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Learning and development workbook  
for potential electoral candidates

The quotes used in this document are from councillors who are not members of Lichfield District Council but a sample of views taken nationally

For more information about how to become a councillor or to find out more about the role, visit [www.beacouncillor.co.uk/lichfield](http://www.beacouncillor.co.uk/lichfield)

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## FOREWORD

What matters to you in your local area? Is it services, such as affordable housing, sustainable development, making the area clean and green, or ensuring local businesses can thrive?

Whatever needs changing in your local area, you could be the person to change it by becoming a councillor.

Perhaps you are already involved in local affairs and want to take the next step. Or you may be looking for a worthwhile and rewarding way to help your local community.

Lichfield District Council is working hard and committed to creating new opportunities for local people, creating a fantastic district in which to live, work and visit.

To support this, we need councillors who are capable, energetic and engaged, with a commitment to local people and a passion for change. Lichfield District Council can only be as effective, relevant and vibrant as the people elected to run it.

Decisions made by councillors affect the lives of everyone in the area in countless ways. Representing the population of over 100,700 across the district, in the major settlements of Lichfield, Burntwood and the surrounding rural areas by understanding the issues and concerns they face. The most important task that any councillor undertakes is taking appropriate and affordable action to address them.

On Thursday 2 May 2019, all of Lichfield District's council seats are up for election, 47 in total. This is an opportunity for you to stand as a representative of your local community and become a Lichfield district councillor. All town and parish council seats in the district will also be up for election on the same day. More information about town and parish councils can be found at

[www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/parishcouncils](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/parishcouncils)

This document focusses on Lichfield District.

We need plenty of talented, high-quality candidates to stand in the election who are willing to work hard and make a difference to their local communities.

No other role gives you a chance to make such a huge difference to the quality of life of people in your local area and influence the way issues are dealt with locally and across the district.

If you think being a Lichfield district councillor is for you, find out more:

[www.beacouncillor.co.uk/lichfield](http://www.beacouncillor.co.uk/lichfield)

This workbook has been designed as a learning and development tool for local people who are considering standing as candidates in Lichfield District Council's elections in 2019. It forms part of a suite of learning and development resources which have been produced as part of the Be a Councillor, Lichfield programme.

Working through this document will improve your understanding of how the council works and the ways that Lichfield District Council's councillors contribute to this. It will also help you to decide whether you are best suited to the demands of being a councillor.

In practical terms, it will take between **two to three hours** to work through. You do not need to complete it all in one session and may prefer to work through the material at your own pace. The key requirement is to think about the issues presented and how the material relates to your local area and the people you would be required to serve if you were successful in standing as a candidate in the local elections.

Throughout the document you will encounter a number of features designed to help you think about all aspects of the councillor role. These features are represented by the symbols shown opposite.



**Guidance** – this is used to indicate guidance, research, quotations, and explanations that you may find helpful.



**Challenges** – these are questions or queries raised in the text which ask you to reflect on the information presented – in essence, they are designed to be thought-provokers.



**Case studies** – these are the views of councillors in other local authorities.



**Hints and tips** – these represent a selection of good practices which you may find useful.



**Useful links** – these are signposts to sources of further information and support.

# What does it mean to be a councillor?

Councillors are the elected representatives of Lichfield District Council. The council votes by 'all out', which means all seats are up for election once every four years.

Lichfield District Council is made up of 22 wards with either one, two or three elected representatives, depending on size and population.

Councillors are often referred to as 'members' of the council. Being an elected member is a uniquely rewarding experience where you can make a real difference to the lives of local people.

Being a Lichfield district councillor can be a rewarding experience but it is not an easy task. It requires individuals who are able, willing, and prepared to scrutinise or take decisions about matters that affect the lives of citizens and who are prepared to be accountable for those decisions. Being democratically elected gives councillors a special status in public life; it brings with it opportunities to contribute to society, but also responsibilities to act fairly and within the law.

There are a number of key roles and responsibilities that councillors have:

- developing strategies and plans, including financial plans and budgets
- serving the community
- representing the community
- working with others
- decision making or reviewing decisions.



## Councillor viewpoint

"I stood to become a councillor to ensure we had a vibrant local democracy where people truly felt their vote mattered and they had a range of candidates and parties to choose from. I wanted to ensure that a broad range of views were represented in our local democracy and especially that the values of my party were strongly represented."

**Former candidate Toby Brampton, Labour Party**

Let's look at each of these in turn.

## Developing strategies and plans

Councillors are collectively responsible for setting the direction of the organisation. This involves developing strategies and plans for the area, balancing different needs, identifying priorities and ensuring that resources are used wisely and effectively. Within this, they provide democratic accountability for public services and ensure that those who deliver services are accountable in delivering quality and value for money.



## Effective councillors

In all aspects of their role, effective councillors are likely to be:

- visible, accessible and accountable
- people who live locally – understanding the local community and standing up for it
- individuals who are proactive – listening to, and available to, local people.

## Serving the community

Providing public services is the main function of the council. No other public body provides the range of services that a local council does. Local councils provide many different services, from planning matters, housing services, benefit payments, street cleaning, environmental health and refuse collection. Providing services to meet community needs requires the development of policies, as well as the planning, delivery and resourcing of those services. Councillors, therefore have a key role as:

- policy makers
- decision takers
- scrutineers of the effectiveness of the council in delivering services.

All Lichfield district councillors are expected to attend meetings of the Full Council, which take place five times a year. This oversees the development of policy making. It has the sole authority to set the annual budget of the council and to determine the amount of council tax to be levied on local residents. Councillors are able to ask questions at Full Council and consider the reports of other council meetings that have taken place. Beyond the Full Council, councillors can be involved in roles including cabinet or scrutiny or regulatory.



## Council meetings

**Cabinet** – certain councillors are appointed as executive members and meet collectively once a month as the cabinet under the chairmanship of the leader of the council. Its principal role is to determine council policy and make recommendations to Full Council. Separately, individual cabinet members have their own portfolios delegated to them by the leader and are able to make decisions within these areas of responsibility. These include economic growth, environment and development services, operational services, leisure and waste, regulatory services, housing and wellbeing, finance and democratic services, corporate and customer services and revenues and benefits.

**Scrutiny** – the council appoints a number of non-executive members to sit on its various overview and scrutiny committees. Their main roles are to: review and make recommendations about council policy, review the decisions and actions of the council's executive and officers, and scrutinise internal and external issues including local services delivered by other agencies.

**Opposition** – The role of opposition in the District Council is to provide constructive challenge to the controlling party along with alternative and/or amendments to policies and strategies. They also ensure political accountability.

## Representing the community

Councillors are elected and have democratic legitimacy. They represent all of the people within Lichfield District's communities (including those who did not vote for them). Councillors, therefore, act as:

- representatives of their constituents
- community leaders, providing a focus for development and improvement within their electoral ward and, in some cases, Lichfield District as a whole.



## Representation

**You can speak** on behalf of neighbourhoods or communities when issues affecting them are debated or decisions need to be taken.

**You can promote** partnership working between public, private and voluntary organisations in response to recognised community needs.

**You can support** community calls for action and promote self-help among neighbourhood groups by understanding their aspirations, views and tactics.

The task of representing a large group of local people is complex because of the patterns of change in social and political life in recent decades. Lichfield District has become increasingly diverse as well as remaining rural in some areas. Understanding the very nature of a ward is not always as easy as it seems.

A significant part of this role is the work that councillors do at a local level, representing the people of their electoral ward – the constituency for which they stand in an election. There is good evidence that councillors who develop a good reputation in their ward earn the respect of the electorate, who in turn repay them at the ballot box. In itself, this is a compelling reason for taking the role of the local councillor seriously.

But the need to be effective as a local councillor is about much more than this. Representing people in Lichfield District, understanding the issues and concerns they face and being equipped with the skills, confidence and ability to take action and make a difference is the most important task that any councillor undertakes. Significantly, it is also often the role that local people value most.

## Working with others

Lichfield District Council not only needs to plan and deliver its own services, but will often take the lead in drawing together the activities of a whole range of public bodies and the business and voluntary sectors in the area.

This means identifying a common agenda and linking the plans of partner organisations with those of the council, to address the needs of communities collectively and effectively. A key part of this is ensuring that partner agencies work collaboratively in sharing information and resources where it is feasible and sensible to do so.

In working with others, councillors will often operate as ‘honest brokers’, bringing together individuals and agencies in the area – and across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors – to tackle the key social, economic and environmental challenges that Lichfield District faces.

## Decision making or reviewing decisions

Lichfield District Council has a distinct role in acting as a legal and regulatory authority. This includes administering rules that parliament and central government has laid down and making and administering its own rules.

In making or administering rules that affect the rights and responsibilities of local people – and which include the granting or refusal of planning permissions – councillors who sit on relevant committees and panels, must:

- pay attention to relevant considerations (and ignore irrelevant ones)
- consider and weigh up the evidence on each issue on its merits
- act fairly and within the law.

In discharging these responsibilities – and all other aspects of their elected role – local councillors are required to operate to the highest standards of conduct to ensure that there is public confidence in all that the council does. We will look at what this means in practice later in the workbook.

## Exercise

### How much do you really know about your electoral ward?



Think about the electoral ward that you would represent if you decided to stand for election. It would be important for you to know about the different communities who live there, the industries and workplaces and the infrastructure that exists to serve and support local people. Write down what you know about the following:

**How many people live in the area?**

**How many different languages are spoken?**

**What proportion of people claim housing benefit?**

**What proportion of the local population are of retirement age?**

**What do the most recent crime statistics tell you about crime concerns in the area?**

**Who are the major employers in the area?**

**How many people commute into the area each day in order to work?**

**How many affordable homes are being built in the ward?**

**Reflect on your responses to the questions above.**

**How well do you feel you know your electoral ward now?**

**Could you learn more?**

**Would you feel comfortable to be asked any of these questions by one of your constituents or the local media if you were an elected councillor?**

# How will you contribute to the work of Lichfield District Council?

Lichfield District Council is responsible for a wide range of powers delegated to it from central government. This includes responsibility for waste and recycling collection, planning, housing benefits, environmental health, street cleaning and council tax collection. The vision and direction of the council in carrying out all of this work is set and led by its democratically elected councillors. Over recent years, this role has broadened to include additional responsibilities, such as improving the health and wellbeing of local people. As one of the largest employers in Lichfield District, the council plays a big part in the local economy and influences many aspects of the lives of the people who live or work there.

Councils now deliver much of what they do in partnership with other councils, services and agencies, so councillors often have opportunities to sit on outside bodies for health, housing and community safety. The table below identifies some of the key duties that councillors perform in acting as the democratically-elected representatives of such a large and diverse organisation:



## Councillor viewpoint

“Councillors come from a variety of backgrounds. They all believe that they can contribute positively to the community by representing residents, working through the issues and making the place we live in better. I’m no different and I would encourage you to do just that. Come and join in.”

**Councillor Rich Michalowski,  
Conservative Party**



## Main duties and roles of councillors

Duty	Roles (as outlined earlier)
Attending regular council meetings, including any committees, sub-committees, task groups or working groups to which the councillor is appointed	Developing strategies and plans Serving the community Representing the community Working with others Decision making or reviewing decisions
Dealing with issues raised by constituents (by correspondence, phone, email and in person) and being accessible	Serving the community Representing the community
Actively being aware of issues – inside and outside the council – affecting the electoral ward and Lichfield district wide	Representing the community Working with others
Working in partnership with other public bodies and local organisations to identify and pursue local needs and aspirations and encouraging community action	Working with others Representing the community Developing strategies and plans
Representing the council on other organisations, agencies or partnership bodies to which the councillor may be appointed	Representing the community working with others
Attending meetings, events and activities – both as a local councillor and as a representative of Lichfield District Council – and reporting back on residents' concerns to ensure they are heard	Representing the community Serving the community Working with others
Abiding by the council's constitution and complying with the council's code of conduct for members and maintaining the highest standards of conduct	Serving the community Making rules and regulations
Ensuring that constituents are aware of decisions that affect them and the reasons they were taken and advising them of their rights	Serving the community Representing the community Decision making or reviewing decisions

The way that councillors carry out their local duties can vary enormously, depending on their time, energy, interests and commitment. The sorts of activities that can help councillors to act as a bridge, or conduit, between the council and its communities will also be heavily influenced by the make-up and nature of the constituents concerned. As such, there are no hard and fast rules about the best ways of representing people's views or engaging with them. However, some of the most common activities include:

- **understanding the electoral ward** – the demographics, the key issues facing local people and the way that services are being delivered
- **representing local voices** – being a channel of communication between the communities served and the council and speaking up for the unheard, for example, younger and older people or those with a disability
- **communicating and influencing** – ensuring that the views of local people are taken into account when decisions are made by the council or outside bodies and ensuring matters are reported in the media
- **managing casework** – listening to and responding to requests from individuals and groups in the community, resolving problems and identifying failures in service delivery.

Let's look at each of these in turn.

## Understanding the electoral ward

Understanding the very nature of an electoral ward is not always as easy as it seems. You may have lived in the area for many years. But the chances are that you will not know all of the communities who live there or all of their issues and concerns. If you are a new councillor, it is essential that you get to know your electoral ward. The people who come to you looking for help can tell you quite a lot about the area, but you will need to find other ways of getting to know the key facts.

Speaking to other local community leaders may help, eg district and parish colleagues, community volunteers, the local police commander, teachers or senior managers within the council. Some councillors programme a monthly walk or drive around different parts of their ward, focusing on particular 'trouble spots' or areas subject to rapid social, economic or environmental change. It is also important to build up a good network of contacts – a list of names, telephone numbers and email addresses for people from a range of local organisations.

Lichfield District Council holds a wealth of information. This data is essential in helping to formulate and review policies and services, but can also help local councillors to understand the nature of the area and community needs.

## Representing local voices

The task of representing a diverse and mobile mix of communities, groups and individuals is a complex one. After all, some groups can be very hard to engage. But generally speaking, the broader your range of approaches to community contact, the more people you are likely to reach.

While representing individual voters, councillors often try to keep in touch with:

- Local opinion formers, such as action groups and community group leaders, residents' association chairs, leaders of leisure groups, local media, and 'stalwarts' of the community.

- Groups that are differentiated by age, such as young people, or those who are occasionally described as 'hard to reach' or 'seldom heard' groups, eg under-represented black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, people with a disability or those who are vulnerable.



### Local campaigns

Local councillors may become involved in, or lead, local campaigns. This could involve anything from campaigning for a zebra crossing to starting a credit union and might involve:

- some consultation to find out how widespread support for the idea is
- helping to organise a campaign group of those who can assist
- organising petitions or public meetings
- helping people to make presentations or ask questions at committees
- engaging the local media and publicising the campaign on websites or blogs.

The council is required to represent the interests of the whole community and discovering the needs of different groups in the community is an important part of a councillor's role. Occasionally there will be conflicts of interest requiring sensitive judgement.

Representing different views in an open and reasoned way may require:

- **Listening** – actively finding out what people think and want. This can be done by knocking on doors or walking around estates, or by seeking out groups that you may not know well, eg mother and toddler groups. You may prefer to use organised advice surgeries to meet people face-to-face and discuss the issues that keep them awake at night.
- **Questioning** – sympathetic questioning to get to the heart of an issue, to generate thoughts and ideas and to challenge extreme views, uninformed opinions and misleading information.

- **Advocacy** – ensuring that local voices are heard when issues are debated and decisions are taken. This can often involve speaking up for people whose views are under-represented, unspoken or frequently ignored.
- **Facilitating** – helping individuals and groups to come together to discuss issues affecting the ward, to debate different points of view and to reach consensus on solutions that may meet local needs.
- **Giving information** – talking to people and providing information in plain English to enable them to understand local government services and processes, eg avoiding the use of council jargon and technical or legal language.

## Communicating and influencing

Understanding fully the nature and needs of a ward and making the effort to truly represent local people can provide councillors with a strong mandate for action. For many, it is the satisfaction of acting on behalf of their local community that encourages them to stand for election. But the biggest challenge for local councillors is often in getting the council or an outside body to take local views into account when making decisions – a challenge that requires them to develop good communication and influencing skills.



### Key influencing skills

**Social skills** – the ability to interact successfully with other people in most given situations.

**Information skills** – the ability to have data relevant to the debate, knowing what the issue is and understanding the context in which it occurs.

**Judgement** – an ability to assess all aspects of the information content and social skills experience in communicating with people.

Influencing others requires both skill and judgement and sound tactics. The following can help:

- Preparing for meetings by studying the agenda and making sure you are properly informed and fully prepared about the issues to be discussed. Avoid ‘hijacking’ a meeting and raising issues which are pertinent to you but irrelevant to the debate.
- Playing an active part in the debate and forming sound conclusions based on what is best for the community – and abiding by any majority decisions.
- Ensuring, with others, that the council’s deliberations and decision making procedures are properly managed – being robust in your scrutiny.
- Representing the whole electorate and not just those who voted for you; listening, and then representing, the views of the community when discussing council business and working with outside bodies.
- Maintaining proper standards of ethical behaviour as an elected representative of the people.



### Consultation ideas

**Surveys** – can be paper-based or sent by email.

**Focus groups** – get a selection of people together to debate an issue.

**Roadshows** – take a campaign out in the division and ask for views.

**Newsletters** – produce a local newsletter and ask for feedback.

**Use of social media** – share thoughts and invite responses.

Another key feature of the communicating and influencing role is the impact that councillors have in the local media. In a democracy, the media is a vital mechanism for ensuring the transparency of local political decision-making and for holding councils and elected members to account. There is a generally held assumption that local government gets a 'bad press', but evidence suggests that local media, in particular, are willing to present local government in a positive light, if handled in the right way.

### **Casework – a further source of guidance**

In summary, the general steps that need to be considered are:

- Identifying what the problem is – establishing the facts and finding out how the constituent wants to be helped. Identifying whether there is a long history to the problem and who has been approached in the past.
- Referring the problem to the appropriate council department – most councillors find that a quick face to face discussion, telephone call or email is the quickest and easiest way to sort out casework problems.
- Providing feedback – after initial enquiries, letting the constituent know what has been done and keeping them up to date with progress and eventual outcomes.
- Considering the wider issues – reflecting on the issues raised and letting other councillors know. A number of similar concerns raised with councillors may suggest that an issue needs to be dealt with by a new or revised policy or a scrutiny review.
- Monitoring your performance – to see if anything you do could be improved.

**Source: 'Handling casework',  
LGA Councillor workbook, LGA, 2017**

**[www.local.gov.uk/councillors-workbook-handling-casework](http://www.local.gov.uk/councillors-workbook-handling-casework)**

Local press, television and radio journalists want a story to cover. These may often be the main source of information on local government for both interested and disinterested citizens and councillors can use their communication and influencing skills to ensure that a balanced and accurate account is given to the media in the first instance.

## Managing casework

Some councillors find casework the best part of their role – the opportunity to sort out problems for residents who find the council 'a nightmare'. Casework can come from a variety of sources:

- letters, telephone calls, emails and social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc)
- surgeries, advice sessions and doorstep calls
- campaigning and other political activity.

Dealing with casework requires councillors to develop their own simple, but effective, ways of managing both the information and paper flow. Good note-keeping and diary management can help, as well as an efficient filing system. The amount of casework any councillor receives will depend on the nature of the ward they represent, although research has suggested that the higher the level of deprivation in an area, the more casework there is likely to be.

### **Exercise – seeing the 'bigger picture'**

Look at the individual cases presented below and write down some of the potential issues that might lie behind each of the cases presented:

**(a) Four separate cases of missed bin collections in one road.**

**(b) A rise in the number of queries received by the local councillor about on-street parking by people commuting in from areas outside of the borough.**

Imagine you were the local councillor who received these cases. How might you react? What wider concerns would they suggest? Most importantly, what first steps would you take?

# Are you ready to be a councillor?



## Councillor viewpoint

“It has been a great privilege, meeting all sorts of interesting people and being able to help with their projects and try to turn community ideas into reality. I’ve worked on a range of issues: from where houses are planned, recycling to potholes, from improving our cycling and community facilities.”

**Councillor Jonathan Essex, Green Party**

Lichfield district councillors not only reflect and represent the communities they serve, but should also have a broad range of skills and life experiences. Councillors do not have to be highly educated or have a profession. Skills gained through raising a family, caring for a sick or disabled relative, volunteering or being active in faith or community groups are very valuable.

As a potential electoral candidate, you may feel you lack the skills or confidence to be a councillor. Rest assured the council provides support, information and training for all new councillors. That said, while you don’t need any special qualifications, having or being able to develop the following skills, knowledge and attributes will help in the role:

- Communication and influencing skills – these include listening and interpersonal skills, facilitation, public speaking, advocacy, the ability to consider alternative points of view and to negotiate, mediate and resolve conflict.
- Problem solving, questioning and analytical skills – the ability to get to the bottom of an issue and to think of different ways to resolve it, including the advantages and disadvantages of each option.
- Team working – being able to work with fellow councillors and officers in meetings and on committees and being able to complete any tasks on time.
- Organisational skills - being able to plan and manage your time, keep appointments and meet deadlines.
- ICT literacy – Lichfield District Council is ‘going digital’ and relies increasingly on information and communications technology both internally and externally. Councillors are expected to play a full role in this, eg accessing information online, communicating electronically through social media and other channels and minimising the need for printed material.
- Ability to engage with the local community – being available through meetings, the media, the internet, public forums, debates and on the telephone in order to provide information and advice to people.

You may have gained skills and knowledge through your professional, personal or community experience. This could include:

- knowledge of the needs of specific groups such as children and young people, older people, or people with health problems
- an understanding of financial management and reporting processes
- an understanding of legal and regulatory systems or procedures
- knowledge of housing, regeneration or environmental issues
- any other skills that relate to the work or facilities provided by the council.

## Balancing the demands on your time

Lichfield district councillors are elected for four years. Being effective in the role requires both commitment and hard work.

Keeping in touch with residents, being visible in the role and responding to case work all require time. Councillors have to balance the needs and interests of residents, their political party (if relevant), and the council, on top of the demands and needs of their personal and professional lives.



### The demands of the role

'Becoming a councillor is a rewarding form of public service that puts people in a privileged position where they can make a difference to the quality of other people's daily lives.

However, being an effective councillor requires hard work. Every day, councillors have to balance the needs and interests of their residents, voters, political parties and the council. All these groups will make legitimate demands on the councillor's time on top of their personal responsibilities to family, workplace and friends...'

**Councillors' guide, LGA, 2015**



### Councillor viewpoint

"I became a councillor because I wanted to protect and improve my local area.

Being a councillor can be very rewarding – helping people and seeing changes made for the better – but you do need to be persistent to see the job through."

**Councillor Jill Bray, Residents Associations**

In deciding whether you wish to stand in an election, you may want to discuss it with your family and friends to make sure they understand what you are taking on. You are likely to need their support as you'll have to spend some of your spare time on council business.

The tasks involved can take up a considerable amount of time and do require some work in the evenings and at weekends. The precise amount of time will depend on the roles and commitments each councillor takes on and can vary, with councillors spending on average around 25 hours a week on council business.

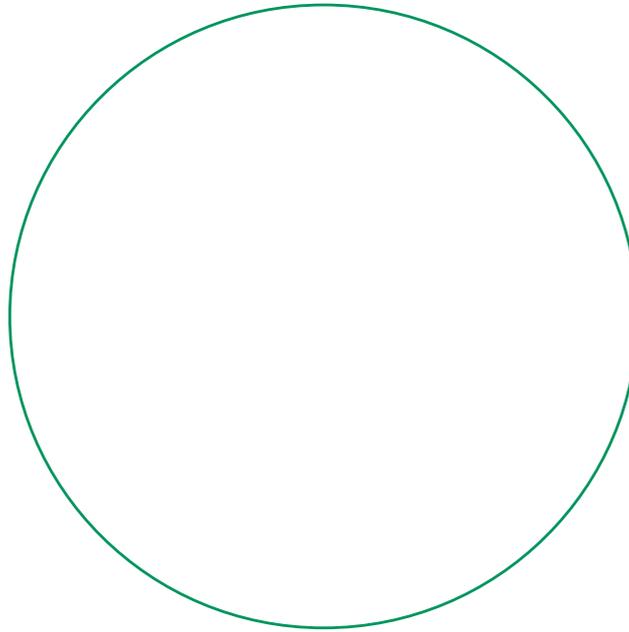
The amount of time you are prepared to put in is largely up to you, but bear in mind that sufficient time is required for things like meetings, training courses and seminars, eg while some committee meetings occur only a few times each year, others take place on a more regular basis. Time will also be needed to read agendas and reports and become familiar with the issues at hand so you can make informed decisions. If you are elected as a chairperson or vice chair, you will also be required to attend agenda briefings with officers. And if you are nominated as the council's representative on an outside body, this will also generate its own time and paperwork demands.

## Exercise

### How you use your time



Think about the time you spend in a typical week on all your existing day to day commitments, eg work demands, training, education, family duties, hobbies, leisure interests, sports, eating, sleeping etc. Using the pie chart below, apportion the time you spend on each activity to build up a picture of how you are currently using the time available:



Reflect on the results. Does your analysis suggest that you might struggle to make time available in taking on the role of councillor? If you were keen to take on the role, what activities might need to be changed, sacrificed or reduced?

## Operating to the highest standards of conduct

Effective local government requires high standards of conduct to ensure there is public confidence in all councils do. This has been the key driver behind efforts to promote better ethical governance in recent years. The starting point for much of the work was the 1997 Committee on Standards in Public Life (known as the Nolan Committee). It established seven principles designed to underpin standards of conduct in public life (see box).

Lichfield District Council has adopted a Members' Code of Conduct which sets out rules for how its councillors should behave. Councillors also need to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests at any decision-making meetings before items are discussed.

Councillors are required to adhere to the code of conduct and are also required to complete a register of interests form.

Areas covered by the code of conduct include councillors not abusing their position and not misusing the council's resources. Councillors are bound by the code whenever they are conducting council business or representing the council. It is a breach of the code to act in any way which brings the authority into disrepute or to use your position as a councillor to improperly secure for yourself or any person an advantage or disadvantage.



## The seven principles of public life

- **Selflessness:** Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.
- **Integrity:** Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- **Objectivity:** In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- **Accountability:** Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- **Openness:** Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- **Honesty:** Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- **Leadership:** Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.



## Councillor viewpoint

“When I first stood as a candidate in a borough election, my four children were aged between one and seven years old, I had a part-time job, did some voluntary work and my friends thought I was mad!”

**Councillor Anna Tarrant, Liberal Democrats**

# What support will you get in the role?

Lichfield District Council is committed to providing councillors with advice and support for all aspects of their role. After an election, all new councillors are required to attend an induction programme to enable them to:

- meet the key officers who will support them in their role
- attend learning and development events to familiarise them with the work of the council, the expectations of councillors and ways in which they can carry out key tasks.

Beyond their initial induction, all councillors are provided with ongoing support in the following areas:

- **Learning and development** – an ongoing programme of training to broaden the knowledge, skills and confidence of all elected members. Councillors may also attend specific events and seminars that are relevant to their areas of responsibility.
- **Officer support** – staff working for the council will provide a range of support and assistance. In particular, the democratic services team, which supports councillors in their representational role and acts as a point of contact, providing information and maintaining effective channels of communication between officers and councillors. Democratic services is a key contact to signpost you round the council in the first couple of months and they provide a range of administrative and secretarial support.

- **ICT support** – each councillor is given an IT allowance as part of your basic councillor allowance and you are expected to have or to buy a suitable device (desktop/laptop/smart mobile device) to enable you to receive electronic communications.

## Financial support

Councillors are not paid a salary but they are entitled to receive a basic allowance, which is intended to recognise the time devoted to their work on behalf of the people of Lichfield District and in connection with council business.

The system of allowances adopted by Lichfield District Council is designed to ensure that councillors are not left out of pocket. It covers costs such as subsistence and travel to and from meetings. The council will also provide a special responsibility allowance to those who take on extra duties, such as the leader of the council, portfolio holders, committee chairs and certain positions within political groups.

### **Members' allowances in Lichfield**

Full information on the members' allowances scheme at Lichfield District Council can be found on the council's website via the link below:

[www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/constitution](http://www.lichfielddc.gov.uk/constitution)

# Why should I consider standing as a Lichfield district councillor?

There are many reasons why you might decide to become a councillor:

- Wanting to make a difference and be involved in shaping the future of the local community.
- Being concerned about your local area and wanting to ensure that the community gets the right services.
- Wanting to represent the views of local people and ensure that community interests are taken into account.
- Having a concern about a specific issue and wanting to do something about it.
- In a time of scarce resources, having good ideas for doing more with less.
- To contribute your business or professional skills.
- As an extension to what you are already doing through a charity, voluntary group or school governing body – becoming a councillor can be a great next step.
- To pursue your political ambitions and contribute to your community. Working in local government can also be a good stepping stone for those who are keen to further their careers in politics – many MPs began their political careers as councillors.
- It can be a career-enhancing activity, allowing you to develop leadership and analytical skills and to obtain practical, managerial work experience.

We have stressed that becoming a councillor can be both rewarding and stimulating. And while there is no template for an 'ideal' Lichfield district councillor, those who excel in the role are likely to be committed, determined, talented and willing to learn. Which leaves us with just one final question: 'Could that be you?'



### Ready to make a difference?

“Increasing the pool of talent from which councillors are elected is a key challenge for local government. Only by encouraging the brightest stars to stand for election can we ensure that councils are able to do the best for their communities. We need plenty of high-quality prospective councillors ready and willing to work hard and make a difference to their local communities...”

“We need to find people who are ordinary enough to be representative, but extraordinary enough to be representatives. We need to think more creatively about how to widen the talent pool...”

**LGA Be a Councillor guidance, 2012**



There are resources you can use to find out more about being a Lichfield district councillor, the support on offer, and how to stand for election:

- a guidebook, outlining the basics of what councillors and councils do and the next steps
- details of forthcoming information events for prospective candidates
- key contact details for the Local Government Association (LGA), Lichfield District Council electoral services and the Electoral Commission.

## **Make contact**

### **Lichfield District Council – Electoral Services**

Frog Lane  
Lichfield  
Staffordshire WS13 6YY

01543 308125  
elections@lichfielddc.gov.uk

### **Local Government Association (LGA)**

Michael Barrett  
Adviser – Leadership and Localism  
020 7664 3162  
michael.barrett@local.gov.uk

### **Electoral Commission**

The Electoral Commission (main office)  
3 Bunhill Row  
London EC1Y 8YZ  
0333 1031928  
pef@electoralcommission.org.uk

## Main political group contacts

### **Local Government Association (LGA) Conservative Group**

020 7664 3264

[www.lgaconservatives.local.gov.uk](http://www.lgaconservatives.local.gov.uk)

@LGACons

### **The Conservative Councillors' Association (CCA)**

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

### **Local Government Association (LGA) Independent Group**

020 7664 3224

[www.lgaindependent.local.gov.uk](http://www.lgaindependent.local.gov.uk)

@LGA\_Independent

### **Local Government Association (LGA) Labour Group**

020 7664 3263

[www.lgalabour.local.gov.uk](http://www.lgalabour.local.gov.uk)

@LGA\_Labour

### **Association of Labour Councillors (ALC)**

[councillors@labour.org.uk](mailto:councillors@labour.org.uk)

### **Local Government Association (LGA) Liberal Democrat Group**

020 7664 3235

[www.libdemgroup.lga.gov.uk](http://www.libdemgroup.lga.gov.uk)

@libdemlocalgov

### **Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors (ALDC)**

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

If you are interested in other political parties, please view the Register of Political Parties: [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/PEF-online-registers](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/PEF-online-registers)



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