

2. COUNCILLORS

Composition

The Isle of Wight Council has 39 elected councillors. Each councillor represents the residents in their electoral division. The overriding duty of councillors is to the whole community, but they have a special duty to their constituents, including those who did not vote for them.

Eligibility

Only registered voters living or working within the Island for the previous 12 months prior to an election are eligible to stand as a councillor. They must be a citizen of the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland or the Commonwealth, or a relevant citizen of the European Union and be at least 18 years old.

Election and Terms of Office

The election of councillors is held on the first Thursday in May every four years with the next ordinary elections due to be held in May 2025. The terms of office of councillors start on the fourth day after being elected and finish on the fourth day after the date of the next election.

Transitional arrangements

Unless they resign or become disqualified, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council and the Leader of the Cabinet are in those posts until their successors are appointed at the annual meeting of the council even if, in an election year, they are not re-elected at that election.

Where a councillor holds another post described in this Constitution and they are re-elected at an election, they continue in that post until the annual meeting of the council immediately following that election. If they are not re-elected, then the post is vacant until a replacement is appointed.

Responsibilities

All elected councillors have the following roles and responsibilities:

- (a) collectively determine the Budget and Policy Framework and effectively discharge the functions that are the responsibility of Full Council
- (b) contribute to the good governance of the Isle of Wight and actively encourage community participation in policy formulation and decision making
- (c) effectively represent the interests of their electoral division and of individual constituents
- (d) respond to constituents' enquiries and representations, fairly and impartially
- (e) be available to represent the council on other bodies
- (f) maintain high standards of conduct and ethics, in accordance with the Member Code of Conduct, the Protocol for Member/Officer Relations (see Part 5 Section 8) and other procedures and protocols set out in the Constitution
- (g) share responsibility with staff of the council to act as effective and caring corporate parents for looked after children
- (h) hold the Cabinet to account as either a member of Full Council or as a councillor sitting on any of the Scrutiny committees or sub-committees
- (i) promote good community relations, ensure greater public/stakeholder participation and take and encourage steps to reduce crime and eliminate inequality of opportunity and unlawful discrimination

- (j) promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Island and to have regard to any island-wide strategies when doing so
- (k) develop and maintain a working knowledge of the authority's services, management arrangements, powers, duties and constraints
- (l) focus on service improvement and efficiency at a strategic and political level and not become involved in detailed operational or managerial issues
- (m) engage with the media in accordance with agreed protocols
- (n) complete a 300 word annual report for publishing on the council's website for the annual council meeting each year other than local election years

Political group leaders

Two or more councillors may form a political group under the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 and appoint a leader of that group. The wishes of the group are taken to be those expressed by the leader.

The Chief Executive organises and chairs regular meetings of political group leaders to:

- ensure that the Constitution operates effectively
- ensure that the administrative machinery (including appointments) is up to date
- share information about policy and performance to enable political debate and challenge, and to drive up the delivery of service improvement and efficiency.

Rights and duties

Councillors have rights of access to such meetings, documents, information, land and buildings of the council as are necessary for the proper discharge of their functions and in accordance with the law. These rights are set out in the Access to Information rules (see Part 5 Section 2).

Councillors will not make public, information which is confidential or exempt without the consent of the Monitoring Officer or divulge information given in confidence to anyone other than a councillor or officer entitled to know it. For these purposes, "confidential" and "exempt" information are defined in the Access to Information rules (see Part 5 Section 2).

Allowances

Councillors receive allowances in accordance with the Member's Allowances Scheme (see Part 6). The scheme also provides allowances for certain post holders and co-opted and independent members.