



Scarborough Borough Council



www.scarborough.gov.uk

Scarborough Borough is a beautiful part of North Yorkshire and includes the seaside towns of Filey, Scarborough and Whitby and much of the North Yorkshire Moors.

Following a review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, the Borough, with effect from May 2019, will consist of 20 wards - 8 three councillor wards, 10 two councillor wards and 2 single councillor wards.

The Borough also has 39 Parish and Town Councils.

From May 2019 there will be 46 councillors in Scarborough Borough Council who represent the diverse and wide geographic spread of the residents of the Borough.

Could you be one of them?

A councillor? Who, me?

An Introductory Guide





POLLING STATION

Contents

Why are councillors important?	2
Why become a councillor?	2
Requirements	3
How do I become a candidate?	3
How do I get nominated to stand?	4
What qualifications do I need?	5
Standards for councillors	5
What do councillors do?	6 - 8
How long would I be in office?	8
How much time would I have to commit?	9 - 10
When do Council meetings take place?	10
Can I get time off work?	11
What support will I get?	11 - 12
Will I need to work at home?	12
Training	13
Will I get paid?	14 - 15
Useful contacts	16

Why are councillors important?

The position of councillors is vital in the local community because:

- they are a voice of the community
- they are champions of the users of local services
- local people know what is best for local communities
- they are critical to the effective functioning of democracy
- they play a very important role in helping to shape future services for the benefit of the local people

Why become a councillor?

There are many reasons why people decide to become a local councillor. Some individuals stand because:

- of their concern over the local area in which they live and a desire to ensure that their local community is provided with the services needed.
- they want to ensure that local community interests are taken into account in the Council's decision making and are committed to representing the local people's views.
- they want to be involved in shaping the future of the local community.
- they want to make a difference and they are concerned about a particular issue in their community.
- it is an extension of what they are already doing as they are active in a political party, trade union or school governing body and they see the next step as to become a councillor.
- they want to pursue their political beliefs.
- they want to contribute business or professional skills.

Requirements

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

- 18 or over;
- be a UK, EU or Commonwealth citizen;
- be registered to vote in or have either worked or lived in the area for one year.

You cannot stand if:

- you work for Scarborough Borough Council;
- you hold a politically restricted post for another local authority;
- you are bankrupt;
- you have served a prison sentence (including suspended sentences) of 3 months or more within 5 years prior to the election;
- you have been disqualified under any legislation relating to corrupt or illegal practices.

How do I become a candidate?

When there is to be an election, a Notice of election is published by the Council. This gives details of the electoral areas, date and time of election, the number of councillors to be elected, and the timetable for proposing a candidate (known as submitting "nomination papers").

A copy of the election timetable and a nomination pack can be obtained from Electoral Services at the start of the formal election period. The pack will contain all the forms and information you will need to become a candidate. After the close of nominations, if there are more candidates than vacancies, then an election will be held.

How do I get nominated to stand?

Nomination packs are available from the Electoral Services Office at the start of the formal election period. To be nominated you will need:

- a 'proposer' (someone who will put your name forward as a candidate);
- a 'seconder' - (someone who supports the proposal);
- eight 'assentors' - eight people who will agree to the proposal.

These ten people must be registered electors of the ward in which you wish to stand as a candidate. (Note - at parish or town council elections, only a proposer and seconder are required).

You must also complete a 'consent to nomination'.

The Notice of Election will state the date by which the papers must be submitted to the Returning Officer. If you are a candidate for a registered political party, you must also have a certificate from that party authorising you to stand. You can either appoint an election agent to manage your election campaign or, alternatively, you can act as your own agent.

The election process, including what candidates may spend on their campaign, is set out in legislation and it is the responsibility of candidates to ensure that they comply with the law.

The nomination pack will contain guidance notes for candidates.

The legislation relating to elections is extensive. Candidates and election agents are advised to familiarise themselves with the provisions. The Returning Officer and his staff are available to give general advice to candidates and election agents. If you require advice please contact Electoral Services at the Town Hall in Scarborough (tel 01723 232309). Please note however, that the team will provide generic advice. For detailed advice on individual matters, candidates and election agents should refer to the Electoral Commission.

What qualifications do I need?

You do not need any formal qualifications to become a councillor. You do need to be willing to attend meetings at the Town Hall and other meetings in your community. You will also be required to read reports, agendas and other materials. Scarborough Borough Council adopted a series of role profiles to help us decide what training you may need.

Standards for councillors

Councillors are currently bound by a code of conduct and have a legal duty to promote equality. They must declare if they have an interest in an item that is being discussed by the Council and in some circumstances must remove themselves from the room.

They must not act in a way that could bring their office into disrepute. These standards are reviewed and updated from time to time.

Advice on standards can also be sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer or the Deputy Monitoring Officer.

What do councillors do?

Councillors or 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 Borough and make decisions about local issues. Councillors are essential in deciding what is in **the public interest** amidst a range of conflicting issues and views.

Councillors usually represent a political party or they can be independent. *All* councillors represent *all* the citizens of the Borough.

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

- 1 Representing the people in their area (ward) and becoming a representative of the Borough
- 2 Community leadership
- 3 Helping to formulate Council policy.

A councillor's role: as a representative

Many councillors see their first and foremost role as representing their ward and the people who live there. To do this they can:

- Hold 'drop-in surgeries', usually in community buildings such as a local community centre;
- Deal with constituent's enquiries about aspects of Council business e.g. claiming a discount for Council Tax;
- Undertake case work such as making representations on behalf of an individual or a family;
- Explain Council policy and ensure that the policy is carried out fairly;
- Support local community partnerships and organisations;
- Campaign on local issues, championing the causes, which further the interests, quality of life and development of the community;
- Help to bid for resources for their ward;

- Encourage community participation and citizen involvement in decision making;
- Listen to the needs of local people and take their views into account when considering policy proposals and in decision making.

They also need to ensure local people are informed about services in the area, decisions that affect them and the reasons why decisions are taken by the Council.

A councillor's role: as a community leader

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

Scarborough Borough 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 and constituents on local management boards, school governor committees or local partnership panels;
- 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.

A councillor's role: as a policy maker

All councillors are involved in decision making. Councillors, as Members of full Council, meet with councillor colleagues from all political and other groups, to debate and approve Council business in a formal setting.

Most meetings are open to the press and public. There are written rules that govern behaviour and procedures at these meetings, which are included in the Council's Constitution. The purpose of these rules is to ensure fair but effectively managed debate.

Councillors can influence local policies through:

- their role on full Council;
- for some, membership of the Cabinet;
- their role on the Overview and Scrutiny Board and its task groups which both scrutinise the work of the Cabinet and recommend policy developments;
- membership of management boards of voluntary bodies and school governors;
- membership of partnership boards undertaking casework.

How long would I be in office?

Councillors for Scarborough Borough Council are elected to serve a four year term.

The next election for all 46 councillors is on 2 May 2019.

If you are elected at a by-election, you serve until the next scheduled election (anything up to four years).

How much time would I have to commit?

It is 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. Most Councillors work between 10 and 30 hours per week, which includes attending Council meetings.

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

Some of the issues you will need to devote time to are:

- The people you represent will look to you for help in dealing with their problems. You are likely to receive a lot of emails, telephone calls as well as post.
- You may find that a large proportion of your time is spent dealing with constituency and associated casework, either taken at the surgeries or received via email, telephone or post. You may also spend some of your time visiting constituents at their homes or at the Council offices.
- There are usually seven full Council meetings each year, plus Mayor Making which you will be expected to attend. These are formal meetings with other councillor colleagues from all political groups.
- Places on committees are agreed with all the political groups and you may be a member of more than one committee.
- For most of the meetings you attend there will be an agenda and reports that you will need to read beforehand. This information can be quite detailed and take time to read and understand.
- Many councillors represent the Council on one or more outside bodies.
- Most Council meetings are held during the day. Your meetings may not be evenly spread out so some weeks you may be out more than others.

- All councillors are offered full training. There is an induction programme, monthly Member Briefings, specialised training for members who serve on the Licensing and Planning & Development Committees plus other training events that you will be expected to attend to keep you up to date with the latest legislation and changes in Government policy, and also training to improve your skills as a councillor.

When do Council meetings take place?

Meetings of the full Council take place approximately seven times a year in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Scarborough and start at 2pm.

The primary role of Council is to establish the budget and policy framework within which Members and Officers of the Council will operate. In addition as a councillor you are likely to be a member of either the Cabinet or a committee or committees of the Council. Most meetings take place during the day - though a few meetings are in the evening.

The average length of a meeting is approximately two hours, but they can be longer than this and councillors are expected to stay for the full meeting. Meetings for other groups, partnerships etc take place at a range of times and venues.

Details of all Council committee meetings and their dates can be found on the Council's website www.scarborough.gov.uk or by telephoning the Democratic Services Manager on 01723 383556.

Can I get time off work?

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

The amount of time off will depend upon your responsibilities as a councillor and the effect of your absence on your employer's business. You should discuss this with your employer before making the commitment.

What support will I get....?

..... from Council officers

Council officers are employed to implement the strategies and policies of the Council. They are committed to help you fulfil your duties as a councillor. There will always be someone who is able to offer advice or support on any issue and all you would have to do is ask.

More often though it will be the more senior officers - including the Chief Executive and other members of the Directors' Team who will help you to make the right decisions.

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

..... with my paper work

Democratic Services, which is part of Democratic and Electoral Services can offer a range of assistance to councillors including, administration of Members allowances, arranging Member training, advising on committee protocol, provision of a postal service to Members, reminding Members of meetings and sending email notifications of meetings, their agendas and reports. Some administrative assistance is provided for Members if required.

All Members are given an iPad tablet device which provides an internet connection and access to all the material relating to committee meetings. Most communication is by email or using the internet. Full training on using the iPad and emailing is available.

There is a Members room in the Town Hall. This contains a library of publications that may be useful to you as a Member and is also where you will find your pigeon-hole for your post. There is a large computer monitor in this room if Members wish to view planning applications.

There are also tea and coffee facilities available in the Town Hall.

Will I need to work at home ?

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

Training

There is training available for new councillors.

Immediately upon election we arrange induction training for councillors, including introductions to the Directors' Team at the Council.

The dates for these will be given to you along with other key dates well in advance of the election so that you can put them in your diary at the 'candidate' stage.

In addition the Council run a series of Member Briefings throughout the year and other training specific to certain roles such as Overview & Scrutiny, Planning and Licensing.

Will I get paid?

Councillors receive no salary for the time they give up to serve their community. However, you will be paid an allowance to meet the basic costs of being a councillor. You may also claim for additional travel and subsistence expenses as appropriate.

Every Scarborough Borough councillor is entitled to a basic allowance, currently £4122.12 per year. Councillors with other responsibilities are paid a multiple of the basic allowance, for example

RESPONSIBILITY	ALLOWANCE
Leader of the Council	Basic x 4
Cabinet Member	Basic x 2
Planning & Development Committee Chair	Basic x 1.80
Other Committee Chairs	Basic x 1.66

The Members' Allowance Scheme is currently under review by an Independent Remuneration Panel who will be making their recommendations to the Cabinet and Council later in the year.

If you receive state benefits, these may be affected by your entitlement to councillor allowances. You are advised to seek the guidance of the local DSS office.

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.

All meetings advertised on the Council website are open to the public. Furthermore, the Council webcasts meetings of the Cabinet, full Council and the Planning & Development Committee which are available to view on the Council's website live and up to six months after the date of the meeting. This will however only give you a flavour of some of the work that councillors do.

You would be well advised to speak to current councillors to get an idea of the full range of their role.

Useful Contacts

Lisa Dixon

Director and Monitoring Officer
lisa.dixon@scarborough.gov.uk
tel 01723 232350

St John Harris

Democratic Services Manager
stjohn.harris@scarborough.gov.uk
tel 01723 383556

Carol Rehill

Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer
carol.rehill@scarborough.gov.uk
tel 01723 384322

Kerry Russett

Democratic Services and Corporate Modernisation Manager
kerry.russett@scarborough.gov.uk
tel 01723 383506

Scarborough Borough Council

Town Hall
St Nicholas Street
Scarborough
YO11 2HG
tel 01723 232323

Useful Links

www.electoralcommission.org.uk

The Electoral Commission is an independent body set up by Parliament. Its aim is to gain public confidence and encourage people to take part in the democratic process within the United Kingdom by modernising the electoral process, promoting public awareness of electors matters and regulating political parties.

www.aboutmyvote.co.uk

Find out about your vote and what elections are happening in your area.

www.lga.gov.uk

The Local Government Association promotes the interests of English and Welsh local authorities and exists to promote better local government.

www.nationalassociationofcouncillors.org

The National Association of Councillors is an organisation, which represents the interests of elected members in all types of local authorities and all political persuasions.

www.nalc.gov.uk

The National Association of Local Councils represents the 10,000 community, parish and town councils in England and Wales.