



Councillors and employment fact sheet – don't give up the day job!

- Would you like to make a difference to your local community?
- Do you have ideas about how your local area could be improved?

Then standing for election as a councillor could be for you.

Many people who would like to stand as a councillor are concerned about how it will affect their career. This fact sheet has been produced to answer those concerns.

What are my rights?

Your rights as an employee are protected by law. Under the Employment Rights Act 1996, councillors who are employed are entitled to 'reasonable' time-off to fulfil their role. This covers both attendance at council meetings and any other events that you might be asked to attend on behalf of the Council.

The question of what is 'reasonable' time off is not specifically defined, but should take into account the amount of time you need to fulfill your role, balanced against whether you already take any time off for other civic duties (such as being a magistrate) or trade union activities, and the impact of your absence on your employer.

It's important to note that your employer is not required to give you paid time off though. You will, however, receive an allowance as a councillor which can make up for this. Currently the basic allowance is £7,086 per year, and if you take on extra responsibilities (such as chairing a committee) you would be entitled to additional allowances.

So my employer has to give me time off. What's in it for them?

Your employer can benefit through the additional skills and experience you will pick up as a councillor. These can include:

- Transferable skills such as negotiating, relationship management, leadership and decision making;
- Various types of training that will help you in your job as well as your role as a councillor;
- Increased knowledge of local issues; and
- Political awareness.



Many employers recognise the benefits of employing a councillor and encourage their employees to take on such roles. Some employers, including BT and the Nationwide Building Society allow paid special leave for employees who are councillors. How much leave you can take will need to be negotiated with your employer, and will vary depending on how involved you want to get with the Council.

So I can get some training if I become a Councillor?

Yes. Northamptonshire County Council provides training opportunities for all of its councillors. Training sessions we have run in the past have included:

- IT skills, including Word, Excel, Powerpoint and email;
- Media skills;
- Speed reading;
- Finance – understanding budgets;
- Data Protection and Freedom of Information;
- Equalities; and
- Specialised areas such as development and planning and employment issues.

Where can I find more information?

For more information about the role of councillor, visit our website at: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/democracy or to speak to a member of staff in the Democratic Support Service, call 01604 236813.