

A GUIDE FOR NEW CONSERVATIVE COUNCILLORS

Inside you'll find information on:

Local government structures

The role of a councillor

Keeping in touch with residents

CCA support



**Conservative
Councillors' Association**

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FOREWORD

WELCOME TO YOUR GUIDE

Congratulations on becoming a Conservative councillor!

Your life is about to change as you take on the responsibilities of representing your community in your council and beyond. In your first months as a councillor you may feel that you will never conquer the piles of paper or limitless emails, let alone the way your council operates or the intricacies of local government finance.

I hope this guide will help you to tackle these new challenges, balance your commitments and quickly become an effective councillor without losing touch with those you represent. Hopefully, it will make your life a little bit easier and give you the confidence to embark on your new and exciting role.

The Conservative Councillors' Association is your voice within the Conservative Party and is committed to making sure that it is clearly heard within the Party

and with colleagues in Parliament. All Conservative councillors have to be members of the CCA and you can find out more about the benefits of membership on [page 28](#) or on our website www.conservativecouncillors.com.

Councillors play a crucial role in delivering Conservative policies at the local level and have been at the forefront of the Conservative revival. I hope you will enjoy being a Conservative councillor and find it both fascinating and rewarding.

Rachel Oldham

Rachel Oldham
Head of Local Government



ABOUT YOUR COUNCIL

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

In Britain there are two distinct types of local government structure. Firstly, in Scotland, Wales and often the more urban parts of England there is a unitary structure of local government (i.e. each area has one council responsible for providing all the services). Secondly, for the rest of England there is a two-tier structure, with each area being covered by a District and a County Council.

A single tier authority responsible for all local government functions:

Unitary Authorities are responsible for all powers delegated to local government. Their responsibilities therefore include: education, housing, social services, public health, highways, street lighting, licensing, refuse collection, environmental and planning matters, leisure services, etc. There are currently 58 Unitary Authorities in England.

London Boroughs have very similar responsibilities to Unitary Authorities but have some of their powers transferred to the Greater London Authority, with whom they work in close co-operation. The Greater London Authority also has responsibility for the police and fire service. There are 32 London Boroughs

and a City of London Corporation.

Metropolitan Districts have the same responsibilities as Unitary Authorities but cover the areas served by the six former Metropolitan Counties (i.e. Greater Manchester, Tyne and Wear, Merseyside, the West Midlands, West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire). There are currently 36 Metropolitan District Councils.

A two-tier system with both separate and shared responsibilities:

District Councils have various responsibilities including: refuse collection, housing, licensing, planning, leisure facilities, town centres, environmental health, entertainment, car parking, public conveniences, markets and protecting the environment. There are around 180 District Councils.

County Council responsibilities include the following: waste disposal, education, social services, public health, libraries, roads, street lighting, the fire service, planning and consumer protection. There are currently 24 County Councils.

ABOUT YOUR COUNCIL CONTINUED

DECISION MAKING

Most councils run a Leader and Cabinet system (often known as the Executive). Although the Leader and Cabinet system has proven to be the most popular, there are other options such as the Committee system, and the elected Mayor and Cabinet system.

The number of members in the cabinet will vary from authority to authority, but it will include the Leader of the Council and senior councillors responsible for particular aspects of policy/service delivery (housing, education etc) known as 'portfolio holders'. Portfolio holders work closely with council officers and are responsible for the specific details of their brief as well as ensuring the implementation of agreed policy decisions. In addition to the cabinet, councils have various other committees.

It is largely a matter of local choice which committees to have and what to call them, but they often cover functions such as development control, audit and compliance, personnel, and scrutiny and overview. Cabinet members cannot sit on the scrutiny committee(s).

Councillors who are not members of the cabinet are often known

as 'frontline' councillors, although some councils tend to use the term 'backbench'. These members have a role to play in scrutinising policy decisions and suggesting improvements, but their key role is in representing their constituents to the council.

OFFICERS

Officers are employees of the council who give advice, implement decisions and manage the day-to-day delivery of its services. The most senior officers are the Chief Executive and Directors. Council officers write reports which inform the decisions made by councillors in committee or at cabinet meetings. Some officers have a specific duty to ensure that the council acts within the law and uses its resources wisely.

In order to be an effective councillor it is important to have a good working relationship with officers. See [page 11](#) for more information on working successfully with them.

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

The conduct of debate and other procedural matters, both in full council and committees, is governed by the council's constitution. New councillors

ABOUT YOUR COUNCIL CONTINUED

should familiarise themselves with this document (sometimes still referred to as the 'Standing Orders') and may find it beneficial to listen to and observe a few debates before becoming fully involved in them. The full council meeting is the most formal debate where a councillor can normally only speak once on each issue and for which they should prepare well in advance. In committees there is more round-table type of discussion.

The majority of meetings held by the council are open for members of the public to attend. Notice will be given five working days before the meeting takes place, when the agenda should be published and circulated.

It will be helpful for you to look at the agendas to know if there are issues coming up which affect your ward. The agenda will usually have an officer's report attached which summarises the issues concerned, draws a conclusion and makes a recommendation. Often the report will identify any policy issues and any resource implications.

Depending on the council's constitution, a councillor may be able to speak on behalf of ward constituents at a meeting (especially at development control or licensing committees) but cannot vote unless

they are a member of the committee concerned.

Minutes will be taken at all formal meetings and these will be made available to the public. It is essential that you prepare thoroughly for meetings and read the relevant papers beforehand. Then you can consider what questions you might want to raise; whether you need to speak to other local people and organisations before the meeting to get a greater understanding of issues; or if you want to get further information from an officer.

For each item on the agenda a councillor or an officer will usually give a brief oral summary of the report. The Chairman will then invite other councillors to debate the report before moving to the vote.

Before a vote can be taken, it will be necessary for a councillor to move a motion. This would normally take the form of a Member moving the report's recommendation. However, a Member may move a different set of recommendations. Members in opposition will sometimes try this.

It may be necessary during a meeting for you to declare an interest in a particular matter, or in the case of development control, to declare if you have been lobbied.

ABOUT YOUR COUNCIL CONTINUED

Under the Council's Code of Conduct, interests can be either personal or a more significant interest might be both personal and prejudicial. It could be, for example, because you are the applicant for planning permission or are a friend of the applicant.

It is vital that you familiarise yourself with the Council's Code of Conduct and you are legally obliged to register your interests within 28 days of taking office. See [page 25](#) for further information.

ALLOWANCES AND SUPPORT

Councillors do not get a salary for the work they do. It is regarded as voluntary and therefore councillors are paid an allowance which is designed to reimburse costs incurred while undertaking council business.

You should not be left out of pocket for being a councillor although allowances for councillors vary from council to council. Allowances are proposed by an independent assessment committee and then agreed by each council independently.

Each councillor is entitled to a basic allowance (which is subject to tax) and this is paid in monthly instalments. It is designed to cover your costs such as travel to and from meetings, dealing with your casework, administration costs etc. The council may provide stationery, business cards and perhaps computing equipment.

You can also claim travel and subsistence allowances when you represent the council at external meetings (e.g. special conferences and meetings). There is sometimes also a childcare and dependants' carers' allowance payable on production of receipts, up to an agreed maximum cost per hour. Your council will also provide a special responsibility allowance to those who undertake additional duties such as Leader of the Council, portfolio holders, overview and scrutiny chairs and opposition leaders.

BEING A COUNCILLOR

RESPONSIBILITIES

Councillors have many different roles and although all councils are different these can broadly be identified as:

- Representing the ward.
- Decision-making.
- Strategy and policy.
- Overview and scrutiny.
- Community leadership and engagement.

Being a councillor is hard work; you have to find a balance between the needs and interests of your residents, voters, political parties and the local council.

While carrying out your roles as a councillor, it is important to remember that you have been elected by local people to represent them as well as to plan, run and develop council business.

You will be working to make decisions about local issues and improving the quality of life for the people in your ward.

REPRESENTING THE WARD

The primary role of a councillor is to represent your ward and the people who live in it. You are the bridge between the community and the council. See the sections on "Helping your Residents" on [page 13](#) and "Keeping in Touch" on [page 16](#) for further information.

DECISION MAKING

The policies and general direction of a council are debated, scrutinised and agreed by the elected members. Councillors play a crucial role in monitoring the council's performance across a whole range of areas.

The council's policy framework, which includes major policies, the budget, the local development framework/local plan etc, will be decided by the full council.

If your council operates a cabinet system, several councillors will be appointed, usually by the Leader, to serve in the cabinet and take part in executive decision-making. These decisions affect the level and quality of services received by the people you represent, and will have a significant impact on the way the council delivers its services and on the way it is perceived by the public.

BEING A COUNCILLOR CONTINUED

Certain local government functions are deemed 'non-executive' functions, and decisions on these functions are usually made by committees, such as the development control committee, personnel committee etc. There is a considerable amount of local determination in some of these matters, and your council's constitution will give the details that have been agreed for your council in regards to such decisions.

POLICY AND STRATEGY

Councillors influence and determine the development of, as well as reviewing, the council's policy and strategy. They can contribute to the policy process through their role in the overview and scrutiny function; involvement in advisory groups; interaction with Executive members; as a representative on local community groups; and casework.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Overview and scrutiny are an essential part of a councillor's role in representing local people. When working successfully, it should be both inward and outward looking.

In other words, it allows backbenchers not only to hold the cabinet to account and to review council services and policies, but should also provide the opportunity to scrutinise the way that other local services may impact upon your local community. This may include health services, fire services, transport, post office closures, etc.

In its inward-looking role, a scrutiny committee can review and question past decisions taken by those with executive responsibilities; take part in consultation before decisions are taken; and review the policies and direction of the council and propose changes for the future.

In its community-facing role, a scrutiny committee may, for example, request a spokesman from the Post Office to come to explain proposals to close post office branches in your area, and then make or recommend a council response to a consultation on such a closure programme.

WORKING WITH...

THE GROUP

Councillors elected from each party will make up a political group so that the Conservative one will be made up solely of Conservative councillors. The Conservative Group will have a Leader and on larger Groups, a Deputy, Whip, Secretary and Treasurer.

As a new councillor it is important to get to know your Conservative colleagues and how the Group operates and takes decisions. Your Group Leader will help you with this and can also supply you with a copy of the Group rules. Spend time with your Conservative colleagues and attend Group meetings - if your Group is to be effective it is important that you all work together.

Conservative councillors need to work as a team, recognising the obligation to work within the discipline of the Conservative Group and, in particular, to vote on the Group line in policy issues.

From time to time, the Group will insist that a particular policy or line of action be taken by the Party. This will normally need a two thirds majority and, if carried, all members of the Group will be expected to vote accordingly unless given a special exemption. However, a

councillor should always have the freedom to vote on essential non-political issues affecting their local constituents.

As an active councillor you will be writing items for local In Touch newsletters and for the local papers. Make sure you clear any controversial council issues with the Group before going to press. Keep your colleagues informed about what is going on in your ward - this means pro-active and regular internal communication. If factions develop within your Group the Conservative voice will be weakened and any splits could be exploited by opposition parties.

COUNCIL OFFICERS

A good relationship between councillors and council officers is extremely important and will have a big effect on how effectively the council is able to perform its duties.

It is a good idea to introduce yourself to as many officers as you can following your election. Remember not to be afraid to ask them questions - the officers are paid to be experts in their field and are there to assist you in your work. Once you know which officers specialise in which area, you will be able to approach the correct person for help with

WORKING WITH... CONTINUED

queries and casework, and this will help you to represent your constituents more effectively.

Officers should also be willing to brief you on any issues coming up in meetings and you can raise any questions you may have with them beforehand.

Your relationship with officers should be built on good communication and mutual respect. When you ask them for anything, give them clear and specific details. Identify any documents you may want and the deadline by which you would like to see them.

If councillors and officers are able to work in partnership together they can turn the controlling Group's core values and priorities into practical policies for implementation.

THE ASSOCIATION

Your ward Branch is extremely important as it provides the campaign team to help you win your seat. If your Association is in the enviable position of having a good Branch for your seat, you should attend all ward meetings and participate in their events. This includes drives for new members and workers. You will be expected to be at the forefront of all these

activities if you want the Branch's support and hard work at the election.

It is important that the ward team works together. You can contribute to this by consulting others before sending letters to the local papers or including items in your newsletters. It is also important to ensure that the electorate knows that you are not the only Conservative working hard in your ward.

If you are lucky and have a safe seat, your Association will call on you at election time to help in a neighbouring marginal ward. This is important to you because, by winning the marginals, we win or maintain control of the council and you will have real power as a councillor.

If you are in a marginal seat without the benefit of a Branch organisation, your Association will help by providing mutual aid. If you want to form a Branch then you are the most likely person to do this. Talk to the safer ward councillors and enlist their support.

HELPING RESIDENTS

EXPECTATIONS

Your primary role as a councillor is to represent your ward and the individual residents who live in it. You are the bridge between the community and the council. This applies to every councillor whether they are Leader of the Council or a newly elected backbencher.

Your contact details will be posted on your council website. You will be contacted by your constituents with requests for help and you may receive a lot of emails, post and phone calls.

In terms of helping your constituents with their problems, you are not expected to be familiar with every single detail across a range of policies (although as you gain experience you will inevitably become more knowledgeable about certain key issues facing the community).

As a councillor, your job is to represent your constituents' concerns to the council – either via officers or the elected member for the particular area of policy – and try to get the problem solved.

You will not be able to solve every

single problem but you should be able to make a difference to many of those who approach you for help. However, you should bear in mind that many people contact their local councillor for help on issues that are not the responsibility of a local authority. In such cases, councillors should do what they can to put such people in touch with other relevant agencies who can help them.

A good first step is to build a database of council officers and key contacts within your community that can help with specific problems or requests. If you are unsure as to which council officer to approach, address your correspondence to the Chief Executive.

The next few pages cover some of the specific activities you should be carrying out at a local level to help your constituents.

UNDERTAKING CASEWORK

Undertaking casework on behalf of residents is an essential part of your activities. The extent to which you are approached depends on many factors: the size of your ward, if you are on any committees and how often you put out leaflets listing your contact details.

HELPING RESIDENTS CONTINUED

Casework can sometimes seem overwhelming if not dealt with regularly. One of your first steps as a new councillor should be to devise a routine for dealing with casework.

It is important to respond quickly to those who have asked for your help with a letter or email acknowledging the casework and setting out what action you will be taking.

Do not make any promises but do say that you will do your best, making sure those concerned see relevant items such as copies of the letters you write on their behalf and any replies.

If people have passed on personal details to you, make sure that you treat these details responsibly. Only pass on details to a third party that are necessary to a person's case.

HOLDING SURGERIES

Surgeries are great for councillor-resident engagement. Aim to hold them monthly, advertising on the council website and in leaflets.

The building you use should have somewhere that could be used as a waiting room and somewhere as an

interview room. Councillors should remember to consider their own safety and not hold surgeries alone - either hold them with other councillors or with someone acting as a receptionist.

Guides on [safety guidelines](#) have been published, which give advice on holding surgeries, campaigning and dealing with conflict.

You could also hold a street surgery. Deliver leaflets a few days before telling people that you will be in their street at a certain time and to display the reverse 'Yes please call' sign in their window if they would like you to call on them to discuss issues.

Councillors have also chosen to hold surgeries virtually. This allows them to maximise their time, whilst ensuring they can speak to as many residents as possible.

CAMPAIGNING ON LOCAL ISSUES

Once elected, councillors should not neglect campaigning for their ward as this becomes even more important.

Such campaigning doesn't have to be a formal political campaign with

HELPING RESIDENTS CONTINUED

a manifesto and election leaflets. Instead, you should run 'peacetime' campaigns; issues that will mark you out as the local Conservative campaigner who is working for their community all the year round- not just at election time.

It also provides the opportunity to showcase your work in your latest edition of In Touch, which you can refer back to during your election campaign. This is all preparatory work for the real campaign.

'Peacetime' campaigning doesn't have to be political either; councillors have run campaigns on issues as diverse as saving the bees; stopping 'rip-off' rail fees for local residents; saving a local car park from housing development, and surveying residents about a residents' parking zone.

As part of this, it is important that you maintain regular contact with groups in your community and use your position as a councillor to support them.

Some of the local groups you should consider becoming involved in, if you are not already, include:

- PTAs – especially if you have children at the school.
 - Residents' associations.
 - Neighbourhood Watch.
 - Churches/mosques/temples/charities.
 - Youth organisations.
 - Local environmental groups.
-
- Local schools – particularly as a School Governor.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

COMMUNICATION

In order to represent your constituents effectively, you will need to keep in constant contact with them to find out their concerns. Moreover, your local community does not know what you are doing and will not know unless you tell them.

NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters show that you are interested in people's views all the year round (not just at election time) and, by publicising yourself and your work, including your successes, you will raise your profile. Newsletters also offer an opportunity to advertise your contact details so that residents can get in touch easily.

To produce good literature:

- Have large punchy headlines and lots of photos.
- Write short articles with snappy sentences in at least 12 point font.
- Use language that people understand.
- Show you are in touch by reporting and commenting on local issues important to the community.
- Keep your text positive.
- Don't refer to your opponents by name.
- Keep your literature looking professional and in line with the Party's corporate identity.
- Add a feedback slip asking people to sign a petition or express a view on a particular issue and also asking for their voting intention, telephone number, mobile number and email address. Make sure you add a Data Protection disclaimer.
- Promote your website.
- Stay legal. Make sure your literature includes an imprint, and ensure it is signed off by your Association's agent or organising secretary.

KEEPING IN TOUCH CONTINUED

SURVEYS

Surveys are another good way of keeping in touch with your constituents. They make residents feel that their views are appreciated while helping you to gain useful information about local issues and provide you with contact details of many potential supporters.

There are two main ways of conducting a survey - written surveys or survey canvassing.

Whichever technique you use, make sure the data you obtain is put onto the Association computer and think carefully about the questions you ask - there is no point asking a question if you are not going to make any use of the answer.

With written surveys, you can either deliver them yourself or post them; and to collect them either rely on people posting them back (you can increase the likelihood of this by including a reply-paid envelope) or collect them yourself.

In this case, state clearly on the survey form when you will be calling to collect them and that if people don't want to be disturbed they should leave completed forms sticking out of their letterbox. Collecting surveys yourself gets the highest response rate.

Whichever method you use, the survey form should:

- Be individually addressed so that it does not look like junk mail.
- Include a voting intention question near the end to reduce the amount of door-to-door/telephone canvassing you have to do.
- Ask for the elector's telephone number and email address as well as their name and address (making sure you add a Data Protection disclaimer).

The other way to keep in touch with the issues each elector is concerned about is to knock on people's doors or telephone them, normally using a standard script. This requires significant resources but, if you have sufficient activists, gets a good response rate. The script should likewise include a voting intention question near the end.

For advice on surveys please email voterinsight@conservatives.com.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Many councillors are increasingly using websites (either individually, with their ward colleagues or through their Group/Constituency Association).

KEEPING IN TOUCH CONTINUED

If you have a website it should be updated regularly and the address should be prominently displayed on campaign literature.

Your site will have a number of audiences (primarily the public and journalists) who will all want different content. Make sure you include news and photos and cover your campaigns. If you send out newsletters and press releases put them up on the site (as PDFs). As with all your communications, make sure your website carries an imprint.

USE OF EMAIL

Local authority resources must not be “used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes)”.

Where your local authority provides resources (for example a telephone, laptop and other IT facilities, transport or support from council employees), you must only use these for carrying out your council business and any other activity which your local authority has authorised you to use them for.

Moreover, if you authorise someone, for example a family member, to use your authority’s resources, you must check that this is allowed by your

local authority’s rules. Councils will have an IT Code of Conduct outlining how council computers and email facilities should and should not be used.

We recommend that you do not use council computer facilities for (a) personal or (b) party political activity. You should use a personal account for such discussions, such as a webmail account like Gmail or Hotmail. This will also prevent your authority IT department from being able to access your emails as councils will routinely store all emails for a number of years.

TARGETED LETTERS

If you keep good records on your Association database of the issues raised in surveys and in your surgeries and casework, targeted letters can also make up a significant part of your communications.

If, for example, the level of street lighting was raised as an issue and you subsequently got the council to take action on this, you can send a letter to everyone in that street. Other opportunities to send a letter include when you start a new local issue campaign; new policy announcements; and at the beginning and end of an election campaign.

KEEPING IN TOUCH CONTINUED

People are more likely to read letters if they are delivered in window envelopes with the address from the letter showing or ideally in hand-addressed envelopes. Also, include your photo on the letter paper and unless mail-merged, address letters ‘Dear Resident’, not ‘Dear Elector’ or ‘Dear Voter’.

GETTING OUT AND ABOUT

There is no better way of keeping in touch with what is going on in your ward than by walking around it. You will meet people, identify problems and ensure you are familiar with every part of your ward when issues are raised.

Visitors are always welcome at places such as schools and residential homes provided you make prior appointments. Give a specific reason for a visit e.g. in schools to familiarise yourself with local education. Likewise going along to school fetes and fairs is a great way to meet local people. It is always best to try to find someone who is well known or is taking part in the event who can make the introductions.

Never miss any public meeting which is called in your area and never fail to ask a question. Rotary Clubs, Probus and Women’s

Institutes are always looking for speakers - but choose a non-political subject.

You should also of course help out and get involved in wider political campaigning. As well as helping the Party, such campaigning will help you maintain a visible presence within your community and help you to stay informed of the concerns of your electorate.

HOW TO BE EFFECTIVE

BE ORGANISED

With so many competing demands on your time it is important that you learn to manage your work effectively. A good filing system is invaluable as you will receive vast quantities of paper on a regular basis. It is also important that you manage your casework files and set aside enough time each week to deal with queries from residents.

See [page 23](#) for more tips on balancing your commitments against your time.

WORK WITH YOUR GROUP

It is important that your Group works together to achieve its collective aims. You will get a lot further if you are working with each other, rather than against each other. Try to co-ordinate with the Group if you intend to issue a press release or speak at a meeting to make sure it does not go against something previously said by the Group or adversely affect the work of another councillor.

Don't forget that what you do also reflects on other Conservatives on the council.

BE VISIBLE

Attending local meetings in your ward, such as residents' association meetings, is a good way to show people that you are taking an interest in the well-being of your constituents. It will also keep you abreast of any local issues and potential concerns before they land on your desk. If you are able to pre-empt some of these problems it will make life easier in the long run.

Many local organisations will ask for councillors to sit on their committee as a representative of the council. There are a wide variety of local action groups covering everything from the preservation of local historic buildings to community safety and these present a good opportunity to become involved with local activities and to gain valuable experience in an area you are particularly interested in.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP

When you are starting out, you are likely to need help and advice in carrying out casework or representing the views of residents in your ward. Other members of your Group will be invaluable when you are finding

HOW TO BE EFFECTIVE CONTINUED

your feet as not only can they offer you the benefit of their experience, they will also know the best places to look for further advice and assistance.

LEARN WHEN TO SAY NO

There are a lot of competing demands on your time and it can be difficult to fit everything in around your other commitments.

Don't feel obliged to attend every local residents' group meeting if the time could be better spent on casework. Learn to prioritise and be realistic about what you can and cannot achieve. It can be tempting to say yes to everyone who asks but if you take on too much you will burn out and your effectiveness as a councillor will suffer.

TELL PEOPLE WHAT YOU ARE DOING

Don't assume that if you do a good job as a ward councillor that everyone will know about it. The next election is never very far away and it always helps if people can see that you are working hard all year round, not just when you are seeking re-election.

THE MEDIA

WORKING WITH THE LOCAL MEDIA

Your local media will be one of the best ways to let constituents know about your activities and views as a councillor. If you approach the media in the right way and provide them with real stories and useful information you will be able to make a real impact.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR MEDIA

Before you make your first move you must ensure that you have a solid understanding of the media in your area. Read, watch and listen to your local and regional media to help understand their style and the type of stories they are interested in. Not all are the same and you will find some that are interested in political stories, some in human-interest stories and some that are only interested in very localised stories.

BUILD UP INFORMATION

You will need to draw up a list of all the media outlets in your area and gather information on:

- The circulation area.

- The readership, viewing/listening figures.
- Addresses/contact numbers.
- Deadlines for print or timings of news programmes.
- Contact names and titles.
- Whether they will accept photos or only use their own photographers.

Armed with this information you can make your first contact with the media in your area.

Being able to show a reasonable knowledge of their organisation will help make a good impression with the journalist.

YOUR COMMITMENTS

MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

Being a councillor can take up as much or as little of your life as you allow it to. How much time you have to give will depend on other commitments, your position on the council (most councils now pay executive members significant allowances with an expectation that they will spend at least some of their working week on council business) and how much extra you are prepared to take on. But how much should you take on and how can you use that time to best effect?

DON'T TRY TO DO TOO MUCH

Many people make the mistake of confusing effort with effectiveness. Try to do too much and your health and personal life will suffer as will the quality of your work, both as a councillor and professionally. Allow time each week for relaxation.

THINK ABOUT HOW YOU USE YOUR TIME

You can easily fill your diary with meetings that are neither going to achieve anything for your residents nor help to get you re-elected. What is the point in attending such

meetings? Before agreeing to do anything, ask yourself what you or your residents are going to get out of it.

STRIKE THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN BEING A COUNCILLOR AND YOUR ROLE AS A POLITICIAN

Bizarrely, many councillors do not think of themselves as politicians. Never forget that you have to get re-elected - and if you have a safe seat, someone else in a marginal ward has to get re-elected if we are going to run your council. Don't assume that if we do a good job running a council and/or you do a good job as a ward councillor everyone will know about it - they won't.

Communication is a key part of the job. That means attending residents meetings but it also means delivering political literature and canvassing. You should have a branch to help you with the canvassing and delivery but you have to lead by example. If you allow the council to take over all your time and stop being a politician, you will regret it.

STAYING LEGAL

THE PARTY'S CODE OF CONDUCT

The Party's Code of Conduct sets out the minimum standards of behaviour expected from anyone representing the Party as an elected or appointed official or office-holder. It also supports equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion, and the absence of any and all inappropriate behaviour, in all aspects of the Party's activities.

The Code of Conduct sets out specific standards that are expected of individuals. This includes following all of the Seven Principles of Public Life established by Lord Nolan and the Committee on Standards in Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

Those individuals covered by the Code should also actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs; lead by example to encourage and foster respect and tolerance, and treat others in a professional and straightforward manner. It is

also vital that all individuals act with honesty and probity and in a manner which upholds the reputation and values of the Conservative Party. Conduct which the public may reasonably perceive as undermining a representative's honesty and probity is likely to diminish trust and confidence placed in them, and the Party, by the public.

Individuals should not use their position to bully, abuse, victimise, harass or unlawfully discriminate against others. Rather, they should take reasonable steps to ensure that people who wish to raise concerns about bullying, discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation by others feel able to do so, and know how to follow the complaints procedure set out in this Code. It is also important that they co-operate fully with any process set down by the Party Board should a grievance process be instigated.

For more information, including a detailed version of the Code of Conduct, please see: www.conservatives.com/codeofconduct.

STAYING LEGAL CONTINUED

THE LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Every authority is required to adopt a Code of Conduct that sets out rules governing the behaviour of its members. All elected, co-opted and independent members of local authorities, including parish councils, and fire, police and national park authorities, are covered by their Council's Code.

The Localism Act 2011 brought in many changes devolving decision making powers from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils. One of these changes saw the Standard Boards for England, which previously oversaw complaints about councillor conduct, formally abolished. From 1st July 2012, all standards matters are now the responsibility of local authorities to be handled under the new arrangements and their own local Code of Conduct.

This new arrangement includes a 'Nolan-based' code; the involvement of an independent person in allegations of misconduct; and a new criminal offence for failing to declare or register interests, coming into force. Under the Localism Act 2011, councils are now required

to develop their own local codes of conduct based on the seven Nolan principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

Councillors have a duty both to register and declare personal and prejudicial interests. Your Council's Monitoring Officer will issue you with a form for the declaration of interests which will need to be returned to the Monitoring Officer. It is your responsibility to request a new form to keep any details up-to-date.

In general terms, a personal interest is where the councillor has a personal connection to any matter under debate. The personal interest does not necessarily prevent a councillor from participating in the debate and voting.

A prejudicial interest is one where a reasonable member of the public in full knowledge of the relevant facts would think the personal connection is so significant that the councillor's judgement is likely to be prejudiced. If in doubt, seek guidance from your council's Monitoring Officer, and from colleagues.

STAYING LEGAL CONTINUED

Councillors must give to the Monitoring Officer written details of any interest they need to register and that information will be available to the public at the authority's office, but can only be put on the internet with the councillor's approval.

Interests that need to be declared are:

- Financial interests.
- The councillor's job and their businesses.
- The name of their employer, any firm of which they are a partner and any Company of which they are a paid director.
- The name of any person - other than a relevant authority - who has helped them with expenses associated with their election or their duties as a councillor.
- The name of any 'corporate interest' - any corporate body that has a place of business or land in their authority's constituent area; and in which they have a beneficial interest in shares with a face value worth more than £25,000 or one per cent of the total amount invested in that corporate body by shareholders.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

USEFUL TIPS

- You can pick up tips on what makes a good or bad speaker by listening to colleagues when they speak, but do not try to emulate someone else's style.
- Try to be natural, you will be less nervous if you can relax and be yourself.
- Be sure to address the chair when you begin and tell them on which point you would like to speak.
- If a microphone is supplied, be sure to use it and do not hold papers in front of your face which may prevent people from hearing you.
- Try to make eye contact and look at others around you. If you are animated and can engage people then they are more likely to pay attention to what you are saying than if you are wooden and awkward.
- So long as it is appropriate to the subject you are discussing, humour can be a good way to engage your audience and keep the tone of your speech light. Just make sure it does not detract from any serious points you are trying to make.
- While it helps to be confident and knowledgeable, try to avoid the appearance of being a 'know-it-all'. You are more likely to be challenged on your point by opposition colleagues if they think you are arrogant and self-important.
- We would hope that, as a new councillor, you will not be heckled by other members but if this does happen, try to stay focused and continue speaking. Remember, only the chair can stop you from speaking so try to ignore it. The worst thing you can do is to react to hecklers by retaliating or getting angry - it will detract from what you are saying and will affect your concentration and performance.
- Sign up to one of the CCA's Public Speaking Courses, which are held throughout the year in conjunction with the Roe Project. The CCA has been arranging these courses for over six years - feedback from attendees has always been excellent. Please visit the 'Events' page of the CCA website for details of future courses.

ABOUT THE CCA

MEMBER SERVICES

The Conservative Councillors' Association (CCA) exists to provide a strong and unified voice for all Conservative councillors within the Party and in the wider community. The CCA supports councillors in their important role and provides them with the tools to both work effectively on behalf of local residents and to campaign successfully as Conservatives.

Membership of the CCA costs just £35.00 per year for which members receive a wide range of services including:

- Weekly news bulletins containing the latest campaigning information and news updates from the Conservative Party.
- CCA members' magazine which includes articles written by our members and Ministers.
- CCA and CCHQ campaign support including campaigning guides such as Writing to Win and Winning your Local By-Election.
- Access to online resources in the secure area of our website

including information on best practice, by-elections and CCA events as well as briefings and campaigning templates/guides.

- Numerous training and network sessions held throughout the year, allowing CCA Members to connect with fellow councillors, the MHCLG Team, and CCHQ's professional campaigning staff.
- CCA publications including Effective in Opposition and Councillors and the Law.
- Various events throughout the year focusing on being an effective councillor, campaigning and policy.
- Discounted rates at large CCA events including the annual Conservative Local Government Conference.
- CCA staff and Board Members on hand to help with your queries and campaigning needs (the CCA employs three members of staff).

...and much more!

ABOUT THE CCA CONTINUED

MEMBER SERVICES AND RESOURCES

As part of our member services, the CCA offers a number of schemes to assist members in their roles as councillors. This includes:

CCA Bursary Scheme

The CCA is able to offer a number of bursaries to members. The Scheme's focus is on assisting those councillors from groups who are less well represented amongst our members.

Those accepted onto the Bursary Scheme benefit from free or reduced price tickets to some of the CCA's most popular events as well as a mentor to guide and advise them in their professional role of a councillor.

For further information on all of our services and to download an application form, please visit our website - conservativecouncillors.com or contact the CCA on **020 7984 8144** or via cca@conservatives.com.

All elected Conservative councillors are required by the Party Constitution to become

members of the CCA and the CCA works hard to provide a value for money service to our membership.

Other Useful Resources

Make sure you have a Campaign Toolkit account. Campaign Toolkit is the Party's one-stop-shop for all of your campaigning needs. It offers literature templating software, a social media graphic generator, guides on how to organise an election, legal and compliance advice, and resources such as national literature and display products. You can sign-up at toolkit.conservatives.com.

Ensure you are subscribed to CCHQ's Conservative Research Department Briefing mailing list. They often circulate briefings that many councillors find useful in including in campaign literature, as well as template press releases. Email briefing@conservatives.com to sign up.

ABOUT THE CCA CONTINUED

TOP TIPS TO HELP YOU MAXIMISE YOUR WORK

TEN TOP TIPS FOR COUNCILLORS

- 1 Keep in touch with your electorate.
- 2 Communicate regularly with your fellow councillors and officers.
- 3 Make an impact on the council. Find out how the council takes decisions and learn how you can influence them.
- 4 Organise yourself/manage your time - learn how to manage your paperwork, setup a filing system.
- 5 Take advantage of formal training offered to you by your council.
- 6 Learn how the council works and read their corporate plan.
- 7 Concentrate on areas that are of interest to you and become knowledgeable in them.
- 8 Talk to the media.
- 9 Don't take too much on too quickly otherwise you will burn yourself out.
- 10 Keep in touch with the Party - Join the CCA!

WWW.CONSERVATIVECOUNCILLORS.COM



**Conservative
Councillors' Association**