

Want to make a difference in your community? Become a Councillor!

Ever thought of standing for election to Worcestershire County Council?

Are you interested in helping your local community develop and grow?

Are you ready to make a difference to the quality of other people's lives and influence the way things are done in your area or the county?

Are you already involved in local matters and want to take things further or looking for a way to help your community?

Do you have local knowledge and commitment to make a real difference?

Do you have the ability and skills to listen, debate and make sound decisions?

Are you prepared to learn new things and develop your skills and knowledge?

Could you devote time to and provide leadership within your community?

If you have answered, "yes" to any of the above questions, the following information should help you decide whether to stand for election as a County Councillor.

County Council elections take place every four years. The next 'all out' elections 6 May 2021.

What does the County Council do?

The Council needs to meet both current and future challenges and it is responsible for providing a wide range of services to more than 500,000 residents and spends around £324m a year. It works with partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors to make Worcestershire a better place for people to live and work. It has specific responsibilities in relation to:

- Schools and other educational opportunities;
- Social care services;
- Public health;
- Libraries, Museums and other cultural activities;
- Trading Standards Services;
- Waste Disposal;
- Highways and public rights of way; and
- Planning advice and determining particular planning applications.

What do County Councillors do?

The Council is led by democratically elected councillors (often called 'members') who set the vision and direction of the Council. The Council also has paid staff (officers) dealing with delivery of services and professional judgements. Worcestershire County Council is made up of 57 Councillors who represent 52 Electoral Divisions across the County.

All Councillors are expected to represent and champion the interests of the community, businesses and constituents in their area. To achieve this as a Councillor you will need to:

- Keep yourself informed about the needs of your area;
- Represent your Division within the County Council and other bodies;
- Be accessible to the people in your area e.g. through regular surgeries but in any event responding to letters, emails and phone calls;
- Play a leading role in your area and keep in contact with local groups and societies and, where they exist, parish council;
- Keep the residents in your electoral division informed about your work.

As well as the local representational role, Councillors participate in the political management of the council. Your role and responsibilities:

- Will include being a member of the Council which agrees the budget and policy framework and holds the executive to account;
- May include serving on Scrutiny Panels to help develop Council policy, and scrutinising decisions taken by the Cabinet, in order to improve outcomes for our residents;
- May include serving on specific Committees or Panels which have regulatory, quasi-judicial or statutory duties for the county e.g. Planning Committee.

Nearly all of our democratic meetings are open to the public and you are welcome to attend if you would like to see how the Council's political structures operate. A timetable of meetings is available on the Council's website and many of the public meetings are also webcast and viewable on our website - you can access the information at www.worcestershire.gov.uk

Some Councillors may also be appointed to represent the Council on a wide range of local, regional and national organisations.

Personal conduct

The way Councillors act in office, particularly over matters where they have a financial or personal interest, is governed both by the law and by a Code of Conduct. The Council has a legal duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its councillors.

If elected, you will be required to sign a declaration stating that you undertake to observe the council's Code of Conduct for Councillors. Full details of the council's Code of Conduct can be found by accessing this link www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20013/councillors_and_committees/108/complaints_about_conduct_of_councillors

You will also be required to declare certain financial and other interests which you may have.

The public rightly have high expectations of the conduct of our Councillors. Amongst other requirements, you must treat others with respect and, must not conduct yourself so as to bring your office or the Council into disrepute.

Who can become a Councillor?

Almost anyone can stand for election. You do not have to live in the Electoral Division you are seeking to represent, but you must be:

- at least 18 on the day of nomination;
- a British subject/EU citizen, a citizen of the Irish Republic or a qualifying Commonwealth citizen;
- an elector within the County or have lived, worked or owned a property in Worcestershire for at least 12 months immediately preceding nomination and election.

A candidate can be disqualified if:

- they are subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or debt relief restriction order;
- they have a criminal conviction with a prison sentence (whether suspended or not) of 3 months or more, in the previous 5 years;
- they are disqualified under election legislation;
- they work for Worcestershire County Council or hold a politically restricted post with another authority.

How much do I need to know?

Councillors come from a variety of backgrounds. You don't have to have any specific academic qualifications or have a profession. You may have gained valuable skills and knowledge through working life, personal or community experiences.

Having, or being able to develop the following skills, knowledge and attributes will help you in the role:

- Communications Skills, including:
 - » listening and interpersonal skills;
 - » public speaking skills;
 - » ability to consider alternative points of view; and
 - » to negotiate, mediate and resolve conflict.
- Problem solving and analytical skills including:
 - » considering the advantages and disadvantages of each option;
 - » getting to the bottom of an issue; and
 - » to think of different ways to resolve it.
- Team Working including being able to work with others in meetings and complete tasks on time.
- Organisational Skills including being able to plan and manage your time, keep appointments and meet deadlines.
- Ability to engage with your local community including making yourself available through meetings, the media, public forums, email and on the telephone.

If you are elected, you would be offered training to help you carry out your duties and support from the Council and your political group (if appropriate). The Council places a great emphasis on training/development and expects Councillors to actively participate in appropriate opportunities which can help develop the skills and abilities necessary to remain an effective Councillor.

What training and development can I expect to receive?

There will be a programme of induction and training sessions for Councillors after the elections.

What is the time commitment?

This will depend on your roles and responsibilities; the work of a Councillor can vary greatly but is likely to be a good number of hours each week according to the commitments you take on. In addition to your work in the community, there will be Council meetings and briefings to attend, most of which will be held at County Hall in Worcester during office hours.

The great majority of meetings take place during the working day so, if you are in employment, you will need to discuss the time commitment with your employer. The number and length of meetings do vary.

For most of the meetings you attend there will be associated reports and supporting papers, which you will need to read beforehand. In line with the Council's policy on sustainability and commitment to the use of ICT as a Digital Council, many of these will be circulated electronically and you are definitely encouraged to use IT. Other calls on your time may involve evidence-gathering and research in respect of scrutiny exercises.

What support can I expect to receive?

Councillors are supported by officers who will provide you with assistance with your community leadership role, acting as your link both with council directorates and partner organisations.

Information Technology

The majority of council business is now being transacted electronically. To ensure that you are kept fully involved and informed, you will need to use these systems. Officers will be on hand to assist with any questions you may have in relation to ICT equipment. You will be provided with a dedicated Council email address which is used as the primary means of communication with the Council and to which all emails from the Council will be sent, and the address will be available to the public as a means of contacting you. Appropriate ICT equipment will be provided to Councillors to allow them to do their job effectively.

Will I get paid?

Councillors are not paid a salary but receive a Basic Allowance (currently £9,245 pa - subject to review) paid in monthly instalments, to compensate for the time and expense incurred whilst on Council business. It also covers incidental costs such as the use of your home and telephone.

In addition, you are able to claim travel expenses for your attendance at certain "approved events". A Carers' and Dependents' Allowance can also be claimed to recompense those Councillors who incur expenditure for the care of children or other dependents. Please use this link to access full details of the Councillors' Allowances Scheme: www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20013/councillors_and_committees/112/councillors_allowances

Some Councillors also receive a Special Responsibility Allowance in recognition of particular responsibilities they hold.

Still Interested?

If you are thinking of standing as a candidate for a particular political party, then you should first get in touch with that party's local organisation. If you plan to stand as an independent candidate, your local Elections Team (details below) will be pleased to give you further information.

District	Elections Team
Bromsgrove & Redditch	elections@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk Telephone: 01527 881421
Malvern Hills	elections@malvern hills.gov.uk Telephone: 01684 862259
Worcester City	electoralservices@worcester.gov.uk Telephone: 01905 722530
Wychavon	elections@wychavon.gov.uk Telephone: 01386 565437
Wyre Forest	electoral@wyreforestdc.gov.uk Telephone: 01562 732762

Worcestershire County Councillors Elections

You can contact us in the following ways:

By telephone:

01905 843287

By post:

Worcestershire County Council,
County Hall,
Spetchley Road,
Worcester WR5 2NP

Online:

www.worcestershire.gov.uk

To the best of our knowledge all information was correct at the time of printing: February 2021.

Find out more online:

www.worcestershire.gov.uk