Potential Candidates Information Booklet















How to become a councillor

Councillor requirements

To be able to stand for council elections in Wales, you must meet the following criteria.

- Be at least 18 years old.
- Be a British citizen, Irish citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen or a qualifying foreign citizen and meet at least one of the following qualifications:
    1. You are registered to vote in the area.
    2. You have owned or rented property in the area for the last 12 months.
    3. Your main place of work has been in the area for the last 12 months.
    4. You have lived in the area, or within three miles of it, for the last 12 months.

Disqualifications

There are a range of disqualifications that could prevent you from becoming a councillor. It is your responsibility to check whether you are disqualified before submitting your nomination papers as you will be asked to confirm that you are not disqualified.

It is a criminal offence to submit nomination papers that give a false statement to your qualifications.

If you are unsure whether you qualify you should:

- Contact your employer.
- Consult the legislation.
- Take own independent legal advice.

You may be disqualified from standing for election if you:

- Work for the local authority, or hold a paid position with the council, a joint board, or a community council (certain non-senior or non-politically restricted employees may stand for election, but must resign if successful).
- Are subject to bankruptcy restrictions or an interim order.
- Have been convicted of a criminal offence and sentenced to three months or more in prison (including a suspended sentence) without the option of a fine within the relevant disqualification period.
- Have been disqualified due to corrupt or illegal electoral practices under the Representation of the People Act 1983.
- Are subject to the notification requirements of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- Have been disqualified by a decision of the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

The rules on disqualification can be complex. If you are unsure of your eligibility, you should seek advice from:

- Electoral Commission: https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/
- The Returning Officer / Electoral Services for your area: electoral@bridgend.gov.uk

What to do to become a councillor

First, you must decide whether you would like to stand as an independent or for a political party.

Independent: You run on your own name, without backing from a political party. It is your responsibility to build your local profile, community backing and your campaign messages.

Political party: You join your local political party, join the local branch and you will undergo internal vetting and a selection process to represent your party.



Nomination process

To become nominated as a candidate at a local election, a completed set of nomination papers need to be submitted to the **Returning Officer by 4pm on the 19th working day** before the poll. This is a fixed deadline by law.

An official notice published by the Returning Officer will include information such as when you will be able to submit nomination papers and the times and arrangements for delivery by hand or electronically.

You must submit two nomination papers:

- Nomination form
- Home address form

You can find out how you can obtain the nomination papers from the local elections office: electoral@bridgend.gov.uk

If you are unable to complete the form, the Returning Officer and electoral services can help by preparing the form for your signature (check what assistance is available from electoral@bridgend.gov.uk).

The Returning Officer may hold candidate briefings on the importance of following election rules and protocols, and update on any changes since the last election. You should ask when these briefings are and where they are being held.

There is the option for an informal check of your nomination papers before submitting them. You should consult with the Returning Officer whether they decide to do informal checks, and the specific arrangements surrounding them – for example, online, in person, an email address to use or whether you need an appointment, etc.

All information on the forms must be true and to the best of your knowledge.

The nomination form must include:

- Your full name - no initials and no prefixes.
- Statement of party membership- stating whether you have been a member of any political party at any time in the last 12 months.
- Declaration that you are qualified on the day you complete your nomination paper, and on the day of elections to be elected as a councillor.
- Declaration that you meet one of the qualifications to stand.
- You are not disqualified from being elected as a councillor.
- Your signature and the signature of a witness.

The address form must include:

- Your full name.
- Any commonly used names.
- The nomination form.
- Home address in full.
- Qualifying address.
- Which of your qualifications relates to your qualifying address.
- The full name and address of your witness to your signature.

Political party

To stand on behalf of a registered political party, the party must be registered on the Commission's register of political parties and be listed to allow field candidates.



You can use the English, Welsh or both versions of either the party name or description if they are registered with the commission. All party names and descriptions that are registered will be listed under translations, if you cannot see your chosen translation of the party name or description then it is not registered and cannot be used.

You will need to submit the following:

- A certificate that authorises you to use the party name or a registered description on a ballot paper.
- A written request to use one of the party's emblems.

When completing the nomination papers and home address forms for a political party election you should consider the following:

- If the party you are representing does not include Wales or Welsh or Cymru or Cymraeg in the description box on the nomination papers, you can include this in the party name
- You may use a joint description if you are representative of two political parties
- It is your decision what order the political parties appear in the joint description
- The nomination form may be rejected if the descriptions or names of parties aren't registered under the commission register.

Independent

You must appoint an election agent who is responsible for your campaign management and more specifically, for the financial management. It is essential you have an election agent and if one is not appointed, then you will become your own agent. Payments for election expenses can be made once the election agent is appointed and must only be made by or through the agent. There are no specific qualifications needed to be an election agent, but the following cannot become an agent:

- The Returning Officer or a member of their staff
- A partner or clerk of the Returning Officer or a member of staff
- Anyone not entitled to vote because of the report of an election court or conviction for a corrupt or illegal practice.

Your agent must be someone you trust, and someone who understands their responsibilities and the obligations attached to the role. You can be your own election agent if you wish. The name, address and office address of your election agent with both of your signatures attached, must be declared in writing to the Returning Officer by 4pm on the 19th working day before the poll. Your election agent must have an office address where legal notices can be delivered so it must be a physical address. The election agent's office address should be:

- Within the local government area where the election is held, or
- Within the UK Parliamentary constituency or constituencies that are included in the local area, or
- Within a district that adjoins the local authority area

Once nominations are confirmed by the Returning Officer, there will be a notice of poll released detailing the candidates standing for election in each ward.

Potential costs

The period in the run up to the election is called the 'regulated period' where time and spending limits apply to promoting your candidacy. This will start the day after your nomination is announced and ends on polling day.



The spending in this time includes any expenses during the run up to the election, such as spending on goods, services, property or facilities.

The spending also includes any items or service that was bought before the regulated period began but was still used during the campaign and any items or services given to you free of charge which is known as ‘notional spending’.

You are responsible for your spending during the campaign, and you must fully and accurately report your candidate spending. All spending must be properly authorised, recorded and reported.

The spending limit for the regulated period is £806, plus 7p for every registered local government elector in the ward. Your local electoral registration officer will provide you with information regarding the number of registered electors in the local authority you are standing.

Candidate spending includes:

- Advertising of any kind like posters, YouTube videos, websites or adverts
- Any unsolicited material sent to voters like letters leaflets or emails that don’t address specific queries
- Transport costs
- Public meetings

- Staff costs
- Accommodation
- Administrative costs

If no expenses are incurred this is counted as a ‘nil return’ and the expense forms must still be submitted post-election.

For more information on the election process and spending, please visit the Electoral Commission website for an in-depth analysis of the process and spending.

What will happen on the day of the election?

Polling stations are open from 7am to 10pm. As a candidate you can:

- Visit polling stations but do not campaign inside them.
- Speak to supporters away from the entrance to the polling site, ensuring you do not influence their vote in any way.
- Monitor turnout information supplied to campaign teams.
- Encourage people to vote until polls close, but do not display campaign posters at the polling station.

After the polls close at 10pm, ballot boxes are taken to the count venue.

1. Officials will verify each vote to ensure that the ballot papers match the paperwork from polling stations.
2. Candidates and their appointed agents can observe the ballot papers being sorted and counted.
3. If the vote is very close, candidates can request a recount, and the Returning Officer will decide if this is justified.
4. The Returning Officer will announce the result, and the successful candidate is formally declared elected with vote totals for all candidates announced publicly.

If elected:

- The councillor will complete required acceptance paperwork.
- Attend induction and training sessions.
- Be allocated to committees and receive access to council systems, equipment and support arrangements.



If not elected:

- All election expenses must be submitted by the legal deadline.
- Campaign materials removed.
- The result can be reviewed by the candidate's team, and the candidate can consider standing again in future elections.

Term of office for an elected member

The term of office refers to the fixed period during which an elected councillor legally holds office, beginning and ending on dates set by statute. The Local Government Act 1972 (as it applies in Wales) defines the term of office as the period from the fourth day after the ordinary election at which a councillor is elected until the fourth day after the next ordinary election for that council.

Local authority elections in Wales will be held on the first Thursday in May and as defined by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the electoral cycle for principal councils is **five years.**

Declarations of acceptance of office

A person elected as a councillor cannot act in that capacity until they have signed a declaration of acceptance of office and delivered it to the proper officer of the council. If the

declaration is not made and delivered within two months from the day of the election, the office of the person elected shall become vacant.

The Code of Conduct for Members

All members of the council are bound by the provisions of the code and must agree in writing that they will observe it. If any member fails to sign up to the code within two months of it being adopted, then they will cease to be a member of the council. If a member fails to undertake or observe the code, they can be suspended from office.

A copy of the code is included in the Constitution.

What happens if a member breaches the code?

If someone believes that a member has breached the code, a complaint can be made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

If the Ombudsman believes them to be justified, it will be referred to the Standards Committee which every council must have, or to a tribunal convened by the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

There may also be local resolution procedures depending on the nature of the complaint. If the complaint is found to be proven, sanctions can range from no action through suspension to disqualification for five years. Even if a member is suspended, they are still subject to the code.

Register of interests

Members have to provide a record of their interests in a public register and should do so within 28 days of election or appointment to office (if that is later). Members should also notify in writing of any changes to their declaration on the register within 28 days to the Monitoring Officer. Failure to do so will be a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Declarations of interest

Alongside the register of interests, the code also requires that declaration of interests are made at meetings of the council (including Cabinet and committee meetings).

There are two types of interest, personal and prejudicial. A pro-forma is made available at each meeting to enable members to register their declaration in writing.



Member remuneration

Salaries and allowances are paid according to the findings of the Democracy and Boundary Commission Cymru (DBCC), which prescribes the levels for basic councillor expenses throughout Wales.

Councillors are not paid for attending meetings but receive a salary to reimburse them for the time and expenses incurred while on council business. The basic salary (currently £21,044 per annum) is paid to all members who wish to receive it. A senior salary (inclusive of basic salary) is paid to members who have specific additional responsibility such as a Committee Chair or Cabinet Member.

A full breakdown of payments and entitlements can be found on the council website: www.bridgend.gov.uk/council/council-and-democracy/councillors-remuneration/

Council meetings

Council meets approximately every four weeks either by attending in person in either the committee rooms or the council chamber at the Civic Offices in Angel Street, Bridgend CF31 4WB or remotely online using a suitable remote location. The Proper Officer for convening meetings of Council is the Monitoring Officer. The Democratic Services section prepares and dispatches the Council agenda and associated papers on their behalf and previous agendas and minutes can be viewed here: Minutes, Meetings and Agenda

Council Chamber and Committee Rooms

The council chamber and committee rooms are situated in the Civic Offices. The chamber is mostly used for Full Council meetings, Civic and formal council business and key decision-making sessions. The Committee rooms are also used for formal Council business and meetings as well as member training sessions and workshops. The Committee rooms provide a more flexible environment for detailed discussion, policy review and decision-making. Both the chamber and committee rooms provide seating for councillors, officers, members of the public and the media. Both are also equipped with modern meeting technology and designed to support transparency, scrutiny and public engagement.

Conduct of business

The conduct of business at meetings of Council is governed by the authority's rules of procedure as contained in section four of the council's Constitution.

The Constitution sets out how the council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are to be followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by law while others are a matter for the council to choose. The full document can be viewed here at Bridgend County Borough Council Constitution together with the Guide to the Constitution which can be viewed here: Guide to the Constitution

The Executive (Cabinet)

The Cabinet is responsible for taking most of the council's day-to-day decisions which are in line with the authority's overall policies and budget. Decisions taken by Cabinet are subject to call-in by Scrutiny. The executive is made up of the Leader of the council and seven other councillors appointed by the Leader to act as Cabinet Members, each holding a portfolio that relates to a corresponding service area.

Non-executive functions

Council takes decisions on the budget and policy framework while non-executive member-level decisions are considered and taken by regulatory committees such as Audit, Development Control (i.e. the council's planning function) or Licensing.

Scheme of Delegation of Functions

The Scheme of Delegation of Functions delegates decisions primarily to Cabinet Members and Chief Officers. The scheme allows for decisions to be made by Cabinet Members and Chief Officers rather than being made by Full Council, Cabinet or any of the regulatory committees.







The Forward Work Programme

The Forward Work Programme is published quarterly and covers a six month period. The programme contains information on:

- The timetable for considering the budget and any plans, policies or strategies which form part of the policy framework and require Council approval. It also indicates which body is to consider them.
- The timetable for considering any plans, policies or strategies which are the responsibility of Cabinet.
- Any individual matters on which the Cabinet intends to consult in advance of taking a decision, and the timetable for consultation and decision.

- The work programme of the overview and scrutiny committees, to the extent that it is known.

Overview and Scrutiny committee structure

The role of Overview and Scrutiny is to look at the services and issues that affect the lives of people in Bridgend County Borough. All councils are required to have at least one overview and scrutiny committee, although most have more.

Overview and scrutiny plays an important part in holding the Executive to account for their decisions, policies and the performance of council services. While they do not make decisions themselves, they can make recommendations to Cabinet and can also require members of the Executive and council officers to attend and answer questions.

Members of Overview and Scrutiny committees and regulatory committees

Members are appointed to Overview and Scrutiny committees and regulatory committees by Council. Seats are allocated proportionately according to the political balance of the authority, and the political groups submit their nominations. Chair and vice-chair positions for these committees are appointed by Council at its annual meeting.

Call-in

The council's Constitution allows for decisions or proposed decisions made by the Cabinet, a Cabinet committee, a Cabinet member or an officer to be called-in.

During the call in period - i.e. five clear working days - a decision can be called in by any three members of an Overview and Scrutiny committee and a Scrutiny Chair, and notification of this shall be given to the proper officer for committees.

If a decision is called in, a meeting of the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny committee has to be convened within five clear working days in order to debate the matter further. Should the committee consider it necessary, it can refer the item back to the decision-making person or body for further consideration.

Committees

Councillors are required to serve on committees because most council decision-making is carried out through committee structures. They scrutinise policies, investigate issues and

make recommendations or decisions on matters in their area of responsibility. Most councillors usually serve on at least three committees.

Committee places are allocated proportionally based on political party representation, meaning the membership of most committees must reflect the political balance of the council as closely as possible.

Decisions about who serves on which committee are usually made within each political group, often by group leaders. Independent councillors are generally assigned to committees based on available places and local representation.





A councillor's background, experience and interests may also influence the committees they become involved in. For example, someone with a background in education may have an interest in serving on the Education and Youth Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Annual Meeting of Council

This meeting is held in May to elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the council for the forthcoming municipal year and to decide on matters relating to the appointment of committees. The meeting will also determine who will be Leader – the Leader will then announce the composition of Cabinet. Follow this link to view the Annual Meeting 2026

Budget meeting of Council

A meeting of Council is usually held in February of each year to approve the authority's budget and set the council tax for the coming year. Generally, no other business is conducted at this meeting. Follow this link to view Council Budget Meeting 2026

Appointments to outside bodies and organisations

Members can be nominated to sit on various types of outside bodies such as community groups, partnership organisations and trusts. Members are normally appointed to outside bodies for a term of one year.

Nominations are made where applicable based on a member's role within the authority, i.e. a member of Cabinet or a chair of Scrutiny - the appointment is therefore attached to the role and not to the individual member.

Council issued equipment

Successful candidates elected as councillors will be provided with council ICT equipment to support them carrying out their duties effectively. This will include:

- A council-issued laptop.
- Access to council emails and systems.
- Microsoft 365 applications (Outlook, Teams, Word, Excel etc.)
- Secure remote access to council services.

Purpose of the equipment

The use of this equipment is to support councillors and enable them to:

- Access meeting papers and agendas electronically.
- Attend remote and hybrid meetings via MicrosoftTeams.
- Communicate with other elected members, officers and residents.
- Support their workload and correspondence capacity.
- Access training and development workshops and resources.

Training and support

Newly elected members will receive an ICT induction and set up support with access to training on council systems such as the council Intranet, electronic meeting papers and all Microsoft software. There will be ongoing support through the ICT service desk.

All elected Members are expected to complete mandatory e-learning training on a variety of subjects with refresher training required periodically, and in some cases on an annual basis. These modules can be accessed through the Learning and Development area of the Council intranet and help ensure Members remain informed of key corporate responsibilities and legal requirements.

Alongside this, Members have access to a structured Member Development Programme that begins with induction following election and continues throughout their term of office. The programme offers a range of training sessions, workshops, briefings and development opportunities designed to enhance knowledge, build skills and provide Members with the information and support needed to undertake their representative, regulatory and decision-making responsibilities confidently and effectively.

Reasonable adjustments for impairments

The council is committed to supporting elected members with disabilities, long term health conditions, and impairments to ensure they can fully participate in council business.

There is an option for increased ICT support with assistive software such as text-to-speech, speech-to-text tools, screen and text magnification, accessible laptop settings and configurations as well as a hearing loop and infra-red hearing systems within the chamber and committee rooms.





Most meetings will be hybrid or remote to accommodate schedules and any additional personal requirements.

Access to the Elected Office Fund Wales

Disabled people are underrepresented in Welsh political life. The Access to Elected Office Fund Wales aims to help disabled candidates by removing practical barriers and covering any additional costs that they may face when standing for election. Both political party and independent candidates are eligible for this fund.

The fund is managed by Disability Wales and funded by Welsh Government. It enables disabled people to fully participate in local democracy. The fund supports candidates with costs that nondisabled candidates may not face.

The fund can support and cover the cost of:

- British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters.
- Personal assistants.
- Accessible transport.
- Assistive technology.
- And more….

For more information, please get in touch with electedofficefund@disabilitywales.org

Personal safety protocol

Strong relationships between elected members and the communities they represent lies at the heart of local democracy. Face to face contact is essential for individuals in their wards to discuss issues and any concerns, enhancing the relationship between elected members and their constituents.

However, while it can be uncommon, councillors may occasionally face challenging situations including verbal, physical and online abuse.

During training and support, councillors will be provided with a copy of the Elected Member Personal Safety Protocol which sets out some useful steps that elected members can follow to keep themselves safe and enable them to carry out their role safely and effectively. Members will also be signposted to the council's Generic Risk assessment and Lone Working guidance to help manage personal safety risks. Training will also include Personal Safety, Conflict Management, Cyber Safety and Data Protection training and a

Member safety training programme will continue to run throughout the electoral term providing periodic updates to arrangements and refreshers as necessary.

Elected member role description

1 Accountabilities

- To Council (i.e. the decision-making body of Bridgend County Borough Council).
- To the electorate of their ward.

2 Role purpose and activity

- **Representing and supporting communities**
  - To represent ward interests.
  - To be an advocate for the council within the ward and communities they serve.
  - To be a channel of communication to the community on council strategies, policies, services and procedures.
  - To represent individual constituents and local organisations, undertaking casework on their behalf and serving all fairly and equally.
  - To liaise with executive members, other council members, council officers and partner organisations to ensure that the needs of the local communities are identified, understood and supported.
  - To promote tolerance and cohesion in local communities.





- **Making decisions and overseeing council performance**

- To participate in council meetings, reaching and making informed and balanced decisions, and overseeing performance.
- To participate in informed and balanced decision making on committees and panels to which they might be appointed.
- To adhere to the principles of democracy and collective responsibility in decision making.
- To promote and ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of council services and other public services.

- **Representing the council (subject to appointment)**
  - To represent the council on local outside bodies as an appointee of the authority.
  - To represent the council on local partnership bodies, promoting common interest and co-operation for mutual gain.
  - To represent and be an advocate for the council on national bodies and at national events.

- **Internal governance, ethical standards and relationships**
  - To promote and support good governance of the council and its affairs.
  - To provide community leadership and promote active citizenship.
  - To promote and support open and transparent government.
  - To support and adhere to respectful, appropriate and effective relationships with employees of the council.

  - To adhere to the member's Code of Conduct, the Member / Officer Protocol and the highest standards of behaviour in public office.

- **Personal and role development**
  - To participate in opportunities for development provided for members by the authority.

3 Values

To be committed to the values of the council and the following values in public office:

- Openness and transparency.
- Honesty and integrity.
- Tolerance and respect.
- Equality and fairness.
- Appreciation of cultural difference.
- Sustainability.

