

Thinking about being a **Councillor?**

A guide for prospective Councillors in Torridge



Torridge – a great place to live, work and visit

Could I be a Councillor?

To stand for election, on the day of nomination, you must be:

- 18 or over and a UK, EU or commonwealth citizen
- have registered to vote in the district of Torrington or
- for the whole 12 months preceding, you must have occupied, as owner or tenant, any land or premises in the district of Torrington, or
- worked (as principal employment) in the district of Torrington or
- lived in the district of Torrington.

You can't be a Councillor if you:

- Work for the Council you want to be a Councillor for, or for another local authority in a politically restricted post.
- Are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order.
- Have been sentenced to prison for three months or more (including suspended sentences) during the 5 years before election day.
- Have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (including a suspended sentence), without the option of a fine, during the five years before election day.
- Have been convicted of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court.

What skills and qualifications do I need?

No formal qualifications are needed. Many people become Councillors because they have an interest in speaking on behalf of local people and improving aspects of local communities and services.

Do I have to belong to a political party?

People who are interested in becoming a Councillor do not have to belong to a political party. If you are a member of a political party you will have the support of your political group, but some Councillors prefer to stay completely independent.

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What do Councillors do?

Councillors are elected to represent a number of local residents in an area called a ward. The role of a Councillor can be very varied and Councillors have responsibilities to their ward, to the Council and to the community.

Responsibilities include:

- Represent local people's views and concerns.
- Provide local leadership to help make the areas they serve better places to live.
- Help improve services to local people and help to check that local areas are managed effectively.
- Work with the health service, police, businesses, voluntary and community groups to help achieve these aims.
- Take part in making important decisions affecting the whole of the District.

Ward responsibilities could include:

- Listening to and representing the views of residents and to make sure services are delivered effectively in their ward.
- Trying to secure extra resources and grants for their ward.
- Helping out individual ward members on specific issues, known as 'casework'.

Council responsibilities include:

- Representing the whole District.
- Helping to form policy.
- Helping to develop the Council's budget and agreeing the level of Council Tax.
- Making or scrutinising decisions.

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How the Council works

The Council operates the following committees:

- Audit & Governance Committee.
- Community & Resources Committee.
- Joint Crematorium Committee.
- Licensing Committee.
- Overview & Scrutiny Committees (one internal and one external).
- Plans Committee.
- Standards Committee.

In addition to elected members, there are a number of non-elected representatives who sit on our Standards, Overview & Scrutiny and Audit Committees.

In the interests of openness and accountability Parish and Town Councils play an important role on the Standards Committee.

The Community & Resources Committee is the main financial decision making committee of the Council.

Lead Members are elected members who act as an advocate or spokesperson for a key theme of the Council's business. The main responsibility of each Lead Member is to encourage communication and positive action over the theme they represent.

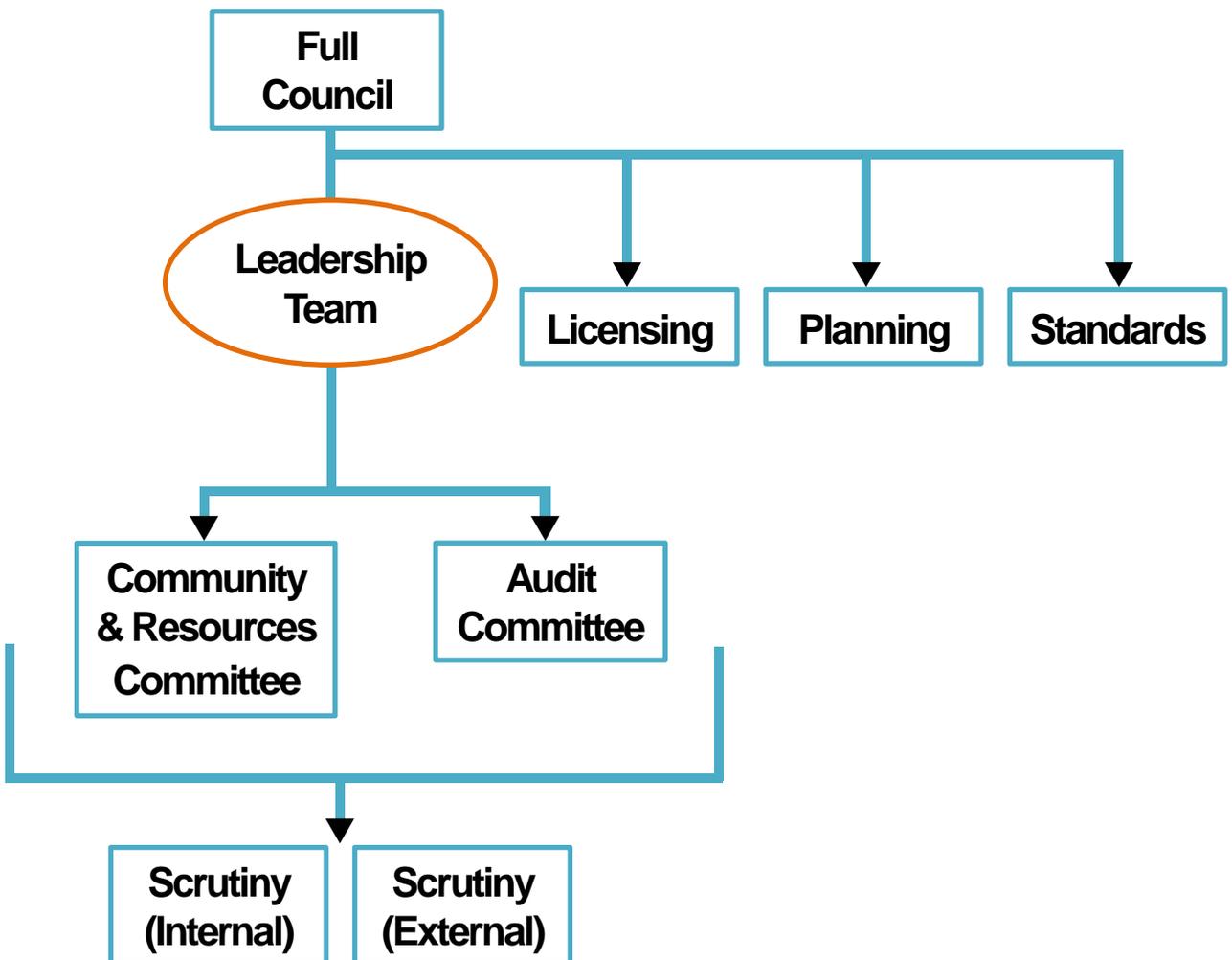
Torridge currently has nine Lead Members:

- Culture and Leisure.
- Customer Services and Internal Resources.
- Democratic Support.
- Economy.
- Environment.
- Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety.
- Housing.
- Planning and Development.
- Waste and Recycling.

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How the Council works

Committee Structure



Torrige District Council

Torrige District Council is a rural Council within the North West of Devon.

The district is predominantly rural with the main towns comprising Bideford, Holsworthy and Great Torrington.

Torrige has a total population of 66,799.

The net revenue budget for the Council for 2018/19 for services provided to the public is £10.31m.

The Council has a property portfolio which includes a variety of land and property assets including Managed Commercial land and industrial estates, offices, depots, car parks, cemeteries, play areas, public conveniences, woods and amenity land.

For a complete list of services that Torrige provides please visit our website – www.torrige.gov.uk.

Our Strategic Goals:

- Developing a Prosperous & Sustainable Economy.
- Stronger, Safer, Healthier Communities.
- Protecting and Enhancing our Quality Environment.
- An Effective and Customer Focused Council.

Torrige District Council's vision is:

Torrige - a great place to live, work and visit

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Do I have the time?

It is for you to decide the level of commitment you are able to give to being a Councillor. 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 each day at busier times.

There are some issues you will need to consider:

- How will your role as a Councillor affect your family and personal relationships? You will need their support and understanding as you may be spending some of your spare time on Council business.
- It is a fundamental requirement of the role that Councillors work from home as well as the Council offices to effectively serve their constituents' interests. Facilities at the Council offices are limited and you are likely to receive a lot of post, emails and telephone calls.
- There are usually eight Full Council meetings each year, which you will be expected to attend.
- You are likely to be a member of at least one committee. Your meetings may not be evenly spread out over the year, so some weeks you may be out more than others.
- The average length of a committee meeting is approximately three hours, but this could vary. Meetings can be in the daytime or evening.
- Many Councillors also represent the Council on one or more outside bodies. Background reading and attendance at meetings of these bodies would increase your time commitment.
- For most of the meetings you attend there will be reports that you will need to read beforehand. You will receive a lot of information as a Councillor: managing this and prioritising it will be important.

It is worth remembering that the officers employed by the Council are there to provide you with briefings and help on specific issues.

What support will I get?

What support will I receive if I am elected?

Information to help you deal with ward matters and other work you do as a Councillor will be provided by officers of the Council, but it is more likely that help and guidance on your role will come from the Senior Officers.

Will I get any training?

Yes – A full induction and training program will be provided. This will include a days induction (Thursday 9 May) where you will be given a general overview of the Council, the services provided, finances, our committees, role of a Councillor etc. You will also get a chance to meet fellow Councillors and Senior Managers. Other specific training will be provided within the initial period following your election including: Planning, Licensing, Standards and Chairing skills.

We believe that it is important that you receive the best training available and throughout your term of office you will be able to access a range of in-house and external training.

An Induction pack containing useful information will be provided and our Senior Managers and Democratic Services team will be on hand to answer questions and provide general support and guidance throughout your term in office.

Will I get time off work?

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 will depend on your responsibilities and the effect of your absence on your employer's business. You should discuss this with your employer before making the commitment to stand.

Will I get paid for duties as a Councillor?

Councillors receive an annual basic allowance which is currently £4660.47 per annum which is paid monthly. Councillors will need to be accessible via email and have access to the internet.

Councillors are also entitled to claim travelling and subsistence expenses incurred while on Council business. Special responsibility allowances are also paid where appropriate.

What next ?

Nominations

Once you have decided to stand for election as a Councillor, you will need to be proposed and seconded by two people and have a further eight people as 'assentors' to your nomination who are residents in the ward.

Full details of the electoral process, including the nomination procedure, is available on request from the Council's Electoral Services Team, on 01237 428739 or email elections@torridge.gov.uk.

The nomination pack will include nomination forms, timetables and guidance notes. The timetable for the next local election is available on request.

It is your responsibility, or your agent's (see next page), to present your nomination papers to the Returning Officer before the statutory deadline.

A prospective candidate briefing will be on Wednesday 6th March 2019, 6:00pm, at Bideford Town Hall.

Nomination Forms

Some points you should consider:

- Nomination packs will be available after 6th March 2019 and must be completed and returned by 4pm on 3rd April 2019.
- All Nomination Papers must be hand delivered by the candidate or agent to Riverbank House, Bideford, EX39 2QG.
- Do not leave this task until the last minute, as there may be a mistake in your papers that you may need time to rectify.
- It is important to read the nomination papers and supporting material and make a careful note of when each of the various papers needs to be returned. The returning officer can help with any queries.

Nomination Register

In the run up to the election, candidates are entitled to a nomination register for the ward for which they are standing, which lists residents who can vote at the next election and includes a map showing the ward boundaries.

What next ?

Do I need an election agent?

You do not have to have an election agent - you can take on this role yourself - but most people standing for election find that having an agent is a great help.

It is the agent's responsibility to make sure that all the necessary forms are sent in at the correct times, and to keep a clear and accurate record of financial expenditure, to be submitted after the election.

If you are a member of a political party, it's quite common to share an election agent with several other candidates.

Election expenses: who pays?

If you decide to become a Councillor, it is important to note that you will have to pay for your own publicity material, property, services or items used for your election campaign.

However, if you are a member of a political party or some other group, you may find that it will provide some financial help with your campaign. You will need to check this with your political party or group.

Furthermore, although you or your party or group pays your election expenses, you must keep all your receipts. You will need to submit a statement of election expenses, supported by receipts shortly after the election. This is done to make sure that the money you spend on the election campaign does not go over the limit set by the Electoral Commission which is £740 + 6p per elector within the ward you are standing. The spending limit is reduced if you are a "joint" candidate standing in the same ward. A "joint" candidate is classified as one that:

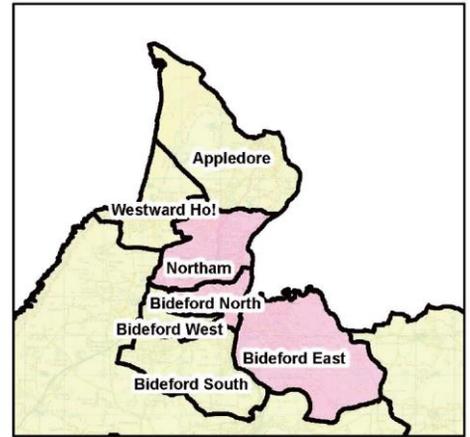
- Has the same election agent or
- Use the same campaign rooms or
- Publish joint material

The reduction in spending limits is 25% where there are two candidates or 33% where there are three or more. Note the reductions only apply if any of the above criteria are met and not simply because there is more than one candidate in a ward. Please contact the elections office for further clarification if required.

No election expenses are refundable.

Torridge

Ward Map



For more information visit:
<https://torridge.gov.uk/newwards>

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Useful contacts

Contacts at Torridge District Council

Main Switchboard

01237 428700

www.torridge.gov.uk

Electoral Services Team

01237 428739

elections@torridge.gov.uk

Local Government Useful Contacts

Local Government Association (LGA)

18 Smith Square,

Westminster

LONDON SW1P 3HZ

0207 664 3000

www.lga.gov.uk

Devon Association of Local Councils

First Floor

3 & 4 Cranmere Court

Lustleigh Close

Matford Business Park

EXETER EX2 8PW

01392 248919

www.devonalc.org.uk

Electoral Commission

0333 103 1928

www.electoralcommission.org.uk