



**New Forest**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

[www.newforest.gov.uk](http://www.newforest.gov.uk)

***INTERESTED  
IN BEING A  
DISTRICT  
COUNCILLOR?***

## **INTERESTED IN BEING A DISTRICT COUNCILLOR?**

Have you ever wanted to get something done for your community, or thought the Council could spend money more effectively? If so, have you thought about standing for election as a District Councillor?

This leaflet is aimed at prospective District Councillors. It gives some basic information about the Council, how to stand for election, how the Council makes decisions, and what will be expected of you if you are elected. For further information about the Council and its services please visit our website at [www.newforest.gov.uk](http://www.newforest.gov.uk). This leaflet, incorporating any subsequent updates, is available at: <http://www.newforest.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=37574&p=0>

Whole Council elections are held every 4 years.

## **ABOUT THE COUNCIL**

- **Facts and Figures**

New Forest District's population is about 178,000. The Council covers an area of about 290 square miles (75,200 hectares).

There are 60 District Councillors, elected to represent 34 Wards. (Most Wards are represented by two Councillors, while a few have only a single Councillor). An outline map of the wards is at [www.newforest.gov.uk/article/18757/Outline-Map-of-District-Wards](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/18757/Outline-Map-of-District-Wards) More detailed maps of the wards are available at: [www.election-maps.co.uk](http://www.election-maps.co.uk)

The District consists of 37 Parishes, each of which has a Parish or Town Council.

An outline map of the parishes is at:

[www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4954](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4954)

The Council employs about 1160 people (of which approximately 800 are part-time), and spends about £114 million revenue and £26 million capital a year (2018/19).

- **What it does and how does it do it?**

The Council aims to play a leading role in the future of the District. Its Corporate Plan, “Delivering For Our Communities”, sets out how it is working towards doing this. The Plan is at [www.newforest.gov.uk/corporateplan](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/corporateplan)

## **HOW TO STAND FOR ELECTION**

You must:-

Be 18 or over; and

Be a British or European Union subject; and

**\*\*Not be disqualified from being a Councillor.**

In addition, you must qualify on one of the following grounds on the day of nomination and, if there is a poll, on the day of election:

- (a) Be registered as a local government elector for the District Council’s area; or
- (b) During the whole of the 12 months preceding the day of nomination and the day of election, occupied as owner or tenant land or premises in the District Council’s area; or
- (c) Your principal or only place of work during those 12 months has been in New Forest District Council’s area; or
- (d) During the whole of those 12 months have resided in New Forest District Council’s area

**\*\*the main reasons for disqualification are having a Bankruptcy Restrictions Order made against you, or criminal convictions that attracted certain penalties, within certain periods.**

If you satisfy these requirements you are eligible to stand as a District Councillor. 10 people must support your nomination by signing your nomination paper. All must be on the electoral register for the ward in which you are standing for election.

The deadline for submitting your nomination for the 2 May 2019 election is 4.00 p.m. on 3 April 2019. No deposit is required.

Further information for candidates at elections is available on the Electoral Commission's website –

[www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-those-we-regulate/candidates-and-agents#local](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-those-we-regulate/candidates-and-agents#local)

## **“PARTY POLITICS”**

Although in practice most District Councillors are associated with a political party, this is not a requirement. Councillors are also free to leave or join a political group after they have been elected, without having to stand for re-election.

At present the political composition of the Council is:

- 56 Conservative
- 2 Liberal Democrat
- 1 Independent
- 1 Vacancy

## **CODE OF CONDUCT AND REQUIREMENT TO REGISTER CERTAIN INTERESTS**

Councillors are expected to maintain high standards of ethical behaviour. At the time of writing this document (January 2019), a statutory “Code of Conduct” requires elected Councillors to state in writing their employment or business, any major shareholdings, interests in land, any contracts they have with the Council, and membership of some types of organisation. They

must also include the same information about their spouse/partner. Members of the public are entitled to inspect the statements, and they are published on the Council's website. The Code of Conduct also covers other aspects of Councillors' behaviour, such as the need to treat others with respect, and not to use their position improperly to confer an advantage or disadvantage on anyone.

The District Council has also adopted some local codes to cover members' and officers' conduct in specific areas, for example when dealing with planning matters. Copies of the codes currently applicable to New Forest District Councillors are available at [www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1651](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1651).

## **A DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S ROLE**

A Councillor's role is more than just speaking and voting at Council meetings. A good Councillor should also be active in his or her "constituency role" as a representative of the people living in his or her ward and as a community leader. This would include, for example:

- Helping constituents resolve some of their problems, if necessary by raising matters with the Council or other organisations on their behalf.
- Developing a good knowledge of the services available to, and aspirations of, people who live and work in their Ward.
- Keeping up to date with the Council's policies and priorities, so that decisions, the reasons for them, and residents' rights can be clearly explained to constituents.

As well as attending formal meetings, Councillors are also expected to attend informal meetings, briefing sessions and training events from time to time, to help them carry out their

duties effectively. They also normally try to attend meetings of parish/town councils in their areas.

The role of members as elected representatives is at Chapter 17 of the Constitution

[www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3327](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3327)

## **HOW THE COUNCIL IS ORGANISED AND DECISIONS ARE MADE**

The way the Council is structured and how decisions are made are set out in detail in the Council's Constitution at [www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3327](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3327) The Council operates a "Leader and Cabinet" system. On the last page of this leaflet is a diagram showing the decision-making structure.

The law states that certain types of decision have to be taken by the full Council (or Committees appointed by the Council), and others by the Executive (that is, the Cabinet). Overview and Scrutiny Panels participate in policy development and look at how well services are performing but do not take final decisions about delivering services.

Broadly speaking, the budget and major policy issues are decided by full Council, "regulatory" matters such as planning or licensing applications by a Committee, and most other types of decision by the Cabinet or an individual member of the Cabinet (also known as a "Portfolio Holder").

Officers also have the power to take some decisions themselves.

## **Leader and Cabinet**

The Leader is elected by the whole Council, for the 4 year term of the Council, and is the Chairman of the Cabinet. The Leader decides which other members will be in the Cabinet, and which “Portfolio” or subject they should be responsible for. At present there are 8 Cabinet members including the Leader, all chosen from the Leader’s political party.

## **Committees**

There are currently five committees. They decide matters such as planning applications\*, licensing applications, taxi fares and appeals by individuals against some Council decisions.

(\*for those parts of the District outside the New Forest National Park)

## **Overview and Scrutiny Panels**

Review Panels review particular areas of the Council’s work (either on their own initiative or at the request of the Council or Cabinet), advise on policy development, and scrutinise Cabinet decisions. There are currently four Review Panels.

## **How members are appointed to Committees and Review Panels**

Seats on committees and panels are allocated to political groups in proportion to the number of members they have on the Council.

If there is more than one politically independent member they would usually agree to form their own “Independent Group” on the Council. (They need not have any opinions in common to do this). That Group of independent members would then be entitled to a proportion of the seats on committees and overview and scrutiny panels.

## **MEETINGS**

(Note: the following paragraphs reflect current practice. It is possible the arrangements could change following the May 2019 elections).

### **Time and Place**

Full Council, and two of the four Review Panels, meet in the evenings. Most other meetings are during the day-time. Most meetings are at Appletree Court, Lyndhurst.

### **Frequency**

The Council, General Purposes and Licensing Committee and each Review Panel, meet 5 - 7 times a year

The Cabinet and Planning Committee meet monthly

The Licensing Sub-Committee and Appeals Panels meet as and when required

The Employee Engagement Panel meets four times per year

The Audit Committee meets about four times per year

Special meetings have to be called from time to time to deal with urgent matters that cannot wait until the next scheduled meeting.

Apart from special meetings, meeting dates are fixed between 5 and 17 months in advance. For meeting dates already fixed go to <https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>

The average Councillor attends about 15 to 20 District Council meetings a year.

## **WORKLOAD**

Although the time devoted to Council duties varies considerably from Councillor to Councillor, the average time spent by Councillors who have no special responsibilities, such as chairmanship of a Committee or Panel, is about 10 hours a week.

## **TIME OFF WORK FOR COUNCIL DUTIES**

The law requires employers to allow any employee who is a Councillor time off during working hours to perform Council duties. The amount of time off must be reasonable, taking into account the Councillor's responsibilities on the Council, the circumstances of the employer's business and the effect on that business of the Councillor's absence. Anyone in employment who is considering standing for election as a Councillor is strongly advised to discuss the matter with their employer before deciding to become a candidate.

## **MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**

Members receive an allowance, paid monthly, to help with the expense of being a Councillor. This is currently £6,299 (2018/19) a year, which includes a £415 ICT allowance. The allowance is subject to annual review.

Each member is also entitled to a travel allowance for "approved duties", and a carer's allowance if they have to pay someone to look after a dependent relative or child while they are on some types of Council business.

"Special responsibility allowances" are also paid to Cabinet members, Group Leaders and Chairmen of Committees and Panels.

The members' allowances scheme is at Chapter 29 of the Constitution

[www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3327](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3327)

## **COMMUNICATING WITH COUNCILLORS – INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

The Council is committed to the use of electronic communications wherever possible, and to integrating information and communications technology into the day-to-day business of the Council. It is the preferred means of communication with Councillors. Councillors are expected to use their own personal computers, laptop and IT links, such as broadband, to connect to the Council's systems. A sum is included within the Councillor's basic allowance to cover members' use of their IT equipment for Council business. If you are not already conversant with technology, the Council would expect you to learn enough to at least be able to receive and send messages electronically, and to access information stored electronically such as on the Council's website. Training can be provided.

## **TRAINING**

In addition to IT training, a programme of training for new Councillors will be in place following the election to help you in your role.

## **OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION**

- “Candidates at local elections in England” and “Candidates' election expenditure” produced by the Electoral Commission. Go to [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk) or telephone 020 7271 0500 for copies.

## **Summary of where to obtain further information referred to in this leaflet:**

General information about the Council and its services:

[www.newforest.gov.uk](http://www.newforest.gov.uk)

Electronic copy of this leaflet (including any updates):

<http://www.newforest.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=37574&p=0>

Outline map of district wards:

[www.newforest.gov.uk/article/18757/Outline-Map-of-District-Wards](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/article/18757/Outline-Map-of-District-Wards)

Detailed maps of wards:

[www.election-maps.co.uk](http://www.election-maps.co.uk)

Outline map of parishes:

[www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4954](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4954)

Candidates at elections:

[www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-those-we-regulate/candidates-and-agents#local](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-those-we-regulate/candidates-and-agents#local)

New Forest District Council's Codes of Conduct:

[www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1651](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1651)

Role of elected representatives on New Forest District Council:

[www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3327](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3327)

New Forest District Council's constitution:

[www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3327](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3327)

New Forest District Council's Members' Allowances Scheme:

[www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3327](http://www.newforest.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3327)

Meeting dates:

<https://democracy.newforest.gov.uk/mgCalendarMonthView.aspx?GL=1&bcr=1>

For further information about standing for election please contact:

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