

Barriers to Being a Councillor Task Group

**Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Lancaster City Council**

August 2010

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1. Foreword

As the report concludes 'the council's ability to remove the various obstacles which discourage individuals from standing for council or indeed seeking re-election is limited.' A particularly difficulty is the conflict between the work of a councillor and his day job, which can be a severe problem for younger people, whose principal goal is to further their career. While a higher allowance might ease the problem, it cannot totally compensate for the loss of time and experience on the day job.

Nevertheless a number of recommendations are presented, which should improve the situation and I hope that council will give serious consideration to their implementation.

Thanks to the chair, members and officers who have contributed to a very thorough report.

Cllr John Gilbert
Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2. Introduction

The 'Barriers to Being a Councillor' task group was designed to enable current and former councillors and the people we represent to think about the role of the local councillor and whether we, as a local authority, are doing everything we can to ensure we are representative of the diversity of Lancaster District and to encourage 'new blood' onto the Council to provide new ideas and inspiration and to bring in new perspectives.

To begin with, we wanted to understand how representative our Council is right now and to provide solid information to take forward targeted, as well as general, recruitment and promotion activity. Women councillors are a particular success in the District, with much higher numbers of female councillors than the national average. However, the task group also recognised that our ethnic diversity is not quite so successful and so has recommended targeting specific groups, such as the Polish Association, to ensure potential community leaders are identified and encouraged to stand in the future.

Our remit, on the face of it, seemed quite a negative one, looking for barriers to standing. Consulting with current and former councillors and member of the public brought to light a number of these, in particular the amount of time being a councillor involves and concerns about the 'work / life / councillor' balance. Concerns about career development and juggling full time employment or carer responsibilities were also highlighted, as was the oft controversial subject of financial remuneration! Highlighting such barriers, we hope, has been useful to gain an understanding of the real and perceived barriers to standing and to re-standing, however, for me, the real benefit of the task group and the process of identifying barriers, was the myriad of imaginative, practical and very importantly cheap (!) solutions proposed by all those who contributed to the discussions, details of which form the body of this report.

Finally, a key finding of the report, which isn't explicit in the recommendations, but never-the-less came through very strongly, is that tackling barriers to being a councillor and achieving a strong, confident and diverse group of District councillors is an ongoing project, which must be maintained in the long term, not treated as a one off quick fix.

I'd like to thank all those who took the time to participate and contribute to the task group, whose time and work has made the production of this report possible.

Councillor Jude Towers

Chair Barriers to Being a Councillor task group.

3. Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1

- (a) That a copy of the task group's final report together with an analysis of the consultation responses be forwarded to the Independent Remuneration Panel for information purposes.
- (b) That consideration be given as to how the benefits of employing a councillor could be better communicated to the employer, including the development of an information pack for employers on civic roles, detailing time commitments and benefits to both employer and employee and involving employers in induction events.
- (c) That following on from the next phase of restructure officers from the Governance Service be made aware of the suggestions made by members with regard to further support and make enquiries through member service networks to ascertain what/if any measures other authorities are taking to improve member support.
- (d) That the website and other information on standing for council be revised to ensure that it fully reflects the needs of non-aligned candidates

Recommendation 2

- (a) That details with regard to the Carer's Allowance be more widely publicised on the council's website and in information provided to prospective candidates.

Recommendation 3

- (a) That information about standing as a councillor be revised and consideration be given to including this in council tax notification packs, possibly on an alternate year basis.
- (b) That consideration be given to 'Your district matters' featuring a series of snapshots on the 'day of a life of a councillor.'
- (c) That a councillor job description be drafted to include person specification and made available on the website.
- (d) That an invitation to the Special Council meeting on 13th October be extended to those who expressed an interest in receiving further information or discussing their views more fully when completing the questionnaires.
- (e) That a link to 'Be a Councillor' be included on the city council website.
- (f) That the Communications Team be asked to comment on the response with regard to public involvement/engagement which was submitted via the online consultation
- (g) That consideration be given to a series of holding information meetings earlier in the run up to local elections – the first meeting to provide a general introduction with a further meeting concentrating on rules and procedures.

Recommendation 4

- (a) To undertake exit interviews with councillors who choose not to stand for a further term of office.
- (b) That the suggestions/comments made with regard to member support be forwarded to the officers responsible for Member Development.

Recommendation 5

- (a) That consideration be given to the Elections Officer attending a meeting of a community group, e.g. the Lancaster District Community Leaders Group or Polish Association to see how information regarding electoral registration and standing for council could be effectively dispersed through such groups.
- (b) That community groups, e.g. the Lancaster District Community Leaders Group or Polish Association be notified of any future information meetings for those considering standing for council, including the Special Council meeting on 13th October.

4. Role of Barriers to being a Councillor Task Group

4.1 Terms of Reference

The group worked to the following terms of reference:

1. To identify the barriers to becoming a councillor and in particular, to establish what are considered to be the main barriers within this district.
2. To ascertain what measures the council currently takes to alleviate financial barriers including remuneration, transport, child care and identify any further means of addressing financial impediments.
3. To assess how the Council can help raise awareness of the role of councillors and how local government operates.
4. To determine what factors are leading to disillusion and inability to retain younger councillors and identify ways in which the council can provide necessary support to encourage retention.
5. To undertake a comparison on the changing composition of the city council in recent years with regard to gender, ethnicity and age.
6. To ascertain how the council currently engages with the newly/soon to be enfranchised electorate, and in view of the apathy amongst younger voters illustrated by the poor turn out in the university ward, consider what actions the council could take to help combat current disinterest. (see below)

As the work of the task group progressed it became apparent that the sixth term of reference did not complement the other terms of reference or indeed the title of the task group and a request was made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its deletion. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to this request at their meeting on 14th July 2010.

4.2 Membership of Task Group

The following Councillors were appointed as Members of the task group: Councillors Jude Towers (Chairman), Tina Clifford, Keran Farrow, Melanie Forrest, Val Histed, Janie Kirkman, Roger Plumb, Ron Sands and Peter Williamson with support from Liz Bateson (Democratic Services)

The group gratefully acknowledges contributions and evidence freely given by:-

Professor Alan Mercer and Colin Everett - Independent Remuneration Panel

Officers from Lancaster City Council including:
Roger Muckle - Corporate Director (Finance & Performance),
Gillian Noall -Head of Democratic Services
Daphne Snelson, Elections Officer
Jennifer Williams - Consultation Officer

Officers from Environmental Health, Health & Housing Services

Members of the Community Consultation Register

Members and former members who completed the member questionnaire

Members of the public who completed the online questionnaire

4.3 Timetable of meetings

Date	Attended by / evidence Provided by:	Issues scrutinised/considered
17.09.09	Cllrs Towers, Farrow, Histed, Kirkman & Williamson Head of Democratic Services Senior Democratic Support Officer	Existing measures to raise awareness of role of a councillor – including information on web site. Terms of reference noted and work programme agreed
19.10.09	Cllrs Towers, Clifford, Forrest & Histed Consultation Officer Head of Democratic Services & Senior Democratic Support Officer	Appropriate consultation methods to adopt to fulfil the terms of reference Consideration of extracts from documentary evidence Comparison of changing composition of councillors – age, gender, ethnicity
26.11.09	Cllrs Towers, Clifford & Williamson Independent Remuneration Panel & Corporate Director (Finance & Performance) Senior Democratic Support Officer	Members allowances – in relation to recruitment and retention of councillors Initial consideration of responses to member questionnaire
24.06.10	Cllrs Towers, Forrest, Kirkman & Williamson & Senior Democratic Support Officer	Consideration of responses to consultations Formulation of draft recommendations Agreement to request deletion of sixth term of reference
August 2010	Consideration and agreement of recommendations and draft final report – report submitted electronically to task group for ratification.	

4.4 Documentary Evidence Considered

Association of North East Councils, *Role of Elected Members Task & Finish Group Final Report*, 2008, www.northeastcouncils.gov.uk

BMG Research, *Ideas and Experiences*, may 2008

Communities and Local Government, *The Government Response to the Councillors Commission*, '2008

Department for Communities and Local Government, *Representing the Future – the report of the Councillors Commission*, December 2007, www.communities.gov.uk

I&DeA How you can make a difference (July 2008)

I&DeA Do you want to make a difference? (July 2008)

I&DeA Make a difference for business (November 2008)

I&DeA The Councillors Commission – helping councils meet the challenge (Dec 2007)

I&DeA The 2007 survey of local election candidates

I&DeA *Give the women the opportunity too*, 2009

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *Routes and barriers to citizen governance*, 2008, York Publishing Services

LGC *Candidate diversity*, 14.1.10, pages 2-4

LGiU, *Promoting Councillor diversity – a guide to achieving effective representative democracy*, 2005, info@lgiu.org.uk

LGiU, *Perilous Democracy – Equipping Councillors for the future*, 2005

LGiU, *Perilous Democracy – Don't make allowances – Let's reward our councillors*, 2005

LGiU, *Perilous Democracy, Barred from politics*, 2004

LGiU, *Perilous Democracy, Democracy starts young*, 2004

Local Government Association, *National Census of local authority councillors*, 2008, www.lgar.local.gov.uk

Denbighshire County Council -Thinking of becoming a Councillor?

New Local Government Network, *Local Government Young at Heart?*, 2006

www.beacouncillor.org.uk

5. Status of this Report

This report is the work of the Barriers to being a Councillor Task Group, on behalf of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and where opinions are expressed they are not necessarily those of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Lancaster City Council.

Whilst we have sought to draw on this review to make recommendations and suggestions that are helpful to the Council, our work has been designed solely for the purpose of discharging our work in accordance with the terms of reference agreed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Accordingly, our work cannot be relied upon to identify every area of strength, weakness or opportunity for improvement.

This report is addressed to Lancaster City's Full Council. It has been prepared for the sole use of the Council and the Task Group takes no responsibility for any Member or Officer acting in their individual capacities or to other third parties acting on it.

6. Background and Context

The establishment of the Barriers to Being a Councillor Task Group was agreed in principle by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 4th June 2008 although the first meeting of the task group was not held until 17th September 2009.

The rationale for establishing the Barriers task group stemmed from the publication of the Councillor's Commission Report in December 2007. The remit of the Commission which had been set up at the request of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, was to develop recommendations to encourage a more diverse and broader range of people to become councillors. The Report identified the various incentives which encouraged individuals to stand in their local elections including a desire to serve the community and improve the local area, strong feelings about a particular issue, support for a political party, a family tradition of political activity, being asked to stand and frustration with a council or serving councillors. Chaired by Dame Jane Roberts the Commission examined some key issues that discouraged individuals from standing and serving as a councillor including members allowance schemes, securing time off work, time required to undertake council duties etc.

The Report identified three social groupings which appeared to be under-represented nationally: women, younger people and black, asian or those from other ethnic minority backgrounds. This is supported by an analysis of the 2009 local elections candidates which indicated that 71% were men, the average age of candidates was 57.3 and 98.3% were of white ethnic origin. The youngest candidate was 18, the eldest 86 and only 7% of candidates were aged 35 or under with 9.8% aged 36 – 45. The average age of a candidate standing for the first time was 52.

In an LGiU article entitled *Promoting Councillor Diversity* it is claimed, 'to continue to be legitimately considered as the voice of local people, councils need to address how a more diverse range of people can become councillors. If they do not, councils risk being thought of as remote, unrepresentative and failing to take up the breadth of talent among under-represented groups.' This appears to be supported by a survey undertaken by IDeA of the 2007 local election candidates with 61 % of the opinion that greater social diversity in the council chamber would improve the image of local government.

In its response to the Councillor's Commission Report which the government welcomed as 'comprehensive and thoughtful' reference was made to the need for effective and representative councillors at the heart of our councils.'

The task group have sought the views of current and former councillors as well as parish councillors and interested members of the public through various questionnaires in an attempt to establish what are the main factors which deter individuals from standing for council in this district, and whether the council is doing all that it can to encourage residents to stand for election and provide adequate support to them once elected.

The views of current members were sought shortly after the establishment of the task group through a questionnaire which was forwarded to all members with Group Administrators requested to collate responses and forward to Democratic Services thereby ensuring anonymity. 29 responses were received. Out of these 29 responses 15 were from male councillors and 14 from female members. 10

responses were received from members of the Conservative group, 2 from the Free Independents, 4 from the Green Party group, 6 from the Labour group, 5 from the Liberal Democrats and 2 from the Morecambe Bay Independents.

A similar questionnaire was forwarded to 9 former councillors who had chosen not to stand for re-election. 3 responses were received.

A further questionnaire was forwarded to members of the Community Consultation Register who had expressed an interest in democracy. 49 responses were received. 36 of the responders were male, 13 female. None of the responders were under 30 years of age, 9 were aged between 31 and 50, 18 were aged 51 to 65 and 20 were over 65. 48 were white, 1 of mixed ethnicity.

An online consultation ran from 1/2/10 until 1/4/10 using the same questionnaire. A press release was issued to publicise the online consultation and clerks to the parish councils and the student unions of the local universities were notified in order to promote the consultation further. 45 responses were received. Of the responders who included their gender 25 were males and 18 females. 41 of the 45 online responders provided their age. 12 were aged 18 to 30, 15 were between 31 and 50, 9 were aged between 51 and 65 with 6 over 65. 42 indicated their ethnicity was white with 1 black or black British.

The results of the online consultation can be viewed using the following link:
<http://www.lancaster.gov.uk/consultation/#Consultation>

7. Findings

7.1 - To identify the barriers to becoming a councillor and in particular, to establish what are considered to be the main barriers within this district

A number of barriers to standing as a councillor were identified in the Councillor's Commission Report and in several subsequent articles. Using the responses to the various consultations the task group has sought to determine how important these factors are in either determining whether an individual decides to stand as a local councillor or indeed seeks a further term of office.

a. Remuneration – Basic Member Allowances

In an LGiU article entitled '*Don't make allowances – Let's reward our councillors*' it is suggested that '*no one should become a councillor to make money, but neither should their standard of living and their life chances suffer as a result of wishing to better their local community.*'

Allowances are currently determined by each local authority and vary significantly between the contrasting types of authority as illustrated in Appendix 1. **Further reference is made to the Member Allowance Scheme in 7.2**

Is this a problem in our district?

Out of 29 councillors who responded to the questionnaire only 9 confirmed that they considered the level of remuneration to be adequate, 15 indicated it was not adequate. Only one suggested that '*no allowance should be paid.*' Out of the responses from members of the Community Consultation register only 4 indicated that the level of the basic allowance would deter them from standing as a councillor, 25 disagreed that this was a barrier whilst 16 did not express an opinion. 22 of those responding to the online consultation indicated that the basic allowance would not deter them from standing, 8 suggested that it would be a barrier to them standing whilst 14 did not express an opinion.

This would seem to imply that whilst the current level of remuneration is not a main barrier in attracting potential councillors it can often be a factor in their retention, particularly the retention of younger councillors. **This is addressed further in 7.4**

Interestingly one responder to the online questionnaire flagged up the possibility of the existence of the basic member allowances being a potential barrier: '*for me personally this is an issue because I exist on state pension and guarantee credit (income support). The allowance for a city councillor would possibly wipe out the income support and also the fringe benefits, meaning I could be worse off financially.*'

What can be done to address this?

The task group recognises that it is the role of the Independent Remuneration Panel to consider and make recommendations with regard to Member Allowances and it

was apparent during discussions with the IRP that the Panel welcomed the views of members when developing their proposals. The task group sought the opinion of current members as to whether they considered the basic allowance to be adequate and received a number of interesting responses:

One member suggested a minimum allowance of £5K per annum for all 'backbench' councillors funded by a reduction in the number of cabinet members. Another suggested that the current level of remuneration was 'inadequate to substitute for full time employment' and consequently, 'those in full time employment can rarely afford to become 'ordinary' councillors.' This was supported by a cabinet member who confirmed that if not on cabinet the current basic allowance would possibly be a deterrent to seeking a further term.

Appendix 2 details the responses from members with regard to the basic allowance. The task group agreed that a copy of the Final Report of the Barriers to being a Councillor task group as well as copies of the consultation responses be forwarded to the Independent Remuneration Panel for information purposes.

b) Employment

The Councillor Commission report suggests that the Employment Rights Act 1996, Part VI which advises employers to make 'reasonable' provision for employees who are councillors to obtain time off from their employment to fulfil their council obligations is open to wide interpretation.

Is this a problem in this district?

A minority of councillors who responded to the questionnaire reported that their employer was not sympathetic to their council duties. One suggested that their employer regarded their council work as '*a life choice rather than a valued occupation.*' Another maintained, '*it has been difficult to get time off in the past. They struggle to understand what value having a councillor on the staff has for their organisation. It might be an idea to produce a leaflet for employers so they know what is entailed.*'

8 members indicated that their employer was sympathetic – 4 reported that their employer was not sympathetic – the remaining 17 responses were from councillors who were either self-employed or retired. In addition 17 out of the 49 responses received from members of the Community Consultation Register expressed concern with regard to combining council duties with work commitments. 60% of those who responded using the online consultation were concerned about the difficulties combining council duties with work commitments, 23% suggested that this was not an area of concern with 16% not expressing an opinion.

Evidently even members who found their employer to be sympathetic acknowledged the difficulties of combining full-time employment with council duties as the following comments illustrate: '*I managed fine when I was self employed but more difficult now I am an employee.*' Another suggested, '*thank goodness I only work mornings,*' whilst another member advised, '*I am a full time councillor now which makes it easier.*'

Whilst only a minority of responses received from members of the Community Consultation Register expressed concern at combining council duties with work

commitments it is worth noting that of the 49 responses received 20 were over the age of 65 and none of the responders was under 30. This contrasts notably with the online responses with only 6 over the age of 65 and 12 responses from individuals under the age of 30. Clearly some were doubtful that council duties could be combined with full-time employment as highlighted in the following comment: *'I do not think that it would be possible for me to hold down a full time job and work as a councillor.'*

It has been suggested that candidates in full time employment face an additional obstacle to being successfully elected, particularly candidates not aligned to the national political parties as work commitments could limit the opportunities for effective campaigning, which would be essential without a party vote to fall back on. The group administrator of the Independent group advised the Head of Democratic Services of this potential barrier when responding to a request for information for the IRP prior to the commencement of the task group. The Head of Democratic Services was advised that nearly all of the unsuccessful 'Independent' candidates in the 2007 election were aged between 25 and 50 and were standing for the first time.

What can be done to address this?

It has been suggested that many employers have an insufficient idea of what council work entails and the transferable skills that a councillor can bring to their work. The changing role of councillors in recent years has enabled councillors to procure a wide set of skills. It would therefore be beneficial for local authorities to engage with employers to raise the awareness of the advantages of employing councillors. Several suggestions as to how to achieve this have been included in the Report of the Councillor Commission including:

- The benefits of employing a councillor including valuable transferable skills should be better communicated to the employer.
- Development of an information pack for employers on civic roles, detailing time commitments and benefits to both employer and employee.
- Involve employers in induction events.

The task group were sympathetic to these suggestions and would recommend that consideration be given as to how these could be progressed.

c) Time commitments – including Impact on home/social life

Over 45% of those responding to the online consultation believed that being a councillor would have an adverse impact on their home/social life; over 38% did not express an opinion with less than 16% indicating that this was not a concern to them. Out of the responses from the community consultation register 23 were concerned that their home/social life might suffer, 14 did not express an opinion and 9 suggested they were not concerned at this.

Is this a problem within this district?

A number expressed concern at the adverse impact on their home or social life as evidenced in the following response: *"I wouldn't have enough spare time. Meetings are too long and there would be too much paperwork to read. Would also find it difficult to be 'on call' 24hrs with constituents phoning me at home with their problems."* Another maintained, *'I feel it would need quite a lot of my spare/leisure*

time to carry out the duties of a councillor properly. This would put me off standing as a councillor,' with another advising, 'I am already a Morecambe Town Councillor and concerned with time commitments and balance between home, work and existing Town Council duties.'

Moreover as the following response from a member of the Community Consultation register implies, the time commitment can be a barrier even when retired: *'I am already very involved with other committee duties and family commitments – time is my problem not lack of interest. I have enough on at the minute. Life at this point is already full enough – although retired I still have a parent and children and grandchildren I help out with. Am on 6 committees and engage in several social activities and hobbies... I'm just a busy person.'*

Out of the 29 responses from current councillors only 13 suggested that they did not find it difficult to combine their role as a councillor with home life and work commitments and responses suggest that most regard this juggling as inevitable though, in the words of one councillor, 'it can be difficult, but that's part of the responsibility you take on. However it can be an expensive one.'

Additional council responsibilities appear to impact on domestic life as the following observations suggest. *'As role expands so does time commitment – however constituency work is most demanding for committed councillor.'* Additionally, *'As retired does not affect work; when a member of executive the number of meetings interfered considerably with home life; as a non-executive only slightly.'*

For councillors with young children or working councillors the impact of council duties on home life was even more apparent as the following comments indicate: *"I have a son of 12 years of age and a wife who works part of the week in London. The timing of some evening council meetings make it difficult for me to attend. I would think this would be the same for others with similar domestic arrangements; single parents with school age children and others with caring responsibilities.'* Similarly, *'I have 2 children work full time and currently doing a university course. As I work full time I have to do evening meetings all the time, which means some weeks I am out of the house from 07.30 till 9 p.m. 4 days of the week. This can be very difficult with family life. I am fortunate that I have good family and friends for support.'*

The following response from one working councillor reinforces the difficulties juggling home life, work and council duties: *'yes – particularly the number of evening meetings which can be three evenings a week on a regular basis. However, more daytime meetings are also difficult as it is hard to take time off/ make up the missed work.'*

One particular response brought to light the impact that a councillor's duties had on immediate family: *'it can be very demanding on other members of the family. Members of the community assume that we have an office – and can treat a spouse like a secretary or PA for the councillor. If you take the role of community champion seriously then it impacts on how much time you spend with the family.'*

In response to a question as to whether current members believed they had sufficient knowledge of the possible commitment required prior to being elected a number indicated that the reality was very much different to their expectation in terms of time as reflected in the following observations: *'the time commitment was very understated.'* Similarly, *'the amount of time necessary to cover all the meetings, ward work and external organisation is considerably more than I anticipated,'* and, *'I*

don't think anyone can prepare you for this. Someone told me about the meetings and the number you had to go to – but the first year was a bit of a shock!

From the response of a former single-term councillor to the questionnaire it is evident that the time commitment was probably the major factor in their decision not to seek re-election; *'sorry too hard-pressed to spend time on this – which was always the problem with me being, or continuing as, a councillor in the first place.'*

For many local councillors in addition to balancing council duties with work and home life there are other commitments competing for their limited time; they might also be parish and/or county councillors and involved in various voluntary organisations including school governors and for many given the congested roads during peak times, but particularly those in the more rural areas travelling time also needs to be factored in.

One councillor has suggested that the time commitment is likely to deter them from standing again: *'the time commitment is too great to deal with a full time job and commitments to other organisations / causes. The demands are unceasing, i.e. there is no slow period / opportunity for a break.'*

What can be done to address this?

A number of suggestions to help balance eclectic responsibilities were suggested in the questionnaires completed by councillors as listed below although evidently some of the proposals are contradictory as epitomised in the first two and last two bullet points:

- Reducing the number of emails sent to members
- More flexible around councillors including way carry out business e.g. less paper and more electronic communication
- Strict timings on meetings – monitoring of agenda lengths to ensure agendas run to time
- Administrative support for Cabinet members to help with diaries
- Having a crèche available for councillors with young children
- Support should come from the party groups
- Having a paid political assistant to assist each group with research, casework and development of policies and projects

The task group agreed that following on from the next phase of the restructure, officers from the Governance Service be made aware of the suggestions made by members with regard to further support and make enquiries through member service networks to ascertain what/if any measures other authorities are taking to improve member support.

d) Political affiliation

Is this a problem within this district?

Responses from members reinforce the concept that most consider political affiliation to be a prerequisite for standing for election to the city council with 20 of the 29 responses indicating the need to be aligned to a political party. The following comments reinforce this: *'I don't think I would have stood without the support of a group.'* Another suggested, *'to be effective some form of grouping is important – system tends to isolate individuals and cabinet system centralises power,'* whilst

another remarked, 'yes so that voters know what principles and policies they are voting for, and because it is easier to get elected in a large ward if you are part of a team.'

Whilst the questionnaire aimed at members of the public did not include any specific reference to political party affiliations a number of the additional comments indicate that many feel that it is difficult to be elected without the support of a political party and therefore perceive this as a barrier to standing as a local councillor. This is depicted in the following comment: 'I belong to no political grouping or party – standing as an independent councillor is therefore more difficult than for a party hack.'

From the comments received it is notable that some consider the political make-up at the council and indeed party politics at local level as a barrier. This is supported by the following: 'Local councillors are usually associated with a political party or major group. We should encourage more true independents to stand.' Another referred to 'scepticism about political parties,' whilst another suggested, 'that the election procedure and council proceedings are too politicised.'

One response was critical of the large wards since, 'very large multi-media wards make it impossible to canvass and get to know people during an election campaign. Some wards are represented by a variety of councillors of opposing views thus one councillor's vote is wiped out by another representing the same ward. Smaller one man/woman wards would make it easier for people to get to know their local councillor and for the councillor to put out reports of what he/she was doing. The ridiculous range of parties on Lancaster Council makes it impractical to produce decisive policies.' Furthermore, 'I do not think that party politics has any place in local government – I do not agree with block voting (i.e. the way the party says). I would rather see the stance of each prospective councillor on the 10 most important issues affecting the area. I could then decide which councillor had opinions that might be worth following. Each area should have at least 3 prospective councillors preferably from (living in) the area he/she is going to represent.'

What can be done to address this?

The task group recognises that there is little the city council can do to remove this barrier. However the task group agree that the information on standing for council including details on the website need to be revised to ensure that it fully reflects the needs of non-aligned candidates.

e) Attitudes towards local government

Is this a problem within this district?

This leads on to the broader issue of attitudes toward local government with both the Councillor Commission Report and questionnaire responses referring to the negative perception of councillors and local government. The Councillor Commission Report suggests that councillors are held in lower esteem than in the past and relate this to a decline in trust in national level politicians and parties.

It would appear that some consider the limited powers of local authorities as a drawback as indicated in the following comments: 'I don't think local authorities have that much power to influence their local communities,' similarly, 'Local councillors have their hands tied budget-wise, have to operate to central government priorities,

get the criticism about council tax, will find it impossible to please the majority of people and have to spend a lot of time in dreary meetings.' Another response endorses this further: *'I get the impression that local government is not treated very seriously from Westminster. Too much power is kept in London, and there is not enough control of total budgets and available finance, whilst the following response confirms that that for one person at least the limited powers of local government are indeed a barrier to standing for election: 'I think the power and influence of local government has been denuded over recent years as to make it not worth the effort. If power was truly devolved then I would put myself forward, but everything important has already been decided elsewhere, so I don't.'*

f) Additional barriers

Several other possible barriers were raised in the Councillors Commission Report and reference is briefly made to those which were also mentioned during our own consultation responses. The Councillor Commission report referred to the tendency for women and younger councillors to be discouraged by the 'rough and tumble' of politics. One responder to the online consultation wrote: *'I am not interested in tit-for-tat politics or personal attacks against other councillors.'* One councillor who completed the questionnaire commented that 'the amount of animosity between councillors in the chamber also came as a shock.' Another councillor included *'attempts to disparage my person'* as just one of a number of possible impediments to their decision to seek re-election.

Others were deterred by the meetings as illustrated by the following. *'The main barriers I see are the times of and volume of meetings which seem to achieve little or nothing and the fact that there is no limit on the timings/lengths of meetings and their content. There is still a culture of filibustering at full council which seems not to be controlled by those in positions to do something about it which encourages posturing as opposed to problem solving.'*

From responses from current councillors it would appear that frustration and disillusion might possibly dissuade them from standing for a further term as evidence by the following: *'frustration with not feeling like I am achieving very much, for the amount of time I spend on council duties. I am wondering whether I could achieve more as a community activist rather than a councillor - I could focus on doing a few things well instead of a hundred things not very well, and spend a lot less time in meetings and dealing with emails.'* Another cited being *'disillusioned with local and national politics'* as one of a number of factors whilst another felt *'disenfranchised by the cabinet system'* and possibly *'more effective in influencing policy as a non-councillor.'*

The Commission Report also cited lack of confidence, particularly among women, and an uncertainty as to the election process as obstacles to standing. Over 50% of those responding to the online questionnaire and just under 50% of the Community Consultation responders intimated that they were unaware as to how to go about standing for election. (This is covered further in 7.3).

In summary from the responses received it would appear that the main barriers to individuals standing for council in this district appear to be a pre-conception of the need to be affiliated to a political party and concerns as to the time commitments, and impact on work/home life. The main obstacle to retaining councillors for a further term seems to be determined by career development with those at an earlier stage of their career finding it difficult to balance the various and often conflicting demands on their time. (This is considered further in 7.4) Whilst the task group recognises that

the opportunities to address some of these barriers are limited, a number of recommendations have been made to ensure the council takes all the necessary measures to improve its role in this process.

Recommendation 1

- (a) That a copy of the task group's final report together with an analysis of the consultation responses be forwarded to the Independent Remuneration Panel for information purposes.
- (b) That consideration be given as to how the benefits of employing a councillor could be better communicated to the employer, including the development of an information pack for employers on civic roles, detailing time commitments and benefits to both employer and employee and involving employers in induction events.
- (c) That following on from the next phase of restructure officers from the Governance Service be made aware of the suggestions made by members with regard to further support and make enquiries through member service networks to ascertain what/if any measures other authorities are taking to improve member support.
- (d) That the website and other information on standing for council be revised to ensure that it fully reflects the needs of non-aligned candidates

7.2. To ascertain what measures the council currently takes to alleviate financial barriers including remuneration, transport, child care and identify any further means of addressing financial impediments

The Task Group met with and sought the views of members of the Independent Remuneration Panel as to whether members' allowances had a role to play in the recruitment and retention of councillors.

Travel

The Chairman of the IRP advised the task group that the Panel was responsible for subsistence and travel and had not received complaints regarding the levels that were currently paid. Indeed it was as a result of a proposal from the Panel that cycle and car mileage rates were standardized with the rates the highest that could be paid without paying tax. (This currently stands at 40p per mile). The level of reimbursement for travel could not therefore be considered as a barrier.

Carer's Allowance

The Report of the Councillor's Commission cites caring responsibilities as the second main factor which determined a councillor's decision to stand down. The Chairman of the IRP informed the task group that having previously undertaken a comprehensive exercise Lancaster had paid a 'good' carer's allowance well before many other local authorities. In 2009/10 a carer's allowance of up to £8.35 per hour has been payable for the care of 'dependent' relatives living with the member defined as (i) children under 14, (ii) elderly relatives requiring full-time care, (iii) relatives with disabilities who require full-time care – (i) is not payable to another parent, the parent's spouse or partner, whilst (ii)&(iii) are not payable in respect of care provided by a member of the councillor's household.

Not all authorities pay an attendance allowance and as the following table taken from the Members Allowance Survey 2008 illustrates, Lancaster compares favourably with neighbouring authorities and members of the Exeter benchmarking network.

Authority (Hourly rate paid in 2008)	Hourly Attendance Rate £
Lancaster	8.15
Lancashire County	6.70
Hyndburn	8.79
Pendle	3.00
Ribble Valley	5.52
West Lancashire	6.00
Exeter	5.52
Eastbourne	5.20
Ipswich (but 5.50 for childcare allowance)	11.00

The IRP have invited comments from members in respect of these allowances but had not been made aware of any complaints so there is little evidence to suggest that the rate of the dependent carer's allowance is likely to discourage councillors from standing for a further term.

However the task group did comment that the existence of the allowance could be more widely promoted and agreed with the comments of the Chairman of the

IRP that it would be appropriate to publicise the allowance further and ensure that information on the carers allowance was made available to prospective candidates.

This would reduce the likelihood of potential candidates perceiving their carer responsibilities as an impediment to standing for election to the council.

Basic Allowance

As a shire district the services for which the city council is responsible is more limited than county council and unitary authorities and this is reflected in both the gross budget and level of member allowances.

The basic allowance is paid in recognition of a time commitment expected of all members including inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers and constituents and incidental costs including private telephones. For 2009/10 the basic allowance was £3300. Councillors are expected to give 20 hours a month voluntarily.

A number of principles outline the Members' Allowance Scheme:

1. *The system of Members' Allowances should not restrict the possibility of any group in society from standing for Council and should ideally have the effect of encouraging groups currently under-represented on Councils to become Councillors.*
2. *The voluntary public service principle should be one of the major factors influencing the Allowances Scheme.*
3. *There should be established proper processes for holding Councillors to account in the performance of their duties. Transparency and accountability are essential components of a new system.*
4. *The Allowances Scheme is based on responsibilities and workloads as approved by the Council.*
5. *There should be a basic payment received by all Councillors irrespective of their formal responsibilities on the Council, reflecting the demands of their representative roles and other duties.*
6. *Special recognition for Councillors holding positions of responsibility should be acknowledged in the Scheme. Special Responsibility Allowances paid should reflect these different levels of responsibility.*
7. *Levels of remuneration in Lancaster should bear comparison with those agreed in other Authorities.*
8. *The allowances paid to Councillors should take into account those paid in relation to comparable positions of responsibility in the public sector.*
9. *The system of Members' Allowances should be as uncomplicated as possible; easy for Councillors and members of the public to understand.*
10. *Internal political roles and activities should not be eligible for allowances.*
11. *The Allowances Scheme should be reviewed annually to reflect any significant changes and subjected to a more fundamental review every three years.*
12. *Members' Allowances should be seen specifically as a remuneration which reflects the time commitments and responsibilities of Council activity and that expenses incurred for dependent relatives and travel should be reimbursed separately.*

In addition to the basic allowance a number of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) are paid to those members with significant responsibilities including the Leader, Cabinet Members and the Chairmen of various committees in recognition of their additional duties. Full details of the Members Allowance Scheme are included in the Constitution which is available on the City Council's website. The Chairman of the IRP shared some of their developing thoughts on future allowances with the task group and their proposals were incorporated in the Independent Remuneration

Panel's report to April's Full Council. It had been intended for this report to be submitted alongside the Panel's report but unfortunately this was not possible.

Recommendation 2

- (a) That details with regard to the Carer's Allowance be more widely publicised on the council's website and in information provided to prospective candidates.

7.3. To assess how the council can help raise awareness of the role of councillors and how local government operates

The following extract from the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 outlines the prospective mandatory role of local authorities in raising awareness in local government.

(1) A principal local authority has a duty to promote understanding of the following among local people—

- (a) the functions of the authority;
- (b) the democratic arrangements of the authority;
- (c) how members of the public can take part in those democratic arrangements and what is involved in taking part.

(2) The duty under subsection (1)(c) includes in particular a duty to promote understanding of the following among local people—

- (a) how to become a member of the principal local authority;
- (b) what members of the principal local authority do;
- (c) what support is available for members of the principal local authority

Best Practice

Councils can take steps to increase the attractiveness of the position of councillor through raising awareness of the role. The task group considered some of the measures adopted by other authorities to encourage individuals to stand as candidates in the local elections. The following were among a number of examples highlighted in an LGiU article entitled *Promoting Councillor Diversity* as examples of best practice.

1. **Denbighshire County Council** – this council produced and distributed throughout the county a leaflet *'Councillors – what do they do?'* to raise public awareness. To encourage individuals to stand in the local elections a booklet, *'Thinking of becoming a Councillor.'* was also produced. Adverts were posted in the local press and council newspaper and A4 posters produced and distributed to local town and community councils, voluntary and partner organisations, libraries, leisure centres and other council offices with the slogan *'Step out of the shadows, speak out for your community, stand for council.'* 5 public meeting road shows were arranged involving officers and current councillors. A number of younger candidates were encouraged to stand and were successfully elected.
2. **Wycombe District Council** - in 2003 with the help of members a video on the role of the district councillor was produced. This has been used by teachers for students as part of the citizenship programme. Informal evening sessions for candidates were also arranged prior to the district elections.
3. **Crawley** – prior to the 2004 elections in an initiative to encourage wider representation from the community two widely advertised open evenings were held. These began with presentations from the Chief Executive, the Head of Democratic Services and two serving Councillors and included details on the

council's role in the community, its activities through partnerships and its own services, the type of work, level of time commitment involved and the support provided and what a typical month would be like for a councillor. This was followed by an informal chat with serving councillors and key council officers. Follow-up contact details were provided for participants who were interested in becoming a candidate – a council contact for anyone wishing to stand as an independent candidate and political agent contact details for those wishing to stand for a particular party. . Following on from the elections the number of female councillors rose from 19% to 32% whilst the number of councillors over the age of 65 dropped from 31% to 13% with both disabled and ethnic minority represented for the first time.

4. **London Borough of Camden** – whilst 23% of residents of this London borough were from black and ethnic minority groups only one councillor prior to the local elections of May 2002 was from an ethnic minority group and the average age of the predominantly male councillors was 50. The council considered it had a responsibility to encourage people from all diverse communities to consider standing – A Members development working group. was established and a campaign to target Camden residents from groups which were traditionally excluded. A leaflet was produced and an information event held. The membership of the council after the 2002 elections was more diverse – younger, more women, 6 members from black and ethnic groups.

A lack of awareness of what councillors do has been cited as a weak starting point for recruitment and there is frequent confusion regarding the responsibilities of the different tiers of local government. The council has a clear role in disseminating information on how the council works and the council's website affords an ideal channel for this.

Current practice at Lancaster

The Head of Democratic Services provided the task group with an overview of the information available on the Council and Democracy section on the council's website www.lancaster.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/ This includes a broad outline of the services for which the city council is responsible as well as links to details of councillors, committees etc. The Election page provides information on the electoral process including a downloadable booklet 'Want to be a councillor?' which is attached as an appendix to this report. (See Appendix 3). Whilst the website contains a number of useful links the task group would like to see a link added to the 'Be a councillor website' www.beacouncillor.org.uk

Previously information meetings have been held in the lead up to the city council elections focusing on the practical information necessary for potential candidates and in order to distribute nomination packs. This year it is intended to use the Special Council in October to raise awareness and encourage individuals to consider standing in future local elections.

Although more and more people are using the internet to search for information the task group recognises that this is only one means of raising awareness in the role/work of the council/councillors and consequently encouraging interest in more active involvement like standing for election.

Whilst 64.9% of replies to a random postal survey of local election candidates in 2009 undertaken by the IDeA suggest that it is the responsibility of parties to recruit candidates for local elections, a large majority also believed that the local authorities

had a part to play in the process with 84% supporting the suggestion that local authorities publicise the role of councillors and 63% supporting the inclusion of information on standing for election in the council tax notification packs. The task group would support the inclusion of this type of marketing leaflet and would suggest that consideration be given to inserting such material, possibly on an alternate year basis.

The task group would also like to see the work of councillors more widely publicised. During discussions one task group member suggested that many residents were no longer aware of what councillors actually did. With residents now being encouraged to contact Customer Services in the first instance it was felt that enquiries were no longer being directed at ward councillors and whilst there were undoubtedly some benefits in this for all concerned there were possible adverse effects. To help address this and raise awareness it was suggested that 'Your district matters' could be utilised. The task group suggested a series on 'a day in the life of ...': snapshots featuring members from the various committees/panels to highlight the diverse and varied role and duties of our city councillors.

Another means of raising awareness of what being a councillor entails would be provided through producing a 'job description' and these have now been drafted by various authorities. A copy of the 'job description' drafted by Wigan which includes a person specification and main duties and responsibilities is attached as an example of best practice in Appendix 4 together with a some information from the beacouncillor website is most informative on this issue.

13 members of the Community Consultation register and 21 of those who completed the online questionnaire expressed an interest in receiving further information or discussing their views more fully. The task group would like these people to be invited to the next information gathering meeting. This year's Special Council on 13th October will be dedicated to encouraging individuals to stand for council. The task group would recommend that those who expressed an interest in receiving further details be invited to the Special Council meeting.

For the newly elected member there is a great deal to learn about the council – suggestions with regard to supporting new councillors and encouraging councillor retention is covered in the next section, 7.4.

Obviously being a councillor is not for everyone and a number of responses to the consultation confirmed this. One responder advised, '*it just does not appeal*', another maintained, '*I appreciate the time and effort put in by local councillors, but do not feel able to fulfil all the necessary duties myself.*' One consultee provided suggestions as to how the council could engage more effectively suggesting that whilst not tempted to stand for council they welcomed the opportunity to participate in some capacity with the work of their local authority. Several of these have already been implemented but possibly this could be more effectively communicated.

The task group would recommend that the Communications Team be asked to comment on the following response which was submitted via the online consultation:

"In order to get the best councillors the council has to be flexible around them and not the other way round. This includes way in which business is carried out - less paper and more electronic communication and collaboration that allow people to get involved on their terms. At the moment the only way to get key information is to attend council meetings etc. or read endless amounts of documents. The existing electronic consultation system (like this) should be used more to get an idea of public

opinion on local issues - not just the odd consultation but a flexible system that allow people who dont get the time to be full time councillors to get involved as little or as much (e.g. on a daily basis) as they would like. Recent local activities on Facebook illustrate the collective opinion available. Simple straw polls would give the council a much better idea of local opinions - at the moment its all a bit exclusive !! take an interest in various e-democracy projects such as the mySociety and OpenlyLocal projects who try to make local and central government as transparent and accessible as possible. These projects show the great interest the public have about the decision making that effects our lives. The council needs to engage with projects like this on a planning and technical level to get more people interested in local politics - people cannot offer an opinion if they dont know the information. The council needs to apply data sharing standards and get involved with projects mentioned above and data.gov.uk."

Throughout the various discussions it became apparent to members of the task group and to supporting officers that the city council needed to hold information meetings a lot earlier in the run up to the local elections to provide a general introduction to being a councillor with an explanation on the process of standing and the election period. This could be followed up by a more specific session at a later date concentrating on the rules and procedures and aimed at those who have more or less decided to stand for election.

Recommendation 3

- (a) That information about standing as a councillor be revised and consideration be given to including this in council tax notification packs, possibly on an alternate year basis.
- (b) That consideration be given to 'Your district matters' featuring a series of snapshots on the 'day of a life of a councillor.'
- (c) That a councillor job description be drafted to include person specification and made available on the website.
- (d) That an invitation to the Special Council meeting on 13th October be extended to those who expressed an interest in receiving further information or discussing their views more fully when completing the questionnaires.
- (e) That a link to 'Be a Councillor' be included on the city council website.
- (f) That the Communications Team be asked to comment on the response with regard to public involvement/engagement which was submitted via the online consultation
- (g) That consideration be given to a series of holding information meetings earlier in the run up to local elections – the first meeting to provide a general introduction with a further meeting concentrating on rules and procedures.

7.4. To determine what factors are leading to disillusion and inability to retain younger councillors and identify ways in which the council can provide necessary support to encourage retention.

Statistics indicate that only 3.5% of councillors were under the age of 30 in 2007 although 1/3 of the population is in that age group. In 2004 only 62 out of approximately 20,000 councillors were under 26. An article published by the New Local Government Network, 'Local Government Young at Heart', refers to 'an urgent need to seek a mix of candidates that is more representative of the communities they serve; a focus on increasing the proportion of under-thirties should also bring greater diversity in terms of gender and ethnicity.'

Voter turnout amongst the 18-24 year olds is 20-30% lower than the national average. 39% of 18-24 year olds voted in the 2001 general election in 2001 whilst only 11% of 18-24 year olds voted in the 2002 local elections. Figures for Lancaster district's University Ward reveal a turn out of only 13% in the 2007 local election and it has been suggested that one of the drivers of low turnout among younger people is the feeling that candidates don't represent them or understand them or their concerns. Increasing the turn out among young would mean local government better reflected public opinion. 75% of those polled in the IDeA 2009 Local Election Candidates Survey were in favour of more, younger councillors.

However enticing younger people to stand as councillors is not enough with 18-30 year old councillors more likely to leave within one or two terms. A number of factors seem to determine whether younger councillors decide to seek a further term. For some there appears to be a perception among younger members that older councillors do not like to be challenged and regard younger members as naive. Younger members are expected to 'serve their time'. It should be noted that a Fast-track training programme was introduced by the IDeA to provide younger councillors with the skills to take on more senior leadership roles at a younger age but the effectiveness of such programmes is likely to be affected by the attitude of the party vanguard.

It appears that some members see the level of remuneration as a barrier to attracting younger councillors as highlighted in the following response:

"If we are serious about members coming from diverse backgrounds and want them to be community champions then we do need to pay members more. If you are young, have a family and a mortgage then the basic allowance is not enough. Having to take time off work costs money (I know people will say you are entitled to it – but employers are not always sympathetic and nobody supports you when they are not). Being a councillor can also be damaging to your career – so it is not just in the short term that the remuneration seems light."

This is further supported by the following response which also proposes a radical solution: *"In order to have sufficient time to do the job of councillor properly, one needs enough time to do it properly. For a lot of people including myself, this would mean not working full time, and subsequently earning less. This will not be the same for everyone as some councillors who are retired will be in a situation to afford this. I do however feel that if councillors are working as hard as they should be, then the allowance should be higher. Due to the current financial situation of the country, and*

the council, then this may mean reducing the number of councillors – I would suggest reducing the overall number of councillors by approx. half and doubling the allowance. If we want to attract younger people, then the allowances need to be higher.”

Unaware of the likely additional demands on their time the hesitancy of those at the early stages of their career to stand for election is understandable. Others, older and possibly more accustomed to their work or in a position to undertake part-time work or indeed retired are more likely to have the time and resources to dedicate to their council role without having to develop their career. A survey of 118 councillors under the age of 40 undertaken by the New Local Government Network in 2006 claimed that 56.41% of responders agreed completely that it was difficult to work in full-time employment and perform council duties with 27.35% agreeing slightly.

The recent decision of two ‘younger’ councillors to resign during their first full term of office highlights the difficulties faced by younger councillors embarking on their careers. (Both councillors had been elected as a result of by-elections prior to the 2007 local elections and though both were successfully re-elected resigned in 2010). Both had been elected whilst trainee teachers and resigned as councillors when it became necessary to relocate from the district in order to progress their teaching careers. Whilst moving outside of the district removed the final criterion for at least one of these former councillors to remain a councillor there is little incentive that a district council can offer to retain such people.

As inferred previously in this report the level of basic allowance which a district councillor receives may influence their decision as to whether to stand for a further term. For those embarking on a career it is clearly not sufficient to compensate for loss of potential earnings and or putting their career development on hold. Moreover with limited time to take on the additional duties or in view of party ‘hierarchy’ younger councillors are least likely to receive a special responsibility allowance SRA.

The task group recognises the difficulties in retaining younger councillors and would suggest that all councillors who decide not to seek re-election be invited to participate in an exit interview in order that the council can ascertain what if any action could be taken to reduce that particular in the future.

In the Councillor’s Commission report, the chair of the Commission Dame Jane Roberts maintained, *‘our democracy faces a major problem of disenchantment and disengagement...if we are to attract new and able candidates it must become less daunting to stand for election and councillors must feel better supported once elected.’*

Is this a problem in our district?

Clearly the level of support that is provided to councillors is vital. On the whole members have been very positive with regard to the support that they have received from Member Services and Democratic Support in particular, as evidenced by the following comments: - *‘the support here is excellent,’ ‘I have had plenty of training and everyone has been supportive,’ ‘they are always very considerate and helpful.’*

Research indicates that some authorities do not supply their members with computer facilities. Here all Members are provided with a laptop and printer, access to broadband and have use of the computer facilities at both town halls. On the whole members have found this useful as highlighted in responses to the questionnaire: *‘the laptops have helped considerably, even the new ones!’*

What can be done to address this?

The city council offers a comprehensive and ongoing member development programme and every effort is made to identify any areas where provision could be improved. Full details of the member development programme are available on the council's website. A number of suggestions/comments were included by members with regard to supporting members and the task group would recommend that these be forwarded to officers responsible for Member Development.

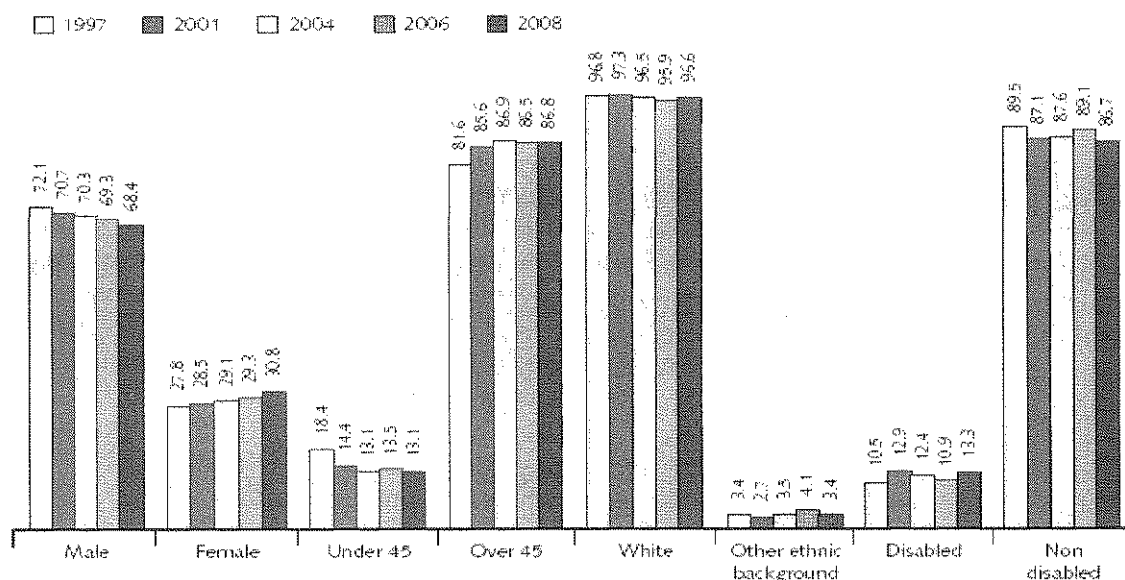
- More basic information before being elected and in first year of office.
- Roles of councillors and officers could be better defined and explained.
- A backbench councillor does not know what is happening at executive and administrative levels of the council.
- A session on the constitution.
- Training as a newly elected councillor of what they are expected to do on committee meetings and full council.
- Tour of council buildings – introduce new councillors

Recommendation 4

- (a) To undertake exit interviews with councillors who choose not to stand for a further term of office.
- (b) That the suggestions/comments made with regard to member support be forwarded to the officers responsible for Member Development.

7.5. To undertake a comparison on the changing composition of the city council in recent years with regard to gender, ethnicity and age

Figure 8 Gender, age, ethnic origin and disability, England 1997–2008



Gender

The above graph reinforces the concept of councillors being ‘male, pale and stale’ at national level. IDeA statistics for 2009 indicate that 98.3% of councillors were of white origin, 71% were men with an average age of 57.3 years. The proportion of female first time candidates was 37%, with female incumbents at 29.4%. The mean age of a first time candidate was 49.6%, almost 10 years younger than incumbents at 58.3. An LGiU article ‘Promoting Councillor Diversity’ suggests, ‘to continue to be legitimately considered as the voice of local people, councils need to address how a more diverse range of people can become councillors. If they do not, councils risk being thought of as remote, unrepresentative and failing to take up the breadth of talent among under represented groups.’ This reinforces the concept that improving the diversity of elected representatives cannot be solved by political parties alone.

Responses to enquiries made with the Exeter Benchmarking Group with regard to the gender of councillors in the years between 2000 and 2008 confirm an increase in the number of female councillors. Whilst the figures indicate an increase in the number of female councillors in all of these authorities the ratio of male to

Year	Authority	M	F	no. clirs	% Male / female
2000	Ipswich	40	8	48	83 / 17
2008		33	15	48	69 / 31
2000	Exeter	27	13	40	68 / 32
2004		26	14	40	65 / 35
2008		26	14	40	65 / 35
2000	Cheltenham	28	12	40	70 / 30
2008		26	14	40	65 / 35
2000	Dover	39	17	46	85 / 15
2004		31	14	45	69 / 31
2008		33	12	45	73 / 27
2000	Lancaster	35	25	60	58 / 42
2004		34	26	60	56 / 44
2008		33	27	60	55 / 45

female councillors in the Lancaster district has consistently been much closer than in the other authorities, a clear indication that being a female is not such a barrier to standing as a councillor in this district. A number of London councils have been running a 'Be a Councillor Campaign' to encourage a more diverse range of candidates and this has resulted in the highest proportion of female candidates at 36.1%. This percentage is notably lower than the percentage of female councillors on this city council further illustrating that females are not dissuaded from standing for election in this district.

Ethnicity

Although nationally more women and younger people are being selected the proportion of candidates drawn from non-white communities presents a major challenge to political parties. The 2001 census indicates that non-white ethnic groups accounted for 9% of the population although only 3.3% of candidates over the past four sets of elections. Within this district statistics from the 2001 census indicate that at less than 2.2% the non-white population is below the national average. Out of a population of 133,914, 131,013 were white (95.37% white british, 0.82% white irish and 1.65% other white). The biggest non-white minority was Indian with 631 or 0.47% with 2270 other non-whites, 1.7%. Figures for the district in 2007 reveal a population in the region of 143,500, and clear evidence of further migration with white British 90.94%, white Irish 0.77%, other white 3% and non-white 5.29%. (See Appendix 5 for further details).

The ethnicity of current councillors and the members of the public who responded to the consultation is not only indicative of the lower than national average non-white population in the district but also reinforces the difficulties engaging with what is frequently referred to as the 'hard to reach groups.' 42 of the 43 online responses to provide their ethnicity indicated their ethnicity to be white with 1 selecting black or black British. The 49 responses received from members of the community consultation register provided a similar picture; 48 white and 1 mixed.

It is apparent that measures are currently being taken to address the issue of community cohesion particularly through the Valuing People Thematic Group. The first priority of this thematic group is to *'improve community cohesion, a sense of belonging and taking part by promoting positive relationships between the diverse and emerging communities and groups in the Lancaster District.'* An indication of the group's work programme/projects is available on the city council's website and can be accessed by clicking on Community and Living, followed by the LSP link.

Of particular note and relevance to the work of this task group are the Lancaster District Community Leaders Group (comprising representatives from the Chinese, Polish, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Travellers, Christian and Huaxian communities) and the Pomocna Dion (Helping Hand) project which was instigated to assist Polish migrants in overcoming some of the barriers which were preventing them from becoming fully integrated and playing a full role in the community.

Clearly the city council could do more to encourage individuals from minority groups to become involved in local government and the existence of such organisations could provide a useful channel for this. The task group made particular reference to the Traveller and Polish Communities within the district. Statistics provided by officers from Environmental Health indicate that in July 2009 there were 100 gypsy caravans predominantly located within licensed gypsy caravan sites, the figure for January 2010 was recorded at 107 caravans. Whilst the Elections Office has 20

caravans listed on Mellishaw Park only 15 are listed as having occupiers on the electoral register.

EU citizens are entitled to vote in the local elections providing that they have completed the electoral registration form and can stand for local elections if they meet one of the qualifications. From the number of for example Polish citizens on the current electoral register it is apparent that not all entitled to register have done so and whilst there will undoubtedly be some who do not wish to register there will also be those who are unaware that they are able to do so.

The Elections team are eager to do all they can to engage with the hard to reach groups and are currently working with Communications. The task group would recommend that consideration be given to the Elections Officer attending a meeting of a community group, e.g. the Lancaster District Community Leaders Group or Polish Association to see how information regarding electoral registration and standing for council could be effectively dispersed through such groups. The task group would also suggest that these groups be notified of any future information meetings for those considering standing for council, including the Special Council meeting on 13th October.

Age

Of the 29 councillors who responded to the questionnaire 1 was under the age of 30, 7 were aged between 31 and 50, 12 were within the 51 to 65 age group and 9 over the age of 65, which coincidentally results in an average age of just over 57 years; identical to the national average age according to IDeA's 2007 survey.

A number of responses from members of the public suggested that age was a barrier to them standing. Many considered themselves too old as evidenced in the following comments: *'too old at 86 – cant walk – otherwise would love to become a councillor,'* and, *'I would have been interested when I was younger, but the interest has waned. I no longer feel inclined to accept the additional workload.'* Whilst in recent years the age for standing as a councillor has been lowered to 18, in the opinion of one 23 year old online consultee this was an obstacle: *'I feel I am too young and do not really know enough about the local area/issues.'*

With regard to age it has become apparent throughout this report that whilst a number of younger candidates are persuaded to stand for election the barriers to retaining them are not easily diminished by a district council.

Recommendation 5

- (a) That consideration be given to the Elections Officer attending a meeting of a community group, e.g. the Lancaster District Community Leaders Group or Polish Association to see how information regarding electoral registration and standing for council could be effectively dispersed through such groups.
- (b) That community groups, e.g. the Lancaster District Community Leaders Group or Polish Association be notified of any future information meetings for those considering standing for council, including the Special Council meeting on 13th October.

8. Conclusion

To conclude the task group recognises that the council's ability to remove the various obstacles which discourage individuals from standing for council or indeed seeking re-election is limited. This report has attempted to highlight the main barriers within this district and make suggestions as to what further measures the council can take to remove the barriers where indeed it can have some influence.

A number of recommendations have been made to address the issues raised in the Councillor's Commission Report and in the responses to the various consultations. One responder welcomed the rationale of the task group: *'Its good you are trying to encourage new blood into the city council. Many people need encouragement to take the first step.'* By implementing these limited and inexpensive recommendations the task group would hope that it will become less daunting for individuals to take the initial step.

The consultation responses produced a number of interesting, thoughtful, provocative and even humorous replies as evidenced by this final comment. One councillor listed a host of reasons which might influence whether they would be seeking a further term in office, including *'age, enthusiasm, dedication, energy and health ... lottery win (large)!*

9. Appendices

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | Remuneration - examples of variances amongst different types of authorities |
| Appendix 2 | Responses from members with regard to the level of basic allowance |
| Appendix 3 | 'Want to be a councillor?' leaflet |
| Appendix 4 | Wigan Job description and information from www.beacouncillor website |
| Appendix 5 | Ethnic Group 2001 – 2007 – from Lancashire Profile Lancaster County Council website |

APPENDIX 1

Examples of varying levels of basic allowances and additional allowances – including London Boroughs, Metropolitan district, County, Shire district and Unitary authorities (Taken from the I&DeA Survey of Member's Allowances 2008)

Authority	Type	Annual basic allowance for 2008/09	Additional allowances available:							Date allowances last reviewed	
			Dependent carers' allowance	Childcare allowance	Travel allowance	Bike allowance	Subsistence	Access to pension scheme	Rate of dependent carers' allowance (£ / hr)	Rate of childcare allowance (£ / hr)	
Barnet	London borough	9,735	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	7.00	7.00	Mar-08
Hammersmith and Fulham	London borough	8,940	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	8.36	8.36	May-08
Richmond upon Thames	London borough	9,650	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15.00	7.00	May-08
Tameside	Metropolitan district	10,946	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.58	5.58	May-07
Trafford	Metropolitan district	6,121	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			May-07
Chester	Shire district	3,516	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes			Jan-08
Barrow-in-Furness	Shire district	2,263	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	10.00	10.00	Apr-07
South Lakeland	Shire district	3,591	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes				Feb-08
Lancashire	County	9,770	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	6.70		Feb-08
Burnley	Shire district	2,460	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes				Feb-08
Chorley	Shire district	4,088		Yes	Yes		Yes				2007
Fylde	Shire district	3,500		Yes	Yes		Yes				Mar-08
Hyndburn	Shire district	4,388	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	8.79	8.79	Apr-08
Lancaster	Shire district	3,220	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		8.15	8.15	Jan-08
Pendle	Shire district	3,000	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		3.00	3.00	
Ribble Valley	Shire district	2,586	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.52	5.52	Oct-07
Rossendale	Shire district	3,180	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes			Dec-06
South Ribble	Shire district	1,500		Yes	Yes		Yes				Jul-02
West Lancashire	Shire district	4,725	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	6.00	6.00	Apr-08
Wyre	Shire district	3,564		Yes	Yes		Yes				Apr-08

Bedford	Shire district	4,888	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	6.50		Apr-08
Ipswich	Shire district	3,650	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	11.00	5.50	Feb-08
Worcester	Shire district	3,775	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	15.00	7.50	Jun-06
Oxford	Shire district	4,601	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.52		Feb-08
Exeter	Shire district	4,430	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.20	5.20	Nov-07
Cheltenham	Shire district	4,945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.20		May-07
Eastbourne	Shire district	2,469	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Jul-07
Hastings	Shire district	5,277	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Jan-08
Swale	Shire district	3,263	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			Oct-07
Worthing	Shire district	3,801	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7.50		Jan-08
Kirklees	Metropolitan district	12,272	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5.12	5.12	Nov-07
Blackburn with Darwen	Unitary	5,992	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	10.00	5.00	Nov-07
Warrington	Unitary	7,718	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	7.50	7.50	Apr-08

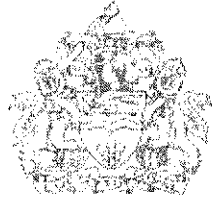
APPENDIX 2 – MEMBER RESPONSES REGARDING BASIC ALLOWANCE

Do councillors receive adequate remuneration?

Yes 9 no 15 other 5 (29 members responded to the questionnaire)

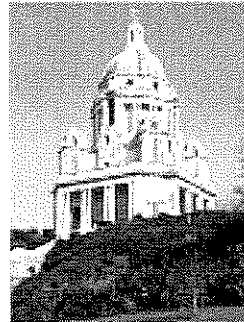
- (1) It depends, money would attract more not necessarily better, given public perception of politicians, it is highly unlikely to be achievable.
- (2) No, in order to have sufficient time to do the job of councillor properly, one needs enough time to do it properly. For a lot of people including myself, this would mean not working full time, and subsequently earning less. This will not be the same for everyone as some councillors who are retired will be in a situation to afford this. I do however feel that if councillors are working as hard as they should be, then the allowance should be higher. Due to the current financial situation of the country, and the council, then this may mean reducing the number of councillors – I would suggest reducing the overall number of councillors by approx. half and doubling the allowance. If we want to attract younger people, then the allowances need to be higher.
- (3) I don't think they do. I think it should be a minimum of £5,000 per year for back-bench councillors. I'd probably reduce the number of cabinet members to help pay for it.
- (4) A very broad and open question. In terms of the allowance then this is not enough for those who work and may need to work part time to commit sufficiently to play an active role as a councillor.
In terms of expenses then this is a political madness to create a new system with the current climate.
- (5) No – not for the hours etc, - may be we should put in a work sheet or something similar to say what work we have been doing that month? Then if considered you are the minimum hours/ workload then you are paid extra for that month- minimum wage would be nice.
- (6) £4,000.
- (7) No comment.
- (8) Some councillors put in hours of ward time and no-one sees how many hours of catch-up time we have with emails if we take a holiday.

- (9) That all depends. If we are serious about members coming from diverse backgrounds and that we want them to be community champions then we do need to pay members more. If you are young, have a family and a mortgage then the basic allowance is not enough. Having to take time off work costs money (I know people will say you are entitled to it – but employers are not always sympathetic and nobody supports you when they are not). Being a councillor can also be damaging to your career – so it is not just in the short term that the remuneration seems light.
 Not sure on this one do feel it is relatively low for the commitment that's required but everyone puts different amount of time in so not easy to balance it out.
- (10) The basic allowance should be £4000.
- (11) I did not join for the money but to help residents but the allowance helps pay for the equipment needed at times.
- (12) £8000.
- (13) £1K more.
- (14) Amount is inadequate to substitute for full time employment – this means that those in full time employment can rarely afford to become 'ordinary' councillors. Current Leader's position is an example of this – he needed council leader allowance to justify joining cabinet.
- (15) No allowance should be paid
- (16) More commensurate with the work involved.
- (17) £500 pm.
- (18) Realistically it is very difficult to persuade talented people of working age to stand for election (or re-election) to work at least 1-2 days per week including unsocial hours for this level of remuneration. People who work full time find it too much of a time commitment and the allowance is not enough to enable them to negotiate a reduction in their working hours and salary. People with children find it interferes too much with family life and finding ad-hoc childcare for attending meetings is a nightmare. People who are looking for work (especially younger people at the moment) cannot afford to be a councillor because it will reduce their flexibility and chances of finding a suitable job, and the councillor's allowance is nowhere near enough to live on. Working part-time is ideal, but it is difficult to find reasonably well-paid and secure part-time jobs. I think these problems help to explain why there are a disproportionate number of retired councillors and hardly anyone under the age of 30. It might be preferable to pay city councillors something closer to a living wage (eg £10,000 pa, more like county councillors) and have fewer of them but with more responsibility and working more hours per week.
- (19) The remuneration should be a living wage equivalent to a sufficient number of hours to complete the job.



WE NEED YOU.....

To Stand as a Local Councillor



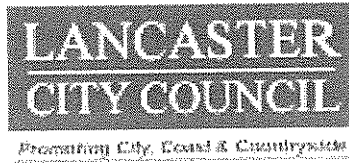
Have you ever thought 'I could make a difference'?

Do you want to have a say in the future of the District?

Have you ever thought you could help improve local services?

Do you want to make a difference in your local community?

If you can answer yes to any of these questions, why don't you stand for election as a Councillor in the District Elections on 5 May 2011?



INTRODUCTION

Lancaster City Council elections take place every 4 years, the next being in May 2011 and new candidates are always encouraged to come forward.

This leaflet aims to make standing for election an easier process and give you an idea what would be expected of you if you were successfully elected on 5 May 2011.

Firstly, are you eligible to stand for election?

Before you go any further, you need to know that you can actually stand in an election for Lancaster City Council.

Almost anyone can stand to be a District Councillor, but there are just one or two exceptions.

- You must be over 18 years of age on the day of nomination.
- You need to be a British or EU citizen.
- You must be an elector in the District of Lancaster, or have lived or worked in Lancaster within the last 12 months.
- You cannot stand for election if you are an employee of Lancaster City Council.
- You cannot stand if you are subject to a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order, or have a criminal conviction involving imprisonment in the previous 5 years.

It is not necessary for you to be aligned to a political party to stand to be a District Councillor, however if you are of a particular political persuasion, local political groups will always welcome new members especially people who are wanting to stand for the District Elections.

The contact details for the local political groups can be found on the internet or in the local phone book. The Council of course does not endorse any political group.

Councillors come from all sorts of different backgrounds including farmers, students, judges, labourers and are a wide range of ages. The greater the mix of people, the more effectively the Council can work and reflect the views of the local community.

What sort of experience/qualifications do I need?

Well none really. But an understanding of how the Council works would obviously be helpful as would an enthusiasm for your local community and a belief you can make a difference in local government and its principles. The main qualifications for being a Councillor are that you care for your community, are keen to learn and are willing to spare some time. Don't forget that even the Prime Minister had to begin somewhere !

If you are elected training will be given to help you carry out your duties as a Councillor, beginning with an induction to the Council within a few weeks of the election.

What does Lancaster City Council actually do?

Lancaster City Council - 'Promoting City, Coast and Countryside'

Lancaster City Council encompasses the City of Lancaster, the towns of Morecambe and Carnforth and the rural areas stretching from Silverdale in the North and Cockerham in the South.

The Council is responsible for services such as Environmental Services which empties our bins, cleans our streets and maintains municipal gardens and Parks in the District, Planning, Licensing, Strategic Housing, Environmental Health, Leisure including Salt Ayre and Council Housing.

Lancaster City Council employs approximately 950 staff to carry out this important work.

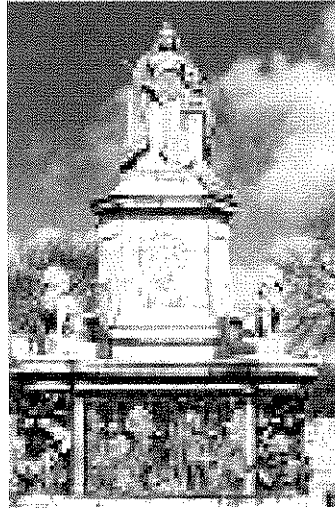
What do Councillors do?

Lancaster City Council is made up of 60 Councillors who are elected for a term of 4 years to cover 28 wards that make up the District of Lancaster.

Councillors are elected by the community and represent and champion the interests of local people, businesses and the community as a whole. They ensure that the Council fulfils its role as a service provider by taking part in the political management of the Council.

Councillors have the opportunity to become involved in local issues and to make a difference to the lives of the local people they represent. Their involvement in their local communities gives them an insight into the needs of local people which can shape the policies of local government.

As well as representing the community, Councillors participate in the decision making process to form the budget and policy framework of the Council. Councillors serve on Committees such as Cabinet, Planning and Highways Regulatory, Overview and Scrutiny and partnership bodies, so it is likely you will attend meetings in your role as Councillor.



How much of my time will it take up?

This really depends on your role within the Council and could be just a few hours a week to several hours each day.

If you are not a Member of one of the larger Committees, you could find yourself attending just full Council, which is held roughly every 5 weeks and the odd meeting away from the Council such as P.A.C.T. (Police And Communities Together) meetings giving you time to concentrate on your ward work which could amount to a few hours each week. You must attend Council meetings though which usually take place on a Wednesday afternoon, so if you work you will need to discuss this with your employer.

If you have more time on your hands, being a Member of one of the Council's many different Committees is very rewarding, interesting and, depending on your role, can take up much more time.

For most meetings there will be reports and information that will need to be read before the meeting so decisions can be made based on the facts you have been given. This information is usually sent electronically as all Councillors are provided with a laptop – but don't worry if you have no computer experience – full training will be provided.

Your constituents will look to you for help in any problems they may encounter, even though some of these will probably not fall strictly within the City Council's remit. You will probably receive a large amount of post and phone calls and some calls will probably come at a time you would not consider to be reasonable.

Can I get time off work?

If you work, your employer must by law allow you to take off a reasonable amount of time off during your working day to perform your duties as a Councillor. This is covered in the Employment Rights Act 1996, Section 50.

The amount of time off will depend on your responsibilities as a Councillor and the effect your absence will have on your employer's business.

Will I get paid?

Councillors do not receive a salary for the time they give up for Council duties; however you will be paid a basic allowance. This allowance is paid to recognise the time commitment expected of all Councillors, including the inevitable calls on their time such as Council meetings and working with constituents and also to cover incidental costs such as phone calls. Currently, this allowance at Lancaster City Council is £3,300 but there are extra allowances allocated for special responsibilities.

Prospective candidates should be aware that allowances count as earnings for benefit purposes and as taxable income for income tax purposes. If you are in any doubt as to how this may affect you, please contact your local Tax office or Welfare Rights service.

How democracy works at Lancaster City Council

The Full Council

There are 60 Councillors on Lancaster City Council. Their main responsibilities are:

- To meet to discuss and agree major policies which determine how Council services are run and how the Council will fulfil its community leadership role.
- To agree how much the Council will spend each year.
- To agree how much Council Tax will be each year.
- To listen to the views of other Councillors and constituents.

Cabinet – the Executive

Cabinet is the main decision making body of the Council and is made up of the Leader of the Council and up to 9 other Cabinet Members. The Cabinet is responsible for taking key decisions on behalf of the Council and individual Cabinet Members are responsible for taking non-key decisions.

Overview and Scrutiny

The Council also has a scrutiny function which consists of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Budget and Performance Panel. Their role is to scrutinise decisions and act as a critical friend to the Cabinet. The scrutiny function also reviews Council services and listens to the concerns of local people.

Other Committees

There are Regulatory Committees such as Planning and Licensing which meet regularly as well as many partnership meetings.

Come and See how it works

Most of the Council's Committees meet in public such as Council, Cabinet, Planning and Overview and Scrutiny Committee to name a few. You are more than welcome to come along to any of these meetings to see what goes on. Details of all meetings can be found on the Council's website : www.lancaster.gov.uk under the heading Meetings and Minutes or telephone 01524 582000 for details.



What support would I get if I was elected?

Basically, all Council Officers will be on hand to help you and offer information and advice, but there are specific Officers in Democratic Services who are there to provide guidance and support. Staff in Democratic Services provide secretarial and administrative support for all Councillors and are always available to answer that question you can't find an answer for in your Member's handbook !

What training and development will I receive?

Once the election is out of the way, work will begin on an induction programme for all Councillors, particularly for those newly elected Councillors. The induction programme is an essential introduction to your life as a Councillor. This will be followed by one to one interviews to assess what training you will need as an individual.

There is also a Member Development programme which includes many different training events held throughout the year to enable you to gain knowledge and help you to develop through your political career.

Personal Conduct

The way Councillors act in office particularly over matters where they have a personal or financial interest is governed by law and the Code of Conduct. If you are elected, you will be required to sign a declaration stating that you will abide by the Code of Conduct and declare any financial or other interests you may have.



How much of my time will it take up?

This really depends on your role within the Council and could be just a few hours a week to several hours each day.

If you are not a Member of one of the larger Committees, you could find yourself attending just full Council, which is held roughly every 5 weeks and the odd meeting away from the Council such as P.A.C.T. (Police And Communities Together) meetings giving you time to concentrate on your ward work which could amount to a few hours each week. You must attend Council meetings though which usually take place on a Wednesday afternoon, so if you work you will need to discuss this with your employer.

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Prospective candidates should be aware that allowances count as earnings for benefit purposes and as taxable income for income tax purposes. If you are in any doubt as to how this may affect you, please contact your local Tax office or Welfare Rights service.

Still interested ?

There are several political parties already represented on Lancaster City Council and there are others. Or you could always stand as an independent Councillor. Details of all political parties can be found easily on the internet.

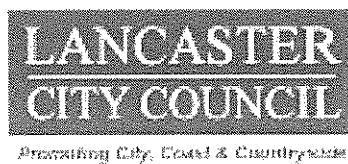
Approximately five weeks before the election, the Notice of Election is published and displayed all over the District.

You will need to be proposed and seconded by 2 local electors and also have 8 other supporters for your nomination all of whom must be registered electors in the area in which you are standing.

You will also need to appoint an election agent who will see that the election is conducted within the law, deal with expenses and organises the campaign's activities.

If you need any further information or assistance, please contact the Elections Officer on 01524 582905 or e-mail elections@lancaster.gov.uk

You can ask any questions you may have on the electoral process or the nomination procedure and also request your nomination pack once the Notice of Election has been published.



APPENDIX 4 **JOB DESCRIPTIONS – EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE – WIGAN & EXTRACTS FROM WWW.BEACOUNCILLOR WEBSITE**

Wigan

COUNCILLOR

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Learnt Abilities and Skills

- Ability to work effectively with people.
- Effective decision making skills.
- Ability and confidence to challenge and scrutinise policies and decisions.
- Effective organisation skills and excellent inter-personal skills.
- Ability to communicate with a wide variety of people using a high degree of discretion and tact.
- Ability to formulate documents in a clear and logical manner both in written and verbal contexts.
- Ability to organise and prioritise workloads.
- Ability to work and liaise with a wide range of individuals, groups and organisations.
- Ability to adopt a flexible approach to hours worked and location of work.
- Ability to understand large amounts of complex information quickly and effectively.
- Effective and highly developed leadership skills.
- Ability to represent constituents fairly and impartially.
- Negotiating and mediation skills.
- To learn new skills and adapt to a changing environment.
- To be computer literate
- Ability to chair and facilitate meetings.

Learnt Understanding and Awareness

- An understanding of local and central government and the way the Authority works.
- An understanding of national and local political issues and stances.
- A thorough knowledge of the role of modern day councillors.
- A thorough and detailed knowledge of current issues affecting constituents and the local community.

Personal Qualities

- A willingness to learn and develop new skills and undergo training.
- A clear and demonstrable commitment to excellent customer care.
- A clear and demonstrable commitment to equal opportunities.
- Desire to work in an ethical way and in accordance with agreed standards of conduct.

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Wigan

WIGAN COUNCIL

Job Description - Councillor

- POST: Councillor
- HOURS: As required within the parameters set by the individual.
- JOB PURPOSE:
- Represent the local community and Ward by acting as an effective advocate, campaigner and representative.
 - To contribute actively to the Council's decision making processes, including the formation, implementation and monitoring of the Council's policies, budget and service delivery arrangements
 - Promote the economic, social and environmental well being of the local community, the Ward and the Council as a whole.
- WORKING WITH: Local electors, fellow Councillors, Council staff, representatives of various agencies and partners.
- REMUNERATION: in accordance with the Council's Members Allowance Scheme.

MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

(A) DECISION MAKER

1. To contribute to the decision making process by participation in meetings of the full Council and other formal meetings such as the Executive, Panels and Regulatory Committees. *Cabinet Business Units*
2. To participate in the Overview and Scrutiny process to monitor the Council's performance against targets, review the implementation of policy and scrutinise external agencies.
3. To set service priorities and participate in agreeing and setting a budget.
4. To ensure that the Council acts in co-operation with other agencies and for the benefit of all constituents.
5. To work with local partnerships and organisations to further the well-being of the locality and wider Borough. *Business*
6. To contribute to the 'Best Value' process to support the provision (by a variety of providers) of the best possible services to residents of the Borough. *Business*
7. To be a Council representative and active participant on an outside or partner organisation and to support two way communication between the Council and the organisation.

(B) COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE AND ADVOCATE

8. To represent the local community at meetings of the Council and with external bodies and partner organisations.

9. To be an advocate for the local community in order to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area and Borough as a whole.
10. To establish a range of mechanisms (including regular surgeries) to listen to matters of personal concern and importance to constituents and take appropriate action.
11. To develop and contribute to a range of consultation mechanisms with local residents, groups, partners and other agencies/bodies.

(C) COMMUNITY LEADER

12. To be a 'community leader' by promoting effective working between fellow Councillors, the Council, partner organisations, external organisations and local community.
13. To campaign or make representation in the Council or at other meetings on behalf of the local community.
14. To liaise and work with officers of the Council as appropriate.
15. To campaign and make representation on local issues affecting constituents and secure resources for the local community.
16. To contribute to the development of the Local Community Strategy/Plan and Partnership working.
17. To regularly and effectively communicate with local constituents.
18. When appropriate, to Chair local panels, working groups and other joint meetings.
19. To promote community engagement and participation.
20. To support the establishment of local meetings and networks and promote effective Townships.


(D) ETHICAL STANDARDS

21. To meet the standards established by statute and approved in the Council's Formal Constitution. These include the approved Members Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the Members Allowance Scheme.
22. Where it is believed that another Member has failed to comply with the Authority's Code of Conduct to refer the matter as soon as possible to the Standards Board of England.

(E) CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT

23. To continuously develop the skills, knowledge and experience required to be an effective Councillor.
24. To respond (e.g. by the development of new skills or way of working) to a changed role for Councillors to undertake new responsibilities.





be a councillor

"It was great to be able to show local people that their actions could make change happen."

Darren Johnson

Music lover
Inspired by green causes
Local councillor

See Darren's profile
View his council page

- [Meet the councillors](#)
- [What do councillors do?](#)
- [Local government structure](#)
- [How councils work](#)
- [What is expected of a councillor?](#)
- [What kind of skills and experience do councillors need?](#)

- [Could I be a councillor?](#)
- [How do I become a councillor?](#)

Home > What do councillors do? > What kind of skills and experience do councillors need?

What kind of skills and experience do councillors need?

Diverse groups tend to make better informed decisions, so it is important that councils not only represent the communities they serve, but also have a wide range of skills and experience. That's where you come in.

The knowledge and experience you have picked up through your personal and professional life are important. While you don't need any special or formal qualifications to be a councillor, having or being able to develop the following skills, knowledge and attributes will help you in your role:

- **communication skills**
These include listening and interpersonal skills, public speaking skills, the ability to accept alternative points of view as well as the ability 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 advantages and disadvantages of each
- **team working**
Including being able to work with others in meetings and on committees and being able to complete any tasks on time that you agree to do
- **organisational skills**
These include 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, on the phone and face to face at regular sessions called surgeries.


You might also have specific skills and knowledge gained from professional experience or from working with other groups. These might be:

- the needs of specific groups, such as children and young people, disabled people, older people or those with health problems
- an understanding of financial management and reporting processes
- legal and regulatory systems or procedures
- housing, regeneration or environmental issues
- or related to any of the many services and facilities provided by your local council.

But don't worry if you think you don't yet have some of the skills or confidence to be a councillor. All councils in London have support, information and training available for new councillors.

More guidance and advice is also available from:

- Communities and Local Government
- IDeA (The Improvement and Development Agency for local government)
- London Councils
- Local Government Association
- Modern Councillor Training
- The Electoral Commission



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APPENDIX 5 Ethnic Group 2001 – 2007 – from Lancashire Profile Lancaster County Council website

Ethnic Group, 2001 to 2007

Percentage of total number of people in ethnic group:

Total number of people (thousands)	Percentage of total number of people in ethnic group:															
	White	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese or Other	White and Black Caribbean	White and Black African	White and Other Asian	Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi	Other Black African	Other Black Chinese					
Lancaster																
2001	134.0	95.37	0.82	1.64	0.15	0.07	0.22	0.15	0.52	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.15	0.00	0.37	0.30
2002	135.1	94.89	0.81	1.70	0.22	0.07	0.22	0.15	0.59	0.15	0.07	0.07	0.15	0.00	0.44	0.30
2003	137.6	93.97	0.80	2.03	0.22	0.07	0.22	0.22	0.65	0.29	0.15	0.15	0.15	0.22	0.58	0.44
2004	139.8	93.06	0.79	2.29	0.21	0.07	0.29	0.21	0.79	0.36	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.29	0.72	0.43
2005	142.3	92.06	0.77	2.74	0.28	0.07	0.28	0.21	0.91	0.42	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.35	0.91	0.56
2006	143.0	91.47	0.77	2.80	0.28	0.07	0.28	0.21	1.05	0.49	0.14	0.21	0.21	0.35	0.98	0.56
2007	143.5	90.94	0.77	3.00	0.28	0.14	0.35	0.28	1.11	0.49	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.42	1.05	0.63

COUNCIL RESPONSE TO BARRIERS TASK GROUP

15.9.10 – Minute 56

Resolved:

- (1)
 - (a) That a copy of the task group's final report together with an analysis of the consultation responses be forwarded to the Independent Remuneration Panel for information purposes.
 - (b) That consideration be given as to how the benefits of employing a councillor could be better communicated to the employer, including the development of an information pack for employers on civic roles, detailing time commitments and benefits to both employer and employee and involving employers in induction events.
 - (c) That following on from the next phase of restructure officers from the Governance Service be made aware of the suggestions made by members with regard to further support and make enquiries through member service networks to ascertain what/if any measures other authorities are taking to improve member support.
 - (d) That the website and other information on standing for council be revised to ensure that it fully reflects the needs of non-aligned candidates
- (2) That details with regard to the Carer's Allowance be more widely publicised on the council's website and in information provided to prospective candidates.
- (3)
 - (a) That information about standing as a councillor be revised and consideration be given to including this in council tax notification packs, possibly on an alternate year basis.
 - (b) That consideration be given to 'Your district matters' featuring a series of snapshots on the 'day of a life of a councillor.'
 - (c) That a councillor job description be drafted to include person specification and made available on the website.
 - (d) That an invitation to the Special Council meeting on 13th October be extended to those who expressed an interest in receiving further information or discussing their views more fully when completing the questionnaires.
 - (e) That a link to 'Be a Councillor' be included on the city council website.
 - (f) That the Communications Team be asked to comment on the response with regard to public involvement/engagement which was submitted via the online consultation
 - (g) That consideration be given to a series of holding information meetings earlier in the run up to local elections – the first meeting to provide a general introduction with a further meeting concentrating on rules and procedures.

- (4) (a) To undertake exit interviews with councillors who choose not to stand for a further term of office.
- (b) That the suggestions/comments made with regard to member support be forwarded to the officers responsible for Member Development.
- (5) (a) That consideration be given to the Elections Officer attending a meeting of a community group, e.g. the Lancaster District Community Leaders Group or Polish Association to see how information regarding electoral registration and standing for council could be effectively dispersed through such groups.
- (b) That community groups, e.g, the Lancaster District Community Leaders Group or Polish Association be notified of any future information meetings for those considering standing for council, including the Special Council meeting on 13th October.