



**SANDY**  
Town Council

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## **Councillor Co-option Fallowfield Ward**



**CO-OPTION INFORMATION PACK**  
JANUARY 2022

## INTRODUCTION

Thank you for taking an interest in the Town Council's recent advertisement for the role of Councillor for Fallowfield Ward, Sandy. We trust that you will find this information pack of assistance in deciding whether to apply. The Town Clerk and current Councillors would also be happy to have an informal discussion about the role of a Town Councillor and answer any queries you may have.

The information is arranged as follows:

- 1) Why become a councillor?
- 2) What do Town Councils do?
- 3) What does a Town Councillor do?
- 4) Skills and Attributes Needed
- 5) Eligibility
  
- 6) Being a Councillor in Sandy – What is required and how much time will it take?
  
- 7) About Sandy Town Council
  
- 8) Co-option Process
  
- 9) Application Form
- 10) Eligibility Form

If you would like to apply, please complete the attached application form and submit it by email or print and post to arrive by 12 noon on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 to the email / postal address at the bottom of this page.

If you have any questions on the Information Pack or the co-option process, require any further information on the Council or the role of a Councillor, or you would like an informal discussion please contact Chris Robson via the details below.

If as a result of a disability or impairment you would like us to make any special arrangements concerning the completion of your application or attending the Council meeting at which applications will be considered, please let us know.

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Contact: Chris Robson, Town Clerk  
10 Cambridge Road, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 1JE  
Email: [clerk@sandytowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@sandytowncouncil.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 01767 681491

*Councillors can help provide and organise important community events*



## Why become a Town Councillor?

There are many reasons why you might like to become a councillor:

- to make a difference and help shape the future of the local community concern about your local area and wanting to ensure the community gets the right services
- to represent the views of local people and ensure that community interests are taken into account
- concern about a specific issue and wanting to do something about it
- having good ideas for the council and community in a time of scarce resources to contribute your skills
- to build on other community work through a charity, voluntary group or school governing body
- to pursue your political ambitions and contribute to your community
- it can be a career-enhancing activity, allowing you to develop leadership and analytical skills and to obtain practical and managerial work experience.

## What do town councils do?

Town Councils are the first tier of local government and are statutory bodies. They serve electorates and are independently elected and raise their own precept (a form of council tax). There are 10,000 local councils in England with over 30% of the country parished and 100,000 councillors who serve in these local councils, with over £1bn being invested into these communities every year.

Local councils work towards improving community well-being and providing better services. Their activities fall into three main categories: representing the local community; delivering services to meet local needs; striving to improve quality of life and community well-being.

Through an extensive range of discretionary powers, local councils provide and maintain a variety of important and visible local services including allotments, bridleways, burial grounds, bus shelters, car parks, commons and open spaces, community transport schemes, community safety and crime reduction measures, events and festivals, footpaths, leisure and sports facilities, litter bins, public toilets, planning, street cleaning and lighting, tourism activities, traffic calming measures, village greens and youth projects.

*Councillors consider grant applications and make awards for projects that help benefit our community*



## What does a Town Councillor do?

Councillors are elected to represent the local community, so you must either live or work in the council area. Becoming a councillor is both a rewarding and privileged form of public service.

You will be in a position to make a difference to the quality of other people's daily lives and prospects.

Being an effective councillor requires both commitment and hard work. You will have to balance the needs and interests of residents and the council.

Over recent years the role of councils has changed. They now have additional responsibilities, a focus on engaging better with communities, and working in partnership with different organisations.

A councillor's role and responsibilities include:

- developing strategies and plans for the area
  - serving the community – helping with problems and ideas
  - representing the community
  - working with others
  - decision making and reviewing decisions
  - talking to the community about their needs and about what the council is doing
- Councillors do this by:
- Talking to constituents by phone, email and letter, social media, home visits, drop-in sessions, street or community meetings, local events.
  - Attending formal council meetings.
  - Working on specific council projects with other councillors and council officers.
  - Representing the council on outside organisations such as charities and public bodies.
  - Participating in community meetings and events, such as council or community meetings.

## Skills and Attributes Needed

Groups made up of people from different backgrounds and with different skills tend to make better decisions. It is important that councils have councillors who not only reflect and represent the communities they serve, but also have a broad range of skills and life experience.

**You don't need any special qualifications.** Skills gained through work, raising a family, caring for relatives, volunteering or being active in your community are highly valuable. However, having or being able to develop the following skills, knowledge and attributes will help you in the role.

**Communication and influencing skills** – these include listening and interpersonal skills, facilitation, public speaking, advocacy, the ability to consider alternative points of view and to negotiate, mediate and resolve conflict.

Problem solving, questioning and analytical skills – the ability to get to the bottom of an issue, look at evidence and research, and think of different ways to resolve the issue, including the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

**Team working** – being able to work with other councillors and council officers in meetings and on committees and being able to complete any tasks given to you.

**Organisational skills** – being able to plan and manage your time, keep appointments and meet deadlines.

**Ability to engage with the local community** – being available to provide information and advice to people.

**Knowledge of the local area** – the needs and concerns of communities and awareness of local community groups, events and activities.

**Don't worry** if you don't yet feel that you have the skills or confidence to be a councillor, the council and the Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils provides support, information and training for new councillors (and ongoing support for councillors of all levels).

## Eligibility

You can become a councillor as long as you are:

- British or a citizen of the Commonwealth or European Union
- At least 18 years old
- Registered to vote in the area or have lived, worked or owned property there for at least 12 months before an election.

You can't be a councillor if you:

- Work for the council you want to be a councillor for, or for another local authority in a political restricted post
- Are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order
- Have been sentenced to prison for three months or more (including suspended sentences) during the five years before election day
- Have been convicted of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court.

If you are in any doubt about whether you are eligible to stand as a councillor, you should contact the Town Clerk for advice.

*The Council organises the annual Remembrance Parade and Councillors take an active role in representing the Council and community at important civic events*



## What is required and how much time will it take?

Quite often councillors say that their duties occupy them for about two to five hours a week. Obviously, there are some councillors who spend more time than this - and some less, but in the main, being a town councillor is an enjoyable way of contributing to your community, and helping to make it a better place to live and work.

Sandy Town Council is a non-political body made up of fifteen Members interested in serving their town.

1 from Beeston Ward, 5 from Ivel Ward, 6 from Pinnacle Ward and 3 from Fallowfield Ward.

There are at least 3 meetings to attend in every 6 weeks, all of them held on a Monday evening. Members usually sit on two standing committees as well as Full Council.

**Development Scrutiny committee**  
**Policy, Finance & Resources committee**  
**Community Services & Environment committee**  
**Plus**  
**A full Council Meeting**

In addition, there is a **Human Resources committee** on which 7 Members must sit.

You do not need to sit on all the committees, but Councillors sit on two of the committees as well as Full Council.

A calendar of meetings for the year is approved each year in advance. Most meetings start at 7.30pm and usually finish between 9.00pm and 10.00pm, with the exception of the Development Scrutiny Committee which starts at 6:45pm and usually finishes at 7:30pm. Meetings usually take place in the Council Chamber at 10 Cambridge Road, Sandy.

In addition to attending meetings, you will be asked to investigate residents' complaints, problems and difficulties and may be asked to attend daytime meetings with other Councils or contractors and additional Working Groups formed for a specific purpose.

The present Council will remain in Office until May 2023, unless a particular Member resigns earlier or is disqualified from Office for non-attendance at meetings or for any other reason.

## About Sandy Town Council

Sandy has a very long history dating back to pre-Roman times. This history plays an important part in the culture of the town and local community. There has always been a Parish Council and subsequently an Urban District Council in the town. Sandy Town Council came into being on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1974 under the 1972 Local Government Act. The Council comprises 15 elected members over four wards. The Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor (who act as Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council) are elected from the membership of the Council. Other Councillors will chair and vice chair the other Committees.

The Council is responsible for a variety of services including a number of parks and recreation grounds, cemetery, closed churchyard, public conveniences and car park.

The Council Offices are located at 10 Cambridge Road in the former fire station, which dates back to 1883. This building houses the administration team, Council information point and Council Chamber. The Roman Story exhibition is also part of this building.

**Some key areas of Sandy Town Council's responsibilities are summarised below;**

Allotments

The Council does not currently have allotment land, but is in discussion with the unitary authority to take on a small site in Beeston to create some allotments alongside a community orchard. Further allotment land will need to be continued to be sourced.

Beeston Green

The Town Council is the Lord of the Manor of Beeston Village Green, which is a very important area of registered Common Land. There are a number of management issues relating to the Green which the Town Clerk will help progress.

Cemetery

The Council owns and maintains the local cemetery and is currently undergoing a project to extend the site. Working with Councillors on the completion of the extension over the next year will be one of the key priorities for a new Town Clerk. St Swithun's Church also has burials but is now closed to further interments. As a closed churchyard, the Council is responsible for the ongoing maintenance.

Depot and Yard

The Council has recently completed the building of a new work depot and yard at its Stratford Road cemetery site. The Council's outdoor team operate from this site.

Jenkins Pavilion

The Council owns this sports centre site with the operation of its services under contract to Stevenage Sports and Leisure. A project is underway to extend the pavilion in partnership with the Unitary Authority. Helping to guide the Council through this project will be part of the Town Clerk's role in the coming two years.

Local Nature Reserve

The Council owns "the Riddy" Local Nature Reserve which borders the River Ivel and is especially important for water voles.

Pinnacle Open Space

This area of wooded open space dominates the skyline of Sandy and is our highest point in the Town. From here you can see across the town and also as far as Dunstable Downs. This land is leased from the Pym family but maintained by the Town Council.

Public Conveniences

The Council owns and is responsible for two public conveniences. One is in Bedford Road Recreation Ground, the other in the Town Centre car park. These are open every day for public use.

Recreation Grounds

The Council has three large grounds comprising 27 acres in Bedford Road, Fallowfield and Sunderland Road. In addition, there are a number of smaller sites in the Parish which are owned and maintained by the Council. In total the Council maintains four recreation grounds

and five play areas. The Sunderland Road ground is used for organised cricket and football whilst Bedford Road accommodates football.

### Sandy Town Centre

The Council maintains seats, shelters and bins within the town centre, but the area itself is the responsibility of Central Bedfordshire Council. Sandy Town Council does own the main car park just off the market square. The Council undertakes yearly planting schemes within the town centre, which are well received by residents.

### Events

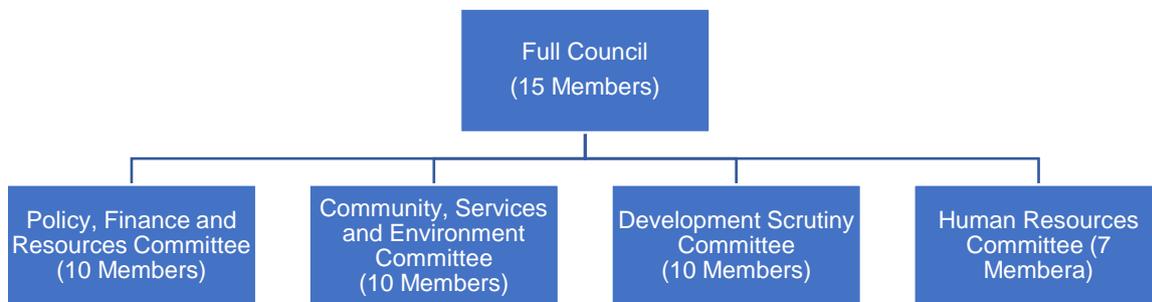
The Council is involved in a number of civic events which are run by the Mayor, with the support of the Town Clerk and an administrative officer. The Council is also heavily involved in the Remembrance Day Parade and Christmas lights switch on. In recent years the Council has held more events, such as craft markets. During the height of the pandemic lockdown the Council ran a number of events, such as a Scarecrow competition and best kept gardens.

### Staffing

The Council currently employs 4 administrative staff, plus the Clerk. This includes two full time members and two part-time members. Our Outdoor Team has 4 full time staff. We also have 2 part-time cleaners/caretakers.

More information can be found on the Councils website [www.sandytowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.sandytowncouncil.gov.uk)

## **COUNCIL STRUCTURE**



The Council also has the following Working Groups that meet as required;

- Beeston Village Green Working Group
- Cemetery Working Group
- Events Working Group
- Environmental Working Group
- Leisure Services Working Group (Specifically set up to deal with the Jenkins Extension Project)
- Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

## **Co-Option Process**

On receipt of applications, Sandy Town Council will write to invite candidates to attend the Full Council meeting scheduled for Monday 7th March 2022 at 7:30pm. The meeting will be held at the Town Council Chamber and is open to the public.

Each candidate will be invited to address the Council to introduce themselves and present information on their background, experience and why they wish to become a Town Councillor. Members of the Council will also have an opportunity to ask candidates questions. During this process candidates not presenting will be asked to wait outside the Chamber until it is their turn.

As soon as all candidates have finished giving their submissions, the Council will proceed to a vote with each candidate who has been proposed and seconded by the councillors in attendance. Voting on appointment will be by a method of ballot papers.

In order for a candidate to be elected to the Council, it will be necessary for them to obtain an absolute majority of votes cast (50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting). If there are more than two candidates and there is no candidate with an overall majority in the first round of voting, the candidate with the least number of votes will drop out of the process. Further rounds of voting will then take place with the process repeated until a candidate has an absolute majority.

The successfully co-opted candidate will become a Councillor with immediate effect. Co-opted members will be asked to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office to agree to be bound by the Local Government Code of Conduct. They may then take their seat at Council and are then able to be appointed to a committee and / or as a representative to local organisations.

Any application can be considered in a candidate(s) absence, but if successful, the candidate would need to sign the Declaration of Office either before or at the next Full Council meeting.

# Eligibility Form

Are you a British subject, citizen of the Commonwealth or citizen of the European Union?	<b>YES/NO</b>
On the 'relevant date' (i.e. the day on which you are nominated or if there is a poll the day of the election) are you 18 years of age or over?	<b>YES/NO</b>

***Please tick those below which apply to you***

I am registered as a local government elector for the town of Sandy; or	
I have, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the date of my co-option, occupied as owner or tenant, land or other premises in the town of Sandy; or	
My principal or only place of work has, during the whole twelve months preceding my co-option, been in the town of Sandy; or	
I have during the whole of twelve months preceding my co-option lived in the town of Sandy or within 3 miles of it.	

Under Section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 a person is **disqualified** from being elected as a Local Councillor or being a member of a Local Council if specific criteria are not met:

Are you an employee of Sandy Town Council?	<b>YES/NO</b>
Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order?	<b>YES/NO</b>
Have you within the last five years been convicted of an offence in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man which resulted in a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of three months or more without the option of a fine;	<b>YES/NO</b>
Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a member of a local authority?	<b>YES/NO</b>

## Declaration

I.....hereby confirm that I am eligible for the vacancy of Sandy Town Councillor, and the information given on this form is a true and accurate record.

Signed: .....

Print: .....

Date: .....