



Candidates' guide 2021

Your guide to becoming a Wiltshire Councillor



Introduction

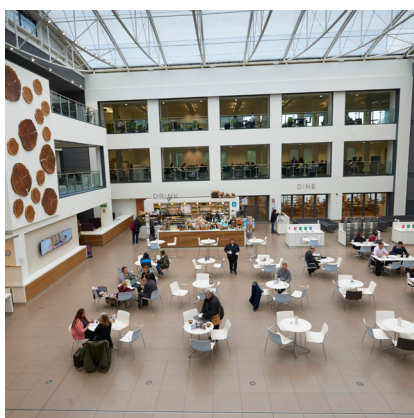


Hello

Thank you for standing to be a councillor.

Taking on the responsibility of this role is not for everyone – it takes real commitment to want to be the local voice and champion that people come to for support and guidance in their time of need.

The fact you've taken this first step already demonstrates that you're passionate about wanting to make a difference in Wiltshire.



Being a councillor is not simply a day job, it's a vocation. Over the last 12 months, in responding to COVID-19, local government and those who are part of it have confirmed their importance more than ever.

During this last year, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, residents up and down the county have shown that they care deeply for their communities and each other. When this council was formed more than a decade ago, we wanted to be able to empower our communities, and we've been humbled to see people mobilise instantly and support others through these most difficult of times.

Wiltshire Council in 2009 was very different to the one today. Back then we had hundreds of buildings and services that needed to be streamlined and run more efficiently. We're proud to have achieved that and it has helped us to be ahead of the curve, to innovate and invest.

There is no doubt that responding to COVID-19 has been the council's biggest challenge to date, but our teams have worked harder than ever, with support from our communities, to ensure we got through the worst of it with our hope and optimism for the future still intact.

However, there will be challenges ahead, no doubt about it. Having said that, there really is no greater time to want to be part of local government and to help shape public services for the years ahead.

The next few weeks will be a busy but exciting time for you, as you look to set out your aims, ambitions and vision to the people of Wiltshire. For those of you who haven't put yourselves forward before, we hope you enjoy the experience and that it also gives you a good insight into Wiltshire Council and the work we do.

I wish you all the best in the forthcoming election and, if you and I are successful, I look forward to working with you.

Philip Whitehead
Leader, Wiltshire Council

// During this last year, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, residents up and down the county have shown that they care deeply for their communities and each other. //

Foreword

Dear nominated candidate

Wiltshire Council Unitary Elections 2021

Congratulations on being nominated to stand as a candidate in your electoral division.

In preparation for the election on Thursday 6 May 2021, Wiltshire Council has produced this guide for all candidates.

This guide provides the following information, which we hope you will find useful:

- Wiltshire Council's priorities
- What to expect as a Wiltshire councillor
- The electoral process
- Administration of the council

Within the pack, you will also find information on what happens following Election Day if you are elected and the expectations for the first two weeks. **We encourage you to plan to be available for the induction and development programme – the two weeks following the election.** This is a vital time designed to help you find your feet, understand how the organisation works, and support you during your first few months as a Wiltshire councillor. For more experienced councillors who are re-elected, it will provide important information on our challenges and approach in the new council term. All successful candidates will also need to attend the first Full Council meeting on Tuesday 18 May 2021.

Please have a look at the guide, and if you require any further information either review the **unitary elections** and **becoming a councillor pages** on our website, or contact committee@wiltshire.gov.uk

We would also like to highlight the following websites, which you may find helpful:

Wiltshire Intelligence **Bringing evidence together**

This site provides a one-stop-shop for many key local data sets, indicators and assessments about Wiltshire and its population.

Local Government Association **Becoming a councillor**

This site is for new and prospective local councillors and, under the Resources section, includes guidance on planning your election campaign and your campaign communications.

Electoral Commission **Guidance and resources for candidates and agents at local government elections in England**

This site provides comprehensive information on election issues and rules such as spending and donations, campaigning, attending electoral events and access to electoral paperwork.

I would like to wish you good luck with the forthcoming election.

Yours sincerely

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive, Wiltshire Council



Our priorities

Wiltshire is a thriving county that enables and positively encourages healthy living in strong, inclusive and prosperous communities.

We are proud of our heritage and for having a strong community spirit, where people come together to support each other, take part in events and activities, and take responsibility for what matters to them. That is what makes us unique and it's at the heart of everything we do.

Our vision is to **create strong communities in Wiltshire**, and our current business plan states our key priorities as:

- Growing the economy
- Strong communities
- Protecting those who are most vulnerable
- An innovative and effective council

COVID-19 is likely to have a lasting impact on residents and businesses for some time to come so it's vital that we are there for them to help them through these quite uncertain times.

We have an excellent track record, and over the last decade the council, with its public and voluntary sector partners, has improved people's lives and helped businesses to develop and relocate in Wiltshire – and that's something we intend to build on.



Due to recent events, people are going to need our services more than they ever have.

We anticipate that services to support the care of children and adults will increase and we will continue to invest as much as required to ensure support is accessible and high quality.

People's health and wellbeing have suffered over the last year and our public health and leisure services will play a key role in providing support.

The economy was looking strong pre-COVID, and we have done everything we can to support businesses through this time. This work will continue as we look to not only strengthen local businesses but attract investment into our county.

Through our Local Plan Review we will identify community needs including housing over the coming years and with our proposed Future Chippenham program, we have ambitious plans to provide appropriate housing and infrastructure to help address economic, social and environmental priorities.

As an organisation we have pledged to be carbon neutral by 2030. We have also committed to make the county carbon neutral by 2030. A new Climate Strategy will be prepared to enable us to meet these commitments, which will include a community-led approach that engages, empowers, enables and communicates with Wiltshire communities and businesses.

We will also continue to invest in the 'day-to-day' services that everyone relies on – including ensuring Wiltshire's road network keeps the county moving and providing an efficient waste collection service that recycles as much as it can.

Going forward over the next four years, Wiltshire Council will continue to focus its resources where they are needed most, using clear and concise evidence and data to inform all decisions made.

What to expect as a Wiltshire councillor

As community leaders and champions, the role depends on the matters of importance to your local division, but you may spend your time as a councillor managing casework by email, letter or meetings, being out and about in the community, attending council and committee meetings, including outside bodies and town and parish councils, preparing for meetings or carrying out research, attending training and development sessions, or attending meetings of your political group (if applicable).

As a decision maker and influencer your role will include:

- making informed decisions at Full Council meetings,
- working with partners and outside bodies as a representative of the council,
- working with town and parish councils,
- acting as a corporate parent for children and young people,
- being a member of your local community area board, and
- adhering to the council's **code of conduct** and upholding high standards of conduct in public office.

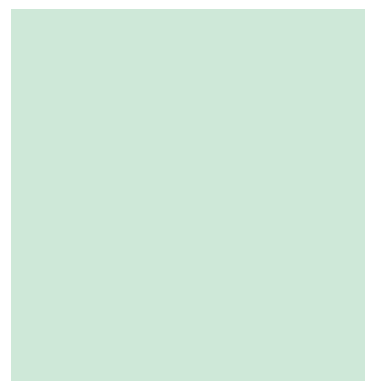
Nationally, councillors spend on average 27 hours a week on council business. However, this includes councillors that have existing full-time commitments and so may spend fewer hours on their council role, and others who may have more time to dedicate to council business. The term of office for a councillor is four years.

How much time you commit will depend on you and what additional roles, if any, you take up as a councillor. There is a statutory requirement that all councillors attend at least one formal meeting every six months.

Appointments to different committees will take place at the first Full Council meeting, but all councillors are members of Full Council and their local area board.

There is additional information on both further on in this pack.

For more information on the roles and responsibilities of a Wiltshire councillor, see **part 11 of the council's constitution**.



Wiltshire Council elections 2021

The 2021 elections in Wiltshire will be one of the largest in the country. All 98 unitary seats will be up for election, as well as Police and Crime Commissioner elections and all parish and town council seats.

The **elections will take place on Thursday 6 May 2021**. Due to the pandemic, many people may not wish to vote in person on Election Day and we are encouraging them to vote by post. For those voting in person, we will be ensuring that all of our 348 polling stations are as safe as possible for everyone.

The verification and counts will take place over the following dates:

- **Saturday 8 May** – Unitary elections count
- **Sunday 9 May** – Parish and Town Councils elections and Local Neighbourhood planning referendum counts
- **Monday 10 May** – Police and Crime Commissioner elections count

The counts will take place at three venues across Wiltshire:

- **The Olympiad Leisure Centre**, Sadlers Mead, Chippenham, SN15 3PA
- **Five Rivers Health and Wellbeing Centre**, Hulse Road, Salisbury, SP1 3NR
- **County Hall**, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN

We are awaiting guidance from central government regarding attendance at the count centres to hear the results. The results of the count will also be available on our website [election results page](#).

Further information is available and will be updated on [our website election pages](#).

If you have any questions about the elections, please contact our elections team on **0300 456 0112** or email elections@wiltshire.gov.uk



Boundary changes

As part of an electoral review of the division boundaries conducted by the Local Boundary Commission for England recently, many of the division areas have changed for the May 2021 elections.

The maps of boundary changes made to Unitary Divisions in Wiltshire can be found on our website under **unitary elections**.

What to expect after you are elected

Once the results are announced, elected councillors will be sent a comprehensive Welcome Pack providing full details of the induction and development programme. This will run from Monday 10 to Friday 21 May 2021 and most days will include several events, so it is important that candidates are available for this period. The process will include:

- a welcome presentation from the council's Chief Executive and Corporate Leadership Team,
- preparation for the first Annual Full Council meeting, scheduled for Tuesday 18 May 2021,
- key sessions on the council's services and how the council works,
- key councillor skills, legal responsibilities, and how to deal with common enquiries and issues,
- additional dedicated training from Monday 24 May 2021 for those appointed to council specific committees.

“Remember what it was that drove you to stand for election as a councillor and consider what role in the council might help you to achieve your aims.”

As COVID-19 restrictions will still be in place, the programme will be held virtually using remote meeting technology (MS Teams). All of the ICT equipment and training councillors need for this will be provided on Monday 10 May.

At Full Council on Tuesday 18 May 2021 appointments will be made to committees and further training focusing on the relevant knowledge areas will be provided.

A detailed schedule of the induction and council meetings will be provided in due course. In the meantime, you may want to make a note of the following key dates to ensure that you are available:

Date	Activity
Monday 10 May	Collection of IT equipment for newly elected councillors Digital skills training for all councillors
Tuesday 11 May	Welcome to Wiltshire Council event
Tuesday 11 – Friday 14 May	Induction week one
Monday 17 May – Thursday 20 May	Induction week two
Tuesday 18 May	Annual Full Council (councillors appointed to committees)
From Monday 24 May	Ongoing committee-specific training



New councillor support

We appreciate that becoming a councillor for the first time can be daunting. To assist you in your first few months, you will be assigned an officer 'buddy' to help you. Your buddy will be a member of the council's democracy and governance team who work at the heart of its decision-making processes. The buddy's role will be to help guide you and point you in the right direction whenever you have been unable to resolve a query for yourself. You will be contacted directly by your officer buddy soon after the elections.

If you have any questions on the induction please email committee@wiltshire.gov.uk.



“If you put in the hard work and actively engage with the community it will be a hugely rewarding role and one that I consider to be a real privilege.”

Register of interest

All councillors are required by law to provide a register of interest within 28 days of being elected. Sessions with the monitoring officer or representatives to discuss with you how to complete your register of interest will form part of the induction and development process. This includes details of employment, land holdings and other defined interests, for yourself and your spouse / partner.

Should you have a need to update your register of interest once elected you can do so online. Guidance on what you might wish or need to include on your register once elected can also be found in the guidance to the council's **code of conduct**.

Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Under Section 83 of the Local Government Act 1972, all councillors must make a Declaration of Acceptance of Office in a form prescribed by the Secretary of State. Arrangements will be made for you to complete this form and you will be provided with details (date and time) shortly after the elections.

Paperless meetings

As a modern organisation, the council no longer provides hard copies of agendas for councillors and officers unless there are compelling reasons to do so, for example visual impairment that would make this difficult. This is now well-established and all councillors are expected to access agendas electronically via the laptop provided or the Mod.gov app, which can be downloaded free to any device.

You will receive an email notification to advise you when an agenda or minutes have been published giving you a link to where the documents are available online. You will also be shown how to use the Mod.gov app as part of your induction.

Virtual meetings

Under the COVID-19 emergency legislation, meetings of the council are currently being held virtually using Microsoft Teams. All of the ICT equipment and training required to participate in virtual meetings will be provided on day one of the induction and development programme.

Members' allowances

Councillors generally come into office to make a difference to their communities rather than any monetary gain. However, the council recognises the commitment of all councillors and the inevitable calls on their time and the incidental expenses that they will incur by having a members' allowance scheme.

All councillors will receive a basic allowance, currently set at £13,833 per annum.

In addition to the above basic allowance, special responsibility allowances are paid to councillors who hold certain positions for example chairs of committees and cabinet members, to recognise the significant additional time commitment and responsibility required. These payments will be made automatically on a monthly basis.

Councillors may also claim expenses for example for mileage undertaken in the course of their duties as a councillor. In keeping with the council's paperless drive, such claims are to be submitted electronically via the council's SAP system on a monthly basis where a payslip can also be downloaded. You will be shown how to use SAP during the induction.

All allowances are approved by Full Council following consideration of a review and report by an independent remuneration panel. Full details of the current scheme and the rates of pay for the different types of allowances and expenses can be found in **part 13 of the constitution**.

Administration of the council constitution

The Wiltshire Council constitution sets out principles, rules and protocols for every aspect of the council's governance. The full constitution can be found on **our website**, but some of the key sections include:

- **Part 3: Responsibility for functions and schemes of delegation** – setting out the council's committees' terms of reference and the extent of authority delegated to the cabinet and to officers
- **Part 4: Rules of procedure** – standing orders for conduct of meetings, including details of public statements and questions, moving motions, petitions scheme and more
- **Part 8: Overview and scrutiny procedure rules** – specific rules of procedure for the council's scrutiny committees
- **Part 9: Financial regulations**
- **Part 11: Role and responsibilities of Councillors**
- **Part 12: Code of conduct**
- **Part 13: Members' allowance scheme** – details of basic councillor allowance and allowable expenses
- **Protocol 4: Planning code of good practice** – rules of procedure for planning committees

“ Becoming a councillor is a unique opportunity to represent your community and to make and influence decisions that will improve the lives of people across our county. None of us knows everything and when you are first elected there is a lot to learn but your colleagues and the council officers will be a big help to you. ”

Code of conduct

All councils are required by law to have a code of conduct for their councillors.

Wiltshire Council's code of conduct can be found in **part 12 of the constitution**. Councillors are required to maintain high standards of conduct and uphold the Nolan Principles (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership), as well as abide by provisions relating to disclosing pecuniary interests. Failure to declare on your register of interests disclosable pecuniary interests and then participating as a councillor in discussion on a matter relating to it, is a criminal offence.

Once elected, training will be provided on your obligations under the code, and if you have any concerns or uncertainties you should discuss the matter with the monitoring officer.

The arrangements for dealing with code of conduct complaints can be found within **protocol 11**.



Full Council

As a councillor, the first formal meeting you will be asked to attend is the annual meeting of council, which will take place on Tuesday 18 May 2021.

Role of Full Council

Full Council is the council's supreme decision-making body and comprises all 98 elected members. There are certain decisions that only Full Council can take, including:

- setting the budget and council tax,
- major policy documents for example the core strategy, licensing policy, Wiltshire Council's business plan,
- approving and amending the constitution,
- appointing the leader of Wiltshire Council,
- appointing members to committees having regard to the wishes of political group leaders,
- considering motions submitted by councillors.

Full Council meetings are webcast live – the last six months of Full Council meetings can be watched online via our **Wiltshire Council webcasting page**. Past agendas and minutes can be found on our website **meeting pages**.

Types of Full Council meetings

There are four Full Council meetings per municipal year, which take place in May, July, October and February. The meeting in February is for the budget and council tax setting. Extra meetings may also be arranged from time to time as required.

All councillors will be expected to attend Full Council meetings and their respective area board meetings.

// Once elected, you are representing all of the residents in your division, not just the ones who voted for you. //

Annual meeting of Full Council

Full Council will be asked to elect a chair and vice-chair at the beginning of the annual meeting on Tuesday 18 May 2021. Regardless of whether or not the current chairman, Councillor Richard Gamble or the current vice-chairman, Councillor James Sheppard are re-elected, they remain in office until their successors are appointed by Full Council.

Councillor Gamble (or in his absence, Councillor Sheppard), will therefore preside at the beginning of the annual meeting. The chairman and vice-chairman of Wiltshire Council are elected annually.

Council will also be asked to vote on electing a leader of the council with the appointment lasting four years. The leader will subsequently appoint up to nine other members, each with specific areas of responsibility, to form his or her cabinet.

Full Council will be asked to agree the appointment of Wiltshire Council's committees, appoint councillors to those committees as advised by political group leaders and appoint chair and vice-chair to most committees.

Full Council will also receive various annual reports. As with ordinary meetings, Full Council will also consider any motions submitted by councillors, any questions received by councillors and / or members of the public, any petitions received under the council's petition scheme and receive minutes of the various meetings of cabinet and committees held between Full Council meetings.

Full Council meetings start at 10.30am and can last all day with a break at lunchtime. Full Council meetings are usually preceded with separate meetings of each political group as arranged by those groups.

Area boards

As a Wiltshire councillor you will sit on one of the 18 area boards with other councillors from your community area. The boards are also attended by the NHS, fire, police, town and parish councils, community groups and the public.

Area boards are a way of working to bring local decision making into the heart of the community. Area boards are not like old fashioned council meetings and there are lots of opportunities for local people to get involved. Meetings take place in each community area and between these meetings different task groups consisting of local people, Wiltshire Council staff and councillors tackle local issues and find solutions to take forward at the next area board.

Councillors are able to award funding to local priorities and projects; ensuring local decisions are at the heart of the community and tailored to local needs. Area boards bring communities together, making them stronger and more resilient. You can find out more about area boards, including which one you would sit on if elected on our [area boards page](#).

Contact us

For enquires regarding the elections, please see the [elections pages](#) on our website or email elections@wiltshire.gov.uk

For enquires regarding the post-election induction and development programme, please contact committee@wiltshire.gov.uk