

Be a Councillor

Information Pack



Where is Charnwood?



Contents

Title	Page No.
Introduction from the Chief Executive	4
What do Councillors do?	5
Case Study - Councillor Robin Popley	7
Frequently Asked Questions	8
Case Study –Councillor Julie Bradshaw	11
How do I become a Councillor?	12
Personal Conduct	14
Case Study—Councillor Laurie Needham	15
About Charnwood Borough Council (with Councillor Jonathan Morgan)	16
How the Council works	17
Useful contacts	18
Draft Induction Programme 2023	19



Introduction from the Chief Executive

Hello and thank you for your interest in learning more about becoming a Councillor at Charnwood Borough Council.

Local democracy depends on people like you showing an interest and taking part in the Council's work and I hope that this event will help you understand the role of a local Councillor.

It is an exciting time to be part of Charnwood Borough Council and there are plenty of ways to make a difference in your community.

This pack gives you the information you need to decide whether you might want to stand for election as a Councillor and details of the processes involved.

The next Borough Elections will be held on Thursday 4th May 2023. If you would like further information or have any queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch with our Head of Governance and Human Resources, Adrian Ward, on 01509 634573 or email adrian.ward@charnwood.gov.uk.

I hope you find the Information Pack useful and thank you again for your interest.

Rob Mitchell
Chief Executive



What do Councillors do?

If you're the type of person who cares about your community, has a good rapport with your neighbours and a desire to improve your area then becoming a councillor could be for you.

There are roughly 20,000 local councillors in England, each representing their local community and all with their own reason for doing so.

Councils are particularly keen to encourage people from under-represented groups to get involved, such as younger people, people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with health conditions or impairments.

Women are also under-represented on local councils. You could bring a new dimension to the Borough of Charnwood.

This is a chance to make a big difference to the quality of life for people in your local area!



Councillors are elected to the local council to represent their local community. Becoming a councillor is a rewarding and privileged form of public service.

Being an effective councillor requires both commitment and hard work. Councillors have to balance the needs and interests of residents, the political party they represent (if any) and the council.

These will all make legitimate demands on a councillor's time, on top of the demands and needs of their personal and professional lives. Before you consider becoming a councillor you may want to discuss it with your family and friends to make sure they understand what you are taking on.

You will need their support as you'll have to spend some of your spare time on council business.

Borough councillors are elected to represent a number of local residents in an area called a ward. The role of councillor can be very varied and it is up to each individual councillor how they work, but they have a duty to represent their wards and the constituents within them, and to deliver good quality value for money services across the Borough.

Ward responsibilities

As a Councillor, your responsibilities to your ward are:

- To listen to and represent the views of all constituents in your ward (including those who may not have voted for you)
- To make sure services are delivered effectively in your ward
- To try to secure extra resources for your ward
- To help individual constituents with specific issues (case work).

As a councillor you will find that much of your time is taken up by contact with local people. This could include 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 this from officers (staff) in the Council.

Council responsibilities

As a Councillor, your responsibilities to the Council are:

- To assist in the formulation of Council policies
- To help develop the Council's budget and agree the level of Council tax
- To make or scrutinise decisions.

These are just a few of the responsibilities you will have as a Councillor, at the council. You will work for the people of your ward but you work for them in conjunction with the Council and its officers.

Communities responsibilities

Community leadership is central to the government's thinking about modern local government. It involves partnerships with other organisations. Charnwood Borough Council works in partnership with many local bodies and councillors serve on these local forums on behalf of the Council.

Case study:

Councillor Robin Popley

Member for Shepshed East and Disabilities Champion, Conservative

“These past three years of service have seen me balance having an incurable disability, ankylosis spondylitis, a form of arthritis ~ diagnosed at 27, I am now 31 ~ with a changing career. Recently, I have just qualified as a secondary school teacher and am set to begin my first post within weeks. That, in itself, has brought challenges but has made me acutely aware of the political figure I wish to become.

I have always fiercely believed that the greatest good any public servant can bring is empathy and trying to bring society closer together. Since my appointment as Disabilities’ Champion in late 2020, I have been fortunate enough to raise the profile of disabilities across the area, and worked closely with leading professional sports partners, to instigate a week of sport raising the possibilities which lie out there for disabled athletes.

I have always believed that I don’t just represent my ward as a councillor, although this again has been a proud achievement to provide a voice to my hometown at a higher echelon, but for the well-being of thousands of others across our communities whom I and my council colleagues represent.

You may wonder how time consuming this is? Admittedly, if you invest properly the time required to do the role the justice it merits, there can be long hours and flexible working patterns involved. Nevertheless, the opportunity to be a representative for the place I love, far outweighs any barriers which may be in my way. Seriously consider this as an opportunity. That would always be my advice to anyone wishing to stand, and good luck, to those who are ever lucky enough to have that same privilege, for it is indeed, a privilege.”



Frequently asked questions

Who can become a Councillor?

To stand as a Councillor, you must be:

- 18 or over
- a UK, EU or Commonwealth Citizen
- registered to vote in the Borough of Charnwood or, for the whole 12 months preceding, you must have occupied as an owner or tenant, any land or premises in the Borough or worked (as principal employment) in the Borough or live in the Borough of Charnwood.

You cannot stand if you:

- work for Charnwood Borough Council
- hold a politically restricted post for another local authority
- are bankrupt
- have served a prison sentence (including suspended sentences) of 3 months or more within 5 years prior to the election
- if they are subject to notification requirements or various orders in relation to sexual offences.
- have been disqualified under any legislation relating to corrupt or illegal practices
- are not a British subject.

What attributes does a Councillor need?

- Leadership
- Knowledge of the area
- Honesty
- Communication skills
- Confidence
- Trustworthiness
- Compassion

Do Councillors need any qualifications?

The simple answer is no, you do not need any specific qualifications to become a councillor. Life experience and a willingness to contribute to the work of the Council are probably the best things you can bring to the role.

There is an expectation that new councillors will have good IT skills and be able to use a laptop computer or tablet device. If not, IT training courses will be available together with help and support.

Do Councillors have to belong to a Political Party or Group?

No, Councillors don't have to belong to a political party, although the majority of people do 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).

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. One advantage of being a member of a political group is that support and assistance will generally be available from other members of that group.

To find out about political parties, please visit the Register of Political Parties accessible via the Electoral Commission's website: www.electoralcommission.org.uk.

Do Councillors get paid for their council duties?

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

Every Charnwood Borough councillor is entitled to a basic allowance, which currently (November 2022) is £5,610 a year. This is paid directly into councillors' bank accounts in 12 monthly instalments. Some councillors are also paid an additional allowance to cover any special responsibilities such as the Leader of the Council or the Chair of a Committee.

How much time is involved in being a Councillor?

There are usually seven full Council meetings each year, which councillors are expected to attend. These are formal meetings with other councillor colleagues from all political groups and any independent councillors.

Nearly all committee meetings are held in the evenings starting at either 6.00pm or 6.30pm. Meetings/commitments may not be evenly spread out over the cycle so some weeks are busier than others. The average length of a committee meeting is approximately two hours, but this can vary.

For most of the meetings you attend there will be papers that you will need to read beforehand. These papers can be quite detailed and take time to read and understand.

Being a councillor may impact on any family and personal relationships – their support and understanding is important as councillors can spend a lot of their spare time on Council business.

Some councillors hold drop in surgeries. A large proportion of time is spent dealing with constituency and associated casework either taken at surgeries or received via post, telephone, or email.

Do Councillors get time off work?

It is the law that employers must allow a reasonable amount of time off during working hours to perform councillor duties. The amount of time off will depend upon a councillor's responsibilities and the effect of the absence on the employer's business. It would be wise to discuss this with employers before making the commitment (Employment Rights Act 1996, Section 50 covers this).

What support do Councillors receive?

There is a lot of information and support available to councillors. This includes help from officers, fellow councillors and the Democratic Services team at the Council. Democratic Services are a first point of contact for any queries, can help with the management of meetings and provide important information on council business. The team can also organise training opportunities, provide procedural advice and guidance, and provide a 'buddy-up' service, in which one officer will work closely with a new councillor for the first few months following election.

Case study:

Councillor Dr Julie Bradshaw MBE Member for Loughborough Ashby, Labour

“I have always loved helping people since an early age. This was the main reason I decided to stand in 2011 as a Councillor on the Loughborough Ashby Ward where I have lived since 1987 after graduating from Loughborough University.

As a busy person running a business and at the time preparing for a 29.5 mile Butterfly solo swim round Manhattan, I wondered how I could juggle it all. However, I proved it is possible and can be very rewarding.

I wanted to further help my residents and to represent them on the Council at Charnwood. I am proud to say that during my time as a councillor I have achieved much for residents which I wouldn't have been able to do if I had never stood for election; for example, a skatepark for young people, ramp access to shops to enable those with mobility problems and so much more.

I won't say it has been easy but in being well organised and motivated, it is totally possible to fit in being a councillor with the other demands of my life. There are meetings to attend and with the pandemic has come virtual meetings. This has opened up a whole new way of working both safely and enabling me and others to continue with being a councillor. Am I glad I became a Councillor? The answer is definitely 'yes' - and I would encourage others to go for it.”



How do I become a Councillor?

Induction

Following the elections in May 2023, newly elected councillors will be expected to attend induction training. Indicative dates for these inductions sessions are at the back of this document so that you can put them in your diary now. You are strongly recommended to attend all of these sessions.

In the weeks and months following the induction sessions, there will be further courses organised and you are welcome to attend these. The vast majority of them will be held in the evenings.

The nomination process

Once you have decided to stand for election as a Borough councillor you will need to complete a Nominations Form which requires 10 signatures from local people:

- a person to act as your proposer
- another person to act as your seconder, and
- 8 signatures from 'assentors' (people who support your nomination).

If you stand for election and your nomination form is verified, and the election is contested (i.e. there is more than one candidate duly nominated), you will be advised by letter. This letter will also include information about when and where the election count will be and information regarding polling stations.

It is your responsibility, or your Agent's responsibility if you appoint one (see below), to present nomination papers to the Returning Officer before the statutory deadline. The deadline is shown on the Borough Elections Timetable at the end of this document.

Do I need an election agent?

Once you have decided to stand for election as a Borough councillor you will need to cYou can appoint an election agent to represent your interests. They would be responsible to you and to the public for everything done during your election campaign.

It is the agent's responsibility to ensure that forms are returned at the correct times and to keep a clear and accurate record of financial expenditure, to be submitted after the election. You can take on this role yourself but it is helpful to have an agent.

Who pays for election expenses?

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

Whether it is you or your party/group who pays for your 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.

Further guidance on Standing for Election can be obtained from the Electoral Commission at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/home.

What are polling agents and counting agents?

These are people appointed to safeguard and 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 however 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.



Personal Conduct

The behaviour of councillors is formally governed by a Code of Conduct, which has been formally adopted by the Council. The Code of Conduct sets out the rules that councillors must comply with when acting as a councillor.

If elected, you will be required to sign a declaration of acceptance of office. Complaints that a councillor has breached of the Code of Conduct may be considered by Charnwood's Member Conduct Committee. Training and advice on conduct requirements will be available.

The principles of public life

The seven principles of public life which all Charnwood Borough Councillors must follow are:

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

Other things to consider

- Councillors receive information only when reasonably required to perform their role on a “need to know” basis
- Councillors cannot be involved in any matter or decision where they have a disclosable pecuniary (financial) interest or an interest that could lead to bias.
- Councillors must treat all sensitive and confidential information as private
- Councillors are bound by the Data Protection Act and may be sued for defamation or libel or breach of confidence
- Councillors and officers should treat each other with respect.

[Read the Council's Code of Conduct](#)

Case study:

Councillor Laurie Needham

Member for Member for East Goscote, Green

“Many people tell me that they’d love to stand as a candidate for local government but worry that their caring or working responsibilities are a barrier to them. I have four young children, who were aged between 2-9 years old when I was elected in 2019. I also work full time and, although it is sometimes a tricky balance, I have not found my responsibilities to be in conflict with my role as a councillor.

Most of my work as a councillor, for example reading papers ahead of meetings, emails and case work can be done flexibly to fit in with family life and work. Charnwood’s meetings are generally held in the evening, which also helps me to balance Council commitments with those of work.

Being the sole councillor for my Party was (and sometimes still is!) quite daunting. The induction and ongoing training programme for councillors, helped me to find my feet, as did the support from my Party and colleagues. Democratic Services are always on hand to answer my queries and council officers are a great source of advice and education.

Likewise, it has been my experience that Councillors from other parties were welcoming and supportive to me when I was newly elected and have often been more than happy to share their knowledge and experience.

I feel strongly that Council’s should represent a wide range of people and backgrounds, including those of working age and with caring responsibilities. It’s important to have a diversity of political representation, so I would encourage anyone from a smaller party or with a young family and career, to consider standing for election and not to feel that any of these things need to be a barrier to you.”





About Charnwood Borough Council

**Councillor Jonathan Morgan,
Leader of Charnwood Borough Council**

The Vision for Charnwood

Charnwood is a borough for innovation and growth, delivering high-quality living in urban and rural settings, with a range of jobs and services to suit all skills and abilities and meet the needs of our diverse community.

With a highly-acclaimed university, thriving towns and a network of vibrant villages, and within easy reach of national and international markets, Charnwood provides everything a business needs to succeed.

At the forefront of technology while protecting our beautiful environment for future generations, Charnwood is a borough of contrasts, and provides a world of opportunity.

Our corporate strategy

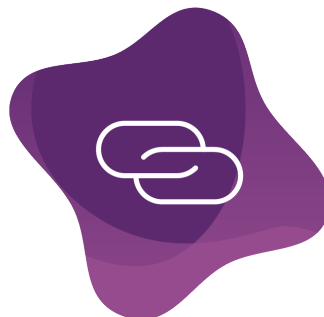
Our Corporate Strategy sets out our priorities which are grouped into four themes. These themes are: Caring for the environment Healthy communities A thriving economy and Your Council. To read Charnwood Borough Council's Corporate Strategy 2020-24, visit www.charnwood.gov.uk/our_corporate_strategy.

Charnwood Borough Council values



Pride in Charnwood

We take pride in our work and our borough and are ambitious for the future.



Working Together

We work together with pace and positivity as one council and in partnership with others.



Customer Focused

We listen to our customers and are focused on delivering excellent services.

How the Council works

Council

All 52 elected members meet together as the Council, seven times a year. The full Council has responsibility for making decisions on strategic policy, Council Tax levels and the Council's budget.

Cabinet

A Cabinet of up to ten members, including the Council Leader, meets monthly and is the Council's principal decision making body. It is responsible for developing policies to deliver the Council's priorities within the set budget, and ensuring services perform to expected levels.

Regulatory

The Council appoints Regulatory Committees to perform functions related to planning and licensing. The Council also has an Audit Committee to monitor financial performance and a Member Conduct Committee to advise on the adoption and implementation of a Code of Conduct for elected and co-opted Members.

Scrutiny

The scrutiny structure at the council includes the Scrutiny Commission, the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee and up to four panels at any one time. Scrutiny bodies ensure that the Council meets the expectations and needs of the people within the District. This includes reviewing financial and operational performance, examining the impact of the work of the Council (and its partners – such as the police), monitoring the decisions of the Cabinet and assisting in the formulation and development of policy.

Council officers

The Council's employees (officers) give advice to Councillors, implement decisions and manage the day-to-day delivery of its services. All officers must ensure that they act within the law when doing so, although some officers have a specific duty to ensure that the Council acts within the law and uses its resources properly. The Council has a protocol which governs the relationship between officers and Members of the Council.

Useful contacts

Rob Mitchell, Chief Executive

Tel: 01509 634660

Email: Rob.mitchell@charnwood.gov.uk

Adrian Ward, Head of Governance and Human Resources

Tel: 01509 634573

Email: Adrian.Ward@charnwood.gov.uk

Charnwood Borough Council

Tel: 01509 263151

Web: www.charnwood.gov.uk/contactus

Democratic Services

Tel: 01509 634785

Email: Democracy@charnwood.gov.uk

Local Government Association

Tel: 0207 664 3000

Web: www.lga.gov.uk

Electoral Commission

Tel: 0207 271 0500

Web: www.electoralcommission.org.uk

Draft induction programme 2023

Date	Induction events
Elections: Thursday, 4th May 2023	
Week commencing 8th May 2023	<p>Welcome evening including introduction to the Council by senior officers and councillors.</p> <p>Various opportunities during the week to be supported by Democratic Services to go through a number of administrative processes (e.g. id badges, car parking permits, expenses claims), have a tour of the building and meet key staff, and discuss IT support requirements.</p> <p>The Role of a Councillor and Community Leadership Skills</p>
Week commencing 15th May 2023	<p>Standards and Probity – an explanation of the principles of promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct and the rules that are in place governing this.</p> <p>How Council meetings work – an explanation of the roles of different committees including an introduction to the role of scrutiny and how meeting procedures work.</p>
Annual Council: Monday 22nd May 2023 at 6:30pm	Meeting at Loughborough Town Hall
Week commencing 22nd May 2023	<p>Training to enable councillors to sit as members of the Plans Committee including probity in planning.</p> <p>IT Drop In sessions.</p>
Week commencing 29th May 2023	<p>Safeguarding training and information in relation to health and safety for councillors.</p> <p>Licensing – roles and responsibilities.</p>
TBC	<p>Other induction events to be programmed include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairing skills Data Protection Equality and Diversity Financial Awareness

