

Do you have the **X**factor? FAQs

What type of services is the council responsible for?

Wiltshire Council provides more than 300 services, from adult social care, to looked-after children, highways maintenance, revenues and benefits, planning, streetscene and elections.

Full details can be found on the Website: www.wiltshire.gov.uk or by following these links:

- Area boards
- Planning and building control
- Leisure and recreation
- Rubbish and recycling
- Parking, transport and streets
- Council tax, housing and benefits
- Schools and learning
- Arts, heritage and libraries
- Health and social care
- Business advice
- Community and environment
- Council and democracy

How do I learn about what the council does?

There is a wealth of information on the website (see above). Once elected, there will be seminars and training sessions, and you can always speak to the relevant officers who will explain their role and departmental function. Casework and committee work are also excellent ways of finding this out.

How are decisions made?

The council has a constitution that lays out what decisions can be made where. Wiltshire Council operates a cabinet system, which comprises nine members who are able to make some delegated decisions. We have a number of committees which can make either decisions or recommendations, Area boards operate at a local level with some local funding, and finally Full Council, comprising all 98 councillors, makes decisions which affect the council as a whole.

Where and when do meetings take place?

Area board and parish council meetings take place in the evenings, and will be local to you. Most council meetings involving officers take place during the day. These generally take place in one of the council hub buildings in Trowbridge, Chippenham or Salisbury. Ad hoc meetings with officers can take place anywhere in the county.

How much time will I need to spend on council business each week?

We suggest 27 hours a week on average. There are a lot of different things that a councillor will do and the amount of time will depend on the share of that work in their own division, and there is no upper limit of time if you wish to give more!

You may spend time doing the following:

- Managing case work: by email, letter, meetings
- Being out and about in the community
- Attending council and committee meetings, including outside bodies and town and parish councils
- Preparing for meetings/ research
- Training and development

Do I need a car?

Wiltshire is a large county, and the public transport network is variable, so having a car makes travel much easier. Reasonable travel costs are reimbursed.



Does my employer have to give me time off to carry out my council duties?

Most employees are allowed reasonable time off to go to meetings or to carry out duties. The time must be agreed with your employer beforehand and your employer can refuse your request if it is unreasonable.

A specific amount of time off is not laid down in law, and there is no law to say that your employer has to pay you for this time off. You should check this out with your employer prior to standing for election.

Will I get paid?

There is a scheme of allowances that councillors receive to ensure they are not out of pocket. These are reviewed on a regular basis and include a basic allowance, special responsibility allowances, travel and subsistence and carer allowances. The current basic allowance is £12,000 per annum and petrol is paid at Inland Revenue rates.

Will I receive any training?

Yes. The induction training for new councillors is quite intensive, and you should look at dedicating the first two weeks post election to getting up to speed. In the first six months of office there will be a lot to learn, and we encourage every councillor to have a Personal Development Plan (PDP) so that they can best serve their community.

Will I get assistance with IT as I have a limited knowledge?

The council will provide the necessary ICT equipment to carry out your role, and any training needed. There is a big focus on ICT systems nationally, and Wiltshire Council uses ICT to keep people up-to-date. Councillors will be provided with a secure email system so that residents can be confident that their information is secure.

I have a disability, how can you help me?

Wiltshire Council is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion and will provide the necessary support to meet particular needs where appropriate (reasonable adjustments). However, all councillors are expected to take personal responsibility for identifying their needs.

How do I get elected?

Wiltshire Council's elections team will provide the nomination forms for each election, together with the election timetable and electoral register appropriate to that area. There is no fee or deposit to stand for election as a town, parish or unitary councillor.

Getting elected means winning the majority of votes at the election and Wiltshire Council is unable to offer advice about this, as the council has to maintain impartiality and political neutrality. The council will ensure that you have sufficient information so that you know what you may be letting yourself in for and that you get the necessary forms into the council in time for the election, but the process of getting elected is down to the individual or to the party to which they belong.

There are various websites around with helpful suggestions; you may wish to look at: www.picx.co.uk/frame.html which is a website for independent candidates.

Is there an interview or selection process I have to go through?

Wiltshire Council does not do this, but if you belong to a political party, it is likely that this will form part of the way they choose candidates.

Do I have to belong to a political party?

No you don't, but most unitary councillors do. Once elected, councillors who are members of a party will generally form a political group together. Independent councillors may form a non-political group or remain as ungrouped councillors. Wiltshire Council has to allocate seats on committees according to the size of the various groups, political or otherwise, so group membership generally helps councillors to obtain a seat on the committee(s) they are interested in.

I have heard that I have to declare all of my interests. Is this true?

It is, and this information is available to the public. You will also be expected to sign up to some form of code of conduct, and possibly undertake a CRB check. Much of this legislation is being changed so the exact details cannot be given at this time.