Ever thought of becoming a Councillor?
An introduction to Derby City Council

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Derby City Council has the highest ‘four star’ rating from The Audit Commission, a government body that inspects and publishes its findings on all Councils in England and Wales. As a unitary authority, the Council provides all local government services to the people who live in Derby, including:

- schools
- social services
- environmental health
- highways and transportation
- arts and cultural events
- refuse collection, and
- recycling and parks.

Like all local councils, Derby is a democratic organisation with 51 councillors representing 17 wards. Councillors – who we also call Members - are elected for a four-year term. Elections take place three years out of every four, when a third of the Council is elected. The next year with no election will be 2017.

The Council operates a ‘Strong Leader’ style of government, with the leader being appointed by the Council, who then appoints a Cabinet.

The Council Leader and seven other councillors make up an eight member Cabinet. Those councillors will be members of the political group that has the majority of Council seats.

The Council’s policy framework and budget are set by the full Council of 51 Members, but all executive decisions, the day to day work of the Council, are taken by or on behalf of Cabinet. The councillors meet as a full Council around every eight weeks. A limited number of items of business, such as approving the level of Council Tax, must be considered by the full Council.

Individual planning and licensing decisions are non-executive matters and decisions are taken by separate committees of the Council.

We also have Overview and Scrutiny to act as a check and balance on the Council Cabinet. This is a relatively new political management process that allows councillors who are not in the Council Cabinet to review and scrutinise matters affecting their citizens.

The Council works closely in partnership with other agencies which provide services for the 233,000 people who live in the city, such as police, health trusts and voluntary organisations.

Local elections* offer the perfect opportunity to stand as a representative of your local community. Councillors, or ‘Elected Members’, work on behalf of their constituents and for the City of Derby.

This leaflet gives you the information you need to know about becoming a councillor for Derby City Council and answers some frequently-asked questions about what is involved.

*The local election process for Derby City Council begins when a ‘Notice of Election’ is published in public places throughout the city, about six weeks before an election is due to take place. See ‘Standing for election’ for more details.
Why become a councillor?

This section outlines why people become councillors. It also gives an overview of what’s legally required if you want to become a councillor.

Local people know what is best for their communities. Councillors are vitally important because:

• they are a voice of the community
• they are champions of the users of local services
• they are critical to the effective functioning of democracy
• they play a very important role in helping to shape future services for the people of Derby.
• they oversee the Council - one of Derby’s biggest businesses, which employs around 11,000 staff and spends over £220 million a year
• they play a vital role in developing a better quality of life for the people of Derby.

To make sure this happens, councillors work very closely and in partnership with the police, health services, other public bodies and the private sector.

Why people decide to become councillors

There are many reasons why someone decides to become a councillor. Some people stand because:

• they have concerns over the local area in which they live and want to make sure that the Council provides their community with the services it needs
• they want to make sure that the Council takes local community interests into account in its decision making and are committed to representing local people’s views
• they want to be involved in shaping the future of the local community
• they want to make a difference and are concerned about a particular issue in their community or in the city
• they are currently active as a member of a political party, a trade union or school governing body and wish to use this experience to become a councillor
• they want to pursue their political beliefs
• they want to contribute their business or professional skills.

If you’ve ever had concerns about the future of local services and felt that you could be a voice for your community in aiming for the public interest, you should think about becoming a councillor.
The legal requirements

To stand for election, on the day of nomination*, you must be:

- 18 or over
- a UK, European Union or Commonwealth citizen
- registered to vote in Derby or have either lived, worked or owned property in the city for one year.

You cannot stand if:

- you work for Derby City Council
- you hold a politically-restricted post for another council
- you are bankrupt
- you have served a prison sentence, including suspended sentences of three months or more, within five years of the election day
- you have been disqualified under any law relating to corrupt or illegal practices.

* See ‘Standing for election’ for details of this.

What qualifications do I need?

You do not need any formal qualifications to become a councillor. There is a range of training available for councillors
- see ‘Support for councillors for more details.’
What councillors do

This section outlines the main roles and responsibilities of councillors.

Councillors, also called ‘members’, are elected by local people to plan, run, monitor and develop Council business.

This includes taking part in partnerships with others to do this. Councillors work to improve the quality of life for people within the Council area and make decisions about local and city issues.

Councillors are essential in deciding what is in the public interest among a range of conflicting issues and views.

Every councillor represents all the people of Derby, including taxpayers, customers of the Council’s services, all residents in their ward who voted for them and all those who did not.

The role of a councillor can be very varied and it’s up to each how they work. However, the main areas of responsibility are:

1. representing the people in their area, this is called ‘the ward’, and becoming a representative of Derby
2. being a community leader
3. making policy.

Being a representative

Derby is divided into 17 electoral areas known as ‘wards’. Each ward has three councillors. Many councillors see their first and foremost role as representing their ward and the people who live there. To do this, they may:

- hold ‘drop-in surgeries’, usually in community buildings - a place where local people regularly go
- deal with enquiries from the people in their ward, their ‘constituents’
- take up issues on behalf of residents, known as ‘casework’
- explain Council policy and make sure that Council employees carry it out effectively
- support local partnerships and organisations
- campaign on local issues, championing the causes which further the interests, quality of life and development of the community
- encourage community participation and local people’s involvement in decision making
- listen to the needs of local people and take their views into account when considering policy proposals and making decisions.

They also need to make sure that local people know about:

- services in the area
- decisions that affect them
- the reasons why the Council makes decisions
- the process by which decisions are made
Being a community leader

Community leadership is central to the government’s thinking about modern local government. It involves partnership with other organisations.

Derby City Council works in partnership with many local bodies, and councillors serve on these local forums on behalf of the Council.

Councillors exercise community leadership by:

• representing the Council, with partner organisations and constituents on their ward’s Neighbourhood Board and by attending Neighbourhood Forums, which are public meetings held in their communities
• representing the Council on school governing bodies
• participating in the activities of any outside body to which they are appointed and reporting back to the Council
• developing a working knowledge of the organisations, services, activities and other factors important to the community’s well being and identity.

Being a policy maker

All councillors are involved in decision making. As members of Council and Overview and Scrutiny Boards, they meet with councillors from all political parties and other groups to debate and approve Council business in a formal setting.

Most meetings are open to the public and local press and radio. Some meetings are also webcast on the Council’s website. There are written rules that govern behaviour and procedures at these meetings called Procedure Rules, allowing councillors to exercise their duties effectively.

Councillors can influence local policies and decision making through:

• their role on full Council
• for some, their membership of the Cabinet – the executive body that leads the Council
• their role on Overview and Scrutiny Boards, which both examine the work of the Cabinet
• regulatory committees for planning control and licensing of alcohol, entertainment, taxis and scrap metal
• Neighbourhood Boards and Forums – these deal with community issues affecting each ward
• their role as employers, by sitting on appointment panels and hearing disciplinary and grievance appeals
• membership of partnership boards
• membership of a political group, which meets separately from Council meetings
• taking on casework.
What’s involved?

The section outlines the time you would probably need to commit to being a councillor and tells you about the allowances you would receive.

How long would I be in office?

Councillors for Derby City Council serve a four-year term. There are elections in each ward in three out of every four years. A third of the Council seats come up for election each year.

How much time would I have to commit?

It’s for you to decide the level of commitment you are able to give to being a councillor and it also depends on your role within the Council and the number of commitments you take on.

Obviously, if you have a family and personal relationships to consider, it’s wise to talk through the implications of being a councillor with them first because you will need their support and understanding.

There are a number of issues you will need to devote time to:

- The people you represent will look to you for help in dealing with their problems. You are likely to receive a lot of post, e-mails and a great many telephone calls. And not every caller will telephone at what you might think is a reasonable hour!
- Most councillors hold at least one drop-in surgery each month.
- You may find that a large part of your time is spent dealing with constituency and associated casework, either taken at the surgeries or received by post, telephone, fax or e-mail. You may also spend some of your time visiting constituents at their homes or meeting them at Council offices.
- There are usually six full Council meetings each year, which you will be expected to attend. These are formal meetings with councillors from all the political parties represented and other independent councillors.
- Council and all of the political parties agree places on committees and you may be a member of more than one committee.
- If you are appointed as a committee chair or member of the Cabinet, the role can be very demanding, as you take responsibility for some part of the Council’s current annual budget of £223 million.
- All Council meetings are held in the evenings.
- Your meetings may not be evenly spread out so commitments will vary from week to week.
- Many councillors represent the Council on one or more outside bodies.
- 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 can take time to read and understand.
- If you are a member of a political party, there will be more calls on your time to attend party meetings and seminars/training events.

When and where do Council meetings take place?

- Meetings of the full Council take place six times a year and usually start at 6pm in the Council Chamber.
- Many meetings take into account the fact that representatives have full-time jobs and can only meet during the evening. Committee meetings normally start at 6pm, but there will be some meetings that will have to take place during the day, including the annual mayor making and general meeting. The average length of a meeting is about two hours.
• Meetings for other groups, partnerships and so on take place at a range of times and venues.
• If you would like more information on the dates of Council meetings, please contact the Council’s Constitutional Services section on 01332 643649; e-mail committee@derby.gov.uk, or visit www.cmis.derby.gov.uk

What if I am a disabled person?

We will do all we can to provide you with any reasonable adjustments including additional IT content you may need to help you in your duties as a councillor. This might include providing a British Sign Language interpreter, large print, Braille or other format for information, induction loops, car-parking or something else.

Since December 2005, as a disabled councillor, you will have equivalent rights and protection to disabled employees who are protected under the employment parts of the Disability Discrimination Act. This means you will have a legal right to reasonable adjustments and to be treated fairly.

Can I get time off work?

If you are working, your employer must, by law, allow you to take a reasonable amount of time off during working hours to perform your duties as a councillor. The law that covers this is the Employment Rights Act 1996, Section 50.

The amount of time off will depend on your responsibilities as a councillor and the effect of your absence on your employer’s business.

Please make sure you discuss this with your employer before making any commitment.

Will I get paid?

Councillors receive no salary for the time they give up to serve their community. However, they are paid an allowance to recognise the time they spend working as a councillor and to refund expenses they incur while on Council business.

Every Derby City Councillor is entitled to a basic allowance. Currently this is £10,076 a year. Certain councillors receive an extra allowance to recognise their special responsibilities, for example as Cabinet Members or as Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Boards.

For more details of the allowances paid to councillors that an independent panel agrees, and how they are paid, contact Constitutional Services on 01332 643649, committee@derby.gov.uk or visit www.cmis.derby.gov.uk

If you receive state benefits...

Please note that councillor allowances could affect your entitlement to state benefits. Please get advice from the local DWP office, or contact Derby Advice on 01332 643395, as they will be able to advise on the effect on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

Come along and see for yourself!

There is no better way to see what life is like as a councillor than to attend one of the Council’s meetings. For the full calendar of meetings and details of those that the public can attend, contact Constitutional Services on 01332 643649, committee@derby.gov.uk or visit www.cmis.derby.gov.uk.

If you are unable to attend you may be able to watch a recording on the Council’s website – www.derby.gov.uk
This section gives an overview of the support you would receive to help you in your role as a councillor.

What support will I get from Council employees?

Council employees, known as ‘officers’, are employed to carry out the decisions of councillors. They are committed to help you fulfil your duties as a councillor. There would always be an officer who is able to offer advice or support on any issue - all you would have to do is ask.

More often though, it will be more senior officers – including the chief executive, corporate directors and senior management – who can assist you in the decision making process.

If you are a member of a political party or other group, support and help will also be available from your party or group.

Can I get help with performing my role as a councillor?

We have a Members’ Services section that provides full-time, dedicated support to meet the needs of councillors.

The services we offer include:

- a confidential secretarial service
- help with dealing with enquiries and complaints from your constituents
- information gathering, research, policy advice and assistance in responding to the media
- supplying stationery/business cards
- help with booking a place to hold a surgery and printing of posters to publicise the surgery
- booking external meetings/seminars and making the necessary travel arrangements
- a courier service that delivers packages, post and small items of equipment to Members’ homes.

If you do not already have a personal computer and broadband connection, for e-mail and Internet access, we will provide them through a Council-funded scheme.

You will have access to fully-equipped Members’ rooms and meeting rooms in the Council House. All rooms have facilities for formal and informal use, including telephones, computers, printer access and refreshments.

Will I need to work at home?

You will need to work at home on reading your papers, preparing for meetings, and dealing with enquiries from the public.

All councillors receive a laptop, tablet or other device that can connect to the Council’s intranet and the Internet for research purposes. This makes it possible to look at reports online and to respond to e-mails from constituents.
Is there any training available?

As soon as councillors are elected, we arrange induction training. We will give you the dates of these, along with other key dates, well in advance of the election so that you can put them in your diary at the ‘candidate’ stage.

If you are a member of a political party or other group, there could be training and support available from your party or group.

We will also give every councillor the opportunity to have a development plan drawn up to meet their specific training and development needs.

Councillors can attend general courses covering:

- IT skills
- codes of conduct
- public speaking
- dealing with the local press and radio
- service issues e.g. planning legislation or licensing
- chairing skills.

There’s also special training for councillors who take part in the Overview and Scrutiny Boards.
How to become a councillor

This section gives information about standing as a representative for a political party or as an independent candidate, and answers some common questions about the nomination process.

Do I have to belong to a political party or group?

No, although the majority of people 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.

Standing as a member of a political party

If you are thinking of standing as a candidate for a particular political party, you will need to be a member of that party’s local organisation.

The parties currently represented on Derby City Council and their local contact details are, in alphabetical order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Contact name and address</th>
<th>Telephone number</th>
<th>Website/e-mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Party</td>
<td>Philip Hickson</td>
<td>01332 347298</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@derbyconservatives.co.uk">info@derbyconservatives.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conservative Association</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.derbyconservatives.com">www.derbyconservatives.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2b Chapel Street</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Derby</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DE21 7JP</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James Shires</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2a Wentworth House</td>
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<td>Derby</td>
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<td>DE1 1UR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Party</td>
<td>Vernon Gate</td>
<td>01332 345636</td>
<td><a href="mailto:james@derbylabourparty.co.uk">james@derbylabourparty.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Derby</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.derbylabourparty.co.uk">www.derbylabourparty.co.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DE1 1UR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td>Phil Smith</td>
<td>01332 599995</td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@derbycitylibdems.org.uk">info@derbycitylibdems.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ground Floor</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.derbycitylibdems.org.uk">www.derbycitylibdems.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great Northern Court</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24A Great Northern Road</td>
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If you are interested in standing for other political parties, please check the register of political parties by visiting the Electoral Commission’s website at www.electoralcommission.gov.uk
Standing as an independent councillor

Standing as an independent councillor can be a rewarding experience. Many stand to represent residents on specific local issues or as an alternative to the main political parties.

However, independent candidates face a number of challenges. The established parties may have significant resources, experience and campaigning networks with which an independent must compete. A strong support network is important for a successful election campaign.

The independent group on the Local Government Association has prepared a useful guide for independent councillors and candidates covering many of these issues.

If you would like a guide, please contact:
Marianne Overton
Head of Independent Group
Local Government Association
LGA House
Smith Square London SW1P 3HZ
Email: cllrm.overton@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Or you can view the guide online at www.picx.co.uk

Other sources of information on becoming a councillor are, in alphabetical order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Commission</td>
<td><a href="http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk">www.electoralcommission.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Association, LGA</td>
<td><a href="http://www.local.gov">www.local.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Information Unit, LGIU</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lgiu.org.uk">www.lgiu.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Party</td>
<td><a href="http://www.conservatives.com">www.conservatives.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Party</td>
<td><a href="http://www.labour.org.uk">www.labour.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
<td><a href="http://www.libdems.org.uk">www.libdems.org.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges of being a councillor – is it for me?

Being a councillor provides an opportunity to represent local residents and improve your community. However, as an elected member you will also face a number of challenges.

Now more than ever, given the difficult choices facing local government, public opinion towards politicians can be negative. Councillors, particularly those who assume executive positions such as Cabinet Members, must be prepared to make difficult decisions and to receive criticism from their colleagues, the press and the public.

Representing thousands of residents is a significant responsibility and the public expects the highest moral and ethical standards from their councillors. In assuming office, an individual’s private life may be subjected to unwanted scrutiny. A prospective councillor must be thick-skinned and able to defend their decisions.

Standing for election

The local election process for Derby City Council begins when a ‘Notice of Election’ is published in public places throughout the city, about six weeks before an election is due to take place.

Once you have decided to stand for election as a councillor, you will need to be proposed and seconded by two people and also to have eight further people as ‘assentors’ to support your nomination.

You can ask for full details of the electoral process, including the nomination procedure as part of a nomination pack, from our website at www.derby.gov.uk/elections or contact:

Electoral Services Section
The Council House
Corporation Street
Derby
DE1 2FS
Telephone: 01332 640837
E-mail: elections@derby.gov.uk

The nomination pack includes nomination forms, timetables and guidance notes. It is your responsibility, or your election agent’s – see the next section – to present nomination papers to the Returning Officer, a Council officer who is responsible for the proper running of the election.

Do I need an election agent?

An Election Agent is someone who helps you run your election campaign.

- You can take on this role yourself, but it is helpful to have an agent.
- If you are in a political party, it may be that one person takes on the role of agent for several candidates.
- It is the agent’s responsibility to make sure that they send in forms at the correct times and to keep a clear and accurate record of financial spending – see the next section – which they will need to submit to the Returning Officer after the election.
- You should work closely with your agent as a double check.
Election expenses – who pays?

If you decide to become a councillor and spend money on your campaign, it is important to note that you will have to pay for your own publicity material, property, services or items used for the campaign.

However, if you are a member of a political party or other group, you may find that financial help is available. You will need to check this with your political party or group.

Even though you or your party/group have to pay for the election expenses, you must keep all your receipts, which you or your agent will need to hand to the Returning Officer immediately 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.

If you have any queries about election expenses, please contact:

Electoral Services Section
The Council House
Corporation Street
Derby
DE1 2FS
Telephone: 01332 640837
E-mail: elections@derby.gov.uk
November 2013
We can give you this information in any other way, style or language to help you access it.

Phone 01332 717777, minicom 01332 256666

Polish
Aby ułatwić Państwu dostęp do tych informacji, możemy je Państwu przekazać w innym formacie, stylu lub języku.
Prosimy o kontakt: 01332 718010 Tel. tekstowy: 01332 716709

Punjabi

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Urdu

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