

STAND UP AND BE COUNTED:

BE A COUNCILLOR

2ND EDITION

ABENA OPPONG-ASARE

CLLR SARA HYDE

FABIAN WOMEN'S NETWORK



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◆ Booklet design: behance.net/amostyndesign

WELCOME

Thank you for picking up this booklet. Wherever you live, whatever your life experience, whether you're a first-time voter or wondering how to spend your retirement, we hope that this booklet, will encourage you - you wonderful woman you - to stand up and be counted: be a councillor.

We have been delighted with the response to the first edition of this booklet - it demystified things and encouraged women to step forward in ways we hadn't imagined. We decided it was time for a refresh of it, with the hope of inspiring and propelling new waves of women into local government. So here we are, in the strangest political times, issuing another rallying cry to diverse groups of women to get involved in local government.

All over the country selection processes are underway and interested parties are attending information events, talking to friends and family then filling in panel forms. The overwhelming majority of these interested parties are men. Labour lead the way on gender equality in politics and are the closest to achieving this with 45% of our MPs being female. In local government, we do better than the other parties but still lag well behind where we should be, especially given the wealth of talented and diverse women in the Labour movement.

Although women make up **40%** of Labour councillors, only **20%** of Labour council leaders are women. Those statistics, and the stories we've heard that bear them out, are the driving force behind this booklet: a practical, easy to navigate guide to help answer your questions, explain the process and to encourage you to use your gifts and talents to serve your community. Everyone misses out when our democracy doesn't reflect the communities it seeks to represent. So stop hiding your light under a bushel, ignore the naysayers and stand up and be counted: be a councillor.

In sisterhood; Abena, Sara and the FWN Committee



Abena Oppong-Asare | Cllr Sara Hyde (Chair, FWN)

The articles in this booklet represent the views of the writers only and not the collective view of FWN or the Fabian Society.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A COUNCILLOR?

The role of a councillor is incredibly varied and there are lots of different ways that you can make a difference to your local area. There are, however, some things all councillors do – here is an indication of what’s involved.

One of the most important aspects of the role is standing up for the residents in your ward. Councillors hold surgeries where residents can come and raise problems with you. You are also likely to pick up more individual problems by email and phone: situations where a resident needs you to act as an advocate on their behalf, usually referred to as ‘casework’. This can include concerns relating to housing, antisocial behaviour, school places and anything the council is responsible for.

You will need to build and maintain relationships with community groups, tenants’ and residents’ associations and businesses to work with them to ensure that the council delivers improvements to all stakeholders and residents in the local area.

In addition to working with residents, you will attend Labour group meetings and full council. You may take a lead on campaigning sessions. You will have the opportunity to join committees to scrutinise an element of the council’s work and join scrutiny panels on one specific issue to explore and make recommendations for improvement across the breadth of the council’s work. There’s never a dull moment!



WHAT DIFFERENCE CAN YOU MAKE?



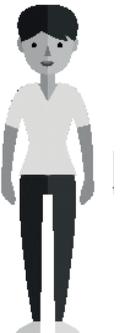
Local government is often portrayed as unglamorous – dealing with bin collections, adult social care, planning decisions, licensing, pest control and so on. It can all seem pretty far from the gothic towers and oak-panelled corridors of power in Westminster and the big decisions being made on national security, foreign affairs and Brexit in Whitehall. But the truth is that our councils deliver many of the services – and make many of the decisions – which are most important to local communities.

This is why the role of councillor is so vital. Whilst central government can seem remote and detached, councillors really understand the areas that they represent and can shape services to fit local circumstances. It’s certainly not easy – councils are on the frontier in the fight against Tory austerity, with the Conservatives cutting local government funding to the bone. However, I’ve been inspired again and again by meeting Labour councillors from across the country who are finding new and innovative ways of providing local people with the services that they need and deserve.

Having first been elected as a councillor at the age of just 21, I can honestly say that – despite the many challenges – there are few roles that are more rewarding. If you want to change things for the better, please run.

Andrew Gwynne MP

Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government



WHY SHOULD YOU STAND?



“There has never been a more important time for women to get involved in standing for election as a councillor.

We face emergencies in adult care services, housing, health and children’s services. We need to fight to protect those things we value and cherish. Our great skills in partnership working, strategic thinking, long term planning and - put simply - getting things done, are vital to transforming our local areas and the radical re-invention of public services that we need for the future.

*It is **your** light we need to show the way forward, so make today the day you say ‘it’s up to me.’”*

Cllr Sharon Taylor OBE

*Leader, Stevenage Borough Council,
Vice Chair, Local Government Association*



WHY WE NEED MORE WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT



In 2018 only 36% of councillors were women. Women make up just over half of the population, so there is clearly still a long way to go to achieve equality of representation between men and women in local government! And with only 20% of councils led by women, there’s lots of work to be done not just to get more women to be councillors, but to get those women who are councillors into leadership roles too.

Women are more likely to use services such as Sure Start and welfare services, and interact with care and mental health services. But because the majority of councillors are men, the decisions being made about these services are being made by people who are less likely to use them. As austerity continues, it is even more important that local decisions are made by those who are representative of their communities. It’s why we not only need more women councillors, but more councillors who are BAME, have a disability or identify as LGBT. Better representation means better decision making which in turn will benefit the community as a whole.

Hannah Lazell

Local Government Association Labour Group

I have been a councillor for over 20 years in the same ward. It’s been a rewarding and fulfilling experience. I’m encouraging women to become role models for their community , to fulfil their potentials and make a positive impact to the community at large.

Cllr Joy Laguda MBE,

Chair of Council, Newham Council



WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO GET SELECTED TO STAND TO BE A LABOUR COUNCILLOR?

A) FIND OUT WHEN THE SELECTIONS ARE TAKING PLACE

The Labour party Local Campaign Forum (LCF) in your area will invite Labour members to express an interest in becoming candidates.

Some training may also be offered. Go on it to learn more about local government in the area, along with local councillors and potential candidates.

B) THE APPLICATION FORM

The LCF will invite Labour members to formally complete an application form.

It will ask about your knowledge of local government, the political situation in your area, and your campaigning experience. It will also ask you to agree to accept the Labour whip (i.e., to maintain collective responsibility and discipline if elected), as well as probity questions.

C) THE INTERVIEW

Following your application, you will be invited to interview by the Labour party so they can decide whether you are suitable and ready to be a Labour candidate.

Most interviewing panels will be made up of three Labour party members. The first question is likely to be around 'Why do you want to be a Labour councillor?'

KEY QUESTIONS YOU WILL BE ASKED:

- a) about your campaigning activity
- b) about your knowledge of local government and party policy around it
- c) about political and probity issues.

TIP: Make sure you remember what you wrote in your application as the interview will follow much the same lines.

D) PANEL OF CANDIDATES

If you are successful, your name and a short biography will be added to the local Panel of Candidates. This is a list of anyone whose application has been accepted, from which the branches choose candidates.

E) SHORTLISTING MEETING

The branch holds a meeting open to all its members to draw up a shortlist of people from the Panel of Candidates: the 'shortlisting meeting'.

In some shortlisting meetings there may be special requirements to select female candidates; this is part of the Labour party's long-established commitment to increasing the percentage of women councillors.

The meeting will choose a shortlist of candidates to attend the selection meeting. Check with your LCF for information about the short listing meeting and selection procedures (these may vary between regions).

TIP: If you are interested in a specific ward then you need to ensure that members in the branch know you are interested, otherwise nobody will nominate you.

F) SPEAKING AT THE SELECTION MEETING

Anyone short listed is invited to a selection meeting.

Each candidate will be asked to speak and then asked questions for a set time period. These periods are not flexible or negotiable. When invited to the meeting, you'll be told what the times are.

When you have finished speaking the chair will take questions from the members.

IF YOU ARE SELECTED

If you win the selection, you may be asked to say a few words.

Make sure you thank the ward for selecting you and commiserate those who have not been selected. Say a few words about looking forward to the campaign and working hard for the ward.

FINALLY

If you are not successful in this round of selections, make sure you ask for feedback from the Interview and Assessment team, LCF officers and the wards so that you can prepare for the next round. Take up training opportunities and participate in campaigning and community events.

G) MEMBERS' VOTE

Members then choose their candidate by secret paper ballot. If there are only two candidates the one with the most votes will win outright. If there are more than two it will be an eliminating ballot – that is, the vote will be done in rounds, with the person with the lowest number of votes being knocked out each time until a result is arrived at.

The result will then be announced to the meeting, and although it will still have to go through an approval process with the LCF, it is usually effectively final.

IF YOU ARE NOT SELECTED

If you are not selected by your first choice ward, you still have a chance at another ward.

If you are on the short list for other wards, try to talk to members in the first ward to find out why they did not select you. There may be lessons you can learn.

PLEASE DON'T GIVE UP!

IN FACT, TRY AGAIN!

MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND PARTY RULES BEFORE YOUR INTERVIEW



There are a few key rules and laws council candidates should be aware of:

CANDIDATE CONTRACTS

Your LCF may have a candidate's contract or councillor's contract outlining what is expected. This includes things like meeting attendance and minimum levels of campaigning. Make sure you understand these commitments.

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Councillors are expected to vote with the group whip. Policies can be debated in private but once a Labour group collectively decided something, all Labour councillors will be expected to support this. While MPs frequently vote against the whip, this is far less common in local government and could result in disciplinary action. It is also against Labour Party rules to vote for illegal budgets.

STANDING FOR ELECTION

Understand the rules for eligibility to stand. For example, you must be registered to vote and should not be in debt to the council. You must live in the authority where you are standing. Once elected it may be possible to move outside the authority but this may prevent you from restanding. (Councillors found guilty of electoral fraud have been put in prison for lying about where they live.)

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions speak with your LCF Secretary or other relevant members of your local party. They are there to help you. Best of luck!

Cllr Alice Perry

Islington Council, NEC Member

COUNCILS NEED TO BE REPRESENTATIVE OF EVERYONE, OF ALL PEOPLE & ALL COMMUNITIES

Councils must ensure they are representative of all communities and are serving all people - or they're not fulfilling their democratic duties. As a councillor of just over a year, I'm honoured to be appointed Oxford City Council's first Representation in the Workforce Champion.



True representation and diversity is about inclusion. An inclusive council is dynamic and models the culture change it wants to see outside the building as much as inside. As a councillor, I've spent a year working with people experiencing rough sleeping and homelessness and specifically I've been working with women experiencing these realities. We must open up political space for people to be seen, heard and valued. Democracy is strengthened through diversity and ensuring people are actively involved in the decisions that impact their lives.

Rebuilding trust is at the heart of encouraging democracy and ensuring councils and local government is relevant and at the heart of making positive changes in people's lives. I work directly with people and grassroots community groups - this enables me to be a strong advocate for them. From working with individuals running community football projects for refugee women, to working with women and men from marginalised backgrounds experiencing social isolation and loneliness, to tackling issues around hunger and wider inequalities. Seeing, hearing, valuing and advocating for and with people is why I decided to stand to be a representative and councillor.

Cllr Shaista Aziz

Chair of Standards Committee, Oxford City Council

ADVICE ON BUILDING COMMUNITY LINKS



I simply cannot overstate the privilege of serving as a local councillor. I am delighted to serve as the Cabinet Member for Sustainable Transport in Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, having been elected as a Labour councillor in 2014.

Fundamental to being a positive public servant, are the links developed and relationships formed by constant but measured communication, sharing, organising and interacting with all communities. This means getting involved, bringing communities to the table, being open and honest, working in partnership, giving a sense of ownership with a real buy in to the decisions made. It's not easy sometimes but it is always worth the effort it takes.

It's important to me to use different mediums in order to communicate effectively with a wide range of stakeholders. I use a full range of communication tools including Facebook, WhatsApp, local papers, radio, Twitter and community meetings.

What do councillors gain from building and sustaining community links?
We get first-hand accounts of what is happening or needed within the area we serve. This allows us to be proactive in our approach and not reactive.

My portfolio means my focus is on transport. The future of transport is ever growing and impacts on a range of other policy areas: on houses, jobs and the economy. People must have good access to jobs and services, and know their representatives fight for all sections of the community to have an equal stake in its success and future. Building community links means focusing on a shared set of common values, leaving no-one behind.

Cllr Jackie Taylor

Cabinet Member for Sustainable Transport, Sandwell Council

Being one of three female ethnic minority councillors in local government leadership, I know we're making a difference, just simply by being here. So many residents count on us to be their voice. Join us now and make a difference.

Cllr Sabia Hussain

Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Governance & Customer Services, Slough Borough Council



ENGAGING WITH WARD MEMBERS BEFORE SELECTION MEETINGS



- Drumming up support is daunting and, occasionally, excruciating. But it's your only chance to show what sort of candidate and councillor you'd be
- Knowing school performance and demographics was helpful, but checking out shops, cafés and community events gave me a feel for what the ward was really like. It also gave me lots to talk about with some members who weren't particularly interested in politics
- Knowing who was who was important for prioritising conversations, like those who are respected opinion formers. They're likely to go to the selection meeting and may be asked for their advice by the undecided majority
- Members' priorities can be surprising. I noticed that my early keenness to demonstrate knowledge made it harder to hear what was being said. Every conversation is a chance to hone your pitch but also to establish trust through shared experiences and passions
- However you engage, it has to feel comfortable, so trust your instinct on the type and tone of approach. Play to your strengths. No need to spend hours crafting emails if you'd rather pick up the phone
- Ward members are a source of support and advice and have made being a councillor much easier. And if you don't get selected, lots of people in your constituency already know you'd make a great councillor next time.

Cllr Ellie Southwood

Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform, Brent Council

Being a councillor brings you face to face with every possible scenario and personality. You get to work with so many inspiring unsung heroes in the community.

Cllr Roxanne Mashari

Brent Council



SHINING AT THE SELECTION PANEL



The selection panel is always the second stage of any local government selection, following on from submitting your form. It's an interview with three people from outside your borough.

The panel process can be daunting but with the right preparation there is no reason that you shouldn't pass.

The panel members will have a list of questions they will ask you. Some questions will be standard across the country; some will be specific to your borough, district or county.

They will want to know why you want to become a Labour councillor, what Labour values you would bring to the role, your campaigning experience, your connection to the local area and your knowledge of the issues that the council is facing.

Preparation is key and knowing the basics is a must. You should know about the political make-up of the council, demographics of the area, the geographical areas where the Labour Party has representation and where it is hoping to target seats.

Top Tips:

- Ask a friend to mock interview you
- Wear something smart but don't be put off if panel members are in trainers!
- Read the local press and council's news web page
- Be confident- they're not there to trick you, just to make sure that you can do the job
- Never, ever say that you would set an illegal budget or break the whip.

The selection panel is your chance to demonstrate your passion.

While I can't promise you will enjoy the process, with the right practice, you will get through it.

Cllr Farah Hussain

Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, Redbridge Council

If you want the opportunity to be a community champion and help your local area come together, be a councillor.

Cllr Sanchia Alasia

Barking and Dagenham Council



THINGS NOT TO SAY IN YOUR INTERVIEW



I became a Haringey councillor in 2014. It became evident to me that, as women, we have a far harder time during the councillor selection process. Women tend to undersell themselves and the harsh reality is that the system is geared towards men. Lots of meetings, campaigning, networking and socialising. Not always easy for women with childcare and caring responsibilities, but also not impossible.

Reflect on why you may want to be a councillor. I became a councillor because I have always been passionate about my local area and I saw it is a way to make a difference to where I live. If you want to go down this route it's worth remembering that everyone has something different to offer. Do not compare yourself to others. Think about your own strengths and take it from there. Do not forget all your transferable skills and experience. There are things we all do in everyday life that translate well into the role of councillor. Humility is a good trait but never be ashamed to talk about your achievements. Our male colleagues rarely are!

Councillors should represent the community they serve. The community is not homogeneous and neither should their representatives be.

Good luck!

Cllr Peray Ahmet

Haringey Council

We need to hear from all the voices in our community and that includes women! Standing for the council means standing up for everyone.

Cllr Bryony Rudkin

Ipswich Borough Council



PREPARE, PRACTISE AND PERFORM YOUR SPEECH WITH CONFIDENCE!

7 TIPS FOR HAVING THE WINNING SPEECH AT THE SELECTION MEETING

It's important you prepare and practise your speech. This will be the opportunity to reach out to members and to get your message across.

- 1. CONTENT IS IMPORTANT:** spend time thinking about what you want to put in the speech. Make sure you demonstrate an understanding of key issues on the council and in the ward; emphasise that you will work hard, in partnership with council colleagues, the party and the community.
- 2. MAKE SURE YOUR SPEECH IS STRUCTURED:** have a good opening and closing line. A good opening line will help capture the audience's attention and a strong closing line is likely to be remembered.
- 3. TIMING IS IMPORTANT:** practice timing the speech, so you don't rush or get cut off before you finish
- 4. PRACTICE MAKING THE SPEECH TO OTHERS:** to family or friends, or ideally a group of Labour colleagues and ask for feedback
- 5. TRY NOT TO READ YOUR SPEECH:** either have a copy with you as a reminder or use 'prompt' cards or brief notes to remind you of the main points.
- 6. STAND IF POSSIBLE:** your voice will carry better if you do.
- 7. DON'T FORGET TO SMILE!**

Being a councillor means I can be a voice for my community, stand up for what is right and make a positive difference.

Cllr Stephanie Cryan
Cabinet Member Jobs for Business and Innovation, Southwark Council

DON'T LET YOUR GENDER DEFINE YOU



As a sassy and determined twentysomething mother of three, welfare rights and adult literacy tutor back in the 1970's I suddenly got it into my head that the combination of my experience and my deep attachment to the Labour party would be handy as a local councillor: and that whilst I was at it, I could probably change the world forever and for better!

I don't think I've managed that, but until I was first interviewed by party colleagues it never even occurred to me that anyone would define me by my gender. I honestly thought that the suffragettes, Joan Baez and Germaine Greer had sorted all that. But no. I was immediately asked how I could possibly look after my children properly as well as being a councillor.

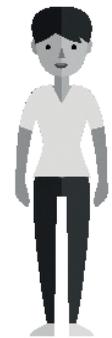
Really? How many men have ever been asked that question? It clearly affected me otherwise I wouldn't still be going on about it nearly 40 years later. As a young councillor I was sometimes patronised and sometimes disregarded – like when I tried to institute some more family friendly working practices. But I can honestly say I never let my gender define me, and even in this dreadful post-truth, populist and reactionary world we are currently screaming about, neither must you.

Cllr Judi Billing MBE

Leader of the Labour Group, and Labour spokesperson for Education, Libraries & Localism, Hertfordshire District Council / Executive Member for Community Engagement and Chairman of Standards Committee, North Hertfordshire District Council

The difference councillors can make to their local communities is massively underestimated - don't hesitate to put yourself forward if you think you can make that difference.

Cllr Léonie Cooper AM
Wandsworth Council



BEING A CABINET MEMBER



Having been homeless at 16, my experiences developed into a passion to design out homelessness. So it was no surprise when months before my first election in 2014 I was promising rough sleepers if I was elected I would get their voices heard. This became my political crusade!

I was given brilliant advice, from my political sister Paulette Hamilton, 'become grounded in your ward and find something you're passionate about to champion'. Little did I know this marked my journey towards cabinet.

I became the council representative as a trustee of St Basil's - the charity who housed me aged 17. I then became the city's first Ambassador for Addressing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. I chaired meetings, undertook media interviews, made policy suggestions and focused on rough sleeping. With a new leader, my role changed to Cabinet Advisor for Homelessness. In the 2018 local elections I was responsible for securing a Homelessness Manifesto: we drafted an ambitious but achievable one.

Post-election, I applied for the cabinet and was delighted to be appointed Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods. Birmingham is the largest council in Europe so the role comes with significant responsibility and challenge, as well as the privilege of serving the citizens of Birmingham.

I visit sites with front line staff and have insisted we use 'experts by experience' to help shape future policy. My goal is to share more of Birmingham's good practice on a European level, whilst also learning from other cities. I see the role as leading the city, not just the council, in my portfolio areas; so partnerships and collaboration are at the heart of any successes.

Cllr Sharon Thompson

Cabinet Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods, Birmingham City Council

It's a rewarding job being able to help people in my community, by actually making a difference at the coal face.

Cllr Dr Aysha Raza

Ealing Council



BEING A CABINET MEMBER



I've been a councillor for Bunhill Ward, Islington since 2010 and have been the executive member (cabinet lead) for Environment and Transport since 2014 covering major transport infrastructure and road safety; energy and fuel poverty; sustainability and air pollution; parks and open spaces; waste and recycling; highways and cemeteries. This role has directly led to several other appointments: I'm the current chair and lead on recycling at North London Waste Authority. Working with my counterparts across London, I'm a member of the London Council's Transport and Environment Committee and am a commissioner on the Mayor of London's Sustainable Development Commission.

I'd encourage women not just to apply to become councillors but to aim to become cabinet level or beyond: you have so much to give! As executive member, I'm able to provide leadership and direction on strategy, policy and significant decision making on Environment and Transport. I pioneered the council's Bunhill Energy Centre which provides locally produced energy, slicing a cool 10% off energy bills. We are now working on taking waste heat from a defunct tube station and channelling this to heat more homes and a nearby school. Improving road safety, tackling air pollution, through tangible policy innovations like making more space for walking and cycling are priorities for me; as is ensuring as many services as possible are delivered in-house, by a strong Labour administration.

Cllr Claudia Webbe

*Executive Member for Environment and Transport, Islington Council
NEC Member*

Being a councillor is about making a difference, making a positive change in people's lives that I wouldn't ordinarily be able to do if I wasn't in this position. I am the very first female Sikh councillor to be elected in Warwick District, I know many local residents count on me to be their voice. I would encourage anyone who is considering standing to be a councillor to go for it - it's so rewarding.

Cllr Mini Mangat

Warwick District Council



BEING A LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE



As cabinet member for education, young people and children's social care within Hackney council, I'm passionate about ensuring young people's voices are heard on the local government stage.

I became a councillor to stand-up for these services during a period of severe Tory austerity and to give a voice to those who often go unheard. This is one of the reasons I'm proud to be Chair of the Local Government Association's (LGA) Children and Young People Board. In this position, I lead a cross-party board which is the national voice of local government, responsible for the care of children and young people. It lobbies government to ensure that all young people have the best possible start and support throughout their lives.

As the LGA Labour Group London representative I'm responsible for ensuring that London's unique challenges are listened to and also that our Labour party values of solidarity and commitment to public services are championed at every level of government.

In these roles I engage with council leaders, give evidence at select committees in parliament, chair policy round tables and brief ministers. It is so important that the communities that councils serve are reflected in the council chamber - we need more women and unrepresented groups to speak for our communities.

There is nothing as rewarding as shaping the place you grew up in and I would encourage anyone who shares this passion to stand to #Beacouncillor.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble

Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care, Hackney Council | LGA Regional Rep

Being a councillor has enabled me to help people make a difference in their communities and given them a voice. I would urge women to empower other women to reach their full potential and make a difference. Please join us.

Cllr Kim Groves

Chair of Transport West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Leeds City Council

BEING A YOUNG COUNCILLOR



I wouldn't be honest if I didn't say there are challenges to being a young female Councillor and a person of colour. It's not easy, but nothing worth doing is easy. The majority of the time when I look around in a meeting, I'm usually the only young person there, the only female, and the only person of colour. That in itself is the reason why we need people of different backgrounds and different genders represented at Local Government level. We make better decisions that way. We hear voices that we wouldn't have heard before, listen to communities we wouldn't be in touch with previously and also get insight into a different outlook and experience of life.

I stood for election because I wanted to make a positive impact on people's lives, in the community that I have lived in all my life and a community that I love, to help support them and to also come up with ideas of bringing people together. Lots of people talk about the need to have tough skin when in politics but I want to see more emotion, more compassion and more people focused decision making at local level. This only happens when you stand up, be counted and have your voice heard.

Cllr Peymana Assad

Harrow Council

I would encourage any woman thinking of becoming a councillor to jump in with both feet and make the most of every opportunity that presents itself. Your community needs you!

Cllr Joy Allen

Cabinet Member for Transformation, Culture and Tourism, Durham County Council



BEING AN OPPOSITION COUNCILLOR



Compassion, passion and empathy. These words have often been used to belittle women, but they are the very assets that make us the best councillors.

Here's how. There is nothing more courageous than compassion. Listening to my residents' stories, about how the lack of affordable housing affects their lives, has empowered me to take the argument to the Tories. I will not let them off the hook in dealing with the housing crisis in our borough.

As opposition Planning Lead I have pushed the subject of viability, challenging developer Viability Assessments to gain the maximum affordable housing. Decent housing is the foundation on which residents can start to rebuild their lives.

There are ten of us in the Labour Group, so we must take every opportunity to make sure we are heard. When delivering our motion to support the Red Box project I explained the plight of women suffering period poverty, illustrating the stigma and humiliation it brings to women.

My empathy emboldens me when speaking in the council chamber and following up casework. Standing up for residents who don't have a voice and getting results. People become councillors because they want to make a difference but it's empathy that keeps you going when the meetings are long, the paperwork feels tedious and the Tories are uncaring.

Compassion, passion and empathy. If you have these qualities, you should be a councillor, our communities need you now!

Cllr Nicola Taylor

Bexley Council



BEING AN OPPOSITION COUNCILLOR



Dartford has been a Conservative controlled council for 16 years. Our previous Labour group was made up of six men and one woman. This could not provide decent representation for women and so issues primarily affecting women were easily missed. Our new group is made up of six women and four men so it is a significant change.

Being an opposition councillor can be frustrating but it is fantastic to have the opportunity to represent the people of the ward where I live. It is not that different to what I have always done as I have been running projects for years - like toy appeals and litter picks, reporting fly tipping and being a school governor. The role is largely a continuation of these types of thing. Women sometimes forget how important their involvement in the community is and how much that counts towards making them a great councillor.

There is a lot of power in listening to people and being their voice on the council. Representing residents' voices is a lot of what being an opposition councillor is all about.

Whether Labour is in power or in opposition in your locality, I would advise any woman who wants to make a difference to their community to put themselves forward.

Cllr Kelly Grehan

Dartford Council

Being a black female councillor means that I can represent more community interests and ensure the authentic voice is heard at all times. If I can do it, you can too!

Cllr Victoria Olisa

*Chair of Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission,
Southwark Council. Council*



TURNING A MARGINAL WARD LABOUR

CASE STUDY

Before 2018 Earlsdon ward in Coventry had not elected a single Labour councillor for 22 years. It was viewed by many to be a Tory safe seat and unwinnable for Labour. In 2018 we were not a target seat but undeterred we decided to use this as a positive thing, taking advantage of our strategic autonomy during the campaign. We used innovative technology including Dialogue and Contact Creator, and rooted our campaign in local issues. We used the lessons we learnt to deliver in our second consecutive win this year.

We were very different from the profile and demographic of the incumbent Conservative councillors. As women, one a BAME woman (where 81% of Earlsdon's population is white) and one a young woman under twenty-five, we worked to demonstrate how our values and experiences aligned with that of our community.

We campaigned hard, starting early. We knocked on every door in the ward, building a local profile and mobilising supporters. Many people told us they had never been canvassed before. By engaging with them we were often able to convince them to vote for us. We won the first seat in 2018, and went on to unseat a 33-year Tory incumbent in 2019. On both occasions, we defied a mixed picture nationally by emphasising what Labour candidates offered locally.

Cllr Becky Gittins and Cllr Kindy Sandhu

Coventry Council



BEING A BY-ELECTION CANDIDATE

CASE STUDY



My active political journey began three and a half years ago. I was a young mother, on maternity leave and midway through a pregnancy discrimination case.

Watching BBC's Question Time I felt frustrated with the political narrative and my own personal experience of injustice, I decided to get active in the local party and hopefully effect the change I wanted to see.

Unfortunately, I didn't see enough women who looked like me or from a similar background to mine, representing me. Over a hundred years ago some women were given the freedom to stand for public office, yet despite this progress women and black and minority ethnic (BME) women are still under represented.

My experience of standing for selection and election wasn't easy and nor was I hand picked. I had to fight hard and not allow myself to get put off, especially after not being selected, during my first and second attempts. Sadly, this often happens to BME women and despite the few success stories we have, for example Diane Abbott MP, Dawn Butler MP, Florence Eshalomi AM, Eleanor Smith MP and Janet Daby MP, but there is still a long way to go.

We cannot achieve change and progression alone - allyship and support of understanding men is crucial, through willingly sacrificing, sponsoring and championing our progress. During my by-election campaign people travelled from as far as Brighton to support me and I was incredibly grateful for the outpouring of solidarity from many comrades.

Cllr Nanda Manley-Browne

Lambeth Council

Being a councillor is about real stuff and one of the best things I have ever done.

Cllr Marie Pye

Waltham Forest Council



BEING A COUNCILLOR WITH A DISABILITY



CASE STUDY

I was elected onto Newcastle City Council in 2018, where I am the cabinet member for housing. I thought long and hard before standing for selection and election. Four years ago, I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia after many years of misdiagnosis. Fibromyalgia is a long-term chronic disorder with widespread symptoms which are very individual. For me it is largely a hidden disability and my symptoms are predominantly chronic pain and stiffness, with periods of lethargy and exhaustion during flare ups.

I also work within the NHS and I'm a lead activist within my trade union, UNISON. It has taken some time to understand my fibromyalgia. However, I am determined that as much as it is part of who I am, it won't define me. I have learned to work with it rather than against it, and as a result of this I decided to stand for election. I'm pleased I did, as our elected representatives need to better reflect the diversity of the communities they seek to serve. A democratic system is improved where decisions are influenced and made by those affected by them. Having a disability should not be a barrier to standing for election.

Cllr Linda Hobson

Cabinet Member for Housing, Newcastle City Council

I have been a councillor for over 20 years in the same ward. It's been a rewarding and fulfilling experience. I'm encouraging women to become role models for their community, to fulfil their potentials and make a positive impact to the community at large.

Cllr Joy Laguda MBE,

Chair of Council, Newham Council



BEING A TOWN COUNCILLOR



CASE STUDY

I had been a West Oxfordshire district councillor for a year when I had the opportunity to also stand for Witney Town Council. I now understood more of how the opposition could shape the policies of the ruling party, so realised we could achieve more for Witney if we had more Labour voices on the town council.

Some view town council as a step down but to me it's of equal importance. I believe wholeheartedly in the value of bottom-up politics and in the potential of an empowered community.

We led our campaign on grassroots Labour and Co-operative values, working with our residents to make sure they were part of what we were working towards. We produced the first Labour & Co-operative Local Manifesto. It's ambitious and punches above its weight, drive, commitment and creativity made it possible.

We led community campaigns, fighting for the issues that really affected our town. When a community is heard, they can find unity and their voice is elevated. As elected representatives we have to act at every opportunity to improve the lives of our residents.

Our hard work paid off and the people of Witney voted for change! We went from two seats to taking control of the council. I'm immensely proud to have become the first female leader of this council and encourage all other women who carry similar values to stand for election to make positive change in your community.

Yes, at town and parish level, we have limited power, but what we do have is the voice of our community, and it doesn't get stronger than that.

Cllr Rosa Bolger

Leader, Witney Town Council

District councillor, West Oxfordshire District Council



DON'T GIVE UP AT THE FIRST HURDLE



“If at first you don’t succeed, try, try, try again”. If you really want to achieve something, a setback such as not achieving it first time should be the encouragement you need to pick yourself up and try again, with lessons learnt and even more determination.

I stood as a Labour Party candidate in an ‘unwinnable’ seat in the 2014 local elections. It was my first time as a candidate and I didn’t really know the process. I tried my hardest and fought with all my might: and yet still I wasn’t elected, missing out by 52 votes. I could have allowed this to put me off, but I knew I wanted to be a councillor, so I could speak up for residents and make a difference in my community.

So, over the next four years, I built my network in the area. I canvassed regularly, attended local events, shadowed the successful councillor and tried again in 2018. I was offered the chance to stand in a safe seat but felt I owed it to the community and myself to fight in the same ward again and take the seat off the Tories.

This time I knew the process and what I needed to do to win. And I did.

My three key takeaways from the experience are:

1. Believe in yourself and your abilities
2. Build your network and ask for help
3. Never give up

Good luck!

Cllr Unsa Chaudri

Hounslow Council



STANDING TO BE A COUNCILLOR IN SCOTLAND



Men account for 71% of Scottish Councillors, but form only 49% of the population. Our council chambers are dominated by men; our communities are not.

This matters. Councillors represent their communities and make decisions on their behalf. To do this effectively, councils should reflect those communities, but until more women stand for elected office, they cannot.

Female representatives best understand the issues impacting women’s social and economic lives. Issues like period poverty gained air-time when female politicians pushed them forward. More women standing can bring a female perspective all issues.

At COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) we are breaking down the barriers that prevent women standing. We are promoting the difference that female representatives are already making and sharing positive role models. We recognise that the hours of work for elected members do not fit with caring responsibilities. We are investigating how to develop parental leave for councillors. And the basic councillor salary of under £17,000 needs to be addressed, if we are serious about a more diverse range of councillors.

If you are looking to stand for local government, persist. You are not alone.

Women who have gone before will provide support. Many of us see our role as paving the way and are creating the cross-party networks to help you if things seem tough. The more of us there are bringing issues of equality to the fore, the more we will encourage other women to stand and to make a difference to our communities.

Together we are stronger.

Cllr Alison Evison

Aberdeenshire Council

President, COSLA

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS AND WEBSITES

FABIAN WOMEN'S NETWORK

FWN run a mentoring scheme, policy and events programmes to support, promote and connect women.
www.fabianwomen.org.uk @fabianwomen

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION LABOUR GROUP

The LGA Labour Group exists to provide a strong voice for Labour in local government.
 They represent and support Labour groups in England and Wales and the Labour councillors within them.
 020 7664 3263 <http://lgalabour.local.gov.uk>

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

An invaluable source of help and advice for all those in local government. LGA website with information on the process and FAQs
www.local.gov.uk

LABOUR PARTY CONTACTS

The Labour Party: www.labour.org.uk
 Labour Party Regional Offices:
 East Midlands: www.eastmidslabour.org.uk
 Eastern: www.easternlabour.org
 London: www.labourinlondon.org.uk
 North: www.labournorth.com
 North West: www.labournorthwest.org.uk
 South East: www.labour-southeast.org.uk
 South West: www.laboursouthwest.org.uk
 Wales: www.welshlabour.wales
 West Midlands: www.westmidlandslabour.org.uk
 Yorkshire & Humber: www.yorkshireandhumberlabour.org.uk

ASSOCIATION OF LABOUR COUNCILLORS

Contact councillors@labour.org.uk for more information.

BAME LABOUR

BAME Labour seeks to empower ethnic minority members within the Labour party and campaigns for greater representation of ethnic minority communities in public life.
www.bamelabour.org.uk

DISABILITY LABOUR

Disability Labour were set up to advocate for, support and connect disabled Labour party members.
www.disabilitylabour.org.uk

LGBT LABOUR

The Labour Campaign for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Rights is a socialist society affiliated to the Labour party.
www.lgbtlabour.org.uk

LABOUR WOMEN'S NETWORK

LWN run training and events aiming to increase women's participation at every level of the Labour party.
www.lwn.org.uk

MEMBERSNET

Membersnet is a tool that helps Labour members and supporters to organise, share and connect.
www.members.labour.org.uk

THE COOPERATIVE PARTY

The Cooperative party is an affiliate of the Labour party-councillors in some areas can stand as Labour Cooperative councillors.
www.party.coop

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Fabian Women's Network Executive Committee are: Chair: Sara Hyde | Co-Vice Chairs: Shaista Aziz and Megan Corton-Scott | Secretary: Jos Bell | Treasurer: Charlotte Rous | Rachael Agnew | Sanchia Alasia | Zahra Alijah Johanna Baxter | Tamara Cincik | Christine Megson | Kindy Sandhu | Denise Scott-McDonald

ACRONYMS AND JARGON

Below is a short list of common acronyms or terms that you may come across during councillor selection. We hope this helps with navigating the process.

| TERM | ABBREVIATION | MEANING |
|---|--------------|---|
| Campaigning | | Door-knocking, leafleting, running street stalls and much more! |
| Collective responsibility | | Debating and discussing council matters privately within the Labour group, then deciding together the Labour line on any particular issue. |
| Constituency Labour Party | CLP | Division of the Labour party based on the electoral district for the MP, comprises Labour party branches and local affiliates. |
| Department for Communities and Local Government | DCLG | Government department with responsibility for local authorities. |
| Get Out The Vote | GOTV | A campaign to identify Labour party supporters and encourage them to turn out to vote, using canvassing and mailings. |
| Labour group | | Grouping of all the Labour councillors in a local authority. |
| Local Campaign Forum | LCF | The Local Campaign Forum will help write the manifesto locally and play a core part in the selection of candidates for council elections. |
| Members Code of Conduct | | A set of rules and expectations that all candidates must adhere to during the selection process. |
| National Executive Committee | NEC | The governing body of the Labour party, with representatives from councils, CLPs, the PLP, socialist societies and trade unions. |
| Probity | | You will be expected to be open and honest about your financial dealings. You will be asked to complete forms declaring your financial and property issues both when you are selected. |
| Selection | | Process of choosing candidates to stand in local elections. |
| Selection meeting | | A meeting held by the membership of the ward to decide who will be their candidate from those short listed. |
| Shortlisting meeting | | A meeting held by the membership of the ward to decide who, from the approved panel of candidates, they would like to short list and hear from at the |
| selection meeting. Standing Orders | | Set of rules governing local Labour party structures. |
| The Panel | | If you are deemed to be a good potential candidate by the assessment centre, you will be placed on the panel. The panel is a list of all members who have been approved by the LCF following the assessment centre. |
| Ward or Branch | | Labour party branches are based on ward boundaries for local council elections. Every member has a Labour party branch, but you can stand for election in any part of the borough not only in your branch. |

@fabianwomen | www.fabianwomen.org.uk

