

Wem Town Council

Town Council Elections

4th May 2017

Candidate Information



Introduction

Elections for local councils in Shropshire next take place on 4th May 2017 and Wem Town Council will have vacancies for 14 Councillors.

Due to changes in the way that Shropshire Council is seeking to run and fund local services it is really important that local people are involved in the decision making process. One of the best ways of ensuring that your views are represented is by standing as a Town Councillor in the 2017 Elections.

By becoming a Town Councillor you will be able to make a difference and help shape the Town of Wem to ensure that it is able to provide the sort of services and facilities that are wanted and needed by the local community.

This document is intended to provide prospective candidates with an idea of what is involved in standing for election.

Town Councils

Town and Parish Councils represent the third tier of local government, the tier closest to the community.

There are around 9,000 local councils in England and they are growing in number, especially as councils in urban areas are established. Most local councils were set up in 1894 by an Act of Parliament. This created the civil parish, separating it from the church after its long history of delivering local services such as care for the poor, maintenance of roads and collecting taxes.

Town and Parish Councils can raise revenue to help meet their spending requirements by issuing a 'Precept'. This is the total amount to be raised through the Council Tax from all the dwellings within the Parish area. The 'Precept' is converted into an amount per Council Tax Band that is added onto the Council Tax bill. The precept is set annually usually in January

Wem Town Council

Wem Town Council was founded in 1974 following the Local Government Act 1972. Its function is to serve local residents who live in the parish of Wem Urban.

Wem Urban parish is divided into 2 wards Wem West and Wem East, The population of Wem Urban Parish is 5,870 (2011 Census). There are a total of 1,067 households. There are currently 4637 electors on the electoral role (December 2016).

The Town Council has fourteen Councillors who work as a corporate body and make decisions for the benefit of the local community.

What does Wem Town Council actually do?

The Town Council is the most local part of the democratic system and acts as a voice that can make a difference to the quality of life within its local community.

The Council's work falls into three main categories:

- Representing the local community
- Delivering services to meet local needs
- Striving to improve the quality of life in Wem

The Council holds monthly meetings usually on the last Thursday of every month in Edinburgh House, New Street Wem. In addition to the full Town Council meetings there are a number of committee meetings held throughout the year. The Town Council has the following committees which meet up to 6 times a year

- Finance and Corporate Governance Committee
- Amenities and Services Committee
- Wem Swimming and Lifestyle Centre Liaison Group

The following committees meet on an adhoc basis

- Planning and Transport Committee
- Events Committee

All Full council meetings and committee meetings are open to the press and public. Members of the public are most welcome to attend and speak to Councillors about any issues during the public session of a Council meeting, or just sit and listen. If you are interested in standing for election it may be useful to attend a meeting prior to the election so that you can familiarise yourself with how meetings are run. Copies of meeting agendas can be found on the Town Council website www.wem.gov.uk or on the Town Council noticeboard (located outside the Town Hall).

Services and Facilities run by the Town Council

Wem Town Council is responsible for the management of a number of facilities in the town. Currently the Town Council manages the following facilities however in 2018 it is anticipated that these will increase when more services are passed down to Town Councils from Shropshire Council.

- **Love Lane Cemetery** – The Town Council is responsible for the management of burials and maintenance of the Cemetery at Love Lane.
- **Love Lane Allotments** – The Town Council is responsible for the management of the allotments and the allotment waiting list.
- **Play Areas**– The Town Council is responsible for the management and maintenance of the following play and amenity areas
 - Cordwell Park
 - The Grove
 - The Wheatfields
 - Trentham Road
 - The Recreation Ground
 - Lowe Hill Gardens

- **Public Toilets** - The Town Council is responsible for the maintenance and management of the public toilets adjacent to the main car park.
- **Streetlights** – The Town Council is responsible for the maintenance of over 250 streetlights throughout the Town.
- **Bus Shelters** – The Town Council manages 3 bus shelters in the Town.
- **CCTV**
- **Floral Planters** – The Town Council manages floral planters in a number of locations.

In addition to the management of the aforementioned facilities the Town Council also owns Wem Swimming Pool and Wem Sports and Social Club. The Town Council works very closely with the two organisations (Wem Swimming and Lifestyle Centre and Wem Sports and Social Association) to which it leases these facilities.

The Town Council also supports and organises a number of events that are held throughout the year including Wem Bonfire night and The Remembrance Day Parade. During 2016 the Town Council jointly organised the Queens 90th Birthday celebrations.

This work is carried out by a team of 4 full and part time staff – Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk, Groundsman and Assistant Groundsman.

The Civic Role

Wem Town Council has an elected Mayor who acts as chairman of the Council and is elected on an annual basis at the Annual Meeting of the Council held in May.

During the Civic year, the Mayor supports a wide variety of events throughout the area. The Mayor receives invitations to a number of events, functions and engagements. If the Mayor cannot attend a function, the Deputy Mayor may be asked to attend on his/her behalf.

Duties which the Mayor may carry out include:

- Acting as host on behalf of the Council at functions organised by the Council
- Attending functions and engagements within Wem, and on occasions outside the town, as a ceremonial representative of the Council
- Undertaking official openings or presentations on behalf of the Council
- Organising events to raise funds for the Mayor's chosen charities
- Representing the Council during royal, celebrity or VIP visits to the town
- Chairing meetings of the Town Council.

When representing the Town Council, the Mayor and consort will usually wear the official Chains of Office. The Chains of Office are worn at all official functions within Wem and they can usually be worn at functions outside of the town when invited in an official capacity.

Being a Local Councillor

Town Councillors are community leaders who represent the aspirations of residents who live in their parish and endeavour to achieve them. Town Councillors also have close links with local community groups, schools and churches within the parish.

- A Councillor's normal term of office is 4 years.

- Is the holder of a public office and not a volunteer.
- The main job of a Councillor is to participate in the collective decision making processes of the Council.
- He/she has no authority to make decisions about Council business on his/her own.
- A Councillor's financial and certain other interests in Council business must be transparent.
- He/she is subject to obligations set out in the Code of Conduct adopted by the council.
- Wem Town Councillors do not receive any remuneration other than travel expenses although an allowance is made to the Mayor.

Who is eligible to stand for election?

The law specifies that you can become a Town Councillor if on the day of submitting your nomination form and on the day of election you are,

- at least 18 years old
- a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any member state of the European Union, and
- meet at least one of the following four qualifications:

a) You are, and will continue to be, registered as a local government elector for the parish/community in which you wish to stand from the day of your nomination onwards.

b) You have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the parish/community area during the whole of the 12 months before the day of your nomination and the day of election.

c) Your main or only place of work during the 12 months prior to the day of your nomination and the day of election has been in the parish/community area.

d) You have lived in the parish/community area or within three miles of it during the whole of the 12 months before the day of your nomination and the day of election.

There are certain people who are disqualified from being elected to a parish or community council in England and Wales. You cannot be a candidate if at the time of your nomination and on polling day:

a) You are **employed by the parish/community council** or hold a paid office under the parish/community council (including joint boards or committees).

b) You are the subject of a **bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order**.

c) You have **been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more** (including a suspended sentence), without the option of a fine, during the five years before polling day.

d) You have **been disqualified under the Representation of the People Act 1983** (which covers corrupt or illegal electoral practices and offences relating to donations). The disqualification for an illegal practice begins from the date the person has been reported guilty by an election court or convicted and lasts for three years. The disqualification for a corrupt practice begins from the date a person has been reported guilty by an election court or convicted and lasts for five years.

A person may also be disqualified from election if they have been disqualified from standing for election to a local authority following a decision of the First-tier Tribunal (formerly the Adjudication Panel for England) or the Adjudication Panel for Wales.

For more information on eligibility please visit

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/141798/Part-1-Can-you-stand-for-election-P-and-C.pdf

How do I stand for election?

If you are interested in standing for election as a Wem Town Councillor you will need to complete a nomination paper and submit it in person to Shropshire Council before the statutory deadline. Shropshire Council will provide an advice pack with information about the election process and key dates. These dates will also be published on the Town Council website, Facebook page and noticeboards nearer the time. It is however anticipated that the deadline for the receipt of nomination papers will be **4pm on Tuesday 4th April 2017**.

You can request an election pack by emailing elections@shropshire.gov.uk or telephoning 03456789015

What Does a Councillor actually do once elected?

- Attend Council meetings including committee meetings.
- Raise matters that the Council can consider and formally decide to take action about at meetings.
- Make informed contributions which influence the debate on the business that needs to be decided at those meetings.
- Participate in the Council's decision making process, which in itself is subject to strict rules and guidelines.
- Represent the Council externally and may be asked to represent the Town Council on committees of other groups in the Town.

For more information on the roles and responsibilities of a Town and Parish Councillor please see the following publication

<http://www.nalc.gov.uk/library/publications/801-good-councillors-guide/file> (a hard copy of this document is available for loan from the Town Council office.

Election Materials and Guides

Shropshire Association of Local Councils Website <http://www.alcshropshire.co.uk/elections>

NALC Elections Website <http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/elections>

Be a Councillor' website <http://beacouncillor.co.uk/>

Become a Councillor' website

<https://www.gov.uk/government/get-involved/take-part/become-a-councillor>

Electoral Commission "Candidates and agents at parish and community council elections in England and Wales

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/parish-and-community-council-elections-in-england-and-wales>

More Information

If you have any further questions about the work of the Town Council please do not hesitate to contact the Town Clerk Penny O'Hagan on 01939 232733 or email info@wem.gov.uk

For specific information about elections and key dates please contact Shropshire Council elections team on elections@shropshire.gov.uk or telephoning 03456789015.