Research Assistant who can provide additional support.

Councillors who have specialist role may have additional officer support.

As a councillor you are provided with a county council e-mail address and your mailing details and phone number are published on the council's website so people can contact you directly.

## **7. What expenses can I claim?**

As a councillor you will incur a range of expenses in the course of carrying out council business. There is an approved [Members' Allowances Scheme](#). You will be paid a Basic Allowance as a contribution towards those expenses for which claims cannot be made within the Members' Allowances Scheme. The Basic Allowance is paid in equal monthly instalments and will be subject to tax and national insurance deductions.

The Basic Allowance is not intended to pay councillors for all the time they spend on business arising from their role as a councillor. There is an assumed voluntary, public service, element to the councillor's role and the Council's current Members' Allowances Scheme assumes that 50% of a councillor's work will be undertaken on a voluntary basis.

You could also get a Special Responsibility Allowance if you are given one of the designated roles referred to in the Members' Allowances Scheme.

All councillors are entitled to Travel and Subsistence Allowances and Carer's Allowance if they meet the criteria in the scheme. These allowances are not taxable, but you will need to claim these using our on-line system and information about what you claim will be made publicly available.

## **8. What can councillors spend?**

Councillors cannot directly spend the Council's money, but as a councillor you can propose how money is spent in your electoral division.

From May 2017 each of Suffolk's 75 county councillors will be able to recommend the Council provides grants to a total of £8,000 each financial year for local projects in their area. Last year groups and projects that benefited included village halls, sports clubs, and toddler groups.

There is also a similar sum of money which a councillor can recommend is used for local highways work.

## **9. What else do I need to know?**

All county councillors are required to provide a record of their interests in a public register. By law, councillors must provide details of their interests that might give rise to a conflict of interest, including gifts and hospitality. The register is available

for inspection by members of the public on the County Council's website and at the following location:

Reception, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX

9.00am – 5.00pm, weekdays only (excluding bank holidays)

Contact

If you have any further questions, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01473 25199 or email [councillor.services@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:councillor.services@suffolk.gov.uk)

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