

...can I afford it?

- parish councillors are unpaid
- district councillors receive allowances to recognise the time they have to commit to council business and any special responsibilities they are given.

...can I get time off work?

- most employers are prepared, within reason, to grant time off for council work. You should discuss this with your employer before making the commitment.
- most parish/town council meetings are held in the evening. District council meetings take place at various times.

...do I have to be a member of a political party?

- No you don't. However, in practice, district councillors normally are. In parish and town councils there is a mix of independent councillors and those with party political affiliations.

Does it cost anything to stand as a candidate?

There is no fee or deposit needed to submit a nomination paper. However, you will be responsible for any costs in promoting your election. There is a legal limit to the amount you can spend.

Interested?

Why not find out more...

For a candidate information pack for the district and parish/town council elections on **7 May 2015**, or for an informal chat, please contact South Gloucestershire Council Electoral Services
email: electoral.services@southglos.gov.uk
tel: **01454 863030**. Our staff will be delighted to help. You can also visit our election webpages at www.southglos.gov.uk/elections

Remember – local democracy is important. It's about local people getting involved in their communities. Why leave it to others? You could make all the difference.

Published by:

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South Gloucestershire Council,
Council Offices,
Castle Street,
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If you need this information in another format or language please contact:
01454 868004

A councillor ...who me?

Could you be **one** of
70 district councillors and
440 parish councillors

who will be **elected** on
7 May 2015 to represent
their **local communities**
in South Gloucestershire?



A councillor ...who me?

Democratic local government is all about local people getting involved in the issues affecting their community.

To be a local councillor, you must be at least 18 years old and a British, Irish, Commonwealth or other European Union citizen. You also need to be registered to vote in the area or have lived, worked or owned a property in the district for at least a year. Parish councillors can also qualify by living within three miles of the area they represent.

Why would I want to be a councillor?

People stand for election for many reasons:

- to represent the local community and help local people
- to pursue a particular local issue or concern
- to improve the quality of life in their area
- to pursue their political beliefs.

Councillors play a vital role in shaping and directing the effectiveness of local services for the benefit of local people. They work with local voluntary organisations, other statutory services (eg police and health service) and the private sector, in order to achieve these aims.

The position of the councillor is important as the voice of the community and the champion of local people and their concerns.

The councillor therefore plays a vital role in the overall effectiveness of local government and well-being of the area.

What's involved in being a councillor?

The role of a councillor can be varied at the best of times. Perhaps the main areas of responsibility are:

- representing the people in your area and pursuing issues on their behalf
- leadership and service within the community
- helping to formulate policy and local solutions to local needs.

Being a councillor can be a rewarding experience. You can make a real difference.

What does the district council do?

South Gloucestershire Council is a unitary authority responsible for the full range of local government services. These include education, social services, planning, highways, transportation, housing, refuse collection and disposal, environmental health, licensing, libraries, leisure centres and other community services.

The council has an annual budget of over £180 million and operates under a committee system. All councillors have a role in developing and approving the council's budget and policy framework, in participating in the decision making of the various committees and being part of one of the five local area forums. Some councillors are involved in deciding planning and licensing submissions.

Approximately 21% of the council's activities are funded from the council tax and the rest from central government grants, business rates, and fees and charges.

South Gloucestershire is divided into 35 wards, each electing one, two or three councillors.

What does a parish/town council do?

There are 44 parish/town councils covering most of South Gloucestershire (except Kingswood, Staple Hill and Rodway areas).

A town council is a larger parish council which has adopted this title.

In 2015, a new parish council will be elected for the first time for Stoke Lodge and The Common.

Parish councils provide:

- an important focus for local community identity
- a 'grass-roots' voice for the needs of a relatively small area
- greater opportunity for local people to become involved in their area
- various enhanced local amenities and facilities to meet local needs
- a local "watch-dog" role on local planning applications and other matters.

They fund their activities from a charge on the local council tax for the area. They involve local people in their work.

What if I am elected? ...what would my time commitment be?

- It will depend on the extent of your involvement, any political activities and what role you take in the council.
- You will attend and participate in Council or committee meetings.
- You are likely to have to deal with constituents' queries at home.
- For district councillors, the role may take up several hours a week. Parish councillors to a lesser extent. It very much depends on how much time you can commit.