

**Thinking of
becoming a
Councillor for
Cumbria County
Council ?**



Can I be a councillor?

Almost anyone can become a councillor. You do not need any specific qualifications. Councillors come from all sorts of backgrounds and, if anything, life experience is the most important attribute you can bring to the role.

Local people become councillors for many different reasons, but mainly because they feel strongly about the area in which they live and they want to make a difference.

Belonging to a political party is not necessary. Some people stand as independent candidates, separate from political parties.

You can stand for election if:

- British or a citizen of the Commonwealth or European Union;
- at least 18 years old;
- registered to vote in Cumbria or have lived, worked or owned property there for at least 12 months before an election.

You can't be a councillor if you:

- work for Cumbria County Council, or for another local authority in a political restricted post;
- are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order;
- have been sentenced to prison for three months or more (including suspended sentences) during the 5 years before election day;
- have been convicted of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court.

If you are in any doubt about whether you are eligible to stand as a councillor, you should contact elections@cumbria.gov.uk for further information.

How do I get elected?

You can choose to stand for election as an independent candidate or as a party political candidate. The Electoral Commission website provides information about elections in England, including guidance for potential candidates.

If you want to represent a political party you will need to contact your local branch directly to discuss becoming a candidate.

Can I still be a councillor if I work?

The Employment Rights Act 1996 requires your employer to allow you a reasonable amount of time off for your work as a councillor.

You may need to discuss this and agree the details with your employer.

Many employers recognise that the skills people develop as councillors are very useful in the workplace.

How much time will being a councillor take?

It varies greatly as the time you devote to the role will depend on the commitments and roles you take on as a councillor, for example if you sit on Cabinet, or are chair of a committee like Scrutiny.

As a rough guide a councillor that has responsibility for a Cabinet remit is likely to spend in excess of 20 hours per week on Council business meeting.

No matter what roles you take on there are a number of meetings which you will be expected to attend for example the Full Council meeting held six times a year.

You will also need to spend time dealing with your constituents' queries.

The National Census of Local Authority Councillors in England provides the most comprehensive 'snapshot' of local government representation and analyses of trends over time, asking councillors about their work as councillors and their views on a range of issues.

Once elected you can be a councillor for a maximum of four years when elections will be held again.

Do I get paid?

Councillors do not receive a salary. However, each councillor currently receives a basic annual allowance. If you have a position of responsibility, like chairing of a committee, you may receive an additional allowance. Details of the Members Allowances Scheme can be found in the Council's Constitution or online [here](#).

Will I receive support and training?

An induction programme will be planned to ensure you are well prepared for your new role if you are elected. We will publish, in due course, a copy of the full induction programme as well as details of two welcome events that will take place in May 2017 following the elections.

The induction programme covers all aspects of being a councillor including:

- your role;
- detailed information about the council and the services it provides;
- the Council's Constitution;
- media management and using social media.

You will also be given ongoing support to ensure training and development opportunities suit your needs and develop your skills during your time as a councillor at Cumbria County Council. The Council has a dedicated Member Development Group, with Councillors setting the future direction of support and training on offer to enable you to carry out your duties to the best of your ability.

A Member development programme will run after the induction period offering topic and skills based sessions. This will help keep you up to speed with new developments in the world of local government.

Regular briefings are also provided to members on areas of importance; and dedicated support within ICT is available.

Can I specialise in areas of interest?

As a councillor, your constituents will look to you to have a wide-ranging knowledge of the Council, something we will help and support you in achieving, but there are also opportunities for you to develop specialisations on topics which interest you.

For example, there are many topic-based working groups and panels, such as Scrutiny Task Groups which you may be able to participate in. The council is also asked to appoint councillors to outside bodies, which can be local organisations, countywide groups or regional bodies.

For further information about the Council and standing for election, please contact:

Iolanda Puzio, Senior Manager for Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer,
Chief Executive's Directorate
Cumbria House, 117 Botchergate, Carlisle
Cumbria CA1 1RD
E: iolanda.puzio@cumbria.gov.uk

Other useful websites

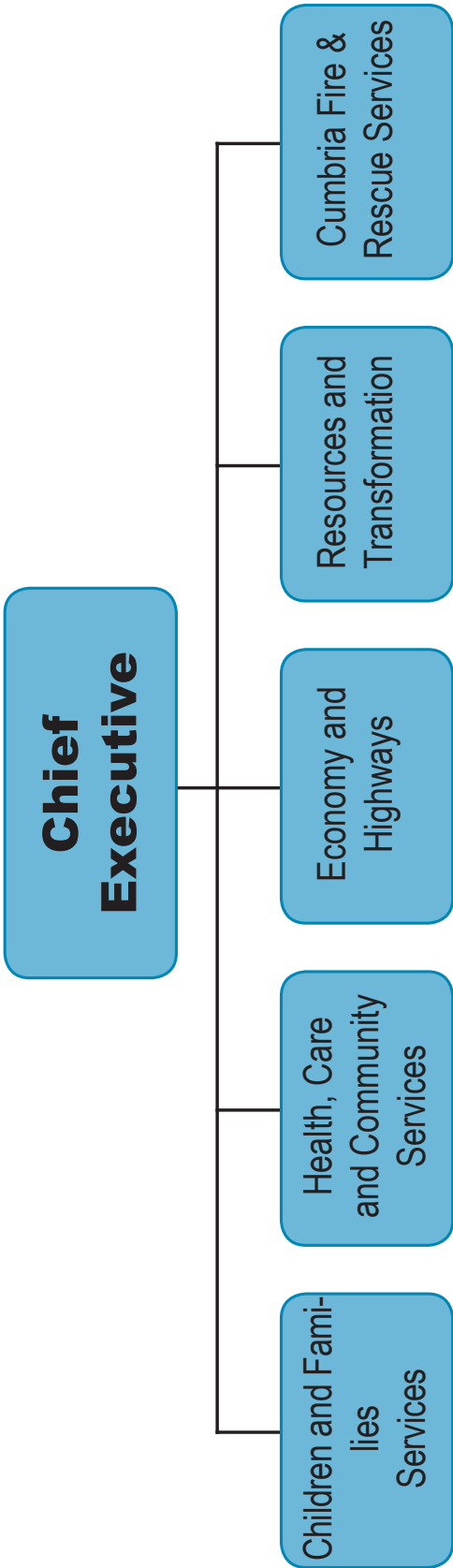
Local Government Association 'Be a Councillor' Campaign – Experiences of other councillors

Electoral Commission – Guidance for potential candidates

Local Government Association – Political Groups

Local Government Association Councillors Guide 2016/2017

Council Structure



Role description for all councillors

1. To deliver the highest standards of service and governance for local people.
2. To contribute actively to decision-making on the Council's policies, plans and budgets, and to continuously review and improve council services and performance.
3. To work with the council's partners in the public, private and third sectors and with customers and service users to shape priorities and improve services.
4. To engage with local communities, representing their interests and championing their causes, improving service planning and delivery, and furthering the council's contribution to the quality of life of people in Cumbria by offering community leadership.
5. To build collaborative working relationships with local partners, including the parish and town councils, the primary care trust, voluntary organisations and community groups, the police and others; to co-ordinate service development and planning, and to improve service integration and delivery.
6. To encourage local communities to engage and participate in meetings and decision making.
7. To represent the interests of their electoral divisions as a whole, and deal with constituents' enquiries, complaints and representations.
8. To lead by example, in accordance with the highest standards of probity in public life, in all matters relating to the Council's Code of Conduct, related protocols and supporting guidance.
9. To comply with the Constitution, particularly with the rules on decision-making and access to information.
10. To ensure that the Council has proper arrangements for the management of its affairs and stewardship of its resources.
11. To develop and maintain a working knowledge of the Council's statutory powers and duties, its services and strategies, and to develop good working relationships with officers.
12. To participate in the activities of any outside body to which they are appointed as a County Council representative, providing two-way communication between the Council and the outside body.
13. To improve their performance as a councillor and in particular to be aware of any personal learning and development needs and liaise with members of the relevant political group and council officers to address such needs.
14. To develop effective working relationships based on mutual respect and co-operation with all officers.
15. To participate in the activities of any political group of which they are a member.
16. Councillors will at all times observe the Members' Code of Conduct and the Protocol on Member/ Officer Relations set out in the Constitution.
18. Councillors will be entitled to receive allowances in accordance with the Members' Allowances Scheme set out in the Constitution.

Code of Conduct - All councillors must sign and comply with the code of conduct.

For members and co-opted members of the authority

1. Cumbria County Council (“The Authority”) has adopted the following code dealing with the conduct that is expected of Members and co-opted Members of the Authority (“Members”) when they are acting in that capacity as required by section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 (“the Act”).
2. The Authority has a statutory duty under the Act to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and the Code sets out the standards that the Authority expects Members to observe.
3. The Code is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all the obligations that are placed on Members. It is the responsibility of individual Members to comply with the provisions of the Code as well as such other legal obligations as may apply to them from time to time.

Failure to do so may result in a sanction being applied by the Authority. Failure to take appropriate action in respect of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest may result in a criminal conviction and a fine of up to £5,000 and/or disqualification from office for a period of up to five years.

4. The code is intended to be consistent with the seven principles as attached to this code and applies whenever a person is acting in his/her capacity as a Member of the Authority or co-opted Member in the conduct of the Authority’s business or acting as a representative of the Authority.
5. When acting in your capacity as a Member
 - (1) You must act solely in the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person or act to gain financial or other material benefits for yourself, your family, a friend, a close associate, an employer or a business carried on by you.
 - (2) You must not place yourself under a financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that may influence you in the performance of your official duties.
 - (3) You must not disclose any information given to you as a Member in breach of any confidence.

- (4) You must not bring your office or your Authority into disrepute.
- (5) You must treat others with respect and promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their sex, race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. You should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority’s statutory officers and its other employees.
- (6) When carrying out your public duties you must make all choices, such as making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits on merit.
- (7) You are accountable for your decisions to the public and you must co-operate fully with whatever scrutiny is appropriate to your office.
- (8) You must be as open as possible about your decisions and actions and the decisions and actions of your authority and should be prepared to give reasons for those decisions and actions.
- (9) You must declare any private interests, both disclosable pecuniary interests and any other registrable interests that relate to your public duties and must take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest, including registering and declaring interests in a manner which conforms with the procedures set out below.
- (10) You must ensure, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your authority, that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes) and you must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.
- (11) You must promote and support high standards of conduct when serving in your office.

Seven general principles of conduct

1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

2. Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

3. Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

5. Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands

6. Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest

7. Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and by example, and should act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.

