



Be a Buckinghamshire Council councillor

Delivering the new Buckinghamshire Council

A brand new council is being created to serve the people of Buckinghamshire. This new council will be called Buckinghamshire Council and will replace the five existing local councils – Aylesbury Vale District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council, Chiltern District Council, South Bucks District Council and Wycombe District Council.

The new council will come into operation on 1 April 2020. Two layers of local government – county and district – will be replaced by one single organisation.

Preparation is being done in the months leading up to the operational 'go live' date of the new council to ensure a smooth transition to the new council. This work is overseen by the Shadow Authority and involves staff and councillors from all the current five councils working together.

When the new council becomes operational on 1 April next year, all the current district and county councillors will move over to the new authority. Local elections will be held on 7 May 2020 to appoint 147 new councillors to the new council.

Councillor role

Local government touches the lives of everybody, every day. Your local council deals with everything from schools to care of older people, from roads to rubbish, libraries and local planning. Being a councillor means you can help make decisions that make a difference to people's lives.

However, being a councillor is hard work. Every day you will need to balance the priorities of serving your local area, your residents and voters, community groups, local businesses, your political party (if you belong to one) and the council. All will make legitimate demands on your time – on top of your personal commitments to family, friends and workplace. The time commitment will be different for each councillor according to the roles they have. As a guide the minimum time commitment is likely to be a few hours per week.

Representing local people

Councillors are community leaders who are chosen to represent local people. They need to

- understand people's priorities and concerns and what matters to them
- help local voices and local views be heard by the council
- speak up for the people they represent
- be in touch with residents and local community groups on a wide range of different issues

Councillors connect the community with the council and are the key part of a two way conversation between local people and the local authority. They need to listen to residents and be able to speak up for them. They also need to share important information and help keep local people informed about the issues and decisions that affect them.

Shaping the future

Local councillors help shape the future of their local area in all kinds of ways, such as

- contributing to all kinds of policies and strategies
- taking decisions or giving input to planning decisions
- setting and spending the council's budget
- scrutinising council decisions
- taking decisions on licensing applications.

Good local councillors build strong and effective relationships with their local community. They encourage local people to make their views known and help the council to work with their residents and they speak up to support their local residents.

As a local councillor, residents will expect you to:

- respond to their queries and investigate their concerns (casework)
- communicate council decisions that affect them
- know your patch and be aware of any problems

- know and work with representatives of local organisations, interest groups and businesses
- represent their views at council meetings
- lead local campaigns on their behalf.

Working in Partnership

Community leadership is at the heart of modern local government. Councils work with a wide range of other services and agencies, including the voluntary and community sector, to improve services and the quality of life of residents.

Community Boards

It is planned that Buckinghamshire Council will operate community boards to enable it to maintain strong connections with communities, understand and respond to local need and improve outcomes for residents. The boards will aim to enable councillors to take decision on local issues alongside key partners including community representatives, facilitate communities to come together with councillors and partners to find local solutions to local issues and provide feedback on local public sector performance and delivery in the area.

Who can be a councillor?

Anyone can put themselves forward to be a councillor in the new Buckinghamshire Council. You must be:

- over the age of 18
- British or an eligible citizen of the Commonwealth or a citizen of any member state of the European Union
- Have a local connection to Buckinghamshire

There are a few restrictions, but the relevant Deputy Returning Officer will be able to help you. Further information on standing for election is available from the Electoral Commission via the following link: www.electoralcommission.org.uk

To stand for election as a Councillor you will need to be nominated as a candidate by submitting a completed set of nomination papers to the relevant Deputy Returning Officer. The contact details for the Deputy Returning Officer are provided below:

Aylesbury:

ereg@aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk

01296 585701

The Gateway
Gatehouse Road
Aylesbury
HP19 8FF

Chiltern:

elections@chilternandsouthbucks.gov.uk

01895 837236

King George V House
King George V Road

Amersham
HP6 5AW

South Bucks:

elections@chilternandsouthbucks.gov.uk

01895 837236

Capswood
Oxford Road
Denham
UB9 4LH

Wycombe:

01494 421180

elections@wycombe.gov.uk

Queen Victoria Road
High Wycombe
HP11 1BB

Member support

Buckinghamshire Council will support you as a councillor in many ways. This will include:

- a programme of induction training & knowledge sessions for new Councillors
- regular briefings and ongoing training for all councillors on key issues throughout the year
- professional, impartial advice and support from council officers
- ICT equipment and support to enable you to work effectively remotely and digitally

Training

The main induction process will take place throughout May. It will aim to ensure that all councillors receive important and statutory information, for example how to access meeting documents and the legal framework. The council will also continue to support councillors in their roles throughout their term of office with a continuous member development opportunities.



Allowances

All councillors are entitled to a basic allowance in recognition that the role will involve a time commitment. Those with additional roles, for example committee chairman, may also receive a special responsibility allowance (SRA) which reflects the level of extra responsibility and expected time commitment for the role.

Allowances will be set by the shadow authority on 27 February 2020 having regard to the recommendations of the independent remuneration panel.

Code of Conduct

It is important that councillors behave and act appropriately in their role. To promote and maintain high standards of conduct all councils must publish a code of conduct which all councillors must comply with. The council has mechanisms in place to investigate allegations that a councillor has not complied with the code of conduct.

Councillors must also register and disclose relevant pecuniary (financial) interests in a register held by the Council. Any interests must also be disclosed at a meeting of the council if they are relevant to the matters under discussion. Guidance on both the code of conduct and interests are provided by the council to all councillors.

Expenses

Certain authorised direct expenses such as mileage to attend meetings in your capacity as a councillor can also be reimbursed in accordance with the Allowances scheme.

How the Council works

Councillors have a central part to play in making decisions that impact on their ward and across the whole area covered by Buckinghamshire Council. They will be involved in decision-making through:

- full Council
- regulatory committees such as Planning and Licensing
- appointments to outside bodies (external organisations)
- developing, monitoring and reviewing policy on Overview and Scrutiny Committees
- providing advice and guidance to Cabinet Member at advisory groups or informal meetings

Cabinet

Much like central government Buckinghamshire Council will operate a leader and cabinet model of governance.

This means Full Council (a meeting of all councillors) elects a leader who chairs the Cabinet meetings and who also appoints Cabinet Members responsible for specific areas of the council's work (a portfolio).

The Cabinet is responsible for most day-to-day decisions, taking the leading role in developing the policy framework and proposing the budget to full Council.

When the Cabinet is going to discuss or make major decisions these must be published in a Forward Plan on the Council's website.

The Cabinet can only make decisions that are in line with the Council's overall policies and budget. Decision that are outside the budget or policy framework, must be referred to a full Council meeting to decide.

Full Council

After the elections on 7 May 2020 all the Buckinghamshire Council councillors (also called Members) will meet for the first time. They will:

- elect a leader
- establish the Council's committees
- make appointments to the committees
- set the policy framework for Buckinghamshire Council
- agreeing the budget and spending plans
- make constitutional decisions.
- debate major issues affecting Buckinghamshire Council and its local area.

Regulatory Committees

The Cabinet does not have responsibility for some regulatory and quasi-judicial functions for example, determining planning applications and making decisions on licensing policy and specific licensing applications where objections have been received. These are delegated to separate committees such as planning, licensing, audit, standards and appeals. Councillors appointed to these committees need to have specialist training before they can serve on the

committee. We would always recommend that all councillors attend the planning, licensing and Code of Conduct training even if they may not be on regulatory committees.

Overview & Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny lies at the heart of local accountability. It is one of the principal democratic means, between elections, of ensuring that decisions made by the Council and its partners are held to account. Scrutiny has built up a reputation as a strong voice in the policy development process, and a place where ideas for improvement can be debated and evaluated. Overview and Scrutiny has some specific statutory roles – such as the scrutiny of health bodies and other partner organisations. The legislation setting up scrutiny arrangements makes it clear that scrutiny committees can look at any issue which affects the area or the area's inhabitants. Scrutiny's principal powers, however, relate to councils.

Scrutiny committees can require that Cabinet Members and Council officers attend meetings; that information held by the Council be provided to it; and that the Cabinet provides responses to its recommendations. In addition, committee members have enhanced rights to access information held by the Council.

Scrutiny has no formal powers to stop the Cabinet from doing something (or to make it do something), but has an important role to play. If Members work to build positive relationships with the executive/cabinet and external partners, and make recommendations clearly based on evidence, it can act as a constructive, critical friend and can have significant influence over policy.

Pension Fund

The Pension Fund Committee is responsible for all matters relating to the administration of the Buckinghamshire Local Government Pension Scheme.

Further information

There's more information and profiles of some councillors here

<https://beacouncillor.co.uk/>

[The Councillors' Guide](#), produced by the LGA, is a very useful reference document for all new Councillors and those thinking about becoming a Councillor in the future. Additional information and guidance for Councillors can be found on the Local Government Association [website](#) which is updated daily.