



# Will you stand for it?

*A simple guide for prospective councillors for the Sedgemoor District Council Elections 2019*

## Why become a Councillor?

- It's a challenge and it's an opportunity.
- It's your chance to influence priorities and the money spent to support the needs of the people you represent; influencing services and how they are delivered.
- It's about teamwork; successful partnership with the people of Sedgemoor, councillor colleagues and the council's staff.
- Councillors come from all walks of life and it is important that our councillors represent Sedgemoor's population as a whole. Different backgrounds and experiences add value to the work of the Council.
- Councillors are at the forefront of giving residents across Sedgemoor a greater say and becoming involved in the services they use and in decisions that affect them.

This booklet gives an insight into the role and responsibilities of councillors and some information about the council itself. It also provides information on how to stand for election with key dates leading to the local government elections on 2nd May 2019.

## Representing your constituents

You will represent the view of your constituents at all levels, dealing with their problems and perhaps getting closer to them by attending Town Council, Parish Council or Parish Meetings.

You will be involved in many Council wide issues, but you are elected to serve your constituents, even those who didn't vote for you or of a different political persuasion. You will find that you become a contact point for your constituents to air any Council related and non-Council related issues.

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

- Wanting to make a difference and be involved in shaping the future of the local community
- Being concerned about your local area and wanting to ensure that the community gets the right services

- Wanting to represent the views of local people and ensuring that community interests are taken into account
- Wanting to pursue your political beliefs
- Wanting to contribute your business or professional skills
- Concerns about one particular issue
- As an extension of what you are already doing through a political party, trade union, charity, voluntary group or school governing body – becoming a councillor can be the next step.

## Attending meetings

All councillors are expected to attend Full Council, which is held every two months. You may also be asked by Full Council to serve on one of the committees, or project groups, or be a Council representative for another organisation.

In the recent Sedgemoor Member study of current councillors, they estimated that on average they spent between 20 and 25 hours a week on Council and ward work.

The majority of Sedgemoor's committees are held during the day. At these meetings you will be involved in either the decision making processes or scrutinising the decisions that are made. Either way these decisions affect the level and quality of services received by the people you will represent.

## Things to consider

You become public property – your name and contact details are published so that they are available to the public; some councillors find this invasive into family life.

You will be required to complete a declaration of interest form that sets out any land ownership interests that you may have and other financial interests. These details will be open for public inspection.

Time commitment – most councillors say that they underestimate the time that is needed.

Detailed papers and reports need to be studied before meetings.

A steep learning curve – not only the way that local government works, but also

many different and disparate areas of service.

As a councillor you will be required to act in accordance with the national code of conduct that sets out basic rules of probity that must be followed.

Politics at a local, regional and national level.

## **How to stand for election**

The Notice of Election across the District will be published around two months before the election date of 2nd May 2019 and the key dates are set out at the end of this booklet. Further information on the process can be obtained from the Electoral Services department at Sedgemoor District Council.

When you apply to be a candidate, you will be sent a nomination pack. This will contain all the forms and information you need for the election, including a nomination paper.

You will need to live, work or be registered as an elector within the area of Sedgemoor, but not necessarily in the ward in which you are thinking of standing.

You will need ten signatures on your nomination paper. These must be from people who are registered to vote and who live in the ward you wish to represent, including a Proposer and Seconder.

You can stand either on behalf of a political party or as an independent candidate. If you wish to stand as a candidate for a recognised political party then you must have that party's support. They will provide you with a certificate confirming that you will be representing that party. This needs to be submitted with the other paperwork from your nomination pack. (Further details available from the Electoral Commissions website).

District councillors are elected for a four year term. There is no limit to the number of times you can stand for election and you can also be a Parish, Town or County Councillor as well as a District Councillor.

If you are in full time employment, the Employment Rights Act requires employers to allow staff a reasonable amount of time off for their work as a councillor. You will need to check with your employer to agree on the amount of time they are willing to let you take.

## Eligibility

To become a councillor you must be:

- Aged 18 or over on the day of nomination
- A British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any other member state of the E.U.
- You must also meet at least one of the four criteria listed below:
  - You are registered to vote in the elections for Sedgemoor District Council on the day you are nominated and continue to be registered from the day of your nomination onwards.
  - You have occupied, either as an owner or a tenant, any land or premises in the local authority area during the whole of the 12 months before the day you are nominated and Election Day.
  - Your main or only place of work during the 12 months before the day you are nominated and Election Day has been in the local authority area.
  - You have lived in the local authority area during the whole of the 12 months before the day you are nominated and election day.

## Restrictions

You cannot become a councillor if:

- You work for Sedgemoor District Council or hold a paid office under the authority, including joint boards or committees e.g. Somerset Building Control Partnership, South West Audit Partnership (*please check with Electoral Services*)
- In the last five years you have been in prison or have received a suspended sentence for three months or more
- You are the subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order
- You hold a politically restricted post for another authority
- You have been disqualified from standing as a councillor under any legislation relating to any corrupt or illegal practices.

## What support can a Sedgemoor District Council Councillor expect?

Even before the celebrations have died down, the reality of becoming a local councillor will start to dawn and this is when you will need to know the answer to “What happens next?”

You will be issued with a welcome and induction pack which is designed to help you through the first few weeks and will give you a feel for the Council. The pack also includes details of your Democratic Buddy who you can contact for help.

There will be a series of welcome and induction events over the first couple of weeks and you will be asked to sign a legal form, the Declaration of Acceptance of Office with the Chief Executive of the Council, Allison Griffin.

A range of training and personal development opportunities to meet your needs, of which you are expected to take advantage of, IT equipment will be provided by the Council to help in your role as a Councillor.

Dedicated assistance from the Democratic Services Team with additional help, advice and support from a network of officers across the Council.

To be kept up to date on local issues concerning your ward.

To have your access needs recognised and to be treated fairly and with respect, dignity and understanding

You can also claim for subsistence and travel. You may also be able to claim a carers allowance to help you with child care or other family support.

There is an annual basic allowance payable to all members of £4,568 paid in equal monthly instalments. The allowance recognises a time commitment expected of all councillors: time taken at meetings with officers and constituents on behalf of the authority. The allowance also reflects costs such as use of individuals’ homes, private telephones, and internet usage. There are other allowances for posts of Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council; Leader of Council; Deputy Leader of Council, Executive members; Chairman of Committees and Opposition Leaders. A full set of allowances is available from Democratic Services.

Like to know more about Sedgemoor District Council and being a District Councillor, please contact the Democratic Services team. They are there to answer

any questions you may have and are happy to arrange a one-to-one discussion if you have further questions that you would like answered.

## Timetable of proceedings for District & Parish Elections in Sedgemoor on 2nd May 2019

Event	Election	Working days before poll (deadline if not midnight)	Date
Publication of notice of election	District & Parish	Not later than 25 days	18/3/19
Delivery of nomination papers	District & Parish	From the date stated on the notice of election up to 4pm on the 19th working day before the election	3/4/19
Deadline for withdrawals of nomination	District & Parish	19 days (4pm)	3/4/19
Deadline for appointment of election agent	District	19 days (4pm)	3/4/19
Publication of statement of persons nominated	District & Parish	20 days (4pm)	3/4/19
Last date for Registration	District & Parish	12 days	12/4/19
Last day to receive new Postal/Postal proxy applications or make changes to existing	District & Parish	11 days (5pm)	15/4/19
Last day to receive new Proxy applications	District & Parish	6 Days (5pm)	24/4/19
Publication of Notice of Poll	District & Parish	6 Days	24/4/19
Appointment of polling & counting agents	District	5 Days	25/4/19
Polling Day	District & Parish	7am – 10pm	2/5/19
Return of election expenses	District	Not later than 35 calendar days after the date the election result is declared	7/6/19
Return of election expenses	Parish	Not later than 28 calendar days after the date of the election	30/5/19

## **Useful websites**

**Be a councillor:** [www.beacouncillor.org.uk](http://www.beacouncillor.org.uk)

**Directgov:** [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

**Electoral Commission:** [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

**Local Government Association:** [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

## **Useful contacts**

**Democratic Services:** 0300 303 7804  
[democratic.services@sedgemoor.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@sedgemoor.gov.uk)

**Electoral Services:** 0300 303 7804  
[electoral.services@sedgemoor.gov.uk](mailto:electoral.services@sedgemoor.gov.uk)

**Sedgemoor District Council  
Bridgwater House  
King Square  
Bridgwater  
Somerset  
TA6 3AR**

**[www.sedgemoor.gov.uk](http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk)  
[twitter.com/SedgemoorDC](https://twitter.com/SedgemoorDC)**