



**SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL  
INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS**

**Sherborne Town Council**



# **Information for Prospective Councillors**

**For Elections on Thursday 1 December 2022**



## **SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS**

Dear Prospective Sherborne Town Councillor,

Thank you for expressing an interest in Sherborne Town Council and for considering standing for election on 1 December 2022 to be a Sherborne Town Councillor.

It is hoped that this information booklet will provide you with a reasonable understanding of the role of a Town Council and the responsibilities held by Sherborne Town Council.

This information booklet has been produced utilising generic material developed by the National Association of Councils (NALC), the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) as well as specific information relating to Sherborne Town Council.

Having read the booklet if you have any queries or questions please do contact either:

Steve Shield—Town Clerk— [townclerk@sherborne-tc.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@sherborne-tc.gov.uk)

Sue Woodford—Civic Administrator—[civicadmin@sherborne-tc.gov.uk](mailto:civicadmin@sherborne-tc.gov.uk)



## SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS

### What is a Parish or Town Council ?

Parish and Town Councils are the same; they have the same powers and act within the same legislation. A Town Council is a Parish Council that has usually decided to have a Mayor and call itself a Town Council. Parish and Town councils are the tier of local government **closest to the people**.

Parish Councils represent the concerns and aspirations of a genuine local community. They are not a voluntary organisation, not a charity nor (a common mistake) anything to do with the Church. A larger Parish or Town Council can cover quite large populations and will often provide a wide range of facilities. Despite being strictly audited each year, Parish Councils are the most non-bureaucratic and the cheapest kind of local authority in existence.

### What can they do?

As Parish Councils were created in law, they can only act within the law by exercising their powers and functions which have been conferred on them by Statutes (i.e. Acts of Parliament). Anything a Parish Council tries to do outside these powers is *ultra vires*, in other words, outside the law. The range of powers available to Parish Councils continues to change. The Localism Act was introduced in November 2011. The aim of the Act was to devolve more decision making powers from central government back into the hands of the individuals, communities and councils. The Act covers a wide range of issues related to local public services, with a particular focus on the general power of competence, community rights, neighbourhood planning and housing. The key measures of the Act were grouped under four main headings:

- New freedoms and flexibilities for local government

- New rights and power for communities and individuals

- Reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective

- Reform to ensure decisions about housing are taken locally

Parish and Town Councils have many powers if they choose to use them. It is how and which of these powers that councillors decide to use, that makes a vibrant forward thinking Parish Council and can bring positive benefits to communities. The basic responsibility of Parish and Town Councils is to make the lives of their local communities more comfortable by representing the whole electorate within the parish, delivering or co-ordinating services to meet local needs and striving to improve quality of life in the parish. Parish and Town Councils can also comment on planning applications and be represented at public enquiries.



## SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS

Town and Parish Councils do not receive Council Tax directly from the public, but are primarily funded at present from a small percentage of the Council Tax charge made by District/Unitary authorities to local householders. Their annual budgets can be anything from £1,000 to sums in excess of £5,000,000, with some even raising further income from services they provide. Parish and Town Council budgets are a tiny part of the whole Council Tax and Parish and Town Councils do not receive any Government funding or income from business rates. Whatever the make up of your council, it embodies the representation of people's hopes and concerns for ensuring that local services are provided efficiently and effectively for the benefit of community wellbeing. A well informed council is aware of what its community needs and strives to provide this through team work, accessing grant funding, representation at other meetings and lobbying appropriate bodies.

Town and Parish Councils have a duty to appoint or employ a Clerk to record and carry out the council's decisions, and larger councils may employ further staff. All councils must meet at least four times a year (although most meet more often) and their meetings must be open to the public, although for certain restricted items of confidentiality they may occasionally exclude the public. A Parish or Town Council *is* the collective voice of its community.

### Overview:

Sherborne Town Council is the parish authority for the town of Sherborne and has an estimated population of nearly 10,000 and has approximately 4,835 dwellings. It is the third tier of government after Parliament and the Unitary Council. The Town Council's powers are granted to it and regulated by various Government Acts.

The Town Council supplements the provision of local government services in Sherborne and provides a range of social and recreational facilities, while promoting and representing the town with other national and statutory bodies.



## SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS

Dorset Council has the responsibility for the whole of the county (except Bournemouth and Poole and Christchurch) and has responsibility for education, social services, highways, fire and rescue, strategic planning, libraries, development control, environmental health, refuse collection, economic development, tourism and major recreational facilities and it consults with the Town Council on such subjects as the County Structure Plan, the Local Transport Plan and the Mineral and Waste Local Plan, the District Wide Local Plan and planning applications within Sherborne town.

### **Structure:**

Sherborne Town Council comprises 12 Councillors who are normally elected for a 4 year term, but are currently elected for a term of 5 years in both 2019 and 2024, then return to a term of 4 years in 2029.

Councillors who are elected at a subsequent by-election or are co-opted to fill a casual vacancy during the course of the 4 or 5 year term will hold office until the end of that term. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor are elected from the 12 Councillors at the Annual Statutory Meeting in May of each year.

A copy of the Town Council's Councillor Information Folder, which contains Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and general guidance notes will be supplied to all Councillors at the commencement of their term of office.

The town is divided into 2 wards, East and West. 6 Councillors represent each ward, a map showing the ward areas and a list of the roads they cover is attached at Appendix A.

The Civic Year runs from May to April with the election of the Mayor, Chairman of the Council and the Deputy Mayor, Vice Chairman taking place at the Annual Statutory Meeting in May. These roles, along with the Environment Committee Chairman, Wellbeing Committee Chairman, and Portfolio Holders, are filled by Councillors who have been nominated and voted for by their Council Colleagues. Town Councillors are voluntary, although they can choose to receive a small allowance that is available to cover council-related costs such as stationery, travel, telephone, etc.



## **SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS**

### **Meetings and Committees:**

The Council operates with bi-monthly Town Council Meetings and quarterly meetings of the Wellbeing Committee and Environment Committee. As the Town Council is a statutory consultee on all planning applications within the parish of Sherborne, planning applications are considered at every meeting. There are Portfolio Holders for Finance, Properties, Open Spaces and Staff Health and Safety. Subject matters are brought before the Council and Committees by means of the Agenda, which is issued a minimum of three clear working days before each meeting and is posted on the main public notice boards and on the Town Council website and social media. The agenda is set a week before each meeting by the Town Clerk in liaison with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor or Committee Chairman. Agendas are distributed electronically unless a paper version is requested. At full Council meetings, the Committees' minutes are received along with officers' reports usually containing recommendations which are voted upon.

The press and public are welcome to attend all Council meetings and the public may put questions or make statements on any matter during the Public Forum which takes place on the commencement of each meeting.

The minimum commitment expected of a Councillor is that they attend full Town Council meetings and Committee meetings and if they are unable to attend, they notify the Town Clerk with their apologies, seeking acceptance.

The Town Council meetings usually take place on the third Monday of the month at 6.00 pm, in the Council Chamber at the Manor House, Newland. The Committees usually meet on the first Monday of the month, commencing at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber at the Manor House, Newland. There is full disabled access and a hearing loop available on request.

### **How do Council and Committee meetings operate?**

The following items appear on the Town Council agenda and in addition it will detail the specific business relevant to that meeting.

- Public Session (30 minutes, or longer if the Mayor considers it appropriate)

- Apologies for Absence

- Declarations of Interest

- Approval of the Minutes of the last meeting

- Approval of the Minutes of the relevant Committee

- Mayor's Announcements

- Financial Reports, Subject Specific Reports and Confidential Reports (occasionally)



## **SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS**

The Town Council agenda also covers recommendations from the Committees and reports from the Councillors of Dorset Council and Town Council Officers on behalf of Portfolio Holders. The local Policing Team usually attend and provide an update on activity or provide a report. Each agenda item is discussed and voted upon by the Council. The Minutes, which are not a verbatim account of the meeting, detail the decisions reached and are a record of the votes taken. The minutes are made available, once approved, to members of the public via the Town Council Website or from the Town Clerk's office. Once a decision has been passed by Council and a course of action identified, the work is organised and carried out by the Council's staff under the control of the Town Clerk.

### **Representation to Community and Local Organisations:**

Through their role as Councillors and/or Portfolio Holders, Councillors act as representatives to organisations and groups within the town. This involvement of Councillors in the local community develops the Council's greater understanding of the role of these organisations and groups.

### **Working Groups:**

Working Groups are formed as and when required, to discuss particular issues and to report back to full Council.

### **Civic Events:**

Councillors are expected to attend various civic occasions through the civic year ranging from the Mayor Making Ceremony to the Remembrance Day Parade and including civic receptions.

### **Notice Boards and Locations:**

We presently have noticeboards at The Manor House, Newland; Cheap Street Post Office; Digby Hall, with other sites identified.





## SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS

### **Town Council Staff:**

The Town Council's executive officer is the Town Clerk, who leads a team of 18 staff including Grounds and Property Manager, Responsible Finance Officer, Civic Administrator, Facilities Administrator and Clerical Administrator. The Grounds and Property Manager oversees the outside staff and the two caretakers who maintain the Digby Hall and Manor House. The office staff provide the financial, Committee and full Council support services; they also provide a public reception service for local government, venue booking service and administrative support for the mayoral role and civic events.

### **The Town Council's portfolio includes:**

- ♦ Abbey Close benches, bollards, clock, floodlights, gates, paths, walls, trees and lawns.
- ♦ Allotment at Bristol Rd, Harbour Road, Harbour Court, Lenthay Close, McCreery Rd & Westbridge Park.
- ♦ 4 Bus Shelters , 14 Grit Bins, 50 plus public benches and litter bins
- ♦ Play Areas at Lambsfield, Granville Way, St Pauls, Simons Road, Culverhays, Midleaze, Ridgeway and a Skatepark.
- ♦ The Conduit, War Memorial, Weighbridge and the Digby Hall in Hound Street.
- ♦ Pageant, Paddock and Newland Gardens and The Quarr Nature Reserve.
- ♦ Sherborne Cemetery and New Extension. The Terrace Playing Field a 40 acre site.
- ♦ Numerous areas of public open space and highway verge grass cutting on behalf of DCC.
- ♦ Providing small grants to local organisations and running the Simon Digby (Sherborne) Memorial Trust which has invested heavily into community projects .

### **How the Council is funded:**

The Council Tax paid by Sherborne households presently includes the spending requirements of Dorset Council, Dorset Police, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue and Sherborne Town Council. Dorset Council is responsible for the collection of Council Tax. Many people do not realise that the Town Council does not receive any revenue support from central government, unlike the Unitary Councils; neither does it receive any funding from local businesses and retailers via their payment of the business rate.

Each year the Town Council calculates the money it needs to raise in order to provide the necessary services. From that is deducted the income expected from fees and charges, such as hire of sports facilities, cemetery fees, etc., to leave the amount required to spend on the services and any capital projects which are planned for the year ahead. This sum, called the Precept, is the amount the Council levy on Dorset Council, which Dorset Council then collects as a proportion of the total Council Tax paid by Sherborne





## SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS

The Sherborne Town Council precept for the year 2022/2023 was set at £870,582.

### What does a Councillor do?

Most people's impression of what a Councillor does is that they just attend council meetings and nothing could be further from the truth. The duties and pleasure, of being a local Councillor are many and varied, however it is the ordinary day to day contact with local people in their own community that is the most important part of being a Councillor.

A Parish or Town Councillor signs a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and thereby undertakes to observe an ethical Code of Conduct when dealing with matters on behalf of the community. A Councillor also completes a register of interests.

**Listening:** One of the most important tasks of a Parish or Town Councillor is listening to and understanding the views of people in their community. Many public bodies or organisations acknowledge this is the hardest information for them to capture and they in turn use the skills and local knowledge of the Parish or Town Council for advice to assist and inform their services.

**Meetings:** A Councillor agrees to attend all meetings (reasonably possible) to which he or she is summoned. In a smaller Council this may only require one meeting of full Council a month (there are however a few small Councils that still only meet once every two months). However, in medium and larger Councils, along with full council meetings, there are further committee meetings or working groups. Most meetings are held in the evening (Mondays) but some committees and working groups may be during the day.

**Representation:** Parish Councils also need representation at other local government meetings or on local bodies/organisations and Councillors may be asked to serve on certain groups or attend functions on behalf of the Parish Council. Councillors act as ambassadors for their community keeping everyone aware of local needs and concerns and reporting back on District/Unitary, County and regional changes. Councillors represent the voice of their community as a whole, whilst being aware of and considerate to, specific minority needs.

**Ceremonial Duties:** In some larger Councils there will be times when Councillors are asked to attend civic functions as part of their duty to the community. This may entail Remembrance Parades, civic dinners or attendance at public functions to name but a few.



## SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS

**Extra skills:** Through all of these functions Councillors will draw on their own skills and experiences and it is the sharing of these skills that makes a strong team. Parish and Town Councils provide a focus for the community to identify concerns and projects and endeavour to solve them locally themselves. Councillors working as a team will need to deal with employment issues, budgeting, asset management, staff management, project management or grant funding and probably lots more if they are creative and involved. All councils must be aware and owe a duty to their community to manage staff considerately, whether it is employing one Parish Clerk or a whole host of office and grounds' maintenance staff. Accounts must be kept and whilst the Clerk (or Responsible Financial Officer) will be employed to carry out this duty, Councillors together as a team are responsible for the financial decisions made and implemented. The clerk is employed to advise and seek advice on behalf of Councillors to assist them in their decisions. Councillors are there to consider the information gathered and make a group decision on all matters. No individual councillor is responsible for any single decision. This is democracy at its best.

**Training and support:** Training is available to any Council, large or small. Legislation allows for Councils to pay for training and ongoing training for Councillors is sound business management. The County Secretary for the Association of Local Councils in your area will be able to provide details of professional training programmes designed specifically for Councillors. See the useful contacts section in this pack for contact information.

**Responsibility:** All Councillors are expected to abide by the Parish Councils Code of Conduct. Each local Council must adopt and publicise a Code of Conduct that is in line with the Nolan principles. The Code deals with Councillors obligations about their conduct, including the registration and disclosure of their interests. Complaints about councillors' conduct are dealt with by the principal authority. The responsibilities detailed in the Code of Conduct are designed to protect Councillors as well as the people they serve and give clear guidance so that Councillors may undertake their duties with confidence.



## SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS

### **Dorset Council Area - How to become a councillor:**

Even those who have stood as Councillors before may forget what the process is like. Whilst relatively easy, it is strict and, if not followed exactly, will result in disappointment and rejection for the wrong reasons! The rules are there to ensure that only those who are eligible to stand for election in your community are considered and that those put forward have agreed to stand for election. Parish Councillors are elected by the public and normally serve 4 year terms in office. However, due to the recent formation of Dorset Council, for the 2019 and 2024 elections, the term will be 5 years to bring them in line with national county, and unitary elections. They will then revert to the usual 4 year term.

### **If you wish to stand as a Councillor you must satisfy these requirements:**

- ♦ To be over 18 years of age
- ♦ To be a British citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union
- ♦ Plus at least one of the following qualifications: to be registered as a local government elector for the Parish or Town Council area in which you wish to stand; to have, during the whole of the previous 12 month period, occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises in the Parish or Town council area; or your main or only place of work during the whole of the previous 12 month period has been in the Parish or Town Council area; or you have, during the whole of the previous 12 month period, lived in the parish or Town Council area (or within 4.8 km of it)

### **You cannot stand for election if you:**

You cannot be a candidate if at the time of your nomination or their election:

- ♦ You are employed by the Parish or Town Council or hold a paid office under that council; or
- ♦ You are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order in England or Wales; or
- ♦ You 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 (i.e. since 1 November 2017); or
- ♦ You may also be disqualified from election if you have been convicted or reported guilty of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court, or if they have been disqualified from standing for election to a local authority



## SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS

### A few terms that you will encounter explained:

**Returning Officer** – person empowered to run an election.

**Standing** - Putting your name forward for election.

**Electoral Register** – Names and addresses, together with election identification numbers, of all people within a community who are registered to vote.

**Election Timetable** – dates when specific forms must be publicised or submitted.

**Warded** – Areas are split up into what is called ‘wards’ so that Councillors are elected by a specific smaller number of people and will be aware of their local concerns rather than having to represent all people within a whole parish.

**Expenses** – If you do produce your own leaflets/pamphlets you need to declare how much you have spent on this.

### The Election Procedure:

#### 1. Publication of the Notice of Election.

The Returning Officer (normally the Chief Executive of the Council) has the duty to call an election. Notice of Election will be given on Thursday, 27 October 2022. Notices will be available on the Council website, Social Media and distributed to Parish and Town Clerks for them to display.

#### 2. Getting the nomination forms

Nomination forms will be available to download from <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/media/5016> for candidates.

#### 3. Completing the nomination forms

You will need to fill in all your personal details and those of the people nominating you. You and those nominating will be asked to fill in your Electoral Register number. This is the district code on the front of the Electoral Register e.g. A Village might be ‘SX’ then this is followed by the number that appears next to your name, or next to the name of the person nominating you. The entry in this box will therefore read something like ‘SX 413’.

#### 4. Returning nomination forms

It is imperative that you submit your forms in accordance with the election timetable and can ONLY be delivered by hand and by appointment. Failure to do so will render your application null and void.



## SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS

### Checklist:

Do not forget to get **everyone** mentioned to sign the forms

Ensure that all addresses are in **full** with no abbreviations

Include the whole Electoral Register reference **letters and numbers**

**Be careful not to miss important dates** (see insert 12 'Election Timetable' enclosed)

### Election Timetable:

#### Key dates

**Notice of Election – Thursday 27 October 2022 to 4pm on Friday 4 November 2022**. This will be displayed locally and on the internet by this date. Nominations can be received from Monday Friday 28 October 2022. We encourage the return of nomination papers as early as possible during the nomination period to allow for any errors to be corrected and returned before the close of nominations. The deadline cannot be extended for any reason.

**Close of Withdrawals – 4pm on Friday 4 November 2022**

**Publication of Statement of Persons Nominated – 4pm on Monday 7 November 2022**

**Notice of Poll – Wednesday 23 November 2022**

**Last day to register to vote – Tuesday, 15 November 2022**

**Receipt of Postal Vote Applications – 5pm Wednesday 16 November 2022 –**

Anyone who is on the register can have a postal vote for any reason, either for an indefinite period, just for this election (helpful if you are on holiday) or away for a period of time (useful for students in temporary accommodation). Electors can download forms from [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk). Please ensure that people do not already have postal votes as a new application may cancel their existing postal vote and give them less time to receive their postal ballot papers in the post.

**Election Expenses** – These must be signed and returned to the Councils' Elections Offices, by the relevant date shown below in section 3 - even if the report is nil.



## SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS

### Nomination Process and Informal Checking

Nomination packs are available online at <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/media/5016> or can be obtained from the offices of the Returning Officer, Dorset Council, County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester. DT1 1XJ

and from Councils' Elections Offices.

It is the duty of the individual candidate to ensure delivery by hand of nomination forms to Dorset Council between the publication of notice of election and the close of nomination. (You may wish to **check with your Council election office for confirmation of timetable**). Delivery between **Thursday 27 October 2022** and **4pm on Friday 4 November 2022**.

### Nomination Paper and Consent to Nomination:

Very important - **both** must be completed in order for a candidate's nomination to be accepted.

**Candidate's details:** It is not permissible to use abbreviations e.g. Jon M Jones instead of Jonathan Michael Jones; both the name and address provided **must** be in **full**. A telephone number and e-mail address will be useful in case the Electoral Service Office needs to contact the candidate.

**Description:** Candidates may put the description/occupation they wish to appear on the ballot paper, such as:

**Independent – Teacher – Housewife - Farmer etc.**

If a candidate is standing for a political party then this party must be a registered political party. The relevant form must be completed, including the request to use an emblem if this is required, in order for the nomination to be accepted.

Parish elections require a Proposer and a Secunder from the relevant Parish or Parish Ward for which the candidate is standing. The candidate, proposer and seconder must sign the nomination paper, print their name and include their full electoral number (i.e. the letters representing the polling district – on the front cover of the Register together with the number beside the elector's name). Make sure you use the correct register, details of which are available on the Dorset Council website at <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/councillors-committees-elections/elections-and-voting/the-electoral-register>.

**The Consent to Nomination:** This **must** be **completed and signed** for the candidate's nomination to be accepted. At least **one** section (a), (b), (c) or (d) **must** be filled in. It is recommended that you complete as many of the sections to which you



## SHERBORNE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE COUNCILLORS

### **Election Expenses**

Election expenses must not exceed £740 together with an additional 6p for every entry in the Register of Electors, for the Parish/Parish Ward. The declaration of Candidate's expenses must be made by Thursday 29 December 2022 – even if it is a NIL return. Please note that these expenses are not recoverable.

**Finally we wish to reiterate the importance of checking all of these dates and the complete Election Timetable at the web sites shown at the head of this article.**

## **Dorset Council Area - Information for Town & Parish Elections Polling Day Thursday 1 December 2022**

**IMPORTANT – This information was accurate at the time of printing but may be subject to amendment. Please check all dates prior to taking action.**

**<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>**

**Further information online at :**

**<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/councillors-committees-elections/elections-and-voting>**



## APPENDIX A



The black lines indicate the Ward boundaries. The division between East Ward and West Ward runs down Marston Road and around Sheeplands (which is in the East Ward) and then up to Greenhill and down Cheap Street joining the perimeter boundary at New Road., Each Ward is represented by six council members.