



**WORKERS PARTY OF BRITAIN**

**GUIDE TO BECOMING A WPB  
LOCAL ELECTION  
CANDIDATE**

**WORKERS PARTY OF BRITAIN  
274 MOSELEY ROAD, BIRMINGHAM, B12 0BS  
WORKERSPARTYBRITAIN.ORG**

## STEPS TO BECOMING A WPB CANDIDATE

### STEP 1

Obtain a Candidate Briefing and Nomination Pack from the Workers' Party of Britain.

Agree with the Workers Party of Britain which Electoral Ward you will stand in.

### STEP 2

Complete the nomination forms within the nomination pack, and collect the required signatures necessary to stand in your ward.

### STEP 4

once your forms are approved, you will receive in the post the necessary certificates required to stand in the May local elections for the Workers Party of Britain.

This pack will include the nomination window for your area.

### STEP 3

Send a copy of your completed nomination form to  
*elections@workersparty  
britain.org*

or send the form to:  
Workers Party of Britain  
274 Moseley Road  
Birmingham  
B12 0BS

### STEP 5

Make an appointment with your local returning officer (details will be included in the return pack) to submit your forms in the nomination window.

### STEP 6

You are now an official election candidate for the Workers Party of Britain.

Go back to your electoral ward and prepare for council.

## **STAND FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN BE A COUNCILLOR**

The Workers Party believes that the present economic crisis, compounded by the Coronavirus pandemic, has demonstrated that it is the working class who keep Britain ticking. Key workers up and down the country have kept our cupboards full and our country moving through some of the darkest months in living memory.

The last year has demonstrated the importance of a planned economy, it has demonstrated the need for a directing role for the state in ensuring a prosperous economy with good working conditions for our working class in the years ahead.

Years of free-market fundamentalism have gutted Britain of its industries, undermined our manufacturing and productive industries, undermined the resilience of our NHS and adversely destabilised proud working-class traditions, culture and way of life.

## **INDEPENDENCE**

No matter where you stood on Brexit, today our priority must be to build a Britain which protects workers' rights, supports families and nurtures our productive industries. What sort of future will there be if jobs are not protected and industry supported through the worst ever capitalist crisis and the combined effects of this trauma with the Corona virus pandemic? This is the question in many working people's minds.

As the crisis bites, so too will the social stresses on working people. In 2020 we saw the polarising effect of a number of social movements. The Workers Party is therefore unequivocally committed to class politics. Though the

fashion of the times is to divide working people along identity lines (race, gender, sex, age), we seek to unite all working people, based on our shared class interest. It is not 'homophobic' or 'racist' for socialists and workers to focus our attention on those issues that concern the whole working class. Pay, jobs, education, family and healthcare.

## **LOCAL AS WELL AS NATIONAL**

What matters to you in your local area? Our job is to demonstrate to workers everywhere their common class interests, to expose the capitalist system and teach the working class the necessity of socialism, this starts with local campaigning for jobs, pay and improved conditions for the working class. Whatever needs changing in your neighbourhood, you could be just the person to change it by becoming a local councillor.

There are more than 20,000 local councillors in England and Wales. In order to speak for working class people councils need to have workers elected who desire to serve the people and not feather their own nest. To make the best decisions, they need to draw on a wide range of skills, experience and knowledge of what the local community wants and needs. Councils need people from all parts of the community who can bring their own perspective on what is needed locally.

Are you ready to help change the face of local government?

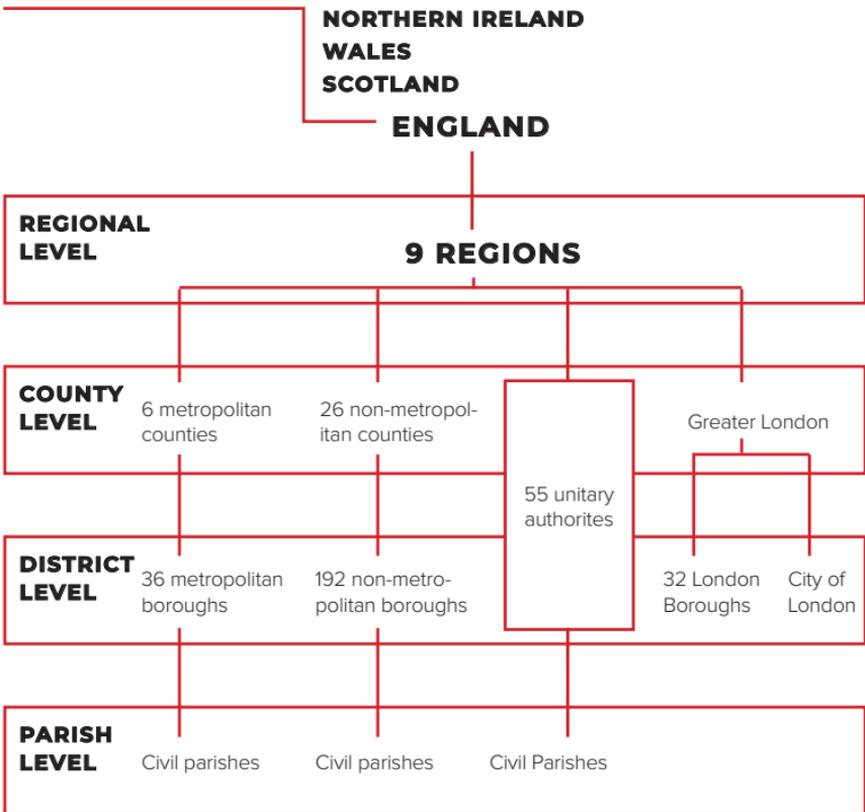
No other role gives you the chance to make such a huge difference to the quality of life for people in your local area.

## HOW DO COUNCILS WORK?

*Tip: Have a look at your council's constitution, which is the rule book of the council. This provides the framework within which the council conducts its business and makes decisions.*

This depends on the type of council. There are several types of local council, for example parish (or community councils in Wales), town, district, borough, county, metropolitan and unitary authorities. Sometimes these are referred to as local authorities. Each area is divided into wards or divisions, and one or more councillors represent each ward.

## UNITED KINGDOM



All councils are led by democratically elected councillors who, working together, set the council's vision, direction and budget. Most councils are run on a system similar to that of central government, with a small elected executive (or cabinet) to decide on policy and make decisions which other councillors then 'scrutinise' or examine in detail. Some councils work with a 'committee system', where decisions are made across a range of committees. Whatever the arrangements, all councillors should research the issues that are affecting their residents and make recommendations.

Councils are large organisations that play a big part in the local economy and influence many aspects of the lives of the people who live and work there. Central government still has some influence over councils through controlling some of their funding and through legislation, however, this is lessening as more powers are devolved locally.

Councils vary widely in terms of their style, political leadership and approach to delivering programmes, and it is here that your community links and local knowledge will make a real difference.

Depending on the type of local authority it is, a council can be responsible for a range of services, including:

- planning and licensing
- education and lifelong learning
- health and wellbeing
- children's and adult social care
- housing and regeneration
- community safety and cohesion
- waste collection and recycling
- roads and street lighting
- arts, sports and culture
- transport.

Councils now deliver much of what they do in partnership with other councils, services and agencies, so as a councillor you may have opportunities to sit on partnership boards or committees for health, education, community safety or regeneration.

## WHAT DO COUNCILLORS DO?

Councillors are elected to a council to represent their local community, so they must either live or work in the area. Becoming a councillor is both a rewarding and privileged form of public service. You will be in a position to make a difference to the quality of people's daily lives and to their prospects.

Being an effective councillor requires commitment and hard work. Councillors must listen to the views of residents, other councillors and experts and work to bring them together to a common aim.

Residents, community groups, the party or group you belong to (if applicable), local business, outside bodies and the council, will all make legitimate demands on a councillor's time, on top of the demands and needs of their personal and professional lives. If you are considering becoming a councillor it's worth discussing the idea with your family and friends. You will need their support as you will have to spend time attending to council business, and depending on your ambitions this can amount to a substantial amount of time.

The time commitment for councillors can range from five to 20+ hours a week. Your role within the council and local circumstances will determine how much time you spend on council duties. Joining a planning committee, for example, will increase your workload. As with most things in life, what you get back will depend on what you put in.

In the 2018 census of local authority councillors, The LGA found that:

- Eighty-five per cent of councillors became councillors in order to serve their community
- Sixty per cent thought that representing local residents was among the most important role of councillors, and 51 per cent thought the same of supporting local communities
- Eighty-five per cent would recommend the role of councillor to others
- Sixty-eight per cent intended to stand for re-election.

## WHO CAN BE A COUNCILLOR?

The easy answer is almost anyone, as long as you are:

- British or a citizen of the Commonwealth or European Union
- at least 18 years old
- registered to vote in the area or have lived, worked or owned property there for at least 12 months before an election.

*You can't be a councillor if you:*

- work for the council you want to be a councillor for, or for another local authority in a politically restricted post
- are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order
- have been sentenced to prison for three months or more (including suspended sentences) during the five years before election day
- have been convicted of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court.
- have not paid your Council Tax.

*Tip: If you are in any doubt about your eligibility to stand, contact the returning officer in the electoral services department at your local council for advice.*

There are many reasons why people decide to become a local councillor. They include:

- wanting to be involved in shaping the future of the local community
- wanting to ensure that the community gets the right services
- wanting to represent the views of local people
- wanting to contribute particular skills
- concerns about one particular issue.

## WHAT'S EXPECTED OF A COUNCILLOR?

*Tip: Look at your council's handbook and code of conduct for members. It is intended to assist councillors in their work at the council.*

The councillor's role and responsibilities include:

- community leadership, engagement and support
- making decisions
- developing and reviewing council policy
- scrutiny and holding the executive/cabinet to account
- regulatory, quasi-judicial and statutory duties.

Being available for community members to contact is an important part of a councillor's job. Many councillors enjoy attending local events and meetings. Some produce newsletters or use social media or blogs. Some hold regular drop-in surgeries, which provide a chance for residents to discuss their problems or concerns.

Much of a councillor's work can be done by telephone, letters or email, though sometimes it is better to arrange meetings with residents or council staff to resolve issues. Sometimes all a resident needs is to be directed to the right information and/ or contacts to enable them to deal with an issue themselves. If you are a councillor in a two-tier area (where there are district councils along with a county council), you will need to know who your county councillors are to redirect some inquiries to them. It is also useful to know who your local MP, as some inquiries will need to be escalated to them.

All councillors are expected to attend full council meetings, and most attend scrutiny meetings (the process of examining the work and decisions of the executive). Councillors may also choose to sit on quasi-judicial committees, for example planning and licensing committees which take non-political decisions on applications. The timing, number and length of these meetings varies from council to council. Depending on the arrangements within your council, you will have opportunities to join relevant political or Independent Group meetings as well as training events.

## **DO I NEED ANY SPECIAL SKILLS OR EXPERIENCE TO BE A COUNCILLOR?**

You don't have to be highly educated or have a profession. Skills gained through raising a family, caring for a sick or disabled relative, volunteering or being active in faith or community groups can be just as valuable.

While you don't need any special qualifications to be a councillor, having or being able to develop the following attributes will help you in the role:

- communication skills
- problem solving and analytical skills
- team working
- organisational skills
- the ability to engage with your local community.

Don't worry if you don't yet feel that you have all the skills to be a councillor. The WPB will provide support, information and training for new councillors.

## **WILL I GET PAID FOR BEING A COUNCILLOR?**

Tip: Find out more about the allowances scheme run by your local council on their web site

Councillors don't receive a salary, but they do get a 'member's allowance' (which is taxable) in recognition of their time and expenses incurred while on council business. Each council sets its own rate for these allowances.

Councils also provide a special responsibility allowance to those who undertake additional duties such as the Leader of the Council, portfolio holders, scrutiny chairs and opposition leaders.

There is also a childcare and dependents' carers' allowance for attendance at meetings payable on production of receipts, up to an agreed maximum cost per hour.

## **CAN I BE A COUNCILLOR AND HAVE A JOB?**

Yes. By law if you are working your employer must allow you to take a reasonable amount of time off during working hours to perform your duties as a councillor. The amount of time given will depend on your responsibilities and the effect of your absence on your employer's business. You should discuss this with your employer before deciding to stand for election.

Please note that there are some jobs holdings which will make an individual ineligible for councillorship. You are disqualified from standing as a candidate at elections to a particular local authority if you are a paid officer or employee of that local authority. This can include if you are employed under the direction of a joint board or committee, such as fire services and education authorities. It is not always the case that a public service worker would be denied from standing as a councillor. Therefore, if you work in the public sector and are unsure of whether you can stand, you should seek advice from your employer's HR department to establish whether the disqualification applies to you.

## **DOES BEING A COUNCILLOR EFFECT MY BENEFITS?**

If you are on benefits, the council allowances can affect your entitlement, so get advice before agreeing to stand.

## **I HAVE A DISABILITY, CAN I BE A COUNCILLOR?**

Yes.

The Public Sector Equality Duty, places a specific duty on public bodies, including local authorities, to consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, from shaping policy to delivery of services and in relation to their own employees.

Councils are required to make 'reasonable adjustments' to accommodate the needs of disabled councillors who would otherwise be placed at a disadvantage compared to non-disabled councillors. It is an 'anticipatory duty' meaning that councils must think in advance about the needs of disabled people and make reasonable adjustments.

If you believe that the council you wish to be elected to would need to make

adjustments to accommodate your needs, you should contact them at any early stage to discuss your requirements. Under certain circumstances, disabled councillors might also be eligible for Access to Work, which provides grants for things like specialist equipment and travel (when public transport can't be used).

Previously the Government Equalities Office provided financial support for individuals seeking elected offices with disabilities. We hope similar support will be available in the future to cover the cost of items such as BSL interpreters, Assistive Technology, a Personal Assistant to support certain tasks, or taxi fares where other modes of transport are not appropriate.

Once you become a councillor, your council will work with you to overcome any barriers you come across as a result of your disability and will make sure you can be fully involved. Being a councillor, however, is not a full-time job and therefore you are not counted as an 'employee' of the council.

*Further information:*

Government Guidance to the Equality Act 2010 [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)

The Government Equalities Office [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-equalities-office](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/government-equalities-office)

The Equality and Human Rights Commission [www.equalityhumanrights.com/en](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en)

## **IS THERE SPECIFIC SUPPORT FOR WOMEN, PARENTS OR CARERS TO BECOME COUNCILLORS?**

There is presently no legal right to parental leave of any kind for people in elected public office. It is a good idea to check with your council what policies they have in place with regards to Parental Leave. Where a council may not have a formal Parental Leave policy in place, they should be able to advise on their practices. Often these will be found in your council's constitution, which should be available on the council website.

Data from the Fawcett Society in 2019 showed that:

- Twenty councils (8 per cent) have a maternity policy in place for their senior cabinet-level councillors.
- Seven per cent of councils have a maternity policy in place that covered ordinary councillor roles.

## **HOW REPRESENTATIVE ARE COUNCILS?**

Representation in councils is improving, but still only 35 per cent of councillors in England are women (Fawcett Society, 2019) and 7 per cent of councillors in the UK are from BAME communities (University of Manchester, 2020). Almost nowhere is the voice of ordinary working class people to be heard, for too many years workers have placed their faith in the Labour party which no longer even pretends to speak for them.

## **WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE TO ELECTED COUNCILLORS TO HELP CARRY OUT THEIR ROLE?**

Councils have staff, known as Officers, available to provide support and assistance. Exactly what facilities you get will depend on the council and the position you hold. Many will provide you with a computer or tablet and some may pay for internet access and an additional telephone line and/or mobile phone.

Once elected, councillors can find it useful to formally link up with other Independent members of the council by forming a group. Joining an Independent Group, even if just for certain council business, will help you to gain the maximum number of seats on council committees and increase your influence.

## **NEXT STEPS**

If you are interested in being a councillor here's some next steps to consider:

### **1. START BUILDING YOUR PROFILE SO THAT VOTERS KNOW WHO YOU ARE**

Now that you've decided to stand it's time to begin gathering local support.

To connect with your electorate, you will need to work out your position on local 'hot' issues such as crime, traffic, the environment and schools. The Workers Party publishes decisions of the national members council which you should be aware of, and our policy groups give focus and direction on issues from taxation to the environment.

### **2. PUT YOURSELF FORWARD AS A CANDIDATE**

*Tip: Once you've decided to put yourself forward as a candidate you need to be prepared to put in the hours, both during the campaign and after.*

If you choose to put yourself forward as a candidate and want to stand as a representative of the WPB you must work to the highest standards, for you represent the cause of socialism.

You can also contact the Returning Officer at your councils for the candidate registration forms and guidance for candidates. Your council's electoral services department can tell you when elections are next taking place. They can also point you towards useful sources of information in the council and the steps you need to take to be formally nominated.

*Tip: Hand your registration forms in at least seven days ahead of the deadline date to allow for any necessary changes and a resubmission to be made before the deadline.*

### **3. PRINTING ADVICE**

Leaflets and letters are a key part of any campaign and guidance by the Electoral Commission is very clear on what needs to be included. The WPB head office can assist in all printing requirements.

#### ***4. KNOW YOUR DEADLINES***

Tip: Gather a diary of all the important dates leading up to Election Day to ensure you don't miss any key deadlines.

There are a lot of things that you will need to do, if you are to be successful in being elected as a councillor. Leave nothing to chance. Plan ahead in plenty of time. Not having a party machine behind you means you need to be very organised. Do not think that you can leave anything to the last moment.

One way to do this is to have a count-down timetable including the deadline for nominations, printing timescales, postal voting dates and election day. Key dates will be informed by the Electoral Commission along with your own campaign goals.

#### ***5. ENSURE YOU ARE OFFICIALLY NOMINATED AS THE ELECTION DATE DRAWS NEARER***

This means getting 10 people to sign your nomination papers (signatories must be registered electors in the ward where you wish to stand). These papers are available from your local council's democratic services department.

You must also give your consent in writing to your nomination.

The council will also confirm dates for nomination papers and elections, as occasionally the pattern might change. However usually all the necessary documents should be submitted 19 working days before the day of the election.

For more information, visit [www.beacouncillor.org.uk](http://www.beacouncillor.org.uk) or the Electoral Commission website [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

#### ***6. YOUR ELECTION DAY CHECKLIST***

By the time Election Day rolls around, you'll have done so much work on your campaign between getting to know your voters, making your positions known, and organising campaign materials, it would be complete shame to forget any Election Day essentials.

- Maximise your social media channels to remind people to come out and vote for you.

- Are there any key locations, e.g. the local train station, for last minute leafletting, to remind people to vote?
- Is someone helping your known supporters who have mobility problems to get to the polling station?
- Are there posters in the houses on the way to the polling station?
- Do you have supporters at the polling station wearing rosettes? Are they aware of the rules?
- Remember that the busiest times at polling stations are before and after office hours.
- Are you planning to attend the count? Don't forget to find out the details and confirm your attendance.
- Don't forget to keep your energy up, it's a long day!

This guide has been produced by WPB head office. The Workers Party of Britain thanks and acknowledges the information provided by the LGA Independent Group's guidance publicly available at [www.local.gov.uk/lga-independent/our-work/be-councillor](http://www.local.gov.uk/lga-independent/our-work/be-councillor) as well as the advice and assistance of comrade James Giles.



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