



People like you are councillors

Make a difference for Torbay!

- ✓ Passionate about where you live and want the best for your area?
- ✓ Want to do something worthwhile and rewarding to help your community?

Be the voice of your community by shaping and directing local services...



Councillors and the Mayor are ordinary people doing an extraordinary job. Stand to be a councillor or the next Mayor to make sure decisions being made meet the needs of the people of Torbay.

Why I became a councillor:

'I wanted to do something to influence change where I live for the better.'

'I wanted to get more involved in local issues and help reinvigorate a sense of community.'

'I really enjoy helping people to solve some of their problems.'

What does the Council and councillors do?

Torbay Council and Brixham Town Council provide local services to residents and visitors to Torbay.

Torbay is split into wards and two or three councillors are elected to represent each ward. The Mayor is elected to represent the whole of Torbay on Torbay Council.

As a councillor you will represent everyone in your ward - not just those that voted for you - and to serve the council as a whole. You will be a:

- **Representative**, acting as a source of information or point of access to council services.
- **Community leader**, developing links with all parts of the community and supporting local partnerships/organisations to campaign on local issues.
- **Policy maker**, attending meetings to discuss and approve council budget and policy. The Mayor may invite you to become a Cabinet member to oversee implementation of policies.
- **Scrutineer**, you may become involved to act as Torbay Council's 'watchdog' to review/improve services for local people and investigate issues of local concern.

People like you are councillors...

What about the Mayor?

Torbay Council has a directly elected Mayor who is responsible for delivery of key services within the policies and budget set by the Council. The Mayor works closely with a cabinet which is made up of a small team of councillors.

How can I become a councillor or the Mayor?

You are able to be the Mayor or a councillor if you:

- ✓ Are 18 years of age or over;
- ✓ Are British, or if you are a citizen of a member country of the European Union or Commonwealth;
- ✓ And have at least one of the following:
- ✓ Are registered to vote with Torbay Council (and within Brixham to stand for Brixham Town Council); or
- ✓ Lived (or worked) in Torbay for one year (or within Brixham to stand for Brixham Town Council); or
- ✓ Occupied or resided in, as owner or tenant, any land or premises in Torbay for one year (or within 4.8 km of Brixham for Brixham Town Council).

A Criminal Records Bureau checks will be carried out on you if you are elected.

You may not be the Mayor or a councillor if you:

- ✗ work for Torbay Council or Brixham Town Council or your job is a politically restricted post;
- ✗ have received a prison sentence or suspended sentence of three months or more within five years of the election; or
- ✗ have been disqualified under any legislation relating to any corrupt or illegal practices or are bankrupt.

More detailed information on how to stand for election is available from the Electoral Commission - www.electoralcommission.org.uk/home.

Will I be able to do the job?

You do not need any formal qualifications or experience to become the Mayor or a councillor. The main requirement is that you want to be involved and help represent the interests of your local area. You may also have special skills (such as communication, problem solving, team working and engaging your local community) or business expertise that you feel you could contribute.

The Mayor and councillors should represent the whole community so it is important people from all backgrounds are elected - women and men; young and older people; parents; people with disabilities; people who are gay, lesbian or bi-sexual; and from different ethnic groups and religious beliefs.

Can I be the Mayor or a councillor if I'm disabled?

The same criteria for being the Mayor or a councillor apply if you are disabled. The Council is not able to provide you with additional support to help you canvass potential voters, although a political party may be able to help. However, once you become the Mayor or a councillor, the Council will work with you to overcome any barriers there are to ensure you are fully involved. Being a councillor is not a full time job and may not affect any incapacity benefit you receive, however, you should check with the

Department for Work and Pensions. Read about the experiences of a councillor who is disabled by visiting www.beacouncillor.org.uk/meetthem/mariepye.htm



People like you are councillors...

How much time will it take?

How much time you put in as a councillor is largely up to you and the commitments you take on as a councillor. The Mayor has a significant commitment due to the responsibility of the job. There a number of meetings which you will have to attend and you will also need to deal with peoples' telephone queries at home. Time commitment can range from between 5 to 20 hours per week depending on how much you want to get involved - what you get back depends on how much you put in. Once elected you can be a councillor/the Mayor for a maximum of four years when the elections are held again.

Do I need to be part of a political group?

No. You can choose to stand for election as an independent candidate or as a group/party political candidate. There are contact details for the political parties at the end of the leaflet.

Will it cost me anything and will I be paid?

The Mayor and councillors receive an allowance, plus travel and expenses. There is also a carer's allowance if you have children and/or people you may care for. You will also be paid extra allowances if you have additional responsibilities such as a Cabinet member. Please note that the allowances you receive may affect any benefits that you are being paid and are taxable - you should contact the agency that provides your benefits to find out how you may be affected.

What support do I get?

Senior Council staff will provide you with information and advice. You will also be given personal support to ensure training/development opportunities are tailor-made to suit your needs. A carefully planned induction programme will start before and continue after the election so you are well prepared to start in your new role if you are successfully elected. Further training and development will be available throughout your time as the Mayor/a councillor to help you develop your skills.

The Democratic Services Team is a council department and is on hand to provide support with for councillors' queries, correspondence,



photocopying, expenses etc. You will also be given an internet connection from home to the Council's IT network and provided with the necessary IT equipment.

What about my boss?

The Employment Rights Act 1996 requires your employer to allow you a reasonable amount of time off for your work as a councillor. You may need to discuss this and agree the details with your employer. Many employers recognise that the skills people develop as councillors are also very useful in the workplace.

What to do next...

The next elections for the elected Mayor, Torbay and Brixham Town councillors are on Thursday 5 May 2011.

This may seem a long time away, but if you are interested now is a really good time to get started and find out more about being the Mayor or a councillor. There will also be information events for candidates once you have been nominated.

Whether you stand for a political party or as an independent there are precise rules governing elections that will need your attention. For more information contact the Electoral Services Team - see useful contacts.

Get more information/Useful contacts

Find out more about Torbay Council and Brixham Town Council by visiting their websites or 'Up my street':

www.torbay.gov.uk

www.torbay.gov.uk/brixhamtowncouncil

www.upmystreet.com

To find out about the election rules contact:

Electoral Services Team, Torbay Council, Town Hall,
Castle Circus, Torquay, TQ1 3DR

Tel: 01803 207171

Email: Electoral.registration@torbay.gov.uk

To find out more about being a councillor and the support you will receive contact:

Democratic Services Team, Torbay Council, Town Hall,
Castle Circus, Torquay, TQ1 3DR

Tel: 01803 207015

Email: democratic.services@torbay.gov.uk

Website: **www.torbay.gov.uk/index/council/councillorsdecisions.htm**

Useful information and experiences of other councillors can be found on: **www.beacouncillor.org.uk**

The charity Scope has published a short guide to encourage disabled people to become actively involved in public and political life - to download the guide visit **www.timetogetequal.org.uk**

The three largest parties have councillors' associations. You can find out more from their websites:

Conservative Councillors Association

www.conservativecouncillors.com

Association of Labour Councillors

www.labouronline.org/councillors

Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors

www.aldc.org

The Local Government Association Independent Group

www.independentgroup.lga.gov.uk

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