

Become a councillor

information pack



Introduction



As a Chief Executive in local government, and Returning Officer for the Borough of Rushcliffe, I am always delighted to meet people who are willing to stand for election as a local councillor. By putting yourself forward you display a real passion for your community and a desire to help the people who live there.

The next elections are on 2 May 2019 for both the Borough Council and our local Town and Parish councils. This offers you the perfect opportunity to stand as a representative of your local community and become a Rushcliffe Borough councillor, or a town or parish councillor. We hope that this pack will be used by anyone who is thinking of standing for election and is interested in finding out about the role of the councillor.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your interest and wish you luck if you decide to stand.

Allen Graham

Chief Executive, Rushcliffe Borough Council, and Returning Officer for the Borough of Rushcliffe



The Borough of Rushcliffe

About Rushcliffe and the Borough Council

Rushcliffe lies south of Nottingham and the River Trent. It extends across towards Newark in the north east and Loughborough in the south west, covering an area of 157 square miles. Although parts of the Borough lie close to Nottingham, Rushcliffe has a strong identity of its own.

The main centre of population is West Bridgford, where around one-third of the Borough's 111,129 population live. West Bridgford, a leafy suburb, is where the Borough Council has its Community Contact Centre. The Council's headquarters is also based in West Bridgford, at Rushcliffe Arena, the Council's brand new flagship leisure centre. West Bridgford has a lively town centre, offering a range of shops to cater for most everyday needs, with plenty of low-cost parking, and lots of places to eat and drink.

For those who prefer life in the country, Rushcliffe offers the best of both worlds: the delights of rural living coupled with good transport links for getting to work and to other parts of the county and country. Some of the most delightful small towns and villages in Nottinghamshire lie within the Borough boundaries. The largest include Bingham, Radcliffe-on-Trent, Cotgrave, Keyworth, Ruddington and East Leake. Each boasts its own schools, shopping centres, health care facilities and leisure activities.

Rushcliffe is the most affluent district within the county, with low levels of unemployment and crime, and higher than average incomes. Nearly eighty per cent of homes are owner-occupied and a higher than average number of residents are self-employed. According to the latest statistics, there are slightly more females than males

within the Borough, nine per cent of the population are from 'non-white' minority ethnic backgrounds, and residents aged 65 years or older now make up twenty per cent of the population.

Rushcliffe has a rich sporting heritage with Trent Bridge Cricket Ground, the City Ground, home of Nottingham Forest Football Club, The Bay, home of Nottingham Rugby, and the National Watersports Centre all located within West Bridgford. The area has a wide range of leisure facilities, including leisure centres, country parks, tennis courts, and playgrounds.

The Council is made up of 44 councillors elected every four years by residents within their communities to represent their views and make informed decisions on their behalf. At the present time, these 44 councillors represent five political groups:

- **Conservative** 34
- **Labour** 4
- **Liberal Democrat** 2
- **Green** 2
- **Independent** 2

The Conservative party are in overall control as they have the most councillors.



About local government

The Borough Council is a one of a number of layers of government responsible for delivering local services in a geographical area. A family living in Rushcliffe may receive services from a parish council, the Borough Council, the County Council as well as feeling the impact of decisions made at a national level by Central Government. They may also receive services from other areas of the public sector such as the health service, fire service and police force. It is not always clear who provides which services to residents in an area.

Rushcliffe Borough Council serves the residents of Rushcliffe by providing the following services (either alone or with partners):

- Refuse collection and recycling
- Street cleansing and playground maintenance (*Streetwise*)
- Council tax collection
- Leisure centres (*Parkwood Leisure and Carillion Leisure*)
- Edwalton Golf Course (*Glendale*)
- Car parks
- Elections
- Sports development
- Arts and events
- Rushcliffe Country Park
- Planning
- Environmental health
- Housing and homelessness (*Metropolitan Housing*)
- Processing of benefit claims

How the Council operates is set by the Local Government Acts from 1972 and 2000, as well as the Localism Act 2011 and a number of other more specific acts of parliament governing housing, the environment and local council finances. You can find out more at legislation.gov.uk

Every four years the Borough Council publishes a Corporate Strategy which sets out what it is going to focus its attention and resources on in addition to delivering its core services to residents. These tend to be development tasks that deliver real change to residents in the Borough. The progress towards delivering these tasks is monitored by councillors and reported publicly. You can view the Corporate Strategy as well as the Council's financial plans and other key documents here rushcliffe.gov.uk/aboutus/aboutthecouncil/documentsstrategiesandpolicies





Cllr Gordon Wheeler and Cllr Alan Philips join basketball players at a Rushcliffe training session

So, what is a councillor?

Simply put, a councillor is somebody from a local community elected to represent that community. They do this on many levels balancing the needs and interests of residents, the political party they represent (if any) and the Borough as a whole.

The role and responsibilities of a local councillor include:

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

For many councillors, representing their ward is the most important aspect of their role. This can involve a variety of activities but usually means councillors will spend time:

- listening to the views of local people so that they know what problems and issues exist in their ward
- ensuring that the needs of their ward are taken into account when the council is making decisions about how it is run, what services it should provide and how it should spend its money

- working with council officers to bring about improvements to their ward
- holding surgeries where local people can drop in with enquiries about the council or raise issues and concerns about any problems that they have which the councillor can deal with or seek to resolve
- getting involved in local campaigns
- offering support to local schools, community groups, businesses and other organisations.

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

- they want to make a difference, be involved in shaping the local community and getting better services
- they want to represent the views of local people and ensure that local community interests are taken into account
- they want to pursue their political beliefs
- they are concerned about particular issues in an area

For some, it is an extension of what they are already doing, as they are active in a political party, parish council, or trade union, and they see the next step is to become a councillor.

Here are some of our **current councillors** explaining why they became councillors:



Councillor **Debbie Mason**

I became a councillor because I had moved into my area and wanted to become part of it and get to know people in the community in some way. I was already part of a Political Party but felt I had something to offer locally as well.



Councillor **Jonathan Wheeler**

I became a councillor because I wanted to make a difference to the local community, and I wanted to see younger people involved in local politics. My father was already a local councillor, and I saw the difference he made in the community, which made my mind up being a Borough Councillor would be the best way for me to make a difference.



Councillor **Andy Edyvean**

A few years ago, I realised I'd reached a time in my life where I felt I had the time to put something back into my community so I stood for election as a Borough Councillor.



Councillor **Alan Phillips**

Having lived in the ward I represent for over 25 years I knew I was well placed to represent my ward as a councillor.

Standing for Election

To become a councillor you need to stand for, and win, an election. You do not need any specific qualifications to become a councillor but you do need to fulfil certain criteria to be eligible.

To stand for election, on the day of nomination, you must be 18 or over and a UK, EU or commonwealth citizen [this may change for the 2019 Borough Council elections as a result of the UK leaving the EU].

You must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

- be registered, and continue to be, as a local government elector for Rushcliffe from the day of your nomination onwards, or
- have occupied (as owner or tenant) any land or premises in Rushcliffe during the whole of the 12 months before the day you are nominated and the day of election, or
- your main or only place of work during the last 12 months, prior to the day of your nomination and the day of election, has been in Rushcliffe, or
- you have lived in Rushcliffe during the whole of the last 12 months, before the day of your nomination and the day of election.

You can't stand if you:

- work for Rushcliffe Borough Council
- hold a politically restricted post for another authority
- have been sentenced to a prison sentence (including suspended sentences) of 3 months or more within 5 years prior to polling day
- are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order
- have been disqualified under any legislation relating to corrupt or illegal practices or offences relating to donations.

You don't have to belong to a political party or group to stand for election. Rushcliffe has both councillors connected to a political party and those that stand as independents (candidates who do not belong to any political party); however, those working together as a party form the majority and lead the Council.



Cllr Debbie Mason leading the Council's tree planting scheme



Cllr Roger Upton and award winning Rushcliffe Wildlife Watch Group

What do councillors do

Representing your community

Community leadership is at the heart of modern local government. A community leader represents the views of that community and stands up for what that community wants. A community leader will listen to and represent the views of all residents, including helping people on specific individual matters, and make sure public services are delivered effectively in the area.

As a councillor you will find that much of your time is spent dealing with ward matters and representing your community. In some

cases, your role will be to listen and identify whether the Council, or another public service, is best placed to resolve the issue, and in others your role will be to explain Council policy and make sure that the policy has been carried out fairly. You will get help and support to deal with residents' enquiries and complaints from officers at the Council.

Before getting elected, you might want to consider how you are going to engage with your community, making it easy for residents to recognise you and contact you, and for you to get information out to them.

Here are some of our **current councillors** describing how they help their community:



Councillor
Gordon Wheeler

I regularly engage with the community through newsletters and every 18 months or so my fellow Borough Councillor

and I door knock right across the ward. Where residents are out or we cannot access properties (e.g. flats) we leave a 'calling card' inviting residents to contact us if they have any issues to discuss. We also deliver a letter to new residents, introducing ourselves and inviting them to contact us if they need any assistance. I also hold a community meeting four times a year.



Councillor
Richard Butler

I help the community by being a point of contact for advice over council-related matters – and also sometimes

to absorb occasional confusion and frustration that residents may face in trying to perhaps contact correct departments or make improvements/repairs to services. Because of the way local government works, people do sometimes get confused as to "which council does what" and "where do I go to find out about" type of issues.



Cllr Simon Robinson with food donations for The Friary



Cllr John Lungley, Cllr Jean Greenwood and Cllr Martin Buckle at a Nottingham GCRS steam day

Representing the Council

In contrast to representing your community as a whole, or attempting to assist with the resolution of the problems of individual residents, as a councillor you will also need to represent the Borough (as a collective group of people and as a place) and participate in making decisions as a member of the Council.

Working together with your colleagues, other councillors who represent different areas of the Borough and different political parties, you will need to help form policy, the documents that guide the way decisions are made and services are provided, and help develop the Council's budget and agree the level of Council Tax. Your role on the Council is to plan, run, monitor and develop council business. Councillors are essential in deciding what is in the public interest amongst a range of conflicting issues and views.

All councillors have a seat on Council which meets five times a year, unless an extraordinary meeting is called. All Council meetings start at 7pm and are held in the Council Chamber of Rushcliffe Arena, Rugby Road in West Bridgford. At the first meeting of Council following the election, the Council appoints a Leader, who then selects his or her Cabinet. Positions on all of the other committees and groups are then allocated in line with the political balance of the Council.

So, following the election you could find yourself being a member of the Cabinet, a scrutiny group or a regulatory committee. Most meetings are open to the press and public, and many now involve some element of public speaking. There are written rules, which govern behaviour and procedures at these meetings called 'standing orders' and these enable councillors to take part effectively and fairly. The standing orders form part of the Council's constitution and can be viewed at rushcliffe.gov.uk/media/rushcliffe/media/documents/pdf/publicationscheme/1whowareandwhatwedo/The%20Complete%20Constitution.pdf

Decisions and topics for discussion at Council and Cabinet meetings are published in the Council's Forward Plan. The topics under discussion at scrutiny groups are published in a work programme as part of each agenda. You may also be asked to sit on one of the Council's regulatory committees such as the planning committee, which meets monthly or licensing committee, which meets as and when required. The Council, Cabinet or Scrutiny Committees appoint other working groups from time to time. These are not public meetings and generally investigate a single issue in more depth before reporting back to either Council, Cabinet or Scrutiny Committee with a recommended course of action. The Council also has a Standards Committee which promotes and maintains high standards of conduct by councillors mainly through the Council's Code of Conduct.

Here are some of our **current councillors** explaining their role within the Council:



Councillor **Alan Phillips**

I am a member on two scrutiny group committees and the Member Development Group.



Councillor **Debbie Mason**

My role at the moment is Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure and I am also Deputy Leader. My Portfolio for Community means I get to meet many different organisations and residents as well as contributing to the decisions that the Cabinet and Council makes. Leisure involves Sport, Health and Leisure Centres. As Deputy Leader I support the Leader and stand in for him when he is unavailable. All of this is both interesting and challenging.



Councillor **Jean Greenwood**

My role in the Council is making sure the views of local people are listened to and are heard at Council meetings/discussions and to see that the Council looks after the needs of the residents of Rushcliffe.



Councillor **Hayley Chewings**

My role as a councillor is to represent the people of my ward over a wide range of local issues, responding to people's issues, investigating their concerns and trying to resolve their issue with the best outcome. I am also vice chair of a scrutiny group.



Councillor **Andy Edyvean**

I was very honoured earlier this year to be appointed to the Cabinet where I can help set the strategic direction of the Council.

Important considerations

Skills and attributes required

You don't need any specific qualifications to become a Borough councillor but there are skills that will make being a councillor much easier. The most effective councillors are comfortable:

- talking to people either individually or in a group
- representing other people's views
- listening to people's problems and being able to identify the main points
- thinking on their feet
- reading, sometimes long and complex, reports and being able to identify the key points
- forming an argument and participating in a debate
- negotiating with different groups of people to resolve disagreements and conflicts
- using basic IT packages such as email, word processing, the internet and, increasingly, social media to undertake work and keep in touch with their residents.

Training and support given to councillors

All new councillors are able to access an extensive induction programme that runs for six months and additional training is offered to all councillors on a range of topics throughout the four year term of office.

The induction programme covers (but is not limited to):

- I've been elected – what happens next?
- Your role in meetings and making decisions
- Council meetings explained – a practical session

- Working in partnership and meeting key partner organisations
- Protecting you and the Council
- Being on the frontline

Councillors joining the Council as part of a political party may also be able to access additional help and support provided by more experienced councillors or by the party. New councillors are also allocated a member of the Council's Executive Management Team as a key contact and first point of call.

Additional training offered over the last four years includes:

- Personal effectiveness including resilience and time management
- Managing challenging people and difficult situations
- Understanding local government finance
- Effect of the Localism Act on the frontline councillor role
- Understanding partners and what they do
- Chairing/facilitating skills
- Public speaking
- Managing casework and advocacy skills



Cllr Debbie Mason at the Rushcliffe Learning Alliance Pupil Parliament



Cllr Neil Clarke and Cllr Roger Upton help out with a clear up of Radcliffe Station

Help is also offered to councillors by a dedicated support team. The Constitutional Services team is here to plan and service the meetings at which councillors make decisions as well as supporting the Council's decision-making process. They will be in touch regularly with information about events and training, meetings and additional information available to councillors, and will try to answer any questions you have about your ward – or they will find you the person who can answer your questions. The Council also has a dedicated councillors' room where you can meet with other councillors, use Council-provided IT equipment and pick up any post that comes into the Council.

Some of the information you will have access to as a councillor is sensitive in nature and is protected by rules of confidentiality and in some cases the Data Protection Act – training is given to ensure you are able to access this information securely and protect it.

You will be given a councillor email address and will be able to access information related to being a councillor such as the papers you need for meetings and background information on the Council's intranet.

Finding the time

The amount of free time needed to be an effective councillor is often a concern for anyone considering standing for election. It is for you to decide the level of commitment and the amount of time you have available for being a councillor. As well as the requirement to attend council meetings, which generally take place in the evening, there will also be ward matters that require your attention and contributing towards your political party if you represent one. It also depends on your role within the Council and the number of duties you decide to take on. It could range from a few hours each week to a few hours every day at busier times.

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. The amount of time needed will depend upon your responsibilities within the Council and we strongly advise you discussing this with your employer before committing to being a councillor.

Allowances and Expenses

There is no salary for being a councillor. However, you will be paid an allowance to reimburse you for time (paid automatically) and expenses (which need to be claimed for on a monthly basis) incurred whilst on Council business.

Every Rushcliffe Borough councillor is entitled to a basic allowance, currently £5,292.24 a year, paid into a bank account in 12 monthly instalments. Some councillors are given an additional allowance to cover any special responsibilities such as Cabinet member or a chairman/ vice chairman. The allowance will be reviewed before the 2019 election. For more information about the Members Allowance Scheme please visit the Council's website at rushcliffe.gov.uk/councillors/membersallowances.

Code of Conduct

Rushcliffe Borough Council has a written Code of Conduct for councillors which forms part of the Council's Constitution. The Code of Conduct sets out the rules that councillors should adhere to as a councillor, and all councillors are required to sign a declaration of acceptance of office once elected which includes an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct. Breaches of the Code may be considered by the Standards Committee.

The Code is based on the seven Nolan Principles of Standards in Public Life:

- selflessness
- integrity
- objectivity
- accountability
- openness
- honesty
- leadership

The Council also has a protocol defining the relationship between councillors and officers (the staff employed by the Council) which also forms part of the constitution. The principles of the protocol are:

- both councillors and officers serve local people, but have distinct roles
- the best service will be provided to local people by both councillors and officers working as one team
- the service given to local people must be efficient, open and accountable
- councillors and officers must act ethically
- officers must be politically impartial
- effective working relationships between councillors and officers must be based on trust and mutual respect



Cllr Barrie Cooper at the West Bridgford Lights Switch On



Cllr Debbie Mason at the Rushcliffe Sports awards

Here are some of our **current councillors** highlighting their biggest achievements:



Councillor **Alan Phillips**

I have taken a very keen interest in the tram that runs through my ward. During construction I raised concerns about noise and vibration the tram would bring and as a result design was amended to include longer sections of noise barriers and anti-vibration matting under some sections of the track. I raised safety concerns regarding the number of accidents at the tram crossing at Wilford Lane. Alterations to traffic lights were made and safety at the crossing has improved. A pedestrian crossing at the Compton Acres tram stop had serious visibility issues especially for small children. As a result of concerns I proposed that some sections of noise barrier fencing were removed to improve the visibility for pedestrians and tram drivers to see each other.



Councillor **Jean Greenwood**

My main achievement in the last few years was championing the St. Mary's Community Park Project in Ruddington. Working with a group of residents on what seemed like an impossible idea to see a completed park/play area a couple of years later.



Councillor **Martin Edwards**

I addressed residents' concerns about planned changes at a local industrial estate and allayed their fears through meetings with the planning team at the council. I was able to get their concerns across and all were happy with the subsequent outcome.



Councillor **Richard Butler**

It's hard to pick biggest achievements, but I have to say that for many years now, I have been to many (I've lost count!) meetings in connection with the investment and regeneration/improvements in Cotgrave (my ward), and whilst there are many council and outside bodies who are making this happen, I feel that I have played a part by getting over the "local on the ground" views. But other main achievements are the relatively "simple" things which actually make a big difference to people's lives. Examples of these include helping to find new and more suitable accommodation via the council for residents who face challenges, and also playing a part in various environmental improvements which help to make the area more pleasant.



Cllr Debbie Mason with international young entrepreneurs from Slovakia, Rome and Poznan at West Bridgford Library and Young People's Centre

Find out more

Further information on the Council's website

There is lots of information about the Council, the services it provides, its priorities over the next few years and how it is funded, on the Council's website – rushcliffe.gov.uk. These are a few quick links to pages of particular interest if you are thinking about becoming a councillor:

Information about standing for election – rushcliffe.gov.uk/elections/standforelection

Information about the borough's wards –
rushcliffe.gov.uk/elections/wardboundariesandmaps

Lots of links to information about the Council's main policies and strategies, management structure, spending and budget –
rushcliffe.gov.uk/aboutus/aboutthecouncil/documentsstrategiesandpolicies

The Council's Constitution – rushcliffe.gov.uk/media/rushcliffe/media/documents/pdf/publicationscheme/1whoweareandwhatwedo/The%20Complete%20Constitution.pdf

The Council's Corporate Strategy – rushcliffe.gov.uk/media/rushcliffe/media/documents/pdf/councilanddemocracy/constitution/Corporate%20Strategy%202016-20.pdf

Further information from other people

Local Government Association – local.gov.uk

Local Government Association Microsite – Be a councillor – beacouncillor.co.uk

Electoral Commission – electoralcommission.org.uk

Electoral Commission – standing for election –
electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent

Political Parties

- The Conservative Party – conservatives.com
- The Labour Party – labour.org.uk
- Green Party – greenparty.org.uk
- Liberal Democrats – libdems.org.uk
- UKIP – ukip.org

Next steps

If you've read all about becoming a councillor, taken a look at our website, been to a few meetings and even taken a look at some of the resources available online, and you still want to be a councillor – great, it sounds like the residents of Rushcliffe will be lucky to have you representing them.



Cllr Nigel Lawrence visits the Council's waste depot

The next Borough Council election will be held in May 2019 – the nominations period will open in March 2019 and the deadline to submit will be publicised on our website and social media channels. You will need to be proposed, seconded and also to have eight further people as supporters to your nomination. Full details of the electoral process including the nomination procedure are available from our Electoral Services team at: elections@rushcliffe.gov.uk

As a prospective candidate, you will be invited to a meeting to hear about how the election is organised and run, including how we deal with postal votes, where the count of the votes will be held, where the polling stations are going to be and to ask any questions you may have.

It is your responsibility, or your agent's, to present nomination papers to the Returning Officer before the statutory deadline. This will be made clear in advance of the nomination period and in your nomination pack.

In the run up to the election, candidates can have a free copy of the electoral register for the ward for which they are standing which lists residents who can vote at the next election and a map showing the ward boundaries.

It is your choice whether or not you have an election agent to represent you and manage your election campaign. An agent can help you make sure all the forms are filled in correctly and submitted before the deadlines, help you keep a clear and accurate record of financial expenditure, and help you plan your campaign.

If you decide to stand for election and spend money on your campaign, there is a set limit of £740 with an additional 6p for every local government elector registered in the register of electors for the area you are seeking to be elected. If you are standing for a political party, help with election expenses may be available. The Electoral Commission can help you with any questions you may have about expenses pef@electoralcommission.org.uk

Here are some of our **current councillors** talking about what they enjoy most about being a councillor:



Councillor **Jonathan Wheeler**

Helping local people and playing a role in helping the council modernise and meet the challenges of modern day local government.



Councillor **Juliet Donoghue**

I enjoy being a councillor as it gives me the opportunity to make a difference in the community, representing the people who live in my ward.



Councillor **Rob Inglis**

I enjoy being a councillor because I care about people. I get satisfaction in dealing with others people's issues and getting them resolved. It is not routine and the workload is not consistent. There are lots of regular meetings with spells of inactivity balanced with periods of overwhelming demand. To me it is ultimately about achieving and maintaining a 'Quality of Life' for the residents in my community.

Here are some of our **current councillors** explaining what they find most difficult about being a councillor:



Councillor **Alan Phillips**

Can be balancing full time employment responsibilities, family life and councillor duties. It requires a certain amount of commitment and flexibility as you have to be there for your constituents.



Councillor **Gordon Wheeler**

The challenge of being a councillor is that your details are in the public domain. This means you can be contacted not just by residents (which is absolutely fine) but by external organisations or individuals.



Councillor **Richard Butler**

The hardest thing – there is a lot of reading to do and meetings to attend! Also many rules and policies in place that are often set by, for example, national government that sometimes mean that things we would like to do can't be done, or takes a long time to achieve. One thing you have to learn is how to develop the art of patience!



Councillor **Andy Edyvean**

I think one of the hardest things about being a councillor is having to make decisions on planning applications and sometimes we have to make difficult decisions to balance the needs of different parties.



Rushcliffe Community Contact Centre Rectory Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 6BU

By telephone: Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm

In person: 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, and from 9am to 1pm on the first Saturday of every month.

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