



So you want to be a  
**DISTRICT  
COUNCILLOR**



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## Why become a Councillor?

There are many reasons why people stand for election as a Councillor. Often it is because they want:

- to speak on behalf of their local community and to help local people and represent their needs and concerns;
- to pursue their political beliefs and aspirations;
- to offer their personal or professional skills to assist the work of the Council.

East Cambridgeshire has 39 District Councillors each of whom represents a particular Ward in the District. Councillors come from all walks of life; this is very important as it means that a diverse range of local people reflecting different points of view are helping to shape and develop the quality and effectiveness of services which the Council provides for the benefit of all residents.

## Could you become a Councillor?

To be able to stand for election to the District Council you should be:

- at least 18 years old and a British subject or citizen of the Republic of Ireland or a citizen of another Member state of the European Community

You must also:

- be a registered local government elector for East Cambridgeshire at the time of nomination, or
  - during the whole twelve months before your nomination, have occupied as owner or tenant land or other premises in the District, or
  - have had your main (or only) place of work in the District during the whole 12 month before, or
  - have lived in the District for the whole twelve months before your nomination
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## How can I stand for election?

The next Full Council election will take place on 5th May 2011. The closing date by which you must submit your nomination will be midday on 4th April 2011.

You may want some advice about nominations, election expenses or any other aspects of the election. Information can be obtained from your Political Party office, from existing Councillors or from the Council's Principal Democratic Services Officer on (01353) 665555.

## Must I be in a Political Group?

You certainly do not have to join a political group but in practice many Councillors choose to do so.

Within the Council the political groups provide a structure and means to enable matters and emerging issues to be discussed informally and this helps the Council when it subsequently takes decisions about important policy issues.

## What if I am Elected?

### What will my time commitment be?

- This will depend on several factors such as: how involved you want to be; your political activities; if you choose to be involved in particular issues, the number of committees you sit on.
- As a rough guide the minimum number of hours you will spend on your duties as a councillor is likely to average out to the equivalent of about 1 day a week. But leading Councillors such as Political Group Leaders and Committee Chairmen and Group Spokespersons would spend considerably more time than this.
- East Cambridgeshire District Council has mainly daytime meetings.

### Will I lose money?

- As a Councillor you must expect to give up some of your time for the benefit of the community.
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- Although most employers will, within reason, allow some time off for Council work this is something you need to check before making a commitment.
  - Each Councillor receives an annual basic allowance and can also claim for travelling and subsistence costs. Councillors with extra responsibility (e.g. Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen of Committees, Spokesperson, Political Group Leaders) receive additional allowances.
  - Councillors are taxed and pay National Insurance on their 'earnings', e.g. basic and special responsibility allowances, just like normal employees. Travelling and other expenses incurred as part of a Councillor's duties, including mileage expenses and subsistence allowances incurred as part of a Councillor's legitimate expenses, are paid to levels agreed by the Council.

### What practical help will I get to deal with things like correspondence (eg. on constituency work)?

- The Council's Democratic Services staff and other relevant officers are available to offer you advice on request.
- All Councillors are given the opportunity to have Information Communication Technology facilities provided and supported by the Council, installed at their home (e.g. a laptop). Alternatively, those who do not take advantage of this facility may instead claim against an annual allowance for ICT expenditure they incur (e.g. on broadband access, print cartridges, paper).

### Will I receive any training?

- On election Councillors are strongly encouraged to participate in a comprehensive programme of induction. This covers a wide range of things from information about the Council's services, challenges and priorities, to training aimed at developing and supporting Councillor's personal skills to enable them to undertake their role most effectively.
  - The induction programme is designed to provide Councillors with the information and support they will need in a phased way over their first few months in office.
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- A structured Member training programme is also provided to enable Members to benefit from further training and development delivered during their term in office.

### How will I find my way around the Council?

- You will be given a comprehensive list of activities and contacts to assist in your initial period on the Council and to enable you to know who to contact about, for instance, queries you may receive from your constituents which you wish to follow up.
- Also the Council's Democratic Services staff will be able to offer advice and support to all Councillors.

### Will I be involved in representing the Council on external bodies?

- You may well be. The Council collaborates with many other organisations and appoints Councillors to represent it on a range of outside bodies.
- You will have the opportunity to express your interest in serving although there is, of course, no guarantee that each Councillor will be appointed to the bodies on which they would like to serve.

### Will I serve on Committees or Sub-Committees?

- All Councillors are likely to have the opportunity to serve on at least one Committee or Sub-Committee. Again you will have the opportunity to express your preference but the final allocation of places on each Committee/Sub-Committee is a matter for decision by the full Council which takes account of the nominations made by the political Groups to fill their particular allocation of places.

## East Cambridgeshire District Council

- The District Council provides a range of important services to the people of East Cambridgeshire. These include; environmental services; strategic housing; local planning and building control; leisure and arts; land charges; emergency planning; economic and community development; tourism and public toilets.
  - The Council is made up of 39 Members who have overall responsibility for the Council's Budget.
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- The Council has a formal Constitution which is a comprehensive document explaining how the Council operates, how decisions are made and what procedures are followed to ensure the Council is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. You can see the full Constitution on the Council's website.
  - From May 2011, the Council will have the following Committees and Sub-Committees:
    - Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
    - Audit and Budget Monitoring Sub-Committee
    - Community and Environment Sub-Committee
    - Development and Transport Sub-Committee
    - Personnel and Corporate Services Sub-Committee
    - Licensing Committee
    - Planning Committee
    - Scrutiny Committee
    - Standards Committee
  - The officer management structure includes a Chief and Deputy Chief Executive and Heads of Service.

### Would you like to know more?

- Available space has inevitably constrained the amount of information we have been able to include in this leaflet. More comprehensive information is contained in a complementary booklet with the same title copies of which are available free on request to the Principal Democratic Services Officer.
- The District Council welcomes the public to attend its meetings. Why not come along to a meeting soon? See our website for details of when meetings are due to take place.
- You can also contact one of the existing District Councillors for an informal discussion. They are also listed on the Council's website.
- If you would prefer to speak with an officer then don't hesitate to contact: Tracy Couper, Principal Democratic Services Officer, on (01353) 665555 or via e-mail at [tracy.couper@eastcamb.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.couper@eastcamb.gov.uk) for an informal discussion

The East Cambridgeshire District Council website can be found at:  
[www.eastcamb.gov.uk](http://www.eastcamb.gov.uk)

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**Produced by Democratic Services  
East Cambridgeshire District Council**

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