

# make a difference for business





do you want to help  
get things done in your  
neighbourhood?

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do you want to  
develop your staff?

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you can make a  
difference

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## how?

## why?



- encourage and support any of your staff who want to stand for election
- support any of your employees who are councillors
- being a councillor is a public service
- it will develop the leadership, problem solving and communication skills of your staff
- councillors help shape the community; they can help improve the local environment and support local businesses.

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## improving understanding



Different people become councillors for different reasons. Councillors represent everyone that lives and works in the area they are elected into. They may work with local schools, community groups, business associations, youth organisations – all working to improve the community.

Councillors give a voice to individual members of the community; they influence what the council does and how it does it – from providing services for children and older people to planning major developments; from emptying the bins to economic regeneration and place shaping.

Councillors are unique in the range of issues they deal with and the positive impact they can have on individuals, the local area and local businesses.

Councils and local businesses need to work together to improve the local area. Both are different yet they need to understand each other and appreciate their respective strengths and potential.

Supporting employees who are councillors, or who are standing for election, increases the pool of people in local government with direct and current experience of the private sector. It also creates a pool of people in local businesses that have an understanding of the council and how it works.

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## skills development



Many of the skills needed by councillors are transferable to the workplace and to business. We all need skills in providing leadership, communicating with others, working in partnership, decision-making and in managing performance.

Employees who are councillors have a unique opportunity to develop and bring a wide range of such skills and abilities back to the workplace and they generally have a wide network of contacts in the local area and between other councils.

### personal

People who are experienced as councillors are able to act ethically, consistently and with integrity when communicating values or representing views in decision-making or actions. They can listen sensitively and uses appropriate language. Councillors communicate regularly with individuals and groups, they tend to have experience of speaking confidently in public.

### leadership

Councillors are leaders within their local communities. They develop skills to engage enthusiastically and empathetically with others in order to learn, understand and act upon issues of concern. Being a councillor will help develop mediation skills and diplomacy which are vital tools for business.

### team working

Partnership and team working skills are important both to councillors and in business. Both require people to build positive relationships by making others feel valued, trusted and included, and by working collaboratively to achieve goals, maintain focus and recognise when to delegate or provide support.

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## performance management

Through their scrutiny and performance management role councillors learn to quickly understand and analyse complex information; they become more than capable of presenting concise arguments that are meaningful and easily understood and are objective and rigorous when challenging processes, decisions and people.

These skills are just as important in business as they are in local government. Companies that employ and support their employees as councillors are likely to have highly motivated staff with good interpersonal skills, capable of leading and working as part of a team, able to handle complex information and to make decisions.

Councils invest significant time and resources into developing their councillors: this fosters a wide range of skills and qualities, which translate directly into greater effectiveness in the workplace. The more your councillor employees can take advantage of these opportunities, the greater their potential to add value in the workplace.



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## what about time off work?



Many employers already support their staff as councillors and 23 per cent of all councillors are in full-time employment. Councillors do not demand excessive time off work: on average councillors spend 21 hours a week on council business but much of this is in the evening or at the weekend. Councils have also become much more aware of the need to vary the times of meetings to allow greater participation from those who work full-time.

## what can i do?

It is crucial that employers are as supportive as possible when any of their employees express an interest in standing for election. Why not:

- circulate the [www.idea.gov.uk/makeadifference](http://www.idea.gov.uk/makeadifference) webpage link to your staff
- download the 'Do You Want to Make a Difference?' flyer from [www.idea.gov.uk/makeadifference](http://www.idea.gov.uk/makeadifference) and email it to your staff
- print off the 'Do You Want to Make a Difference?' flyer from [www.idea.gov.uk/makeadifference](http://www.idea.gov.uk/makeadifference) and post it on any noticeboards in your place of work
- encourage your staff to discuss becoming a councillor in their staff association meetings or while they are on their coffee break!

Many councils run participation campaigns to encourage people to stand for election and there will also be opportunities for local businesses to get involved in these.

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## What if I want to stand for the council myself?



You too can also:

- help shape your community and improve life for local residents and local businesses
- develop your own leadership skills and gain professional experience.

If you are interested in becoming a councillor, why not read the booklet 'How you can make a difference'.

You can access a copy by using the contacts below:

[www.idea.gov.uk/makeadifference](http://www.idea.gov.uk/makeadifference)

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email: [makeadifference@idea.gov.uk](mailto:makeadifference@idea.gov.uk)

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telephone: 020 7296 6600

The majority of people that become councillors do so through a political party that they may feel a natural affinity with; however, some people choose to be independent of any formal political group. We have listed the main contacts below to help you find out more.

*Conservative Councillors' Association*  
[www.conservativecouncillors.com](http://www.conservativecouncillors.com)

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*Association of Labour Councillors*  
[www.labouronline.org/councillors](http://www.labouronline.org/councillors)

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*Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors*  
[www.aldc.org](http://www.aldc.org)

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*LGA Independent Group Office*  
[www.independentgroup.lga.gov.uk](http://www.independentgroup.lga.gov.uk)

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## More specific information on local government

### *Local Government Association (LGA)*

The LGA exists to promote better local government.

[www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

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### *National Association of Local Councils (NALC)*

The national body for parish and town councils.

[www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk)

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### *The Audit Commission*

[www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)

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### *Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG)*

[www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk)

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### *Directgov*

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

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### *The Electoral Commission*

[www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

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### *Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA)*

[www.idea.gov.uk/makeadifference](http://www.idea.gov.uk/makeadifference)

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See the IDeA's Councillors Guide for In depth information on what you can expect after your election.



## **IDeA**

Layden House  
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London EC1M 5LG

telephone 020 7296 6600

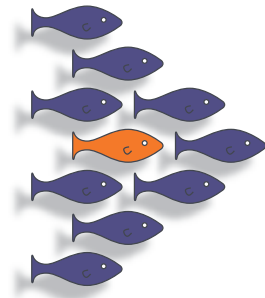
facsimile 020 7296 6666

email [info@idea.gov.uk](mailto:info@idea.gov.uk)

**[www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)**

For a copy in Braille, larger print or audio-tape,  
contact iHelp on 020 7296 6880.

We consider any requests on an individual basis.



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**Local Government Association**

The Local Government Association is the national voice for more than 450 local authorities in England and Wales. The LGA group comprises the LGA and five partner organisations which work together to support, promote and improve local government.



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