

Becoming a Councillor in Chorley

A brief guide for potential
candidates for local elections

May 2014



Foreword

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Chorley Councillor. This guide gives a brief insight into the role of Councillor and what it means to represent Chorley.

By standing at local elections you can make an important contribution to community life as well as influencing decisions that affect everyone who visits, works or lives in Chorley.

The role of Councillor can be challenging but rewarding. It's a great opportunity to be an important part of the local democratic process.

I hope you find this guide useful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Hall', written in a cursive style.

Gary Hall
Chief Executive

About Chorley

The borough of Chorley is situated in Central Lancashire and extends to around 86 square miles

The central spine of the borough is more urban in character, with the market town of Chorley, and is surrounded by more rural areas.

Chorley is well placed for access to the major cities of the North West, with good connections to the major motorways and railway links and to Manchester Airport.

Services provided by the Council

Chorley is in a “two tier” local government area where local public services are delivered partly by Chorley Council and partly by Lancashire County Council.

Chorley Council delivers services which include waste collection; neighbourhood services; revenue collection; planning applications; parks, sports centres and leisure facilities; strategic housing and benefit services; economic development and tourism; and environmental health and licensing functions.

Lancashire County Council deliver adult social care; education; children’s services; highway and transport services.

The Council’s strategic vision

The Council’s ambition for the borough is set out in its annual Corporate Strategy.

Our vision is “an ambitious Council that achieves more by listening to the whole Community and exceeding their needs”

To try and meet this vision we have identified the following strategic objectives, which fall under four themes:

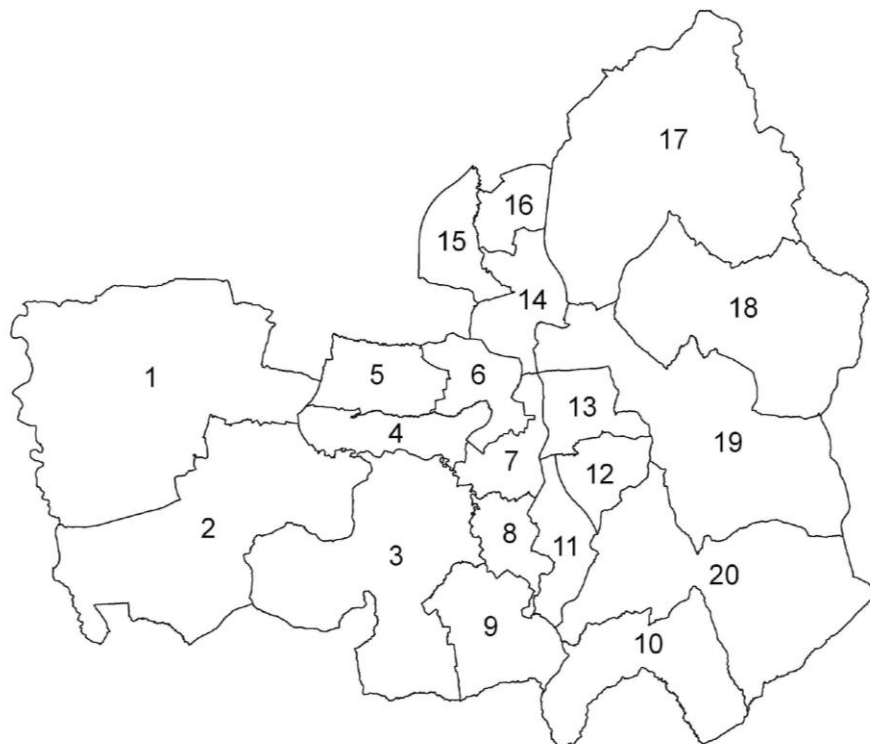
- **Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all**
- **Clean, safe and healthy communities**
- **A strong local economy**
- **An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area**

The Corporate Strategy also contains targets to measure the Council's success in achieving these objectives as well as a number of key projects aimed at improving the borough and the Council as an organisation.



How the Council is made up

Chorley Council is made up of 20 electoral wards as shown on the map below. Each ward is represented by either one, two or three councillors – see ward map and information below. Each Councillor serves a four year term office, after which they need to see re- election if they wish to continue.



1	**	Lostock	12	***	Chorley East
2	***	Eccleston & Mawdesley	13	***	Chorley North East
3	**	Chisnall	14	***	Clayton-le-Woods & Whittle-le-Woods
4	**	Euxton South	15	**	Clayton-le-Woods West and Cuerden
5	**	Euxton North	16	***	Clayton-le-Woods North
6	**	Astley Village & Buckshaw	17	*	Brindle & Houghton
7	***	Chorley North West	18	**	Wheelton & Withnell
8	***	Chorley South West	19	*	Pennine
9	***	Coppull	20	*	Heath Charnock & Rivington
10	***	Adlington			
11	***	Chorley South East			

* one Councillor, ** two Councillors, *** three Councillors

How do I become a Chorley Councillor?

Elections for Chorley Councillors are usually held on the first Thursday in May – although the next Local Elections in Chorley are on Thursday 22 May 2014 to coincide with the European Elections. In Chorley, a third of the Council is elected each year, with the following third the year after and so on, until their four year term is up and the process begins again. One year in four there are no Chorley elections – and this is when the Lancashire County Council elections are held, the next of which will be in May 2013. If a Councillor resigns or otherwise vacates their seat before the expiry of their term, the Council holds a by-election.

Eligibility for Candidates

To stand for election as a Chorley Councillor, candidates must be 18 years or over; be a British, Irish, Commonwealth or other European Union citizen; and fulfil at least one of the following criteria:

- ⑦ your name is on Chorley's electoral register
- ⑦ you have lived or worked in Chorley during the whole of the last 12 months
- ⑦ you own land or have been a tenant of a property in Chorley for at least 12 months.

There are a number of reasons which can disqualify you from standing as a candidate. These include if:

- ⑦ you are or have been bankrupt (subject to specific criteria)
- ⑦ you have been sentenced to a prison term of three months or more (including a suspended sentence) within the last five years
- ⑦ you work for Chorley Council or hold a politically restricted post with another authority.

Choosing a ward

Chorley is divided into 20 wards. You are able to stand anywhere in the borough but you need to decide which ward you want to stand for when submitting your nomination form.

Nominations

To become a candidate you need to be nominated by ten people (whose names appear on Chorley's register of electors for the ward) and declare that you accept the

nomination. A nomination paper has to be signed by the correct number of supporters. The forms for this are available from the Council offices a few weeks before polling day.

Most candidates are nominated through a political party who have their own selection processes. However you can stand in your own right as an independent candidate.

There is no charge to stand as a candidate for election. However, any costs incurred by a candidate in standing for election will have to be paid by the candidate and details of the expenses incurred need to be provided to the Council shortly after the election.

Candidates' agents

Every candidate must appoint an election agent, although you can choose to act as your own agent. Amongst other things, your agent sees that the election campaign is conducted in accordance with the law, deals with expenses and generally organises the campaign's activities.

Polling day (election day)

Every candidate is entitled to attend at the opening of postal votes both before and on polling day and at the counting of the votes which may be on polling day or the day after (known as the Count). You can also appoint other people, known as polling agents and counting agents, to attend the polling stations and the count.

After the election

If elected, you will need to sign to accept your position as Councillor and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct for Councillors. You will also be asked to attend an induction programme shortly after your election which will help you during your first few months as a Councillor.

Councillors' roles and responsibilities

Councillors (also referred to as 'members' or 'elected members') can represent political parties or may be independent.

Elected Councillors to Chorley Council are responsible for making decisions on behalf of their local community about the local services for which the Council is responsible. They agree the Council budget, set the policy framework, appoint chief officers and make constitutional decisions. They also represent those people living and working in their ward and act as advocates on their behalf, while at the same time helping to provide leadership for the area as a whole.

Council Officers

While Councillors set the direction of the Council and create the policy framework for service delivery, Council officers, led by the Chief Executive, advise the Council and are responsible for carrying out the wide range of functions and duties of the Council. Officers have a duty to give unbiased, professional advice to elected Councillors.

Other support and training

Chorley Council offers a good package of support to enable its elected members to carry out their roles and responsibilities. This package includes the provision of a tablet device for Council work and Council meetings and a permit to park free of charge on the Council's car parks in Chorley when visiting Council buildings for meetings or on other Council business.

We also offer a full induction programme for new Councillors and organise regular on-going training and development sessions to help members to develop their knowledge and skills in areas such as chairing meetings, public speaking, IT skills and knowledge of Council services etc.

Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is a set of rules that governs the behaviour of Elected Members to prevent the abuse of their position or the misuse of the authority's resources. In addition, there are rules governing disclosures of interests and withdrawal from meetings when certain interests are declared. When elected, Councillors agree to abide by the Code, as well as recording their significant financial interests which are then published on the Council's website.

Entitlement to Allowance

Councillors do not get paid a salary, as the work is voluntary, but they do receive a basic allowance paid on a monthly basis. The basic allowance is currently £4284 per annum. You may also be eligible for other payments, such as travel and subsistence allowances for approved Council duties. Some Councillors, such as members of the Executive and Committee Chairs, may receive additional payments, known as special responsibility allowances. Details of the amounts paid are available on the Council's website.

Time Commitment

Council work can demand a great deal of time commitment on top of work, families and other interests. It is important for each candidate to ensure that they can fit meetings and other Council work into the pattern of their normal home and work arrangements.

In Chorley, most meetings take place in the early evening, although a few are held during the day. Councillors may also be asked to represent the Council on other organisations.

Employers are required to provide reasonable time off but there is no obligation to pay for that time off, you may therefore want to discuss this with your employer.

How the Council operates

The Constitution of the Council

The Constitution sets out the rules and principles describing how the Council operates, how decisions are taken, and the procedures which ensure that decisions are transparent and accountable to local people.

The Full Council

There are 47 Councillors who make up the full Council, which agrees the major policies of the Council to determine how services are run and decides both the overall revenue and capital budgets of the authority and the level of Council Tax.

The Council meets seven times per year, including meetings to agree the Authority's Corporate Strategy and to set the budget and Council Tax level.

The Executive

The Executive Cabinet is the Council's main decision-making body, made up of Councillors with responsibility for particular service areas. The full Council decides the authority's policy framework and budget, but the Executive makes decisions about service delivery within the agreed budget and policy framework.

Chorley Council's Executive is made up of the Executive Leader, the Deputy Leader of the Council and five leading Councillors, known as 'Executive Members'. Each Member of the Executive has an individual area of responsibility, or portfolio, covering:

- ⑦ **Economic Development and Governance**
- ⑦ **Resources, Policy and Performance**
- ⑦ **Planning and Local Development Framework**
- ⑦ **Homes and Businesses**
- ⑦ **People**
- ⑦ **Places**

Members of the Executive normally take decisions collectively as a Cabinet, but the Executive Members can take individual decisions on matters within their own remit.

Overview and Scrutiny

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has two main functions:

- ⑦ to hold the Executive Cabinet to account, through, for example, examining proposals and decisions; looking at policies and performance; and highlighting areas for improvement.
- ⑦ to ensure services are of high quality and meet the needs of communities by, for example, reviewing and suggesting changes to make services better; ensuring that adequate consultation on proposed changes has been carried out; and ensuring that services present value for money.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is supported by a Performance Panel and a range of Task Groups, set up to review identified service areas.

Regulatory Committees

The Council also appoints a number of other Committees, often known as ‘Regulatory Committees’, which include:

- ⑦ Development Control Committee to consider planning applications
- ⑦ Licensing and Public Safety Committee to consider licensing issues and applications
- ⑦ Governance Committee to consider the Council’s Annual Statement of Accounts and other matters including Councillor Code of Conduct.

Partnership Working

We believe that, through working together with the County Council and other external organisations and agencies, we can achieve more effective services for the residents of Chorley.

Other partnership working initiatives include the Chorley Partnership which is our Local Strategic Partnership and the umbrella organisation for a number of associated bodies.

Public participation in Council meetings

As part of our commitment to openness and public involvement in local government, members of the public are allowed to ask questions, with prior notice, on items being considered at meetings of the full Council, Executive Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Task Groups. Interested persons are also able to speak either in favour of or against development proposals at Development Control Committee meetings.

Public Access to Meetings’ Agendas

Members of the public are able to attend the majority of our Council and committee meetings. The agendas and minutes of our public meetings can be viewed by logging

onto the Council's website at www.chorley.gov.uk and clicking on Council Meetings at the foot of the page.

We hope you find this a useful insight into the work of a local Councillor. If you have any questions about the role of a Councillor or the election process please contact the Democratic Services team on 01257 515151 or email democraticservices@chorley.gov.uk

Key contacts

Council Contact Centre: (01257) 515151

Elections office: (01257) 515131

Democratic Services e-mail: democraticservices@chorley.gov.uk

Useful website links

www.chorley.gov.uk – the Council's website including information on Council services, decision making, current Councillors and local elections.

www.electoralcommission.org.uk – an independent body with further information on elections, nominations and setting up political parties.

www.aboutmyvote.co.uk – includes information on elections and how to register and vote.





The next Chorley Council elections are scheduled to be held in

22 May 2014

To ensure our services are accessible to all, this document can be made available to you in larger print or on audio tape, or translated into your own language.

Please telephone 01257 515151

By becoming a Councillor YOU can make a difference

Chorley
Council