

Thinking of becoming a Councillor?

Your guide to what being a district councillor is all about and how to stand for election

Thought about getting more involved in the community?

Keen to influence the way local services are provided?

Want to help local people or influence council spending?





What do councillors do?

Councillors are the people who are elected to a local council to represent their local community.



Here in the Braintree district we have 60 councillors representing 30 wards (the term given to the areas that a district councillor represents). Councillors are elected for a term of 4 years. The next elections will be held on 5 May 2011.

If you'd like to stand for election see the nomination timetable on page 11

What is expected of a councillor

Being a district councillor can be a challenge. It's not 9 - 5. Most meetings are held in the evening and most councillors use their home as their base where the public can contact them at any time of the day.

Duties are varied and include:

- Considering reports before a meeting
- Attending meetings
- Representing the residents of your ward as a community leader
- Making decisions that the council must carry out
- Attending meetings outside of the council eg parish councils and local interest groups
- Meeting residents
- Encouraging communities to improve their quality of life

People become councillors for many different reasons, sometimes they are passionate about a local issue, or they just want to be involved in improving the lives of people around them.

There is no 'councillor type' just ordinary, everyday people, making a difference.



Meet **Moira Thorogood**
a working mother of four

As a councillor for Bocking South I see my role as being to help people with their problems. I am frequently speaking to different people and businesses on behalf of local residents to get things sorted out for them.

I like to help keep the area clean and tidy too and I call the council to arrange local litter picks; I'm also really pleased with the work I have been involved in with the local police, particularly in tackling fly tipping.



Meet **Tim Wilkinson**
a businessman

As councillor for Panfield, people in my ward often come to me for assistance - my role is to help them and make sure that decisions made by the council are done so in their best interests.



What kind of skills and experience do councillors need?



There are no set qualities to be a councillor, however, the following would be helpful in your role:

- A Good Negotiator - be able to find the middle ground between opposing groups.
- A Good Communicator - be able to present policies and arguments in such a way that they can be understood by the public.
- Courageous - you may have to justify decisions that may not be popular
- Persuasive - the ability to persuade people to agree and take part could help you move mountains.
- Honest - be ready to admit what you do not know and what can and cannot be done.

A councillor also needs to be resilient, energetic and prepared to listen.

Could I be a councillor?



Almost anyone who is registered to vote, lives, works, owns or rents property in an area can become a councillor.

Anyone can seek election as either a representative of a political group or as an independent candidate provided they meet the requirements to stand for election set out on page 10.

Councillors come from all walks of life. This is important as it ensures that a diverse range of people reflect different points of view and help to shape and develop the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided by the council for the benefit of all its residents.

Councillors
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The early days as a councillor

Following election, all councillors, new and experienced, are encouraged to participate in a Member Development Programme. The Programme aims to equip all councillors with the skills and knowledge to quickly become effective in their roles.

The Development Programme also includes an e-learning programme which councillors can take at a time suitable to them.

Therefore, tempting as it may be, the weeks following the election are not the ideal time to take a holiday. If you are elected, you should be available to attend an induction programme and early meetings of the council and committees to which you may be appointed. Dates will be made available shortly.





Frequently Asked Questions

How much time is involved in being a district councillor?

The amount of time spent on council duties depends entirely on how involved you become with council work.

Will it cost me anything to stand for election?

The cost incurred by a candidate at an election is at the personal expense of the candidate or political party (if they are representing one). The council cannot, and does not, refund the costs incurred.

What qualifications do I need?

No formal qualifications are needed; see page 10 for general criteria.

Must I be in a political group?

No

Do I get paid for being a councillor?

All councillors receive a basic allowance of £4,446 per annum. Councillors can also be reimbursed for travel expenses and receive a contribution to broadband expenses for councillors' duties. Special Responsibility Allowances are also paid where appropriate. All allowances are paid monthly.

How will I find out what is happening at Braintree District Council?

We are committed to the use of electronic communications with councillors wherever possible. All councillors will be supplied with a council email account which they will be expected to manage. The email accounts are accessed remotely, enabling councillors to access their email from home. Guidance will be provided. A computer is also available for councillors' use in the Members' Room at the council's offices.

Will I receive training?

As mentioned above, following election, all councillors, new and experienced, are encouraged to participate in a Member Development Programme. The Programme aims to equip all councillors with the skills and knowledge to quickly become effective in their roles.

Code of Conduct

Councillors are expected to maintain high standards of ethical behaviour. There is a statutory Code of Conduct which councillors are required to adhere to.

Getting Elected

Councillors are appointed to represent their ward through a democratic election process

- To be able to stand for election you must be a British, EU or Commonwealth citizen, and be:
- At least 18 years of age and
- Have an entry on the electoral register or
- Have lived, worked or owned/rented property in the area for 12 months
- Not be disqualified from being a councillor**

** The main reasons for disqualification are bankruptcy or criminal records that carried particular penalties within certain periods.

- You will need to find 10 people to publicly support your nomination by signing your nomination paper (available from The Returning Officer, Causeway House or download from www.braintree.gov.uk). All signatories must also be on the electoral register.

So, what next?

If you want to find out more, there are many sources of information.

Braintree District Council welcomes members of the public to its committee meetings, where councillors make decisions on a whole range of issues. Why not come along? There is a timetable of meetings available on our website.

Want to know more...?

...on the role of being a councillor

Alastair Peace, Member Services Manager, on 01376 551414 or alastair.peace@braintree.gov.uk

...on standing for election

Steve Daynes, Democracy Manager on 01376 557751 or steve.daynes@braintree.gov.uk



Nomination Timetable

Nomination Papers available from the Elections Team	7 March 2011
Notice of Election	21 March 2011
Close of Nominations	(noon) 4 April 2011
Polling Day	(7am - 10pm) 5 May 2011
Count	6 May 2011



Contact us

Telephone:

01376 552525

Email:

csc@braintree.gov.uk

Post:

Braintree District Council,
Causeway House,
Braintree,
Essex CM7 9HB



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