



**Northumberland**  
County Council

## **BECOME A COUNTY COUNCILLOR**

A guide about membership of  
Northumberland County Council

## 1.

### The role of a county councillor

<b>Role</b>	County Councillor
<b>Responsible to</b>	All people resident within the electoral division
<b>Regular liaison with</b>	Other councillors, parishes, local residents, council staff, local businesses, and community groups
<b>Period of service</b>	Maximum of 4 years before re-election
<b>Salary</b>	There is no salary, but allowances will be paid for time in addition to expenses on council business

#### Responsibilities and skills:

- Representing your county division and the people who live in it.
- Take part in the development of policies and services for the people of the county as a whole.
- Communicate clearly in written and spoken forms and listen sensitively.
- Ability to engage with the community, canvass opinion and act on issues of local concern. Mediate fairly and constructively between people and groups with conflicting needs, represent all sections of the community, and work with others to develop and champion a shared local vision.
- Build and shape key partnerships at local, regional, and national levels, as well as supporting people from all backgrounds to feel valued, trusted and included.
- Holding the Cabinet to account for its decisions as a non-executive member by acting as a “critical friend” and being the voice of the public and local community.
- Demonstrate consistency in views and values through decisions and actions; looking for ways to promote democracy and increase public engagement.
- Work effectively in range of political environments including outside the Council.
- Use evidence to evaluate arguments and make judgments.
- Follow legal process and balance public needs and local policy.
- Monitor your own and others’ performance and intervene when necessary to ensure progress.
- Making decisions about council services and how they are provided.
- Take part in locality meetings and parish council meetings within the division.
- Developing and reviewing council policies.
- Contributing to and participating in the good governance of the council.
- Engaging in the local community and providing leadership for them.

County councillors must act within the law and must abide by a Code of Conduct which requires them to act impartially and fairly which does not bring the council into disrepute. They must also disclose any pecuniary interests for themselves, spouse, or partner within 28 days of taking up office.

## 2.

### **Northumberland County Council**

County Councils are administrative bodies in local government and provide the majority of public services in their particular area.

Northumberland is a unitary council and as such provides all the services that are delivered at a local government level in the local authority area. These include:

Education	Highways
Environmental Health	Transport planning
Social care	Housing
Libraries	Birth, marriage and death registration
Trading Standards	Waste collection and disposal
Planning applications	Local tax collection
Fire	Leisure

The council's Constitution describes in detail how the Council is governed and how it makes decisions. Northumberland currently operates an Executive model of decision making which is a Leader and Cabinet decision-making model. The Cabinet, also known as the executive, is formed of councillors, or cabinet members, who each have a different portfolio of responsibilities. By law, some important council functions can only be taken by all 69 Councillors. Other decisions are delegated to Committees of Council or Officers.

Meetings are normally open to the public except where, for example personal or confidential matters are being discussed. Agendas and meeting papers are published on the Council website 5 days in advance of meetings.

Alongside the decision-making structure of the Council, there is a management structure in place to deliver and oversee the services we provide. The Council's paid employees are called officers. Senior officers make up the Council's senior management team, heading up the main functions or departments of the Council.

Northumberland County Council Representation	
County Division	Members
Alnwick Castle	1
Alnwick Hotspur	1
Amble	1
Amble West with Warkworth	1
Ashington Central	1
Bamburgh	1
Bebside & Kitty Brewster	1
Bedlington Central	1
Bedlington East	1
Bedlington West	1
Bellingham	1
Berwick East	1
Berwick North	1
Berwick West with Ord	1
Bothal	1
Choppington and Hepscott	1
College with North Seaton	1
Corbridge	1
Cowpen	1
Cramlington East & Double Row	1
Cramlington Eastfield	1
Cramlington North	1
Cramlington North West	1
Cramlington South East	1
Cramlington South West	1
Cramlington Village	1
Croft	1
Druridge Bay	1
Haltwhistle	1
Hartley	1
Haydon	1
Haydon & Hadrian	1
Hexham East	1
Hexham North	1
Hexham West	1

Northumberland County Council Representation	
County Division	Members
Hirst	1
Holywell	1
Humshaugh	1
Isabella	1
Longhirst	1
Longhorsley	1
Longhoughton	1
Lynemouth	1
Morpeth Kirkhill	1
Morpeth North	1
Morpeth Stobhill	1
Newbiggin-by-the-sea	1
Newsham	1
Norham & Islandshires	1
Pegswood	1
Plessey	1
Ponteland East & Stannington	1
Ponteland North	1
Ponteland South with Heddon	1
Ponteland West	1
Prudhoe North & Wylam	1
Prudhoe South	1
Prudhoe West & Mickley	1
Rothbury	1
Seaton with Spital	1
Seghill with Seaton Delaval	1
Shilbottle	1
Sleekburn	1
South Blyth	1
South Tynedale	1
Stakeford	1
Stocksfield & Bywell	1
Wensleydale	1
Wooler	1
	<b>Total</b>
	<b>69</b>

### 3.

#### **How much time does it take up?**

The number of hours would depend on your role within the Council and the number of commitments you take on, which could vary from a few hours each week to a full-time position. By law, you must attend at least one Council or Committee meeting every 6 months or you automatically cease to be a Councillor.

Some of the issues you need to consider are:

- How your role as a councillor will impact on any family and personal relationships. You will need their support and understanding as you may be spending a lot of your spare time on council business.
- The people you represent will look to you for help in dealing with their problems. You are likely to receive a lot of correspondence and many telephone calls at all times of the day.
- You may have drop-in surgeries and spend some of your time visiting constituents at their homes, or at the council offices.
- You will be expected to attend Full Council meetings.
- Many councillors represent the council on one or more outside bodies. Background reading and attendance at meetings of these bodies would increase your time commitment. There will be papers that you will need to read beforehand which can be quite detailed and take time to read and understand.
- If you are elected as a chair, spokesperson or member of the Cabinet, the role can be very demanding.
- If you are a member of a political party, there will be additional calls on your time to attend political group meetings.

### 4.

#### **Do you get paid to be a county councillor?**

There is no salary for being a councillor for the time that you give up serving your community. However, you will be paid a basic allowance with travelling and subsistence expenses whilst on Council business. Members of the Council's Cabinet and chairmen of committees will receive additional allowances. A dependent carers allowance is available as a result of carrying out duties as a councillor.

### 5.

#### **How long does a county councillor serve for?**

Once elected, county councillors serve a maximum four-year term. If they then want to stay in the post, they can stand for re-election.

### 6.

#### **Becoming a county councillor**

The ordinary elections of councillors (when all of the county seats become vacant) in Northumberland are organised by the Returning Officer of Northumberland County Council and take place on the first Thursday in May every four years.

In an election year, the formal election process begins with the publication of the Notice of Election (normally towards the end of March), after which you may submit a nomination paper to formally register your intention to stand for election. This must be supported by a proposer and seconder from the division you are standing in. Nomination packs will be made available from the election office or from the Electoral Commission website during the election period.

## 7.

### **Do I have to stand for a political party?**

Councillors can either represent a political party or stand independently. If you want to represent a political party, you will need to get involved with your local party branch as soon as possible.

If you want to stand as an independent candidate, you may wish to start building your profile so that local people know who you are and how your opinion differs from those of political parties.

## 8.

### **What are the qualifications and disqualifications for standing for election?**

To be qualified to be elected as a member of a county Council, you must:

- be at least 18 years old
- be a British Citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland, a qualifying EU citizen or an EU citizen with retained rights.

Additional qualifications can be found at:

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance-candidates-and-agents-local-government-elections-england/what-you-need-know-you-stand-a-candidate/qualifications-and-disqualifications-standing-election>

## 9.

### **Training and support**

The Council will provide an initial comprehensive induction programme with on-going training and dedicated support from Democratic Services to meet the needs of councillors.

You will be offered a device for use at home for council business with email and internet access and a mobile phone. In addition, you will have access to meeting rooms based at the council offices.

## **10. Interested in becoming a county councillor?**

The best way to find out what it is like to be a county councillor is to talk to someone who's doing it now or go along to a county council meeting. By law, ordinary people are allowed to be present at most council meetings and are encouraged to attend. Information about public meetings can be obtained by contacting the council or going online:

<https://www.northumberland.ca/en/county-government/council.aspx>

The Local Government Association has produced helpful guides for people interested in becoming a councillor:

<https://www.local.gov.uk/be-councillor>