



Hartlepool Borough Council is a unitary authority in the North East of England. It is a fantastic place to live, learn, work and grow up, from the spectacular coastline to the picturesque villages.

The Borough consists of 12, 3 member Wards, with 36 Councillors serving on Hartlepool Borough Council who represent the diverse and geographic spread of residents within the borough.

Hartlepool Borough Council needs different kinds of people willing to stand for election: Councillors who are capable, vibrant, energetic and engaged, with a commitment to local people and a passion for change.

Could you be one of them?



**A Councillor?
Who, me?**





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Why are Councillors important?

The position of Councillor is vital in the local community because:

- they are a voice of the community;
- they are champions of the users of local services;
- local people know what is best for local communities;
- they are critical to the effective functioning of democracy; and,
- they play a very important role in helping to shape future services for the benefit of the local people.

Why become a Councillor?

There are many reasons why people decide to become a local Councillor. Some individuals stand because:

- of their concern over the local area in which they live and a desire to ensure that their local community is provided with the services needed;
- they want to ensure that local community interests are taken into account in the Council's decision making and are committed to representing local people's views;
- they want to be involved in shaping the future of the local community;
- they want to make a difference and they are concerned about a particular issue within their community;
- it is an extension of what they are already doing as they are active in a political party or trade union and they see the next step as becoming a Councillor;
- they want to pursue their political beliefs; and,
- they want to contribute business or professional skills to the Council.

Requirements

To stand for election, on the day of nomination, you must be:

- 18 or over;
- be a UK, EU or Commonwealth citizen;
- be registered to vote in or have either worked or lived in the area for one year.

You cannot stand if:

- you work for Hartlepool Borough Council;
- you hold a politically restricted post for another local authority;
- you are bankrupt or subject to an interim order;
- you have served a prison sentence (including suspended sentences) of 3 months or more within 5 years prior to the election;
- you have been disqualified under any legislation relating to corrupt or illegal electoral practices;
- you are subject to the notification requirement of or under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

How do I become a candidate?

When there is to be an election, a Notice of Election is published by the Council. This gives details of the electoral areas, date and time of election, the number of Councillors to be elected, and the timetable for proposing a candidate (known as submitting "nomination papers").

A copy of the election timetable and a nomination pack can be obtained from the Electoral Team at the start of a formal election period. The pack will contain all the forms and information you will need to become a candidate. After the close of nominations, if there are more candidates than vacancies then an election will be held.

How do I get nominated to stand?

Nomination packs are available from the Electoral Team at the start of the formal election period. To be nominated you will need:

- a 'proposer' (someone who will put your name forward as a candidate) and
- a 'seconder' – (someone who supports the proposal).

These two people must be registered electors of the ward in which you wish to stand as a candidate and agree to their details being made public.

You must also consent to the nomination.

The Notice of Election will state the date by which the papers must be submitted to the Returning Officer. If you are a candidate for a registered political party, you must also have a certificate from that party authorising you to stand. You can either appoint an election agent to manage your election campaign or, alternatively, you can act as your own agent.

The election process, including what candidates may spend on their campaign, is set out in legislation and it is the responsibility of candidates to ensure that they comply with the law.

The nomination pack will contain guidance notes for candidates.

The legislation relating to elections is extensive. Candidates and election agents are advised to familiarise themselves with the provisions. The Returning Officer and her staff are available to give general advice to candidates and election agents. If you require advice please contact the Electoral Team at the Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool (Tel: 01429 523088). Please note however, that the team will only provide generic advice. For detailed advice on individual matters, candidates and election agents should use other sources.

What qualifications do I need?

You do not need any formal qualifications to become a Councillor. You do need to be willing to attend meetings at the Civic Centre and other meetings in your community. You will also be required to read reports, agendas and other materials.

Standards for Councillors

Councillors are currently bound by a Code of Conduct and have a legal duty to promote equality. They must declare if they have an interest in an item that is being discussed by the Council and in some circumstances must remove themselves from the room.

They must not act in a way that could bring their position as a Councillor into disrepute. These standards are reviewed and updated from time to time.

Advice on standards can also be sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer.



What do Councillors do?

Councillors are **elected by local people to plan, run, monitor and develop** Council business.

This includes taking part in partnerships with others to do this. Councillors work to improve the quality of life for people within the Borough and make decisions about local issues. Councillors are essential in deciding what is in **the public interest** amidst a range of conflicting issues and views.

Councillors usually represent a political party or they can be independent. **All** Councillors represent **all** the citizens of the Borough.

The role of a Councillor can be very varied and it is up to each individual Councillor how they work. However, the three main areas of responsibility are:

- 1 Representing the people in their area (Ward) and becoming a representative of the Borough;
- 2 Community leadership; and,
- 3 Helping to formulate Council policy.

A Councillor's role.....as a representative

Many Councillors see their first and foremost role as representing their Ward and the people who live there. To do this they can:

- Hold 'ward surgeries' in venues within the Ward;
- Deal with constituent's enquiries about aspects of Council business e.g. claiming a discount for Council Tax;
- Undertake case work such as making representations on behalf of an individual or a family;
- Explain Council policy and ensure that the policy is carried out fairly;
- Support local community partnerships and organisations;
- Campaign on local issues, championing the causes which further the interests, quality of life and development of the community;
- Help to bid for resources for their Ward;

- Encourage community participation and citizen involvement in decision making; and,
- Listen to the needs of local people and take their views into account when considering policy proposals and in decision making;
- Work with fellow Ward Councillors to achieve the best for the community.

They also need to ensure local people are informed about services in the area, decisions that affect them and the reasons why decisions are taken by the Council.

A Councillor's role as a community leader

Community leadership is central to the Government's thinking about modern local government. It involves partnership with other organisations.

Hartlepool Borough Council works in partnership with many local bodies and Councillors serve on these local forums on behalf of the Council. Councillors exercise community leadership by:

- representing the Council and constituents on local management boards;
- participating in the activities of any outside body to which they are appointed and reporting back to the Council; and,
- developing a working knowledge of the organisations, services, activities and other factors important to the wellbeing and identity of the community.

A Councillor's role.....as a policy maker

All Councillors are involved in decision making. Councillors, as Members of Full Council, meet with Councillor colleagues from all political and other groups, to debate and approve Council business in a formal setting.

Most meetings are open to the press and public. There are written rules that govern behaviour and procedures at these meetings, which are included in the Council's Constitution. The purpose of these rules is to ensure fair but effectively managed debate.

Councillors can influence local policies through:

- their role on Full Council;
- for some, membership of Policy Committees; and
- membership of management boards of voluntary bodies.

How long would I be in office?

The next scheduled election for one Councillor to each of the 12 wards (two in the Rural West Ward) is on Thursday 4 May 2023.

Councillors elected to Hartlepool Borough Council in 2023 will serve a four year term of office, commencing on Tuesday, 9 May 2023.

NB. If you are elected at a by-election (these take place when someone resigns, is disqualified or sadly dies), you serve until the next scheduled election (anything up to four years).

How much time would I have to commit?

It is for you to decide the level of commitment you are able to give to being a Councillor. This will depend on your role within the Council and the number of commitments (committee seats) you take on – there is no set pattern or hours of working.

If you have a family and personal relationships to consider it is wise to talk through the implications of being a Councillor with them first because you will need their support and understanding.

Some of the issues you will need to devote time to are:

- the people you represent will look to you for help in dealing with their problems. You are likely to receive a lot of emails, telephone calls as well as post;
- you may find that a large proportion of your time is spent dealing with constituency and associated casework, either taken at the Ward Surgeries or received via email, telephone or post. You may also spend some of your time visiting constituents at their homes or at the Council offices;
- there are usually up to eight Full Council meetings each year, plus the Annual Meeting which you will be expected to attend. These are formal meetings with other Councillor colleagues from all political groups;
- places on committees are agreed with all the political groups and you may be a member of more than one committee;
- for most of the meetings you attend there will be an agenda and reports that you will need to read beforehand. This information can be quite detailed and take time to read and understand;
- many Councillors represent the Council on one or more outside bodies; and,
- most Council meetings are held during the day. Your meetings may not be evenly spread out so some weeks you may be required to attend more meetings than in other weeks.

When do Council meetings take place?

Meetings of the Full Council take place approximately eight times a year in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Victoria Road, Hartlepool and start at 6pm.

The primary role of Council is to establish the budget and policy framework within which Councillors and Officers of the Council will operate. In addition as a Councillor you may be a member of a Policy Committee or other committees of the Council. Most committee meetings take place during the day.

The length of a meeting is determined by the amount of business to be considered and can take between one and three hours or even longer (in exceptional circumstances) and Councillors are expected to stay for the full meeting. Meetings for other groups, partnerships etc. take place at a range of times and venues.

Details of all Council committee meetings and their dates and the Council's Constitution can be found on the Council's website www.hartlepool.gov.uk or by telephoning Democratic Services on 01429 402818

Can I get time off work?

If you are working, by law your employer must allow you to take a reasonable amount of time off during working hours to perform your duties as a Councillor (Employment Rights Act 1996, Section 50).

The amount of time off will depend upon your responsibilities as a Councillor and the effect of your absence on your employer's business. You should discuss this with your employer before making the commitment.

What support will I get....?

..... from Council officers

Council officers are employed to implement the strategies and policies of the Council. They are committed to help you fulfil your duties as a Councillor. There will always be someone who is able to offer advice or support on any issue and all you would have to do is ask.

More often though it will be the more senior officers - including the Managing Director and other members of the Corporate Management Team who will offer you support to assist in your decision making.

If you are a member of a political party or other group, support and assistance will also be available from your colleagues.

..... with my paperwork

The Members' Services & Democratic Services teams, who are part of the Legal Division can offer a range of assistance to Councillors including first point of contact, Ward support, advising on committee/meeting protocol. The list is not exhaustive and the teams are on hand to provide support to Councillors as and when required.

All Councillors are offered portable IT equipment to assist in the discharge of their duties.

You will receive lots of communication by email and will need access to the internet. Full training on using these devices will be available.

You will also have access to fully equipped Members' and meeting rooms at the Civic Centre. All rooms have facilities for both formal and informal use, telephones, computers and printers.

Will I need to work at home?

You will be required to work at home reading your papers, preparing for forthcoming meetings and dealing with enquiries from the public.

Data Protection

You will come into contact with personal data on a frequent basis; your constituents will ask for advice and assistance and you will need to keep records in order to help them and be their elected representative. The Council will pay for you to be registered as a Data Controller with the Information Commissioner's Office, and you will need to be aware of, and comply with, GDPR and the Data Protection Act in order to respect and keep personal data safe and secure.



Training

There is training available for new Councillors.

Immediately upon election we arrange induction training for all Councillors, and include introductions to the Corporate Management Team.

In addition a series of Member Development sessions will take place throughout the year. Other training will also be arranged, to meet the needs of individual Councillors, and specific to certain committees such as Regulatory Committees (Planning and Licensing) and Appeal Panels.

Will I get paid?

Councillors receive no salary for the time they give up to serve their community. However, you will be paid an allowance to reimburse you for time and expenses incurred whilst on council business.

Every Hartlepool Councillor is entitled to a basic allowance, currently £8330 a year. Some Councillors are given an additional allowance to cover special responsibilities such as Chairs of Committees.

For more information about the Members Allowance Scheme please visit the Council's website at www.hartlepool.gov.uk. Further information on allowances will be available during the induction period.

If you receive state benefits, these may be affected by your entitlement to Councillor allowances. You are advised to seek the guidance of the local DWP office.

Come along and see for yourself!

There is no better way to see what life is like as a Councillor than to attend one of the Council's meetings.

All meetings advertised on the Council website are open to the public. This will give you a flavour of some of the work that Councilors do and the setting of Full Council meetings. These can be also be found at www.hartlepool.gov.uk/council-meetings

Useful Contacts

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Useful Links

www.electoralcommission.org.uk

The Electoral Commission is an independent body set up by Parliament. Its aim is to gain public confidence and encourage people to take part in the democratic process within the United Kingdom by modernising the electoral process, promoting public awareness of electors matters and regulating political parties.

www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

Find out about your vote and what elections are happening in your area.

www.lga.gov.uk

The Local Government Association promotes the interests of English and Welsh local authorities and exists to promote better local government.

www.nationalassociationofcouncillors.org

The National Association of Councillors is an organisation, which represents the interests of elected members in all types of local authorities and all political persuasions.