

NEWBIGGIN BY THE SEA

TOWN COUNCIL

Guidance for those interested in standing for election as a Councillor

1 What is a Town councillor?

A Town Councillor is an unpaid post. By becoming a Town Councillor in Newbiggin by the Sea you become someone your community will look to for help, guidance and support – a community leader with the opportunity to influence decisions for the benefit of the people you serve, the parishioners of Newbiggin by the Sea.

Local Councils in England and Wales are the tier of local government closest to the communities.

2 Eligibility

Qualifications

A person is qualified to be elected or co-opted to be a Councillor if he/she is a qualifying Commonwealth citizen or a Euro national and meets certain criteria.

(A qualifying Commonwealth citizen is a person who is a Commonwealth citizen who either is not a person who requires leave under the Immigration Act 1971 to enter or remain in the United Kingdom, OR is such a person but for the time being has (or is, by virtue of any enactment, to be treated as having) indefinite leave to remain within the meaning of that Act).

The qualifying criteria require a candidate to be:-

- a) 18 years of age or over on the day a candidate is nominated and, if there is a poll, the day of the election
- b) on that day and thereafter the person continues to be a local government elector in Newbiggin by the Sea; or
- c) he/she has during the whole of the twelve months preceding that day occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in Newbiggin by the Sea; or
- d) his/her principal or only place of work during that twelve months has been in Newbiggin by the Sea; or
- e) he/she has during the whole of those twelve months resided in Newbiggin by the Sea; or
- f) he/she has during the whole of those twelve months resided either in Newbiggin by the Sea or within three miles of it.

Disqualifications

Despite complying with the above a person may not be elected or co-opted to the Council if he/she:

- a) holds paid office in the council; or
- b) is subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or an interim order or a debt relief restrictions order or interim order; or
- c) within 5 years prior to election or co-option has been convicted of an offence and sentenced to not less than 3 months imprisonment; or
- d) is convicted of offences involving corrupt or illegal practices; or
- e) is convicted of failing to register or declare disclosable interests under the Localism Act 2011.

3 Competencies, Requirements and Activities

There are no formal qualifications required to be a Councillor although the following list details core competencies that are considered to be essential or desirable thus providing the Town Council with a good range of knowledge, experience, skills and ability.

3(a) Competencies

Competency	Essential	Desirable
Knowledge	Sound knowledge and understanding of local affairs and the local community Interest in local matters.	A vocational or professional qualification may be of value to the work of the council.
Experience, Skills and ability	Good interpersonal skills. Ability to communicate succinctly. Ability and willingness to represent the Council and community. Ability and willingness to work closely with other Members and to maintain good working relationships with all Members and staff. Reasonable IT literacy including an ability to communicate by email and to work from documents produced electronically.	Ability to work under pressure Ability to work with council's partners (e.g. other councils, local voluntary groups). Experience and/or skills that could be of value to the work of the council and community e.g. good reading and analytical skills.

3 (b) Requirements

You must be able and willing to attend meetings of the Town Council and other meetings as a representative of the council, e.g. other councils, local bodies, community groups or organisations.

An enthusiastic, flexible and committed approach to support the work of the council is required.

To effectively serve Newbiggin by the Sea community and carry out the responsibilities of a Town Councillor you must be willing to undertake any relevant training.

3(c) Activities

Local councillors should aim to:

- influence and shape the long-term development of Newbiggin by the Sea, and as part of the planning process, comment on planning applications in the town within the national and local planning guidelines and regulations
- aim to improve the quality of life and the environment in the local area
- work to identify issues which are important to the lives of the residents of Newbiggin by the Sea
- work to bring about improvements through local projects, lobbying other service providers and working in partnership with other parishes and agencies

4 Accepting Office

If you are elected or co-opted you must sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office which will include an agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct adopted by Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council. You cannot act as a Councillor until you have signed your declaration. So that you fully understand what is required you can download a copy of the adopted Code of Conduct from our website under the 'Policies' section. You will also be required to complete a Register of Interests form when you have signed the Declaration of Acceptance which must be published.

5 The legal framework of local councils

Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council, is a corporate body, acting in its own name which undertakes the powers, functions and responsibilities conferred on it by statute, these include the authority to raise money through taxation (the precept or Council tax). The range of services currently undertaken can be viewed on the web site.

6 Chairman

The Chairman is elected by fellow Councillors each year at the annual meeting of the council. The Chairman is the figurehead and also the Mayor, but his/her authority is limited to matters of procedure and to the conduct of a meeting. Other than the power to exercise a second or casting vote, a Chairman has no rights or views greater than the rights and views of other Councillors.

7 Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

The Clerk is the chief officer and responsibilities include advising the Town Council and the administration of the Council's affairs. The Clerk is an independent and objective officer who takes instructions from the Council as the corporate body and not from individual Councillors. The RFO has specific duties relating to the budget, the accounts and financial management of the Council. The Clerk and RFO is the same person at Newbiggin.

8 Meetings of the Council

Newbiggin by the Sea Town Council generally holds 11 meetings and an Annual Parish Meeting (Annual Assembly) in a year. There is a statutory procedure to follow regarding notice of meetings, issuing agendas and minutes and this is the responsibility of the Clerk. Newbiggin has 3 committees, one for finance, one for determining small grants and one for staffing and personnel.

9 Standing Orders

Important decisions are made at the monthly meetings. The Town Council has Standing Orders which regulate procedure and conduct at the meetings. The Standing orders are available on our website under the 'Policies' section.

10 Financial Regulations

Financial regulations govern the conduct and management of the Council's finances. If you become a Town Councillor you will need to familiarise yourself with the Council's Financial Regulations.

11 Further Information

If you would like any further information about the role of a Councillor in Newbiggin by the Sea please contact the Clerk, or any of the Councillors, details are on the website or notice boards.

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