

Have you considered becoming a Conservative councillor?

Women make 75% of phone calls to council offices countrywide.

Women often know more about their community, shops and neighbours.

Women use more local services:

- Childcare and Education
- Adult Care Services
- GP and Healthcare
- Transport and Housing

But decisions about these services are largely being made by men.

In the UK, women are 51% of the population but less than a third of councillors are women (and only 12% of council leaders). The female BAME community is critically under-represented with less than 1% of councillors.

The LGA Conservative Group and Conservative Women's Organisation (CWO), are continuing to try and redress the balance, but we need you!

We need you to join over 8,000 Conservative councillors who are working hard to build a country where you, your friends and family have more opportunity and power over your lives; a country where families are stronger and communities are more responsible; and a Britain which is safer and greener. We need you to join councils that are trusted to deliver high quality, value for money services that you, your friends and family rely on every day.

You'll read profiles of Conservative women councillors in the following pages. They all had their own reasons for becoming one - and they are all different. You might want more police, better housing; or you may want to protect green spaces, a local library or post office. Many women councillors become involved through a single issue but realise how rewarding it is to make a real difference to their local community.

If you are considering becoming a councillor, then your next step maybe the CWO Development programme. Full day and evening workshops teach you transferable skills that are useful in your private, professional and public life - plus you'll never be short on advice from CWO councillor members. Whatever your goal, the LGA Conservative Group and the CWO will be there to help you.

Cllr Gary Porter

LGA Conservative Group Leader

Niki Molnar

National Chairman, CWO

Councillor Melanie Magee

Conservative, Cherwell District Council

As someone who has a passion for my local community, I wanted to get more involved, but didn't think I was the 'right sort of person'. As a qualified full-time HR professional I realised my skills were valuable to the community, so I started volunteering with my local job club providing practical advice to job seekers, specifically the young unemployed. This inspired me to stand as a local councillor and I was elected in 2011. I then became Chair of the Youth Liaison Group, and Lead Member for Apprenticeships and Employment Initiatives (the first in the UK) and have been able to make a real difference to local people by engaging with them and the business community. I'd like to think that I am proof that by having a passion and getting involved, you really can make a difference.



How councils work

This depends on the type of council. There are several types of local council in England, for example district, borough, county, metropolitan and unitary councils. Sometimes these are referred to as local authorities. You may also want to consider standing as a councillor for your town or parish council. These are smaller organisations that have some money to spend for the benefit of people in a small geographical area (for example a town or village).

All councils have things in common in the way they work and make decisions on behalf of local communities. They are all led by democratically elected councillors who set the vision and direction of the council. Most are

run on a system similar to that of central government, with an elected executive (or cabinet) to decide on policy and make decisions which other councillors then 'scrutinise' or examine in detail.

All councils (with the exception of town or parish councils) are large organisations which play a big part in the local economy and influence many aspects of the lives of the people who live or work there. A large proportion of the work councils do is determined by central government. Local councils vary widely in terms of their style, political leadership and approach to delivering these central government programmes, and it is here that your local knowledge and commitment

could make a real difference.

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

- education and lifelong learning
- social services and public health
- housing and regeneration
- waste collection
- recycling
- roads and street lighting
- arts, sports and culture
- community safety and crime reduction
- environment
- planning and regulation
- tackling disadvantage and building strong, stable communities
- setting a prudent budget
- transport.

These activities are mainly funded through payments from central government and the collection of council tax, although council tax makes up only about a quarter of a council's income.

At the time of print, there are 188 Conservative controlled councils, 100 Labour, 12 Lib Dem and 52 other (Independent/NOC) in England.

Over recent years the role of councils has changed. They now have additional responsibilities such as improving the health and wellbeing of local people through joint working with health services. Another important responsibility is community safety and crime reduction, usually achieved in partnership with the local Police and Crime Commissioner, the police and voluntary and community groups.

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 boards or committees for health, education, community safety or regeneration.

What is expected of a councillor?

The councillor's role and responsibilities include:

- representing the ward for which they are elected
- decision-making
- developing and reviewing council policy
- scrutinising decisions taken by the councillors on the executive or cabinet
- regulatory, quasi-judicial and statutory duties
- community leadership and engagement.

Many councillors hold regular drop-in surgeries each month. Surgeries are a chance for residents to meet you and discuss their problems or concerns. You may also need to spend time visiting constituents in their homes. On top of this you will be dealing with letters, emails and phone calls from constituents.

When dealing with casework or council business you may need to meet with council staff. These meetings, and other visits to council offices, may need to take place during the working day.

Then there are council and scrutiny meetings. Scrutiny is the crucial process of looking at the work and decisions of the executive. As well as the close examination

of councillors, it can also involve the community and interested parties. Handled well, scrutiny procedures can stimulate real local involvement in how the council manages and delivers its business.

Councillors often also sit on quasi-judicial committees, for example the planning committee, which takes non-political decisions on planning applications. The number and length of these meetings varies from council to council. If you are selected as a Conservative councillor, you will be a member of the Conservative Group and as such will be expected to attend group meetings, party training and other events.

Councillor Sophia Choudhary, **Conservative, Rushmoor Borough Council**

I'm proud to have been elected as the youngest woman Conservative Councillor in May 2010 for Rushmoor Borough Council. I work hard to ensure that public services meet residents' needs. These range from waste and recycling collections and keeping streets clean to reducing noise and air pollution and flooding plus improving community safety. Serving on the Borough Services and Environment Policy and Review Panels helps me connect with what matters in my area and to keep up with key issues that affect my residents. I work hard because I'm able to make a difference to the quality of other people's lives and wellbeing by finding ways to improve services and encouraging local businesses to invest in Rushmoor. As a passionate advocate, I enjoy influencing and making informed decisions for the benefit of the whole community.



Do I need any special skills or experience to be a councillor?

Groups made up of diverse individuals tend to make better informed decisions. It is important that councils have councillors who not only reflect and represent the communities they serve, but also have a broad range of skills and life experience. You don't necessarily have to have academic qualifications or 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 skills, knowledge and attributes will help you in the role.

- **Communication skills**
These include listening and interpersonal skills, public speaking skills, the ability to consider alternative points of view and to negotiate, mediate, and resolve conflict.
- **Problem solving and analytical skills**
These include being able to get to the bottom of an issue and to think of different ways to resolve it, including considering the advantages, disadvantages and risks of each option.
- **Team working**
Being able to work with others in

meetings and on committees and being able to complete any tasks that you agree to do on time.

- **Organisational skills**
Being able to plan and manage your time, keep appointments and meet deadlines.
- **Ability to engage with your local community**
You may have to make yourself available through meetings, the media, including social media, the internet, public forums, debates and on the telephone.

You may have gained skills and knowledge through your professional, personal or community experience.

These could include:

- knowledge of the needs of specific groups such as children and young people, older people, or people with health problems
- an understanding of financial management and reporting processes
- legal and regulatory systems or procedures
- housing, regeneration, or environmental issues
- any other skills that relate to the services or facilities provided by the council.

Don't worry if you don't yet feel that you have the skills or confidence to be a councillor. All councils provide support, information and training for new councillors, and

you will receive support from Conservative colleagues.

Could I be a councillor?

If you care about the area that you live or work in and the issues facing local people, you could be a councillor. Perhaps you enjoy reading the local newspaper and often have a strong opinion on the issues you read about. You may enjoy talking to friends and colleagues about what's going on in the area.

You may feel that certain sections of the community or people who live in a particular neighbourhood are getting a raw deal and need stronger representation. Research tells us that people are most concerned about issues such as crime, schools, jobs, transport and the environment. Your local council can make a difference on all these issues and many more, and so can you as a Conservative local councillor.

I don't have the time...

How much time you spend on your duties as a councillor depends on the particular commitments you take on. One council estimates the time commitment as ranging from five to 20 hours a week. Your role within the council will determine how much time you spend on council duties.

You will be expected to attend some council committee meetings, which are often held in the evening so that

councillors can attend after work.

As with most things in life, what you get back will depend on how much you put in. But remember, the amount of time you give to it is almost entirely up to you.

Why should I become a councillor?

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

- 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 ensure that community interests are taken into account
- wanting to pursue your Conservative 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 the Conservative party, charity, voluntary group or school governing body – becoming a councillor can be the next step.

Councillor Anne Gower, Conservative, Suffolk County Council

I became a councillor after being involved in a local campaign about a mobile phone mast. The Conservative Association contacted me to ask if I would consider standing for election. I was unemployed and over 50 and feeling like no more challenges or opportunities were going to open up for me. I accepted the challenge of becoming a councillor with little understanding of what it entailed, and I love it. All my skill sets have come into play in one role. My career encompassed banking, publishing, sales and fundraising, and the fact that I had dealt with people from all walks of life has helped me with the challenges I face as a councillor. Within three years I was a cabinet member at the borough council and was also elected to the county council.



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 occupied property as an owner or tenant 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.

If you are in any doubt about whether you are eligible to stand as a councillor, you should contact the returning officer in the electoral services department at your local council for advice.

Standing as a Conservative?

Standing as a Conservative? Over 95 per cent of councillors are members of political parties. Your local Conservative Association is there to fight elections and will be interested to hear from you. They will be able to support your election campaign and your work as a councillor. Please visit <http://www.conservativecouncillors.com/content/become-councillor> to register your interest in becoming a Conservative council candidate.

Your local Conservative Association and the Conservative Councillors' Association will be in touch with further details once you have filled in the online form.

Don't worry if you're not already a Conservative Party member as they will be able to go through all the options with you.

Will I get paid for being a councillor?

Councillors do not receive a salary. However, they do get a 'member's allowance' in recognition of their time and expenses incurred while on council business. Each council sets its own rate for members' allowances, and you can find out more information about allowances from your local council or through its website.

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 making the commitment to stand for election.

I have a disability – can I be a councillor?

If you fulfil the general criteria for being a councillor, you can stand for election. Disabled candidates may be eligible for extra funds or support and training to help them stand as councillors .

The Home Office publication 'Access to elected office for disabled people: details can be found at www.access-to-elected-office-find.org.uk or by contacting the LGA Conservative Group www.local.gov.uk/conservatives

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 is not a full-time job and may not affect any benefits you receive, but individual cases will vary so do check this with your benefits office.

What support is available to councillors?

Councils have staff available to provide support and assistance to councillors, regardless of whether you belong to a political party or group. Exactly what facilities you will get depends on the council. Many will provide a computer for your

home and some may provide paid-for internet access and an additional telephone line and/or mobile phone. You will be using email and the internet, and many councillors now choose to keep in touch with local people through social networking services such as Twitter and Facebook. You can expect full IT training tailored to suit your needs. New councillors receive induction training to familiarise them with the council and its procedures and if you have a particular training request, for example with public speaking, either the council or Party can provide this.

Councillor Claire-Louise Leyland, Conservative, London Borough of Camden

Working as an art therapist since 2004 with children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, I was struck by the impact that national policy can have on our children and young people's lives. I attended several Conservative Women's Organisation forums and was really inspired by the work that the CWO was doing to encourage women to become more politically aware and I took on the role of CWO Forum Coordinator to help to develop this further.

In 2010, I was elected as councillor, which has been very rewarding. I've been able to follow my interests, by sitting on committees that focus on children. I am grateful for the training and support that the CWO offered me and as a CWO Deputy Chairman now, I hope to be able to encourage more women from all different cultures and backgrounds to take a place in holding public office.



Councillor Abi Brown, Conservative, Stoke-on-Trent

I was asked by someone in the Conservative Party party to consider standing, but refused a number of times before agreeing. I didn't see anyone representing the views of families like mine and prioritising the things that matter to them. There were very few younger councillors, and none who were juggling a young family with self-employment. I also saw issues locally that weren't being tackled. Meeting residents is an important part of being a councillor, as is liaising regularly with partners such as the police and fire service. I also really enjoy the satisfaction of getting a job done, be it a new litter bin or resolving an anti-social behaviour problem. Knowing you've made a difference to someone's life is fantastic.



Councils also provide induction and training for new councillors on many other aspects of the job.

The Conservative Councillors' Association (CCA) exists to support all elected Conservative councillors on primary authorities. Further information on the CCA can be found on page 14.

The timescale

Most councillors are elected for four-year terms, but councils run different electoral cycles. Some elect the whole council once every four years, while others elect a proportion of members each year. To find out when local elections are due to take place in your area, contact your local council or visit its website.

The political parties like to have their candidates in place in good time before an election.

This is so that there is time for the candidate to get to know the important local issues, meet as many voters as possible, visit community groups, and raise their profile in the local media before the election takes place.

Next steps

Once you decide you want to take it further and put yourself forward as a candidate, what's the next step? Get involved with your local Conservative Association as soon as possible. This will help you find out more about what the role entails, who you will be working with, and what it takes to win elections.

Ultimately it's up to the local Conservative Association to decide whether to select you as a candidate, so you need to make contact with them as soon as possible and get involved with their work. The Conservative Party will expect you to be, or become, a party member. Further sources of information and support are listed in the 'useful contacts' section of this booklet.

You must make sure that 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. All the necessary documents must be submitted 19 working days before the day of the election. For more information on this visit:

www.beacouncillor.org.uk. An election agent is appointed to help complete the legal necessities.

Useful contacts

LGA Conservative Group

www.local.gov.uk/conservatives

The LGA Conservative Group exists to support Conservative council Groups and the councillors that make up each Group. It is also the day to day voice of Conservatives in the wider corporate LGA and by working with the Group Leader and the group Executive we help shape the political agenda of the LGA.

Additionally, the Conservative Group acts as a link and sounding board with the Government and the Party. We help Conservative councils and councillors to engage in dialogue with the Government and organise meetings where Ministers and councillors get together to discuss issues.

Further information can be found on our website or by emailing lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk

Useful contacts

Conservative Councillors' Association

www.conservativecouncillors.com

The Conservative Councillors' Association (CCA) exists to provide a strong and unified voice for all Conservative councillors within the Party and in the wider community. The CCA supports councillors in their important role and provides them with the tools to both work effectively on behalf of local residents and to campaign successfully as Conservatives.

Further information can be found on our website

www.conservativecouncillors.com

or you can contact us on cca@conservatives.com or 020 7984 8144

Conservative Women's Organistaion (CWO)

www.conservativewomen.org.uk

The CWO is one of the oldest political women's organisations in the world and is made up of women members of the Conservative Party. It encourages women to stand for public life at all levels (as well as board positions) and provides development workshops, training and mentoring to help women succeed in their goals. The CWO also holds Westminster forums to discuss current issues that are important to women.

Twitter: @cwowomen

office@conservativewomen.org.uk

Conservative Party

[www.conservatives.com/
get_involved/](http://www.conservatives.com/get_involved/)

Please visit the 'Get involved' section of the Conservative Party website for more information on volunteering, becoming a member and much more.

Conservative Disability Group

www.conservativedisability.org

email: via 'contact us' link at bottom of website home page

Guidance for candidates and information on the electoral cycle is available on the Electoral Commission website: www.electoralcommission.org.uk

To find the name of your local council or councils, visit www.councillor.info and enter your postcode.

The website www.writetothem.com also provides information on your local councils and councillors along with your MP and MEPs (Members of the European Parliament).



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