

Interested In Becoming a District Councillor?



A Candidate's Guide

Have you ever wanted to get something done for your community, help local people or influence Council spending? Then why not stand for election as a District Councillor.

This guide is aimed at prospective District Councillors and gives some basic information about Braintree District Council, how to stand for election and what will be expected of you if you are elected. For further information about the Council, please visit our website at www.braintree.gov.uk.

Braintree District Council has 60 Councillors elected to represent 30 Wards and they come from all walks of life. This is very important as it ensures that a diverse range of people reflect different points of view and help to shape and develop the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided by the Council for the benefits of all its residents.

How to Stand for Election

To be able to stand for election you must be

- 18 years of age or over
- A British or European Union subject; and
- Not be disqualified from being a Councillor**

You must also either

- Be on the register of electors within the District Council's area; or
- Have lived, worked in your main job, or owned or rented land in the District during the whole 12 months before your nomination.

** The main reasons for disqualification are bankruptcy or criminal records that carried particular penalties within certain periods.

The next Full District Council Elections will be held in May 2011. You will need to find 10 people to publicly support your nomination by signing your nomination paper. All signatories must be on the electoral register.

Must I be in a Political Group?

You do not have to join a political group but, in practice, many Councillors choose to do so. Councillors are free to leave or join a political group after they have been elected, without having to stand for re-election. At present Braintree District Council is made up of 42 Conservative, 9 Labour, 6 Independent [including Halstead Residents], 1 Liberal Democrat and 2 Green. You may only stand for election as an Independent if you are not a member of a political group.

How Much Time Will I be Expected to Commit to Council Business?

Your time commitment will depend upon how involved you want to be, your political activities and whether you want to be involved in certain issues. The law requires employers to allow an employee who is a Councillor time off during working hours to perform Council duties. The time taken must be reasonable, taking into account the Councillor's responsibilities on the Council and the effect the Councillor's absence would have on the business. Anyone in employment who is considering standing for election is advised to discuss this matter with their employer beforehand.

Will I Lose Money?

As a Councillor you will be expected to give up some of your time for the benefit of the community. You will be reimbursed travelling and subsistence expenses for approved duties and you will receive an allowance, paid monthly, to help with the expense of being a Councillor. Special Responsibility Allowances [SRAs] are also paid to Cabinet Members, Group Leaders and Chairs of Committee/Panels/Groups.

What About Training?

Following election, all Councillors, new and experienced, are encouraged to participate in an extensive training programme. This covers a wide range of things from information about the Council's services to developing and supporting the individual Councillor.

Do I Need a Computer?

The Council is committed to the use of electronic communications wherever possible and it is the preferred means of communication with Councillors. In order to encourage wider usage, the Council will pay a small monthly allowance to help with the cost of Broadband. If you are not already conversant with technology, the Council would expect you to learn at least enough to be able to receive and send e-mails and to access information stored electronically such as on the Council's website. Training will be provided. A computer is available for Councillors' use in the Members' Room.

Will I Serve on Committees?

All Councillors will serve on at least one Committee. You will have the opportunity to express your preference but the final allocation of places on each Committee is a matter for decision by the full Council which takes account of the nominations made by the political groups to fill their allocation of places.

Code of Conduct

Councillors are expected to maintain high standards of ethical behaviour. A statutory Code of Conduct requires Councillors to state, in writing, their employment or business, any major shareholdings, interests in land, any contracts they have with the Council and membership of some types of organisation. Members of the public are entitled to inspect these statements. The Code of Conduct also covers other aspects of Councillors' behaviour such as the need to treat others with respect and not to use their position improperly or unfairly. For further information on the Code of Conduct see the Council's website under Council and Democracy

What If I Want To Know More?

Braintree District Council welcomes members of the public to its Committee meetings so why not come along to a meeting? There is a timetable of meetings available on the Council's website or by contacting a member of Democratic Services.

If you would prefer to speak to a member of staff direct, the please contact Steve Daynes, Democracy Manager on 01376 557751 or steve.daynes@braintree.gov.uk