



**CHILTERN**  
District Council



**SOUTH BUCKS**  
District Council

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Stronger in partnership

# The Councillor's Role



## **The Councillor's Role**

This document is intended for anyone looking to understand more about the work local Councillors do and the structure of the Council which they work within.

## **Becoming a Councillor**

To stand for election as a District Councillor you need to be nominated as a candidate by submitting a completed set of nomination papers to the Returning Officer, full guidance for which can be found on the Electoral Commission [website](#). The next elections to Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils are scheduled for May 2019, although there may be opportunities to stand before then if by-elections are held.

Becoming a Councillor is a rewarding form of public service that puts people in a privileged position where they can make a difference to the quality of other people's daily lives.

However, being an effective Councillor requires hard work. Every day, Councillors have to balance the needs and interests of their residents, voters, political parties and the Council. All these groups will make legitimate demands on the Councillor's time on top of their personal responsibilities to family, workplace and friends.

## **Representing the Ward**

Councillors are democratically accountable to residents of their ward. The overriding duty of Councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

Residents will expect their local Councillor to:

- respond to their queries and investigate their concerns (casework)
- communicate Council decisions that affect them
- know their area and be aware of any problems
- engage with representatives of local organisations, interest groups and businesses
- represent their views at Council meetings

Good communication and engagement with the community is essential to being an effective Councillor. One of a Councillor's key duties is to build strong relationships with local residents and encourage them to actively engage with the local democratic process.

## **Regulatory duties**

Local authorities are not just service providers, they also act as regulators. This involves Councillors in quasi-judicial roles on special committees appointed directly by the Council, such as Planning and Licensing committees.

## **Working in Partnership**

Community leadership is at the heart of modern local government. Councils deliver a lot of what they do in partnership with other services and agencies, including the voluntary and community sector, to improve services and the quality of life of residents.



Whilst both Chiltern District Council and South Bucks District Council are sovereign authorities in their own right, the two Councils work in partnership to deliver services to local residents. Council officers work for both authorities across two locations at Capswood, Denham and King George V House, Amersham. Similarly, many Councillors are involved in joint committees and reference groups which shape the policies of the two Councils.

### **Decision-making**

Councillors have a central part to play in making decisions that impact on their ward and across the whole area covered by their Council. They will be involved in decision-making through:

- full Council
- regulatory committees such as Planning or Licensing
- appointments to external (outside) bodies
- developing, monitoring and reviewing policy on Overview Committees
- providing advice and guidance to Portfolio Holders at advisory groups or informal meetings

### **Key Roles**

Their key roles can be summarised as:-

1. collectively acting as the ultimate policy-makers;
2. contributing to the good governance of the District and actively encouraging community participation in decision making;
3. effectively representing the interests of their ward and of individual constituents;
4. responding to constituents' enquiries and representations, fairly and impartially;
5. participating in the governance and management of the Council; and
6. maintaining the highest standards of conduct and ethics.

### **COMMITTEES**

Below is a list of the main committees Councillors may be appointed to and a brief outline of the work they do in them.

#### **Full Council**

The full Council meeting is the sovereign body of the Council. Full Council is where all Councillors meet to debate and take decisions. It is here that Councillors decide the overall policy framework and set the budget each year.

The Council each year appoints the Cabinet Leader, who then appoints between two and nine other councillors to serve on the Cabinet. The Council holds the Cabinet to account by appointing non-Cabinet Councillors to Overview Committees. Non-Cabinet Councillors are also able to question the Leader and members of the Cabinet, and have the opportunity to comment on and question in writing the work of the Cabinet.

#### **Cabinet**

The Cabinet is led by the Leader of the Council. Each Cabinet Member has responsibility for a portfolio (i.e. a particular area of the Council's activity). The Cabinet is responsible for most day-to-day decisions, taking the leading role in developing the policy framework and proposing the budget to full Council.



When major decisions are to be discussed or made, these must be published in the 28 Day Notice.

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

### **Chiltern and South Bucks Joint Committee**

The Joint Committee is a joint executive committee whose prime purpose is to drive forward and oversee the joint arrangements between Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils. This includes considering the relevant business cases for joint service proposals, overseeing the progress of joint arrangements, and considering other reports from the joint Management Team.

### **Overview Committees**

The role of Overview Committees is to challenge and scrutinise the Council, the Cabinet, and other public bodies in the area; and assist in policy development. Their work leads to reports and recommendations which advise the Cabinet and the Council on policies, budget and service delivery.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each Overview Committee have the power to 'call-in' a decision which has been made by the Cabinet but not yet implemented. This enables the Committee to consider whether the decision is appropriate. It can recommend that the Cabinet reconsider the decision.

### **Audit and Standards Committee**

The Audit and Standards Committee reviews and approves various financial statements / reports which assess the Council's financial arrangements and achievement of value for money.

The Audit and Standards Committee acts in accordance with relevant CIPFA Codes of Practice by considering the Internal Audit Plan and the Annual Report of the Internal Audit Manager, as well as the Annual Audit Letter of the External Auditor.

This Committee is also responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by district, town and parish Councillors in the Chiltern and South Bucks Districts. To reflect this, in addition to District Councillors, the Committee's membership at both Councils includes Independent Persons.

### **Governance and Electoral Arrangements Committee**

This Committee is responsible for making recommendations to the Council on proposals from the Electoral Commission or the Boundary Committee for England regarding boundary reviews, electoral arrangements, and the review of parishes and related matters.

The Committee also monitors and reviews the Council's Constitution to ensure that it assists in the delivery of efficient, transparent and accountable decision-making. It considers proposals for changes to the Constitution, and recommends to Council or the Cabinet accordingly.

## Licensing Committee

The Licensing Committee deals with the Council's licensing functions, covering such matters as:

- Public entertainment
- Taxis
- Street and market trading
- Animal control
- Pubs and clubs
- Betting and gaming
- Caravan sites

A comprehensive list of the various local licensing functions is set out in the Council's Constitution.

Most licensing matters related to individual premises, taxi and personal licences are dealt with by a Sub Committee on an ad-hoc basis.

## Licensing Sub Committee

This Sub Committee conducts hearings and makes determinations for matters under the Council's licensing functions. The meetings are held on an ad-hoc basis, as and when applications are received.

Only members of the parent Licensing Committee are eligible to sit on Licensing Sub Committees, and must have received training.

## Planning Committee

The Planning Committee is responsible for Development Control and related Town and County Planning matters. Its role is to determine planning applications and regulate the development or use of land including public rights of way.

Councillors on the Planning Committee consider each planning application on its merits, taking account of current legislation and planning policies.

All members of the Planning Committee must have received training on the Planning Regime / Framework and on the Planning Code of Conduct before they can sit on the Committee. This training is included in the Member Induction events, and **ALL** Councillors are encouraged to attend, not just prospective members of the Planning Committee.

## Joint Staffing Committee

The Joint Staffing Committee a joint committee between Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils and is responsible for the overall management of the Councils' Human Resources (other than appeals), as well as the determination of personnel policies and procedures.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Buckinghamshire (with the exception of Milton Keynes) currently has two tiers of local government, with one County Council and four District Councils. Responsibility for service provision is split between the County and District Councils; Buckinghamshire County Council provides services that cover the whole County area including education, transport and adult social care, whilst Aylesbury



Vale, Wycombe, Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils each provide more local services such as waste collection, environmental health and leisure provision.

In addition, there are a number of Town and Parish Councils which maintain local amenities such as recreational areas, footpaths and cemeteries. Town and Parish Councils are also consulted on highways works and planning applications. Councillors may serve on one or more tiers of local government, with some being elected as Town or Parish, District and County Councillors.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information on the services that Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils provide can be found on their websites: [www.chiltern.gov.uk](http://www.chiltern.gov.uk) and [www.southbucks.gov.uk](http://www.southbucks.gov.uk)

[The Councillors' Guide](#), produced by the LGA, is a very useful reference document for all new Councillors and those thinking about becoming a Councillor in the future. Additional information and guidance for Councillors can be found on the Local Government Association [website](#) which is updated daily.

Further explanation on the services provided by County, District, Town and Parish Councils is available on the gov.uk [website](#).