

Make your voice heard **become a councillor**

INFORMATION PACK



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Introduction

Interested in becoming a councillor?

Read on and find out what's involved and how you can stand for election.

The next elections take place on 7 May 2015 - Parliamentary, Borough and Parish elections. This offers you the perfect opportunity to stand as a representative of your local community and become a Rushcliffe Borough councillor (sometimes known as an elected member). We hope that this pack will be used by anyone who is thinking of standing for election and is interested in finding out about the role of the councillor.

The election process begins when a Notice of Election is published in public places throughout the Borough. If you are thinking about standing as a candidate you will have to formally submit your nomination papers. Information about the nomination process and what candidates need to do is available further on in this pack.

Why are councillors important?

Councillors play a key role in the Borough:

- they are a voice of the community, representing local people and communities
- they champion local services
- they help shape future services
- they decide how services will be provided. These could be provided by the council directly or working with other organisations ie the police, voluntary sector, health or other public bodies or the private sector
- they play a major role in making local government work by developing a better quality of life for Rushcliffe residents.

Why become a councillor?

There are many reasons why people decide to become a local councillor:

- they want to make a difference, be involved in shaping the local community and getting better services
- they want to represent the views of local people and ensure that local community interests are taken into account
- they want to pursue their political beliefs
- they are concerned about particular issues in an area

For some, it is an extension of what they are already doing, as they are active in a political party, parish council, or trade union, and they see the next step is to become a councillor.

Quotes from our councillors



I have lived in Rushcliffe for a number of years: it's a good place to live but I also thought I could help the community understand the Council.

Councillor Debbie Mason



I have a young family making life very busy but, I need some 'me time'. I juggle caring for my family with caring for my community. I make time to be a councillor - my kids know their mum takes action and responsibility and is a good role model.

Councillor Hayley Chewings



I have always enjoyed working in the local community as a parish councillor and a volunteer. I felt that becoming a Borough Councillor was a natural progression that could help me achieve more for the community.

Councillor Debbie Boote



I became a councillor because I enjoy being active and contributing to the community in which I live.

Councillor Gordon Moore



I wanted to help people in my community. I wanted to put fair and environmentally sustainable policies in place to benefit future generations.

Councillor Sue Mallender

Q&A

Who can become a councillor?

To stand for election, on the day of nomination, you must be 18 or over and a UK, EU or commonwealth citizen.

You must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

- be registered, and continue to be, as a local government elector for Rushcliffe from the day of your nomination onwards, or
- have occupied (as owner or tenant) any land or premises in Rushcliffe during the whole of the 12 months before the day you are nominated and the day of election, or
- your main or only place of work during the last 12 months, prior to the day of your nomination and the day of election, has been in Rushcliffe, or
- you have lived in Rushcliffe during the whole of the last 12 months, before the day of your nomination and the day of election.

You can't stand if you:

- work for Rushcliffe Borough Council
- hold a politically restricted post for another authority
- have sentenced to a prison sentence (including suspended sentences) of 3 months or more within 5 years prior to polling day
- be subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order
- have been disqualified under any legislation relating to corrupt or illegal practices or offences relating to donations.

Do councillors need any qualifications?

No, you do not need any specific qualifications to become a councillor.



Bingham



Bunny



Cotgrave

Q&A

Do I have to belong to a political party or group?

No, although the majority of people become councillors as a result of joining a political party. However, some people stand for election as independents (candidates who do not belong to any political party).

About Rushcliffe Borough Council

There are 50 councillors currently serving on Rushcliffe Borough Council and they represent four political parties. The number of councillors will reduce to 44 from May 2015 due to a decision made by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to ensure that there is a fair number of electors per councillor. The political makeup of the Council (as at May 2014) is as follows:

GROUP	COUNCILLORS
Conservative	36
Liberal Democrat	6
Labour	5
Green	2
Independent	1
Total	50

The Conservative party are in overall control as they have the most councillors.

If you are thinking of standing as a candidate for a particular political party then you will need to be a member of that party's local organisation. Contact details are at the back of this book under 'useful contacts'.



East Leake



Sutton Bonington



Hickling

How decisions are made

All councillors meet together at full Council meetings, there are normally 5 meetings every year. These meetings are open to the public and start at 7pm. At full Council meetings, councillors decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year.

The Council appoints a Leader, which is determined every four years. That person appoints a Cabinet which determines strategic policy and each of the Cabinet members is responsible for a particular area (also known as a portfolio) eg the environment, safety and wellbeing etc.

The Cabinet has to make decisions, which are in line with the Council's overall policies and budget. If it wishes to make a decision, which is outside the budget or policy, this must be referred to the full Council to decide.

Key decisions and topics for discussion are published in the Cabinet's Forward Plan.

Meetings of the Cabinet are open to the public, except where personal or confidential matters are being discussed.

A number of Scrutiny Groups monitor the performance of the Council and how it

puts its policies into practice. They can also recommend policies to the Cabinet and Council. They can be consulted by the Cabinet on new policies and can examine in detail Cabinet key decisions before they are implemented. This means they can consider whether the decision is appropriate. They may recommend that the Cabinet reconsiders the decision. The four scrutiny groups are Performance Management Board, Corporate Governance Group, Partnership Delivery Group and the Community Development Group.

The Council also appoints regulatory committees to perform the Council's statutory functions such as Development Control (planning issues) and licensing. The Council appoints other specialist committees from time to time.

The Council also has a Standards Committee which promotes and maintains high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members, mainly through the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. All Members must agree to follow the code to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties. The Standards Committee ensures there is appropriate training and advice on the code.



Keyworth



Radcliffe on Trent



Gotham

What do councillors do?

Councillors are elected to represent a number of local residents in an area called a ward. The role of a councillor can be very varied.

Responsibilities to the Council

- help form policy
- help develop the Council's budget and agree the level of council tax
- consider policies and make decisions.

Your role on the Council as a whole is to plan, run, monitor and develop council business. Councillors are essential to deciding what is in the public interest amongst a range of conflicting issues and views.

As a councillor you will be a member of the Council, and could also be a member of the Cabinet, a scrutiny committee or a regulatory committee eg Development Control. You will meet other councillors from all political groups, to debate and approve Council business in a formal setting. Most meetings are open to the press and public. There are written rules, which govern behaviour and procedures at these meetings called 'procedure rules' and these enable councillors to take part effectively.

Responsibilities to the ward

- listen to and represent the views of the residents, including helping people on specific matters
- make sure services are delivered effectively

As a councillor you will find that much of your time is taken up by local people. This could be dealing with complaints or enquiries. Your role will be to listen, explain Council policy and make sure that the policy has been carried out fairly according to official procedures. You will get help and support to deal with constituents' enquiries and complaints from officers (staff) in the Council.

Councillors as community leaders

Community leadership is at the heart of modern local government. A community leader represents the majority views of that community and stands up for what that community wants for example argues against major developments in their area.

At Rushcliffe, a councillors' role includes:

Community Leadership

- to engage all sections of the community to learn and act upon issues of local concern
- seek opinion and new ways of representing others
- keep up to date with issues of concern
- speak for all sections of the community and work with partners
- mediate fairly in the community
- campaign on behalf of others
- to undertake casework for constituents and act as an advocate in resolving concerns or grievances.

Partnership

- to be aware of the needs of other partners, eg Police, Rushcliffe CCG
- to use influence as an elected representative to develop links between groups and communities in the ward and local area
- to forge local partnerships to ensure resources are used effectively
- to work with Parish Councils taking into account the differences between rural and urban communities.

Representation

- to contribute to the debate at all Council meetings
- to represent the Council to the community and the community to the Council
- to represent the Council on outside bodies and to participate effectively in the appointed role, and where appropriate, to represent those bodies within Rushcliffe
- to participate in the activities of any political group of which you are a member.

General

- to fulfil the legal and local requirements placed on an elected member, in accordance with the Member Code of Conduct and the officer/member protocol
- to be responsible for your own personal development and undergo appropriate development and continuous improvement for any role undertaken.
- to work within the established Councillor: Staff protocol maintaining a clear distinction of roles.

How much time is involved in being a councillor?

It is for you to decide the level of commitment you are able to give to being a councillor. It also depends on your role within the Council and the number of duties you decide to take on. It could range from a few hours each week to a few hours every day at busier times.

Some of the issues you need to consider are:

- how your role as a councillor will impact on any family and personal relationships – you will need their support and understanding as you may be spending a lot of your spare time on Council business
- the people you represent will look to you for help in dealing with their problems. You are likely to receive a lot of emails and a great many telephone calls, and not every caller will telephone at what you might think is a reasonable hour!
- there are usually 5 full Council meetings each year, which you will be expected to attend. These are formal meetings with other Council colleagues from all political groups and meetings start at 7pm and could last up to 3 hours
- you will be a member of at least one committee. Most committee meetings are held in the evenings from 7pm however some maybe held during the day. Your meetings/ commitments may not be evenly spread out over the cycle so some weeks you may be out more evenings than others. The average length of a committee meeting is approximately 2 hours, but this could vary. If you would like more information on the current year's cycle of Council meetings please contact Member Services on 0115 914 8481 or memberservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk
- many councillors represent the Council on one or more outside bodies. Background reading and attendance at meetings of these bodies would increase your time commitment
- for most of the meetings you attend there will be agenda papers that you will need to read beforehand. These papers can be quite detailed and take time to read and understand
- if you are elected as a member of the Cabinet or a committee chairman, the role can be very demanding as you will take responsibility for some of the Council's expenditure each year
- if you are a member of a political party, there will be additional calls on your time to attend political group meetings. Political groups require their members to attend group meetings in advance of Council meetings and possibly training events/seminars organised by the political party.

Q&A

What is a councillor's typical week?

In one week you could have a scrutiny committee meeting, a seminar, be representing the Council on an outside body or partnership, and if you are a member of a political group, have a political group meeting.

- you will receive a lot of information, including details of all planning applications within your ward, as a Councillor so managing this and prioritising it will be important if you want to make an impact and not spread yourself too thinly across too many areas
- it is worth remembering that there are lots of staff in the Council who will be happy to provide you with briefings and help on specific issues

Managing your time

To give you some idea we asked some of the serving councillors how they manage their time and they said:



Time spent on council business varies each week depending on meetings, but it is easily manageable and enjoyable.

Councillor Gordon Moore



I spend approximately 20 hours a week on council business.

Councillor Sue Mallender



On average I spend 10 – 12 hours a week on council business, including case work, meetings and planning consultations.

Councillor Debbie Boote



Council work takes 5 – 7 hours a week, plus as much ward case work as you want to take on.

Councillor Nigel Lawrence

Q&A

Will I get paid for duties as a councillor?

There is no salary for being a councillor. However, you will be paid an allowance to reimburse you for time and expenses incurred whilst on Council business.

Every Rushcliffe Borough Councillor is entitled to a basic allowance, currently £4,476 a year, paid into a bank account in 12 monthly instalments. Members can also claim travel expenses. Some councillors are given an additional allowance to cover any special responsibilities such as Cabinet member or a chairman/vice chairman. Further details of the allowances paid are available from Member Services whose contact details are included in the useful contact section of this document.

For more information about the Members' Allowance Scheme please visit the Council's website at www.rushcliffe.gov.uk/councillors/membersallowances.

Please note the Members Allowance scheme will be reviewed in late 2014.

What support will I receive if I am elected?

- information to help you deal with ward matters and all other work you do as a councillor will be provided by staff, but it is more likely that senior managers, including the chief executive and executive managers, will be helping you and providing guidance
- Member Services staff provide full-time dedicated support to meet councillors' needs
- a Council email address
- access to the Councillors secure Extranet
- if you need any other help after you have been elected, please ask



Edwalton



Granby



Widmerpool



Plumtree



Bridgford Park



Ruddington



East Bridgford



West Bridgford

Will I be given any training to help me perform my duties as a councillor?

When you are newly elected there will be an induction training period when you can attend several induction courses. If you are a member of a political group there could be training and support from your political group. The training programme provided by the Council is decided by the Member Development Group and will include:

- an opportunity to meet senior staff and staff from Member Services.

A series of induction courses on topics such as:

- members' allowances and support from Member Services
- local government finance
- ethical conduct for members
- IT training
- specialised training ie Planning
- Councillors will be asked to complete a Personal Development Plan to identify individual training needs. This will be a confidential statement of your skills and training. The Plan will help you to recognise and value the skills, knowledge and experience you already have, and will help you make informed decisions about your future training and information needs
- individual training sessions identified within your Personal Development Plan
- there will also be optional training, workshops and seminars and an opportunity to attend seminars organised by other public bodies, local government organisations and other local authorities
- training for scrutiny committee members

Will I get time off work?

If you are working, by law (1996 Employment Rights Act) your employer must allow you to take a reasonable amount of time off during working hours to perform your duties as a councillor. The amount of time off will depend upon your responsibilities and the effect of your absence on your employer's business. You should discuss this with your employer before making the commitment.

Code of conduct

The conduct of councillors is formally governed by the Code of Conduct which every council has adopted. The Code of Conduct sets out the rules that members should work to. In Rushcliffe this forms part of the Councillor : Staff protocol which all staff and councillors must follow. All councillors are required to sign the declaration of acceptance of office, which includes an undertaking to observe the Code of Conduct and political conventions/rules. Breaches of the rules may be considered by the Standards Committee.

The Code of Conduct covers obligations in the following areas:

- selflessness
- integrity
- objectivity
- accountability
- openness
- honesty
- leadership.

IT requirements

Some of the information that you will access in your role as a Member will be of a sensitive nature this could be for example personal data or legally or commercially sensitive data. In relation to personal data the Data Protection Act states in principle 7 that "All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that personal data is securely kept". One way in which the Council helps Members to meet their obligation under the Act is to provide them with a Council managed email facility. This facility has a proportionate level of security applied including a user name, password and an additional security code.



Bridgford Park



Bunny



Civic Centre



Cotgrave



Trent Bridge
Cricket Ground



Rushcliffe
Country Park



Flintham



Orston

Protocol on Councillor : Staff Relations

Rushcliffe has a protocol which councillors and staff must follow to ensure professional working relationships.

The principles of the protocol are:

- both councillors and staff serve local people, but have distinct roles
- the best service will be provided to local people by both councillors and staff working as one team
- the service given to local people must be efficient, open and accountable
- councillors and staff must act ethically
- staff must be politically impartial
- effective working relationships between councillors and staff must be based on trust and mutual respect.

The full version of the protocol is available on request and will be made available to all councillors.

The protocol is reviewed regularly and all councillors are told of any changes.

All councillors agree to follow the general principles, code of conduct and political conventions to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties. The Standards Committee ensures there is appropriate training and advice on the code.

I would like to become a councillor, what do I do next?

Nominations

Once you have decided to stand for election as a Borough Councillor you will need to be proposed and then seconded and also to have eight further people as supporters to your nomination.

Full details of the electoral process including the nomination procedure are available from the Electoral Services Section – contact details are:

Electoral Services Section
Civic Centre
Pavilion Road
West Bridgford
Nottingham
NG2 5FE

Tel. 0115 914 8216
Fax. 0115 914 8248
Email: elections@rushcliffe.gov.uk

The nomination pack will include nomination forms and guidance notes. The timetable for the next local election is also included. As a candidate you will be invited to a meeting to hear about postal votes, where the count of the votes will be held, where the polling stations are going to be and to ask any questions you may have.

It is your responsibility, or your Agent's, (see below) to present nomination papers to the Returning Officer before the statutory deadline.

Nomination forms

Some points you should consider:

- do not leave this task until the last minute, as there may be a mistake in your papers and you will need time to rectify this
- when collecting your 10 signatures, it is useful to take a copy of the electoral register with you. You can then compare the name with that on the nomination form and write down the assessor's number. The name and number should be exactly the same
- it is important to read the nomination papers and supporting material and make a careful note of when each of the various papers need to be returned. The Returning Officer can help with any queries
- make sure the people nominating, seconding or supporting your nomination have not signed more nominations than there are vacancies.

Electoral register

In the run up to the election candidates can have a free copy of the electoral register for the ward for which they are standing, which lists residents who can vote at the next election and a map showing the ward boundaries.

Do I need an election agent?

- you can take on this role yourself, but it is helpful to have an agent
- if you are in a political party, it may be that one person takes on the role of agent for several candidates
- it is the agent's responsibility to ensure that forms are sent in at the correct times and to keep a clear and accurate record of financial expenditure, to be submitted after the election
- you should work closely with your agent

What are polling agents and counting agents?

- these are all safeguards to ensure a fair election
- Polling agents are people you can nominate to go into the polling stations to ensure that the polling stations are being run fairly. They cannot ask the polling clerks who has or has not voted
- Counting agents are nominated to attend the count to ensure a fair and accurate count of votes
- you do not have to nominate either of these, though you may find friends and helpers are keen to attend the count

Election expenses - who pays?

If you decide to stand for election and spend money on your campaign, it is important to note that you have to pay for your own publicity material, property, services or items used for the campaign. However, if you are a member of a political group or some other group, you may find that financial help is available. You will need to check this with your political party or group.

Furthermore, although you or your party/group pays for the election expenses, you must keep all your receipts. You will need to submit a statement of election expenses, supported by receipts, shortly after the Election. This is done to make sure that the money you spend on the election campaign does not go over the set limit of £740, with an additional 6p for every entry in the register of electors for the area you are seeking to be elected.

If you have any queries about election expenses please contact:

The Electoral Commission
Tel. 020 7271 0616
Fax: 020 7271 0505
E-mail: pef@electoralcommission.org.uk

Useful contacts

Rushcliffe Borough Council

Customer Service Centre

0115 981 9911

www.rushcliffe.gov.uk or customerservices@rushcliffe.gov.uk

Executive Manager - Corporate Governance

Dan Swaine

Tel: 0115 914 8343

Dswaine@rushcliffe.gov.uk

Electoral Services and Democratic Engagement Manager

Rushcliffe Borough Council

Civic Centre

Pavilion Road

West Bridgford

Nottingham

NG2 5FE

(For election queries including nomination packs)

Member Services

Tel: 0115 914 8481

Political parties

Conservative

www.conservative.com

Labour

www.labour.org.uk

Green

www.greenparty.org.uk

Liberal Democrats

www.libdems.org.uk

UK Independence Party

www.ukip.org

If you are interested in other political parties, please visit the register of political parties accessible via the Electoral Commission's website.

Independent

Head of Independent Group

Local Government Association (LGA)

LGA House

Smith Square

London SW1P 3HZ

Tel: 020 7664 3224

Fax: 020 7664 3323

Independent.group@lga.gov.uk

Useful contacts

Local government

The Electoral Commission

Tel: 020 7271 0500

Fax: 020 7271 0505

The Electoral Commission

Trevelyan House

Great Peter Street

London

SW1P 2HW

www.electoralcommission.gov.uk

info@electoralcommission.org.uk

Local Government Association (LGA)

Tel: 020 7664 3000

Local Government House

Smith Square

London SW1P 3HZ

www.lga.gov.uk

Local Government Information Unit (LGIU)

Tel: 020 7554 2800

22 Upper Woburn Place

London

WC1H 0TB

www.lgiu.gov.uk

Local Government Improvement and Development

Tel: 020 7296 6600

76-86 Turnmill Street

London

EC17 5QU

www.idea.gov.uk/knowledge

About Rushcliffe

Rushcliffe lies south of Nottingham and the River Trent. It extends across towards Newark in the north east and Loughborough in the south west, covering an area of 157 square miles. Although parts of the Borough lie close to Nottingham, Rushcliffe has a strong identity of its own. The main centre of population is West Bridgford, where around one-third of the Borough's 111,129 plus population live. The remainder of the district is largely rural, with the centres of population split between small towns and villages.

Rushcliffe is the most affluent area within the county, with low levels of unemployment and crime and higher than average incomes. Nearly eighty per cent of homes are owner-occupied and with a higher than average amount of residents are self-employed. According to the latest statistics, there are slightly more females than males within the Borough, nine per cent of the population are from 'non-white' minority ethnic backgrounds and residents aged 65 years or older now make up twenty per cent of the population.

Rushcliffe has a rich sporting heritage with Trent Bridge Cricket Ground, the City Ground, home of Nottingham Forest Football Club and the National Watersports Centre all located within West Bridgford. The area has a wide range of leisure facilities, including leisure centres, country parks, tennis courts, and playgrounds.

The staff are led by the chief executive, who is supported by five executive managers each with a broad remit. The Council employs about 300 (full time equivalent) staff who work in one of the five service areas (Communities, Corporate Governance, Finance and Commercial, Neighbourhoods and Transformation).



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