

Be a town or parish councillor

Information sheet



If you are passionate about your local area and interested in making a difference, then being a parish or town councillor could be the ideal position for you.

Your local town or parish council

You can find out the name of your local town or parish council, and the contact details for the clerk who manages the council, on the East Suffolk website: www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/yourcouncil/town-and-parish-councils

You can become a councillor for the town or parish where you live or work, or a town or parish within 3 miles of where you live.

What it takes to be a town or parish councillor

Being an effective councillor requires both commitment and hard work. Your council's clerk will be able to give you information as to the usual timing of meetings, the type of work the council does, and other relevant information about the role of a councillor in your area, so that you can understand the demands that will be placed on your time.

Becoming a councillor is both a rewarding and privileged form of public service. You will be in a position to make a difference to the quality of other people's daily lives and prospects, and to improve your local area. You do not need any previous experience of being a councillor, but you will need to be passionate about your local area and dedicated to working as part of a team for the benefit of your residents.

Could I be a councillor?

There are certain criteria that you must meet to be eligible to be a councillor.

You must:

- Be a British citizen or a citizen of the Commonwealth or European Union
- Be at least 18 years old
- Be registered to vote in the area, or have lived, worked or owned property there for at least 12 months before an election
- Have lived within 3 miles/4.8km of the parish for at least 12 months before an election

There are also certain restrictions on holding the post of councillor.

If you are in any doubt about whether you are eligible to stand as a councillor, please contact the Elections Team at East Suffolk Council for advice (contact details below).

FAQ's

Q: What sort of things do town and parish councils do?

A: Town and parish councils have relatively few duties imposed on them by central Government but have a vast array of powers which give them the flexibility to deal with many of the matters affecting local people. Most local councils will consider and make recommendations on planning applications affecting the area (although they are not the deciding authority), support village events and community buildings, and also provide assets which support the identity of the community (village signs, dog litter and waste bins, and benches). However, depending on the identity and size of the town or village, activities could be wide-ranging such as providing allotments, burial grounds and cemeteries, open spaces, markets, newsletters, toilets, and play areas. Local councils can also support or influence the other tiers of local government (county and district councils). Local councils exist to serve the community, and how they achieve this is largely determined by the councillors that serve on the council and the nature of the local area.

Q: Do town and parish councillors get paid?

A: Town and parish councillors are usually unpaid, but in some cases may be able to claim expenses. Check with the clerk for your council what the policy is for your area.

Q: How long will I be a councillor for?

A: The usual term of office for a councillor is 4 years. If during this time you are no longer able to fulfil the role then you have the option to resign. If you are co-opted/elected to fill the seat of a councillor who resigned then your term of office will be shorter than 4 years.

Useful contacts

East Suffolk Council Elections Team

Email: elections@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

Tel: 01502 523238

Suffolk Association of Local Councils

Email: admin@salc.org.uk

Tel: 01473 833713

Website: www.salc.org.uk