

Do you want to make a difference?



Be a Councillor

www.beacouncillor.org.uk

Introduction

This guide explains how to become a councillor and what this important role is really about.

We hope it will encourage you and people from all walks of life to take an interest in local democracy and to think about putting yourself forward for election.

More detailed and specific information can be obtained from the Democratic Services department at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and from the various contacts listed at the back of this publication.

What do Councils do?

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council provides local services to people living, working or visiting our area. The Borough is made up of smaller areas known as 'wards'.

There are different types of council: unitary, metropolitan and London boroughs, which are responsible for all local services; and county councils and district councils – where responsibilities are shared between them.

In general terms, elected councillors make the decisions that guide the council and paid council staff carry these out, according to laws and guidelines.

Councils work in partnership with other local organisations such as health, fire and rescue and police authorities. Councillors make sure that these organisations work together to meet the needs of local people.

Some areas also have parish and town councils, with delegated responsibility for some local services. They are often involved in managing parks and playing fields, planning, promoting tourism, licensing or providing community halls and the management of town and village centres.

What do Councillors do?

People are elected as councillors to represent everyone in their area –

not just those who voted for them – and to serve the council as a whole. There is often more than one councillor for each council ward.

Councillors represent their wards by meeting people who live or work there and working to resolve local issues, problems and concerns.

This is often achieved by working with council staff or people from other organisations who

may have expertise or knowledge concerning the matter in hand.

Councillors serve the council as a whole by taking an overview and making decisions on wider issues and opportunities affecting the area covered by the council and sometimes the wider regional area.

Some councillors take on responsibility for leading local policy on such things as planning, education, waste collection and so on.

Bob Cook

Grandfather

Going to the cinema

Boro season ticket holder

Local Councillor

I was always interested in working in the community as a school governor and on the management committee of a local law centre. I decided to try and get elected onto the Council so I could help ensure services required by the residents of the Borough were actually delivered. I am very proud to be a local Councillor and the best part of the role is being able to help people in the community.

Since 2011 I have had the privilege of being the Leader of the Council. It is a very demanding role with tough decisions to be made.

However, like all Councillors, I am determined to continue working to bring positive changes to the Borough in spite of the current financial challenges.

I would advise anyone considering becoming a councillor to think carefully about the commitment involved. If you want to make a difference and are prepared to work hard to make it happen, then I would say definitely go for it!



Jean Kirby

School Governor

Keen gardener

Enjoys painting

Local Councillor

I care about where I live and I wanted to make a difference, through becoming a councillor. It means I can be a voice for the community.

As I am relatively new to my role, I have enjoyed the support and guidance I have received from fellow councillors. It can be unfamiliar territory at first but the training is there to help you. I love having the opportunity to meet new people from different walks of life.

I sit on the planning committee and my professional housing and building

background has given me good knowledge when it comes to considering applications.

Being a local councillor does take up a lot of time, what with meetings and answering emails! But in my spare time, I like going on holiday, mainly to Europe and I enjoy gardening, walking and reading.



Phil Dennis

Passionate about the outdoors

Passionate about music

Passionate about local history

Local Councillor

Most people hesitate about standing as a candidate, expecting lots of 'hoops to jump through.' Instead I found the process was straightforward, and the skills and experience from my employment and voluntary work were ideal for this role.

Representing the area where I live is important as I share many of the concerns of local residents. I don't drive, so people often catch me for a chat when I'm out walking. This is great, as I'm more accessible, and I also notice things that I wouldn't if

I was driving. It can be hard balancing family life, a full-time job and working as a Councillor. So it

really helps to have flexible meetings and access to training and technology.

Being a Councillor has made me a more effective and successful campaigner. I'm learning all the time. I would encourage anyone thinking of becoming a Councillor to find out more.



Mohammed Javed

Charity worker

Cricket fan

Enjoys bowling at Ropner Park

Local Councillor

I have always had an interest in politics and wanted to be a voice for the community. I was the first Asian to be elected as a councillor here in the Borough and this is something I am very proud of.

As a ward councillor it means I can help people solve their problems and help them get their voice heard among the people who can make a difference.

I am Chair of the Adult Services and Health Select Committee and the Tees Valley Joint Health Committee. I am also a member of the Housing and Community Safety Select Committee.

I work supporting people with learning disabilities.

I also support many charities including Healing Hands which is building houses and installing clean water to homes in Kashmir, following the earthquake there.

We are in the process of building the first purpose built designed Mosque in the Borough and I am helping to raise money to complete it.

I am married with four children and I really enjoy watching my favourite sports – cricket, football and tennis.



Lynne Apedaile

Grandmother

Keen gardener

Birdwatcher

Local Councillor

I got involved with local politics for the good of the community and to try and make a difference.

I love carrying out ward work as it is very satisfying to help people who are having problems. Sometimes it is only something small that is requested but I hope whatever I do helps to improve the quality of life for residents. I feel passionate about the area where I live and hope I can make a difference.

There is now a good induction scheme for new councillors although it must be said

there is a lot more to being a councillor than just ward work – there are lots of meetings and people can telephone at all hours!

Outside of the Council, my husband and I have seven grandchildren so they take up a lot of our time. We also love getting away at weekends with our border collie, Sally.



Tina Large

Avid reader

Fund raiser

Socialising with friends & family

Local Councillor

I **was inspired** to become a councillor as I was vice chair of a residents' group and felt I could help change things for the better in my community. Being a councillor has allowed me to meet so many new people and gain new skills.

I am continually motivated by the local community and the learning curve I am on – I really do hope I contribute well towards having a safe environment to live in.

I would urge anyone to think about what they can offer their community and realise

the potential they have – I have found my role as a councillor to be so interesting and rewarding.

I enjoy spending time with family and friends and put time into raising funds for Breast Cancer Care. I was recently appointed as a justice of the peace.



Maureen Rigg

Enjoys hill walking

Interested in genealogy

Fairtrade campaigner

Local Councillor

I **was inspired** to becoming a councillor having seen what a difference the ward members made where I lived. Now, as a councillor, the best part of what I do is being able to help people – I am not a miracle worker but sometimes just knowing who to ask or how to go about it gets results.

What motivates me to continue my role is being able to make a difference in the area where I live and sometimes the wider Borough – things from getting a street light installed where needed to helping to form

policy on having more recycling.

It can be hard keeping track of all the new national initiatives and working out which ones will have a bearing on our area.

If I could offer any advice to someone considering becoming a councillor, it would be this – don't think you have to be the same as everyone else – variety is a real bonus!



Can I be a Councillor?

You do not need any formal qualifications to become a councillor.

You can be a councillor for more than one council – such as your district or borough council and your parish/town council.

You are able to be a councillor if you:

- are 18 years of age or over
- are British, or if you are a citizen of a member country of the European Union or the Commonwealth
- and are either registered to vote with your local council

or

- have either lived (or worked) in the council's area for one year
- have been an owner or tenant in the council's area for one year.

What do I do now?

The majority of people that become councillors do so through a political party that they may feel a natural affinity with; however, some people choose to be independent of any formal political group.

We have listed the main contacts below to help you find out more.

Conservative Councillors' Association
www.conservativecouncillors.com

Association of Labour Councillors
www.labour.org.uk

Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors
www.bealibdemcouncillor.org.uk

LGA Independent Group Office
www.lgaindependent.local.gov.uk

General information about becoming a councillor
www.beacouncillor.org

People like you are Councillors

Contact details for Democratic Services at Stockton Council

Democratic Services
P.O. Box 11
Municipal Buildings
Church Road
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 1LD.

Tel: (01642) 526185

Fax: (01642) 528162

Email: democraticservices@stockton.gov.uk

Website: www.stockton.gov.uk

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