



How do I become a councillor?

Councillors are people who are elected to their local council to represent their community. Councillors are elected for a four year term. Whilst being a councillor can take up some of your spare time, it is rewarding and you can make a real difference to the community and the people who live here.

Role of councillors

As a councillor your role and responsibilities may include:

- Representing your ward.
- Decision-making.
- Developing and reviewing council policy on a range of issues.
- Scrutinising the decisions taken by the councillors on the executive.
- Regulatory duties.
- Community leadership and engagement.
- Representing the council on outside bodies and partnerships.

Election

To become a Cherwell district councillor you must stand for election. To qualify to be a candidate on the day of

nomination and on the day of election you must be at least 18 years old and be a British citizen, a qualifying citizen of a Commonwealth country, a citizen of the Irish Republic or a citizen of another member state of the European Union.

You must also meet at least **one** of the following criteria:

- Be registered as a local government elector in Cherwell district both on the day of nomination and election day.
- Have occupied as an owner or tenant any land or premises in Cherwell District for at least 12 months.
- Have, for the whole of the 12 months before the day of nomination and the day of the election, had your main or only place of work in the district.
- Have lived in Cherwell district during the whole of the last

12 months before the day of nomination and the day of election.

(It is important to mark all the criteria you meet on your nomination paper as you have to maintain the criteria for your term of office. If you have only marked one criteria and you fail to meet this once elected you may be disqualified from being a councillor.)

You are disqualified from becoming a Cherwell district councillor if:

- You are a paid employee of Cherwell District Council, or hold a politically restricted post within an authority.
- You are subject to bankruptcy restrictions order.
- You have, within five years before the day of election, been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (including a suspended sentence) without the option of a fine.
- You have been disqualified under Part 3 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (which relates to donation and other offences.)

(This list of disqualifications is not exhaustive. The full range of disqualifications is complex. The Electoral Commission website www.electoralcommission.org.uk provides more detailed guidance.)

Once the notice of an election has been published you can become a candidate. To be nominated as a candidate you must complete a set of nomination papers and submit them to the returning officer (chief executive of Cherwell District Council via the elections team) by noon on the nineteenth day before the election. Nomination papers are available from the elections team elections@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

It is advisable to submit your paperwork as early as possible as mistakes make the papers invalid and you will need to submit a fresh set. Elections staff will be available to help you complete the paperwork and the Electoral Commission has detailed guidance available on its website.

You can stand as an 'independent' candidate or on behalf of a political party. To use any description other than 'independent' on a ballot paper you must stand as a candidate on behalf of a registered political

party. To do this you must gain the permission of the political party to use their logo or description on the ballot paper. This is done through a certificate of authorisation submitted with your nomination paper. You can establish a new registered party as long as you complete the necessary procedures. Again, you can find more information on registered political parties on the Electoral Commission website.

Responsibilities of a councillor

You are elected to represent a particular ward and the people who live in that area. As an elected representative you have a responsibility to communicate council policy and decisions to the people who live in your ward. Councillors often receive enquiries from constituents in their ward asking advice on things like – recycling, planning applications and housing issues. For many residents councillors are the first point of contact with the council and dealing with ward issues can make a demand on your time.

As a councillor you must attend council meetings regularly or you may lose your seat. If you do not attend a meeting of a

council body for more than six months you will automatically be disqualified and a by-election will be called, unless you have previously requested a dispensation.

Initially there may appear to be a lot of paperwork sent to you. Other councillors and officers will help new councillors to work out what is important and how to navigate through the paperwork. As a recently elected councillor put it, it is important to “get stuck into the role and speak up”.

Being a councillor can be extremely rewarding but will make legitimate demands on your time. On top of your personal and professional life you may spend a lot of your spare time on council business.

Councillor conduct

All councillors sign a declaration of acceptance of office which states that they will observe the members’ code of conduct. The code of conduct sets out rules of conduct you must follow in your role as a councillor in relation to things like dealing with other councillors and officers, declaring interests at meetings and dealing with sensitive information. If you fail to comply with the members’

code of conduct a complaint may be made against you and could lead to sanctions made by the council's standards committee.

There are ten general principles which govern the conduct of councillors. These principles define the standards that councillors should uphold, failure to act in accordance with these general principles may amount to a breach of the code of conduct. The ten general principles are:

Selflessness – Councillors should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

Honesty and Integrity – Councillors should not place themselves in situations where their honesty or integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.

Objectivity – Councillors should make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.

Accountability – Councillors should be accountable to the public for their actions and

manner in which they carry out their responsibilities and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.

Openness – Councillors should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.

Personal Judgement – Councillors may take account of the views of others, including their political groups, but should reach their own conclusions on the issues before them and act in accordance with those conclusions.

Respect for Others – Councillors should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers and its other employees.

Duty to uphold the law – Councillors should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.

Stewardship – Councillors should do whatever they are able to do to ensure that their authorities use their resources prudently and in accordance with the law.

Leadership – Councillors should promote and support these principles by leadership and by example, and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.

Council structure

Cherwell is part of a three-tier structure of government – with a county council (Oxfordshire County Council), a district council (Cherwell District Council) and parish or town councils.

The district council provides the following services:

- Housing services, but not direct provision.
- Leisure & Recreation.
- Planning.
- Environmental Health.
- Waste Control.
- Streetscene.
- Recycling.
- Elections.
- Support Services.

Cherwell District Council has 50

councillors who form the council: the council is responsible for setting the budgetary and policy framework for the organisation. The council delegates many of its functions to committees such as planning, licensing and audit. It appoints the leader and members to the various committees and can also hold the executive and the committees to account for the decisions they take. The council meets six times a year and often invites people to speak at the meetings on key issues of importance to the district, for example, health and education. Council meetings also provide an opportunity to question the leader of the council.

Cherwell has an executive model of governance. The executive make key decisions. The decisions the executive expect to take over the next four months are published each month in the leader's forward plan. Cherwell District Council's executive has ten members each with their own portfolio of responsibility. Executive members are often referred to as portfolio holders.

The council also has overview and scrutiny committees which are responsible for reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of council services.

As a councillor you are automatically a member of council and are likely to be a member of other committees such as overview and scrutiny, planning or personnel. You may also be an executive member. The extent of your role will often depend on your experiences and commitment.

Do I get paid for being a councillor?

Councillors are entitled to a basic allowance and expenses to cover the cost of fulfilling their duties as a ward councillor. Councillors are entitled to a special responsibility allowance for roles which hold certain responsibilities, for example, committee chairman. The levels of the allowance and expenses are proposed by an Independent Remuneration Panel and submitted annually to council each year for a decision to be made. All allowances are subject to tax and National Insurance.

What type of support and assistance do I get as a councillor?

The democratic services team support councillors in their role.

The team supports the decision making process and provides advice and guidance to elected members on the committee processes, meeting procedures, the constitution, members' register of interests, declaring interests at meetings, members' allowances and a host of other issues.

The democratic services team is also responsible for the member development and support strategy and organising the annual member development programme. All members are invited to a support interview to determine their individual training needs. The council offers a variety of development opportunities to councillors including – a comprehensive induction programme, training courses, briefings and attendance at external conferences.

The council provides IT support to councillors including IT equipment and a council email address. Members can use IT facilities to submit their register of interest forms, submit gifts and hospitalities, submit monthly allowance forms and maintain a councillor website.

If you would like more information on the role of a councillor and the decision making structure of Cherwell District Council please contact the democratic services team
democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Useful contacts and links

www.cherwell.gov.uk
www.electoralcommission.org.uk
www.beacouncillor.org.uk

democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
elections@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

LEGD0310

Call **01295 221589**
or visit **www.cherwell.gov.uk**

The information in this document can be made available in other languages, large print Braille, audio tape or electronic format on request. Please contact 01295 227001

Jeżeli chciałby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać. 01295 227001

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ। 01295 227001

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。01295 227001

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