

Councillor

Cost:	Councillors are entitled to claim an allowance and may be able to claim travel and subsistence expenses back
Time: High	This will vary, as a councillor you are expected to attend relevant meetings and keep in touch with your ward.
Requirements for Position: Low	You must be over 18 years of age and either a registered voter or live or work within Hartlepool Borough for the last 12 months
Training Offered: Yes	Support and training is provided

What is a Councillor?

A councillor is someone who is elected to represent the local community. Councillors represent a ward and whilst it is their duty

to represent the whole community, they have a special duty to the constituents in their ward.

Hartlepool Borough Council is a unitary authority which means that it is responsible for all local services covering Hartlepool. There are 47 councillors who represent the 17 different wards in Hartlepool.

Hartlepool is currently undertaking an Electoral Review, which will see the number of Councillors reduce from 47 to 33 and a Ward reduction from 17 to 11. These changes will be effective from May 2012 elections.

To find out more information about your local councillor please visit the [Hartlepool Borough Council](http://www.hartlepoolboroughcouncil.gov.uk) website.

All the councillors meet together as the Council, which is also known as full council, these meetings are normally open to the public. This is an opportunity for all councillors to gather together and discuss issues and decisions affecting the local area.

Although councillors play a role in making decisions in the council it is the Executive who are responsible for most of the day-to-day decisions.

The Executive is made up of the elected mayor and the Cabinet, who are a number of councillors chosen by the mayor.

Each member on the Cabinet is responsible for a portfolio (area of work) and is responsible for managing that area of work and making any necessary decisions delegated to them.

All councillors are an important part of the council's decision making process because they provide scrutiny and examine decisions in detail. Importantly, if any decisions are made outside of the budget or policy framework then this must be taken to and approved by full council.

The role of a Councillor

Councillors are elected for a four year term unless they are elected at a by-election which may occur when there are vacancies in between elections. In a by-election the councillor would stand for office until the term of office for that vacancy expires.

NB. Councillors elected in May 2011 will only have a one year term of office and will have to stand for election in 2012, following the electoral review.

Before you stand as a candidate it is important that you look into whether you have the time and interest to take on the role. It is a good idea to contact a local councillor to find out what the role may involve.

Each year a pre-election event is held following close of nominations. This event

gives candidates the opportunity to hear the experiences of elected members and to ask any relevant questions.

The time commitment as a councillor will vary and depend on what roles and commitments you take on within your council. It has been estimated that the amount of time required can range from about five hours a week to 20 hours a week.

You will be required to attend at least one relevant council meeting every six months and to keep in touch with your ward. Attendance at council meetings is recorded. However it really is up to you about how involved you become as a councillor.

For more information about the different roles and experiences of councillors please contact your [local councillor](#) or visit the [Be a Councillor](#) website.

Can I stand to be a Councillor?

The answer is yes almost anyone can stand to be a councillor as long as:

- You are over 18 years of age
- You are British, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union
- You are registered to vote in the area or if you have lived, worked or owned property in the area for at least 12 months before an election

You can become a councillor regardless of whether you work or not and your employer must allow you reasonable time off to perform your duties as a councillor. It is advisable however that you discuss your plans to become a councillor with your employer before you commit.

When can I not stand to be a Councillor?

There are some circumstances which mean that you cannot stand as a councillor these include:

- You have served a prison sentence of three months or longer in the five years before the election
- You work for the local council you wish to represent
- You have been declared bankrupt or you have been found to have participated in illegal or corrupt practices.

For more information about whether you could stand as a councillor visit the [Be a Councillor](#) website or seek independent legal advice.

What are the different types of Councillors?

There are two basic types of councillors:

1. Independent
2. Party Political

A group or party political candidate is someone who stands to be a councillor as part of an established political party. There

will be a selection process for members of a political party who wish to stand for council. Therefore you should contact your local political party if you wish to stand for council as a member of their party.

If you are not a member of a political party then you can stand as an independent candidate.

Parish Councillors

Within Hartlepool there are five parish councils: Dalton Piercy Elwick, Greatham, Hart, and Hartlepool Headland. Parish councils are the first level of local government and allow people to have a say at a very local level. They are responsible for many local services such as allotments, open spaces and village halls. They must also be notified and consulted with for any planning applications within the parish.

You can stand to become a parish councillor, and the election process is in the main the same as that for Borough councillors. Full Parish Council elections only take place every four years.

What are the next steps to becoming a Councillor?

You will firstly need to decide whether you wish to stand as part of a political party or as an independent.

If you wish to represent a political party then you will need to become involved with the party locally and find out about the roles and what is needed to win an election. Ultimately it is down to the

political party to determine whether they wish to select you as a candidate so it is important to get in contact and get involved with the party as soon as possible.

Whether you wish to run as an independent or as a party political candidate you will need to gain the support of at least 10 people who will support your nomination to become a local councillor.

For full details either visit the [Electoral Commission](#) website or contact Hartlepool Electoral Services on 01429 523088.