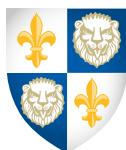


MAKE a DIFFERENCE



in Shaftesbury

*Summary guide to being
a Shaftesbury Town Councillor*



**SHAFTESBURY
TOWN
COUNCIL**



Thank you for your interest in being a Town Councillor and part of Shaftesbury Town Council! We hope this document will help you:

- *Play a part in making decisions affecting your area*
- *Get more involved in your community*
- *Influence the way local services are provided*

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What is a Town Council?

Parish and Town Councils are one and the same in most respects. They are statutory bodies and are local authorities in their own right. They have a range of statutory powers and so act within a body of legislation. They are the most local level of government and are sometimes described as the tier of local government closest to the people.

Such councils can represent the concerns and aspirations of a genuine local community. Town Councils are different in that their Chairman can take on the role of Mayor—a figurehead for the town and a focus for civic pride. Some smaller Parish Councils do not have a permanent office or any full-time staff and will meet in the local hall or school. Some larger councils such as Shaftesbury Town Council can cover quite large populations and will often provide or help provide a wide range of services, such as local facilities, giving grants to local groups and maintaining allotments, play parks and open spaces. The range of powers of local councils continues to change and grow and are many and varied including:

- ***providing and maintaining parks, other green areas and highway verges***
- ***provision of community and recreational facilities***
- ***crime prevention measures including provision of CCTV***
- ***provision of grants to local organisations***



Did you know that your parish/town councillors are responsible for, take an active part in, or are consulted on nearly everything happening in your local area that affects you and your family?

Town Councils are funded through the Council Tax, although additional income can be raised through the services they provide or through delegation of funding from other bodies. Town Councils are strictly audited each year. Councillors must adhere to a Code of Conduct and complete a Register of Interests. This means that they are fully accountable to the public and assures the community that decisions are always taken in the public interest.

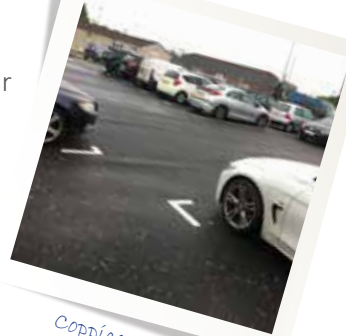
What does Shaftesbury Town Council do?

The main areas we are involved in are:

Capital Projects...

we deliver and support projects for community benefit. Recent examples include the improvement works to St James Park including new play equipment and landscaping, a Play Master Plan for all play parks to improve their offering, a new long-stay car park in Coppice Street, improvements to the surfacing on Park Walk, free exercises classes from May to July as part of Shaftesbury Wellness as well as taking on the provision and installation of Christmas lights.

Our website at www.shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk will tell you all you need to know about our services



Coppice Street Car Park



Christmas Lights



St James Park Project

Community Representation and Leadership...

our position as a statutory public body gives us a strong voice in representing the community to other local and national public sector bodies that provide services in Shaftesbury.

Civic and Ceremonial...

the Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor are elected annually from Shaftesbury Town Councillors, and they attend a wide range of events and functions as the town's representatives.

Events...

in 2022/23 we organised events for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the King's Coronation. We support local events like the Fringe and the Food Festival.



Civic & Ceremonial Events



Platinum Jubilee



Shaftesbury Wellness

Green/Open Spaces...

some areas we look after are Park Walk, Jubilee Steps, St James Park, Castle Hill, Barton Hill, Queen Mother's Garden, Bury Litton, Salisbury Street Green and Cockrams.



Queen Mother's Garden

Play Areas...

the Town Council maintains six play areas across the town, including the newly refurbished St James Park.



Play Areas

Allotments...

we provide and manage 123 allotment plots over four sites across Shaftesbury (36 @ A30, 62 @ St James, 9 @ Bray and 16 @ Mampitts).

Cemetery...

the Town Council manages Mampitts Cemetery, which is an important and highly regarded asset for the town.

Hall & Land Hire...

we hire out the Town Hall for markets and events and the Council Chamber is a popular venue for weddings. We also hire out some of our open spaces for events and outdoor sports.



Allotments

Grants...

the Town Council currently awards up to £20,000 a year in grant support to community organisations. It also supports the Citizens Advice Bureau with a yearly Service Level Agreement.



Markets...

we manage the regular Thursday Street Market. In 2023 we have trialled the Shaftesbury Market, working with the organisers of the Sherborne Market, on three Saturday and three Sundays in 2023. Plans for 2024 are yet to be confirmed.



Weekly Thursday Street Market

Planning...

the Town Council is a statutory consultee on planning applications. We developed the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted in 2021 and is currently in its 2-year review stage.

A team of staff led by the Town Clerk delivers these services. Our work is governed by the Town Council which makes decisions as a corporate body at Full Council meetings.



Imagine how much you can achieve by being involved in such a wide range of services, events and activities!

What does it take to be a town councillor?

What does a town councillor do?

As a councillor you will need to:

Listen and be a voice for your community

The single most important task for a town councillor is to listen to the views of the people in their community. By doing this, councillors gain important information about the concerns and aspirations of the people they represent. It is for this reason that many public bodies turn to the Town Council for information about the services they provide. For example, Dorset Council consults the local Parish and Town Councils on planning applications which affect their area. Local Councils act as a voice for their communities, responding to other authorities and drawing attention to issues which concern the community.

Councillors are there to consider the information gathered and make a group decision. No one councillor is responsible for any single decision.



Act as an ambassador for your community

Town Councils also make representations at other local government meetings. Councillors are often appointed to sit on local bodies/organisations whose work affects the community. Councillors may be asked to serve on certain groups or attend functions on behalf of the Council.

Town councillors act as ambassadors for their community, keeping everyone aware of local needs and concerns and reporting back on county and regional matters. Councillors represent the voice of their community as a whole, whilst being aware of, and considerate to specific minority needs.



Attend meetings

When elected, councillors agree to attend all meetings that they are summoned to (if reasonably possible). The Council also arranges events at which the public can speak to their councillors, who are expected to attend.



Attend ceremonial functions

There will be times when councillors are asked to attend civic functions as part of their duty to the community. This may be Remembrance Services, civic receptions and attendance at public events such as the Carnival and other community events throughout the year. Your fellow councillors will be there to give you support and the benefit of their experience.

Volunteer to help with the Council's work

As the Town Council is relatively small and employs a limited number of staff, councillors may be asked to help when staging events or pop-up engagement sessions. As well as helping to deliver services, this provides another way for councillors to engage with the local community—and it shows residents your commitment to the town!



Who can be a Shaftesbury town councillor?

No prior experience is necessary but you must live or work in Shaftesbury, feel a deep connection with the town and its people, and be motivated to enact positive change. It is also important that you are comfortable working as part of a team and working towards shared goals. Your life experience, everyday skills, passion and commitment to people and the community are vital, and it's important that councils reflect the local population. Additionally you need to be:

- **British or a citizen of the Commonwealth**
- **at least 18 years old**
- **registered to vote in the town or have lived, worked, or owned property here for at least 12 months before an election or live within three miles of the town boundary**

You can't be a councillor if you have been convicted of certain offences or are subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order. Full details can be found online at www.local.gov.uk.

**The Full Council meets
monthly on every third Tuesday at 7pm**

**The Planning & Highways committee meets
monthly on every first Tuesday at 7pm**



When does the Town Council meet?

Councillors sometimes agree to join working parties or other groups to meet on an *ad hoc* basis for particular issues. Some of these working groups have a lead councillor who will work closely with the Town Clerk on the issues concerning the working group.

Our meetings schedule at www.shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Calendar-of-Meetings-2023-2024.pdf gives an indication of the number of meetings. Note—councillors do not have to commit to P&H committee membership.

How many councillors does the Town Council have?

Currently there are 12 councillors, six for the East Ward and six for the West Ward.

However, the town is expanding and so in order to achieve electoral equality of representation between different parish wards Dorset Council made a recommended change to councillor numbers to **15 councillors** from May 2024 (**seven** on the West Ward and **eight** on the East Ward).

What support will I get?

The Town Council is supported by the office of Town Clerk, and we have other staff to deliver the decisions of the Council and provide support. As a new councillor you will be able to seek procedural advice and guidance from the Clerk as well as access training through the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils.

Will I be paid?

Councillors can claim an allowance and/or reasonable expenses in relation to their work as a Councillor.

Are there any special rules about being a councillor?

Rules apply to councillors and the standards of behaviour which is expected of them in their role.

The Good Councillor's Guide, provided as part of the pack for new councillors, will give you plenty of helpful information.

Shaftesbury Town Council has signed up to the **Civility and Respect Pledge**. Councillors are expected to act in the wider interests of the community at all times. There is a lot to learn in the early days—the work of a local council at any level is full of complexities and interest. You will have an influence on many things which happen in Shaftesbury and will be expected to use your position in a measured and responsible way.



Further information

To find out more about the role of a councillor and Shaftesbury Town Council contact:

Brie Logan, Town Clerk

01747 852420

brielogan@shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk

*Alternatively the Mayor or current councillors will be able to advise you more about serving your local community—
their contact details can be found at*

www.shaftesbury-tc.gov.uk/about/your-councillors/

For more details about the work of a town councillor:

Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC)

www.dorset-aptc.gov.uk

National Association of Local Councils (NALC)

www.nalc.gov.uk

Useful information and experiences of other councillors can be found at:

www.beacouncillor.org.uk



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