

Being a Councillor – Job Description

There are a number of different strands to being a local councillor. These are outlined below.

Representing Your Ward

You are first and foremost elected to represent the residents in your ward and to lobby decision makers both within the council and external to the council on behalf of local residents. This can include making representations to the Planning Committee about a planning application in your area.

Decision Making

You must attend any and all relevant meetings. All councillors must attend the monthly meetings of the Full Council. Councillors are also appointed to other panels, groups and committees; the meetings for which you are expected to attend and actively engage in. This could include internal scrutiny panels as well as 'outside bodies' such as community associations. You might also take on being a Party Spokesperson for a particular area of the council's work such as Traffic and Transportation.

Scrutiny

Scrutiny is an important part of how the council works. It gives councillors the opportunity to look at council policies and assess how they can be improved. Scrutiny is an important process for opposition and back bench councillors to hold the council's administration to account for their decisions.

Quasi-judicial Committees

As a London Borough, Lambeth Council is also the Local Planning Authority and the Local Licensing Authority. This means that councillors might sit on one of these panels which make non-political decisions about planning and licensing applications respectively.

Representing the Party and its Values

As Liberal Democrats, it is also the job of Lib Dem councillors to speak to the values and policies of the party when at all possible. This includes taking decisions based on fairness, equality and community.

Community Leadership and Engagement

Localism and community empowerment have always been core values of the Liberal Democrats. Lib Dem councillors are expected to get 'stuck-in' in their local area and show grassroots level leadership. This includes engagement in local community associations, residents groups and Neighbourhood Forums.

Being a Councillor – Person Specification

To run for the elected office of ‘Councillor’, you must be at least 18 years old on the day of your nomination, be a British, Commonwealth or EU citizen and meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. You are registered to vote in Lambeth.
2. You have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in Lambeth during the whole of the 12 months before the day of your nomination and the day of election.
3. Your main or only place of work during the 12 months prior to the day of your nomination and the day of election is in Lambeth.
4. You have lived in Lambeth during the whole of the 12 months before the day of your nomination and the day of election.

While you don’t need any special qualifications to be a councillor, having or being able to develop the following skills, knowledge and attributes will help you in the role.

Communication skills

These include listening and interpersonal skills, public speaking skills, the ability to consider alternative points of view and to negotiate, mediate and resolve conflict.

Problem solving and analytical skills

This includes being able to get to the bottom of an issue and to think of different ways to resolve it, including considering the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

Team working

This includes being able to work with others in meetings and on committees. It also includes being able to complete any tasks that you agree to do on time.

Organisational skills

Being able to plan and manage your time, keep appointments and meet deadlines.

Ability to engage with your local community

You may have to make yourself available through meetings, the media, the internet, public forums, debates and on the telephone