



Become a Seaton Town Councillor

What matters to you in your local area? Is it the local parks and open spaces, the need for more activities for young people, or ensuring local businesses thrive? Whatever needs changing in your neighbourhood, you could be just the person to help change it, by becoming a councillor.

WHAT DOES MY TOWN COUNCIL DO?

Seaton Town Council works with Devon County Council and East Devon District Council to deliver local services. The Town Council provides, maintains or contributes to many services including the following:

- allotments
- leisure facilities
- bus shelters and street furniture
- litter bins
- parks and open spaces
- planning
- events and celebrations
- community grants

HOW DOES A COUNCIL WORK?

All councils have one common purpose - to make the lives of people in their communities better and to give local people a voice. A Town Council is the tier of local government closest to the people. Seaton Town Council is made up of 12 democratically elected or co-opted councillors - people just like you, who give up a little of their time to represent the interests of their community.

Each year a sum of money locally called a 'precept' is collected through your council tax. This money is invested back into the local community to improve facilities and services for you and your neighbours. It is your local councillors, representing the aspirations of the community, who will decide how to spend this money.

WHAT DOES A TOWN COUNCILLOR DO?

Becoming a councillor is both a rewarding and privileged form of public service; you will be in a position to make a difference to the quality of daily life and future

prospects of the people in your community. Being an effective councillor requires both commitment and hard work. You will need to be able to balance the needs and interests of residents, the political party you represent (if any) and that of the Town Council, all of which will make legitimate demands on your time.

Local councillors have three main areas of work:

- **Decision-making** - through attending meetings and committees with other elected members, councillors decide which activities to support, where money should be spent, what services should be delivered and what policies should be implemented
- **Monitoring** - councillors make sure that their decisions lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how well things are working
- **Getting involved locally** - as local representatives, councillors have a responsibility towards their constituents and local organisations. The Town Council delivers many of its services in partnership with other services and agencies, so there may be opportunities to represent the Town Council on partnership boards or committees of other organisations.

WHAT SKILLS OR QUALIFICATIONS DO I NEED?

Whilst you do not need any special or formal qualifications to be a councillor, having or being able to develop, the following skills, knowledge and attributes will assist you in your role:

- **Communication** - these include listening and interpersonal skills, public speaking skills and the ability to accept alternative points of view as well as the ability to negotiate, mediate and resolve conflict
- **Problem solving and analysis** - this includes being able to consider a situation or problem and find pragmatic solutions
- **Team working** - including being able to work with others in meetings, listen to different opinions and reach collective decisions
- **Organisation** – good time management and the ability to keep appointments and meet deadlines is essential
- **Community Engagement** - you may have to make yourself available through meetings, the media, the internet, public forums, debates, on the phone and face to face

You do not need to have all of the skills listed to be a councillor, as other Seaton Town Councillors and Officers will offer support, information and training.

AM I ELIGIBLE TO BECOME A COUNCILLOR?

Almost anyone can be a councillor as long as they:

1. are British, or a citizen of the Commonwealth or the European Union
2. are 18 years of age or over
3. are registered to vote in the area or if you have lived, worked or owned property there for at least 12 months before an election

You cannot be a councillor if:

1. you work for Seaton Town Council or another Council in which you hold a politically restricted post
2. you are bankrupt or have been surcharged in excess of £2,000
3. you have served a prison sentence (including a suspended sentence) of three months or more in the five years before you stand
4. you have been disqualified under any legislation relating to corrupt or illegal practices

I WANT TO BE A COUNCILLOR – WHAT NEXT?

If you would like to stand as a Seaton Town Councillor you must first decide whether or not you would like to represent a political party or stand as an independent candidate.

If you want to represent a political party then the next step would be to get involved with your party locally as soon as possible. This will help you find out more about what the role entails, who you will be working with and what it takes to win elections.

If you are thinking of standing as an independent candidate you need to contact Electoral Services at East Devon District Council on 01395 517402.

For further information, you may also like to contact the following:

- National Association of Local Councils www.nalc.gov.uk 020 7637 1865
- Be a Councillor www.beacouncillor.org 020 7664 3000
- Electoral Commission www.electoralcommission.org.uk 020 7271 0600