

# Becoming a Labour Councillor

## The what, why and how



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## Foreword

**Thank you for showing an interest in being a Labour councillor. It is a critical tier of our democracy – and local councillors can make a real difference to people's daily life.**



Local government is important for people and for the Labour Party, being in the front-line of delivery of Labour's quality public services and in the forefront of engagement with the community. It is one of the closest forms of public service to residents that elected representatives serve. It has a long history and a proud tradition, but it has been flexible enough to adapt to become more relevant and efficient for the twenty-first century.

The party needs people of vision, leadership, integrity, ambition and commitment to help deliver strong leadership and quality public services. Alongside the leadership team, as a Labour Party member representing your community, you will have an important and significant job in delivering local services that play a vital role in sustaining and enhancing the quality of all our lives, creating cleaner, greener and safer communities, raising standards in education, promoting social inclusion and supporting people. Your local Council regulates planning, licensing, and trading to safeguard people and communities. It works with partners to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of our communities, and creates a vision for our local areas in which the community can share.

There is no doubt of the scale of the challenge ahead. But the power of politics to change people's lives remains undiminished and it is therefore important that we work together in every election to return Labour representatives who can deliver real change.

This booklet sets out the opportunities for and expectations of Labour councillors. There is an outline of what being a councillor really means, useful tips on the selection process and thoughts from sitting councillors on why you should consider standing for Labour. We have also included a very in depth overview of the rules governing the selection process in the appendix, so you can understand the process in as much detail as you wish!

I look forward to working with you.

**Iain McNicol**  
General Secretary

## Why you should stand for Labour

**"Being a councillor is the greatest privilege. It's a really practical way of being a champion for the Labour Party at a local level".**

### Cllr June Hitchen

City of Manchester

For me the first job of any councillor is representing their local communities, making sure that you have regular contact with local residents and community groups. You are their link with the council, lobbying for resources and helping them win funding to support their organisations.

Being a councillor is demanding work, but being able to deliver for your community makes it a worthwhile and rewarding experience.

### Cllr Keith Robson

Edinburgh

It was the opportunity to contribute to improving schools in the city, shaping the economic climate to create jobs and training opportunities, and tackling child poverty which drew me into standing for selection.

Getting 'wins' for constituents in whatever form that may be is immensely satisfying and far outweighs the hard yards getting the result.

It is an immense privilege to be an elected Labour representative. I would really encourage people to put themselves forward to serve – I've never regretted it!

### Cllr Mohammed Seedat

Lambeth

I decided to stand for council to make a real tangible difference to everyday lives, give a little something back to the community and do whatever was possible to prevent the burden of austerity falling harshly on those already struggling.

It's been a fascinating 12 months. I've been fortunate to get deep insight into how and why tough decisions are made, the huge constraints on public finances and the effect the housing shortage is having on communities, especially here in London.



### Cllr Helen Holland

Bristol

Being a councillor is the greatest privilege. It's a really practical way of being a champion for the Labour Party at a local level, showing residents and communities what a difference having Labour representatives can make.

Getting alongside community campaigns, fighting for voluntary groups, linking like-minded people to achieve shared aims – what could be more rewarding than that?

### Cllr Matthew Patrick

The Wirral

Standing for local government is enormously rewarding. From the friends you make on the campaign to the experience you gain dealing with local issues, it's a thoroughly enriching experience.

The strongest aspect has to be the reason any of us stand for election in the first place - helping residents. Knocking on doors and speaking to people meaningfully about what role politics can play in supporting them to remove obstacles in their life, provides you with moments you won't forget.

My campaigning as a candidate helped me to understand what people want from politics and it allowed me to stand up strongly for those issues that I care deeply about.

## The role of a councillor

**"To be an effective councillor you must be hard working, committed and passionate about improving the area you live in."**

Councillors are elected to the local council to represent the residents in the ward and their local community. Councillors are expected to be active in their local community and act as the voice of their constituents, raising any local concerns within the Council on a range of matters related to the work of the Council.

To be an effective councillor you must be hard working, committed and passionate about improving the area you live in. Councillors must balance the needs and interests of residents, the political party they represent and values of the Labour Party, as well as the council.

Being a Labour councillor is an extremely rewarding experience but it does also demand your time. It is important that you are able to balance your council and party commitments with your personal life and professional work. Make sure you consult with family and friends before making the decision to stand as a councillor.

### The skills to stand

Below is a person specification which shows the skills you will need to be an effective Labour councillor. How do you measure up against the criteria?

#### Community leadership

Engages enthusiastically and empathetically with the community in order to learn, understand and act upon issues of local concern. Mediates fairly and constructively, encouraging trust by representing all sections of the community.

#### Regulating and monitoring

Understands and executes judicial role by following protocol, evaluating arguments and making decisions that balance public needs and local policy. Ensures progress by monitoring and intervening where necessary.

#### Scrutiny and challenge

Acts as a critical friend by seeking opportunities for scrutiny and providing constructive feedback. Analyses information quickly and presents arguments in a concise, meaningful and easily accessible way.



#### Communication skills

Listen sensitively, uses appropriate language and checks for understanding. Communicates regularly with individuals and groups in the community, speaks clearly and confidently in public, and makes sure that people are informed.

#### Working in partnership

Builds positive relationships by making others feel valued, trusted and included and by working collaboratively to achieve goals. Maintains calm and focus, recognises when to delegate or provide support and is able to take a long-term view in developing partnerships.

#### Political understanding

Acts ethically, consistently and with integrity when communicating values or representing group views in decisions and actions. Effectively works across group boundaries without compromising values or ethics.

## **Key objectives and responsibilities**

**The role of a councillor is a broad and varied one. We hope to give you a clear overview of the sorts of things you are likely to have to do as a councillor, as well as show you the impact you can have through this position.**

### **Standing up for local residents**

One of the most important aspects of any councillor's job is standing up for local residents. Councillors will be expected to host weekly surgeries to ensure that you are hearing concerns from your constituents and taking action on problems in the area.

Another key aspect of standing up for local residents will be dealing with casework and acting as an advocate for residents. These issues will range from those concerning housing benefits to anti-social behaviour in the area.

### **Developing better services**

In the council chamber, your work will focus on a number of different aspects, including ensuring quality public services are provided by the council, participating in community planning and seeking improvements for residents around a number of important areas.

These objectives can be achieved through your work on scrutiny panels, helping create council policy and providing leadership and engaging with the community.

### **Delivering local change**

Councillors will work with community groups and local residents to ensure that the Council delivers improvement and change in the local area.

Community groups are part of the fabric of the area and it is important that councillors maintain a good working relationship with them.

Below is a summary of the key duties you will need to undertake in your role.

### **Key duties on the council**

- to attend full council, the council executive and/or overview and scrutiny committee(s) and other committee meetings as necessary
- to monitor performance against targets in all areas of the council activity
- to engage with local residents to consult them, feedback on council activity, take up their concerns as appropriate and be their voice in the council
- to contribute effectively to the work of the Council, in line with Labour group policy as appropriate
- to help to decide service priorities and participate in agreeing and setting a budget, in line with Labour group policy

### **Key duties within the community**

- to develop links with all parts of the community e.g. visiting schools, meeting local businesses, attending tenants' meetings, visiting local projects and community groups
- to conduct regular walkabouts in the ward to identify issues of concern and tackle nuisance e.g. fly-tipping, graffiti, abandoned cars
- to promote and represent the Council in the local community and on community bodies (e.g. school governing bodies, residents associations)
- to conduct regular surgeries to allow constituents to raise issues of importance or personal concern with their elected representatives
- to take action on issues raised by constituents and lobby for resources for the ward within the constraints of the group's overall priorities and financial strategy for the Council
- to attend local community events on a regular basis

**"One of the most important aspects of any Councillor's job is standing up for local residents."**



## What is expected of a Labour councillor

**As well as representing your constituents as a councillor, it is important that you understand that you will be representing the Labour Party as an elected official.**

A Labour councillor should be in agreement with the aims and values of the Labour Party. You should seek to implement a Labour programme in your local authority. You should help ensure the council delivers high quality public services which represent value for money, and be committed to continuous improvement in the services the council provides.

**"A Labour councillor should be in agreement with the aims and values of the Labour Party."**

A Labour councillor should also aim to represent their residents as effectively as they can, build and sustain relationships with local residents, and give strong community leadership. The Party expects Labour councillors to maintain the highest standards of conduct and to act as Labour's ambassador in the community.

**Key duties within the Labour group:**

- to participate actively in Labour group meetings and contribute to effective decision-making
- to assist in the formulation of the Labour group's strategies and policies, within a framework of national Labour Party policy
- to be a part of the Labour team working to deliver Labour's policies locally
- to support regular campaign and communications in the local community, raising the profile of Labour and its work for local residents
- to be an ambassador for the Labour Party

**Key duties with the local branch Labour Party:**

- to attend branch meetings and report and consult on all council activity undertaken
- to campaign with branch members on local issues
- to support policy discussion e.g. as part of the Party's policy making process
- to recruit new members and mobilise existing ones into action
- to build a healthy party locally

## Assessment, shortlisting and procedures

**We have developed a robust process to select the very best candidates to stand for Labour. The process exists to test your interest in and knowledge of local government, the level of your commitment to and track record in the Labour Party and your involvement in the local community. Over the course of the selection process, you will need to complete a detailed nomination form and attend an interview at an assessment centre.**

As you may have experienced before, we have a number of different bodies and structures at a local level that can be a little difficult to understand at first. To that end, we have produced a jargon buster that will better help you understand the process.

The section then takes you step by step from being an interested member, to being selected as a candidate for the Labour Party.

**“Make sure to speak to your Local Campaign Forum or Constituency Labour Party secretary to find out when the selection process will begin in your area”**



## Selection Jargon Buster

### Assessment Centre

The assessment centre is a meeting held by an interview panel of members from the LCF where applicants to be a council candidate are evaluated for their suitability to be a Labour representative.

### BAME

Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic, the acronym for Labour members who self-define as one of the above.

### Branch

A branch is a sub grouping of the constituency Labour Party, usually made up of membership from two or three ward areas. This grouping deals with party administration on a local level.

### Candidates

Candidates refers to all individual members of the panel of candidates.

### Code of conduct

A set of rules and expectations that all candidates must adhere to during the selection process.

### Constituency Labour Party (CLP)

These are the units of organisation that cover all members within parliamentary constituencies. The branch and the ward are subsections of this unit.

### Labour Group

The Labour Group is a collection of all Labour councillors in the local authority. If you become a councillor, you will become a member of the Labour Group.

### LGBT

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans, the acronym for Labour members who self-define as one of the above.

### Local Authority/Council

The Local Authority or Council is the administrative body in local government, to which you will be a member if you are elected as a councillor.

### Local Campaign Forum (LCF)

The Local Campaign Forum is a group elected from each branch, tasked with coordinating the selection process for council candidates, as well as campaign work across the local authority.

### Local Government Selection Pack

A detailed document that outlines all the rules and process of the selection process. These booklets are made available to the LCF to ensure the process is effectively administered.

### NEC

National Executive Committee, this is the body that is in charge of the Labour Party's rules and is the Party's senior governing body.

### Selection meeting

A selection meeting will be held by the membership of a ward to decide who will be their candidate. A shortlist will be drawn up from the panel.

### 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

A ward is a local authority area represented by councillors. A number of wards make up a constituency and Local Authority. Generally a ward is represented by three councillors, although there are a number of occasions where a ward will have one or two councillors. The members of the ward will have the final say on who will be selected as their candidate.

## Assessment

### Nomination form

The nomination form covers personal information, your experience and knowledge of local government, your track record in the party and community, and the reasons you would like to be a Labour councillor. The Local Campaign Forum will consider your form and check whether you are eligible to stand and if so, will arrange for you to be interviewed. Forms are available by contacting your LCF secretary or CLP secretary.

### Assessment Centre Interview

An interview panel of three members will interview you. The interview panel is drawn up by the Local Campaign Forum and should reflect the diversity of the Party in the area. The questions are set nationally and will seek to expand on the information you have given in the nomination form. Equal opportunities procedures are followed and the panel members of the local assessment centre are trained by the local party. There is an opportunity to discuss any possible training needs.

### Assessment Centre Exercise

The Local Campaign Forum is able to set an exercise for potential candidates. This may be asked to be answered in writing or verbally, or by means of a discussion among a number of potential candidates before the panel members. The exercise is designed to test a nominee's problem-solving skills, rather than a detailed knowledge of local government.

### Recommendation

The assessment team writes up the results of the interview and makes a recommendation to the Local Campaign Forum as to whether the nominee should be included on the panel of candidates to select from. Reasons must be given. This report is shared with the nominee, who has a right to appeal to the Regional Board within fourteen days of receipt.

### Local Campaign Forum

The Local Campaign Forum receives the recommendations of the assessment centre and makes the final decision on the composition of the panel of candidates.

### Information

Successful members of the panel of candidates are invited to provide a summary for distribution to the branches prior to short-listing and selection. A code of conduct, (appendix), must be observed during all of the stages of the selection procedures.

## Shortlisting

### So now you have made it onto the 'panel' or list of candidates that a local ward can choose from, what next?

#### Getting short-listed

The ward party draws up the short list. Once approved for the panel of candidates, you will be asked to write a short biography, which will be circulated to all wards selecting candidates.

**"The selection meeting, like a job interview, is an important opportunity for you to put your case as to why you should be selected, so it is important to make a good impression."**

The branch may be faced with the names and details of a large number of people, and will only be able to include a few names on the short list. So you need to get noticed, get known and convince members why you should be their candidate!

You need to ensure that members in the branch know you are interested, otherwise nobody will nominate you. If you have named their ward specifically on your form, this may help. However, ask yourself, does anybody in the ward know you or know about you? If so, it is wise to make contact before the meeting and see if they will nominate you to the short list. If not, see what you can do to make contacts in the ward so somebody will nominate you. The guidance from the NEC explains the rules governing this, but all members of the panel are able to obtain a copy of the branch membership list for this purpose.

#### Preparing for a selection meeting

If you are shortlisted, you will then be called to a selection meeting in the ward and asked to make a speech and answer questions. You should be told in advance how much time is allowed for your speech and how much time there will be for you to take questions. Ensure that you prepare properly. Find out as much as you can about the ward and its local members. Think about the key issues in the ward. Speak to any existing Labour councillors for the ward, if appropriate, and to local members, if you haven't done so already.

The selection meeting, like a job interview, is an important opportunity for you to put your case as to why you should be selected, so it is important to make a good impression. Look smart, appear confident and be committed and enthusiastic. It is vital that you arrive on time for the meeting – if you are late you may be disqualified.

## Preparation

### Your speech

Prepare your speech carefully as it is your main opportunity to get your message across.

- Spend time thinking about what you want to put in the speech. You will want to demonstrate an understanding of key issues on the council and in the ward and that you will work hard, in partnership with council colleagues and the Party.
- Structure the speech carefully. You should think particularly hard about your 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.
- Ensure you use the time available wisely. Practice timing the speech and ensure it fits in the time given, without having to rush.
- Practice making the speech to others – to family or friends, or ideally a group of Labour colleagues and ask for feedback.
- At the meeting itself it is best not to read the speech. If you have practised it you should be familiar with the words. Either have a copy with you as a reminder or use 'prompt' cards or brief notes to remind you of the main points. (Numbering the cards will avoid getting them in the wrong order!).
- Some people like to stand to give the speech. Your voice will carry better if you do. However, if the meeting is small and informal or if you feel more relaxed that way, you may prefer to sit. The Chair may prompt you either way.
- Most importantly, try to relax and appear comfortable. Remember you are among friends so don't forget to smile!



### Answering questions

Members of the meeting will then have the opportunity to ask the candidates some questions.

Preparing yourself for questions is slightly more difficult. If you have done your homework on local issues and the work of the council, this will help a lot. It is worth spending time beforehand thinking about what you are likely to be asked, and planning your replies, especially on controversial issues or any points on which you may be weaker.

### Likely questions are:

- Why do you want to be a Labour councillor?
- What in particular do you have to offer our ward?
- What issues are you most interested in?
- What do you think are the key issues for the council?
- What do you think are the key issues for the ward?
- What experience do you have of campaigning?
- What experience do you have of other community or voluntary work?
- How would you work with members of the ward during the campaign and after you are elected?
- How would you build and sustain relationships with local residents?
- To whom would you feel accountable as a councillor (eg local ward members and/or the local community)?
- How would you handle a difference of opinion between the Labour group and the branch?
- How would you fit the work of being a councillor around your other time commitments?

## Selection

**Once all candidates have gone through the selection meeting assessment process, you will be asked to wait in a side room while a discussion will be had between the members present at the meeting. The members will discuss all the candidates and vote on who they would like to be the candidate.**

### If you are selected

If you win the selection, you may be asked to say a few words. Apart from thanking the ward for selecting you and commiserating with those who have not been selected, you may want to give a positive start to your election campaign by saying a few words about looking forward to the campaign and working hard for the ward.

### If you are not selected

If you are not selected by your first choice ward, you may 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 to develop your speech and improve your presentation skills and questions to think about that you had not prepared for initially or may have answered differently.

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. Don't give up!

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

## Support for your role

### If you are elected

The Association of Labour Councillors is a Labour Party affiliated organisation (which you become a member of automatically when elected as a councillor) with the aim of enabling Labour in local government to speak with one unified voice and to effectively lobby and input into the national Labour Party structure. Each region has a representative that can provide you support and assistance as a Councillor.

### Training support

Training is crucial to ensure that our Labour Councillors and Labour groups are up-to-date with the latest campaign resources and developments.

We are expanding our training programme and in conjunction with the LGA Labour Group we will have a more extensive and comprehensive training programme open to councillors than ever before. Training will be delivered by experienced councillors as well as party staff. To make it accessible, more will be delivered locally, regionally and online.

We have recently delivered a number of webinars which can be accessed at: [members.labour.org.uk/webinar-library](http://members.labour.org.uk/webinar-library)

Labour groups will have different circumstances, skill sets and strengths and we want to be able to offer a programme which focuses on core training, but with the flexibility to be applicable to all groups.

If there is any specific training you would like to see us deliver, or if there's something we've missed, just email us at [councillors@labour.org.uk](mailto:councillors@labour.org.uk)

If you'd like to receive the Labour Party's training emails, email [training@labour.org.uk](mailto:training@labour.org.uk) with SUBSCRIBE as the subject and we'll sign you up.

### Training Online

Sign up to our easy to use Campaign Technology sessions, or to get involved in our mini-series of campaign sessions about engaging your membership and getting active, just go to [members.labour.org.uk/training-listings](http://members.labour.org.uk/training-listings) to sign up.

- Webinars are usually on a Wednesday evening and are free to join and take part in
- Campaign training webinars usually last 30-45 minutes
- Campaign technology webinars usually last one hour
- All you need to access a webinar is a computer with an internet connection, and speakers or headphones on your computer

### **Signing up for a webinar is easy:**

1. Click on the link in the Training Email for a webinar you are interested in, or access a full list of upcoming sessions at [members.labour.org.uk/training-listings](https://members.labour.org.uk/training-listings)
2. On the specific webinar page, click the 'signup now' button
3. We will send you an email with a link to the event on the day of the session by 5pm

### **Campaign toolkits and online resources**

We have a campaigns team who help to develop templates, campaign packs and online tools. You will soon begin to see more templates specifically designed with councillors in mind - if you have any specific ideas on how our technology can be developed to suit councillors' needs, please email us.

In addition to this, councillors have a website with useful resources, best practice materials and policy briefs to help you in your day-to-day work. If you'd like to submit an idea as to how we develop this website, please email [councillors@labour.org.uk](mailto:councillors@labour.org.uk)

### **Contact Creator**

Contact Creator is the Labour Party's electoral database which local parties use for canvassing, survey and targeting work. It's a highly powerful and effective tool that could help you in your ward campaigns.

For more information on Contact Creator, including training, please go to [members.labour.org.uk/campaigntechnology](https://members.labour.org.uk/campaigntechnology)

### **Campaign Creator**

Campaign Creator is the Labour Party's new website that allows you to produce high quality print, email and SMS communications from a single integrated system. The new platform is compatible with all major browsers and allows you to import information direct from Contact Creator, to speed up personalised communications with your constituents.

Campaign Creator offers over 100 templates to support all-year round campaigning and campaigning at election time. A full monthly print offer, which allows you to order any printed Campaign Creator product by a set date every month, is now available.

Why not try creating leaflets and direct mails to support a campaign that you are running in your local area.

### **Legal support**

Our local government lawyer, Frances Randle, has helped hundreds of councillors in every part of the country on legal issues, from standards board queries to defamation and other issues. Frances is also able to provide support to Labour groups, for example advising on legal technicalities of planning proposals. Frances worked on over 50 cases last year which required additional representation and actions to be taken on top of the regular advice she gives to councillors on a day-to-day basis.

All of our Labour Councillors have access to legal insurance, support and representation on standards and legal matters when they need it. You are able to access support from Frances by calling 0870 890 3778 between 9am – 12pm, Monday – Wednesday or email; [frances.randle@steelandsashamash.co.uk](mailto:frances.randle@steelandsashamash.co.uk).

### **Party staff support**

General local government and ALC queries, campaign advice, print and training  
Ben Murphy, Local Government Officer  
[councillors@labour.org.uk](mailto:councillors@labour.org.uk)  
0207 783 1354

Labour Party Campaign and Training support  
Call 0845 0922 299 and choose option 3  
or by email via [campaigntechnology@labour.org.uk](mailto:campaigntechnology@labour.org.uk)

Local Government Constitutional and Compliance issues  
Compliance Unit  
020 77831498  
[councillors@labour.org.uk](mailto:councillors@labour.org.uk)

The Local Government Association publishes a weekly newsletter which keeps members up to date with policy initiatives, conferences and news stories. See [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk). Also check the Welsh LGA website [www.wlga.gov.uk](http://www.wlga.gov.uk) and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) website [www.cosla.gov.uk](http://www.cosla.gov.uk).

**Thank you for considering seeking office as a Labour councillor.**

**i) Expectations of behaviour  
Taken from the Local Government selection pack 2016**

**The Ethical Framework**

The Labour Party is committed to high standards of ethical behaviour and probity by its elected representatives and members. All Labour councillors need to ensure that all duties are performed in compliance with the highest standards of probity and integrity. Members must sign up to the local Code of Conduct, keep their register of interest up to date in the council and group office, ensure that all declarations of interest are made as necessary, and observe the high standards expected in public life. Guidance is available to elected members by the council, the appropriate standards board/commission of the nation, and the local government unit.

**Code of Conduct for local government members and Labour Group register of interests**

**Code of Conduct for local government members**

The Labour Party expects high standards of behaviour from its elected representatives. Our rules clearly state that competence and probity matter. In addition there are national frameworks of standards and ethics governing local government.

Chief whips are responsible for ensuring that our members are aware of the requirements of the standards framework, and that they maintain good standards of behaviour and probity as councillors.

Whips should ensure that:

- all members are aware of and uphold the provisions of the code of conduct, are aware of the requirements of office and are aware of the standards framework.
- all Labour members sign up to the local code as soon as they are elected.
- all Labour members complete the register of interests held by the monitoring office and the register of interests held by the whip, and keep both up to date.

Any referral to a standards committee should be reported to the Compliance Unit and to the regional office, Scottish Labour Party office or Welsh Labour Party office. The party

has established a legal line to offer support to Labour councillors if they are referred to a standards body. The telephone number is 0870 890 3778 or email frances.randle@steelandshamash.co.uk

The Labour Party expects all its representatives to uphold the highest standards of integrity and probity in public life. Please support your members in complying with these requirements.

**The ethical framework**

An ethical framework for local government was established by the Local Government Act 2000, which requires ever-higher standards of behaviour and ethics from all councillors. The Labour Party takes this challenge very seriously indeed. Being a Labour councillor is an honour not a right, and all our representatives must meet the highest possible standards of conduct and behaviour – both individually and collectively – if they are to be worthy of the trust placed in them by those who have elected them. In addition it is clear our political opponents will use any opportunity to discredit our party through the behaviour of our councillors.

The role of the chief whip therefore needs to include a focus on monitoring and promoting high standards of conduct, as well as the enforcement of group discipline and the management of council business.

The vast majority of Labour councillors are immensely committed, hard-working public representatives, and we must not let the opposition parties abuse the standards committee procedures for purely party political advantage.

What we need to do is spread the best practice of the many so that the few councillors who do not meet these standards do not let the others down, and are allowed the opportunity to improve their behaviour.

**The rules framework**

**Council Code of Conduct**

The Localism Act 2011 made substantial changes to the code of conduct. Local authorities must have in place a locally agreed code of conduct, which replace the 2007 standard code of conduct. They must also have in place arrangements under which allegations of a breach of the code can be investigated and decisions on allegations are made. These arrangements must include the appointment

of at least one independent person. The Standards Board for England has been abolished and so breaches of the code must be dealt with internally.

The Localism Act also made it a criminal offence to not declare certain 'disclosable pecuniary interests' to the Monitoring Officer. These replace the old system of personal and prejudicial interests. A council may add whatever pecuniary interests it wishes to the list of those to be disclosed at the start of a meeting. However, there is a statutory list of interests that must be included.

This list is in 'The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012', and includes:

- Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
- Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the relevant authority) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by M in carrying out duties as a member, or towards the election expenses of M.

This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992(3).

- Any contract which is made between the relevant person (or a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest) and the relevant authority—
  - (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
  - (b) which has not been fully discharged.
- Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the relevant authority.
- Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
- Any tenancy where (to M's knowledge)—
  - (a) the landlord is the relevant authority; and
  - (b) the tenant is a body in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest.
- Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where—
  - (a) that body (to M's knowledge) has a place of

business or land in the area of the relevant authority; and

(b) either—

(i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or

(ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

Please refer to the full list and explanatory information in the statutory instrument here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1464/made>

If in any doubt about pecuniary interests and the new codes of conduct, councillors should seek advice from the Local Authority Monitoring Officer. In particular, written advice should be sought prior to a meeting on whether they must withdraw on an item of concern.

**Party rules**

Chapter 13 of the party's rule book, governing Labour groups in local government, has been in effect since the annual meetings of Labour groups in 2000. It is now an enabling framework of basic minimum rules and requirements, within which groups will adopt standing orders and procedures most appropriate to the model of local governance in operation in their council.

Relevant extracts from the rules governing the behaviour of group members are given below. The responsibility for ensuring that members abide by the rules and standing orders rests with the Chief whip.

**13.II.(2)A. Individual members of Labour groups and group observers**

*To uphold the highest standards of probity and integrity*

*"The Labour Party requires its representatives to uphold the highest standards of probity and integrity and they shall be guided in those standards by advice from the NEC. The onus of responsibility for upholding those standards rests with the individual councillor and group observer. Specifically, it shall be the responsibility of the group whip to establish a register of interests in the form prescribed by the NEC, detailing for each member of the group and group observer his/her employment,*

*financial interests in companies, membership of trade unions and other societies or organisations.*

*Labour councillors and members must at all times avoid not only wrong-doing but also the perception of wrong-doing. Therefore if there is any uncertainty regarding whether a declaration of interest is appropriate, Labour councillors and members must take the most open course of action and declare an interest or disclose all relevant circumstances, taking advice if necessary. The statutory provisions relating to the declaration of personal and prejudicial interests shall apply to full group meetings and other meetings of all or part of the Labour group (e.g. pre-committee meetings). Councillors and group observers are required to take appropriate actions in all those meetings in respect of any interest (e.g. an individual with a prejudicial interest in the item under discussion must declare that interest and leave the meeting while that item is under consideration).*

*(B) To comply fully with the statutory ethical framework*

*Members of the Labour group must sign and abide by any codes of conduct as may be agreed by the local authority from time to time. Members of the Labour group must sign any legal requirements relating to acceptance of office.*

*(C) To accept the rules and standing orders of the Labour group Members of the Labour group shall agree in writing to abide by the rules and standing orders of the Labour group, as agreed at the annual meeting of the group. Members of the Labour group must register as members of the Labour group under the provisions of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990. Failure to do so within 14 days of a written request from an officer of the group shall automatically render that person outside the group for all purposes and ineligible to be or remain a party member (subject to the provisions of 6A.2 of the party's disciplinary rules).*

*The general provisions of the constitution and rules of the party shall apply to this group."*

Therefore the key points to note are that:

- 13.II(2)(A)(ii) requires the chief whip to establish a register of interests of members of the group, detailing for each member of the group and group observer his/her employment, financial interests in companies, membership of trade unions and other societies or organisations.
- This is in addition to the statutory one held by the council's monitoring officer. The purpose

of the whip's register is that the whip may ensure that members comply with the code and is aware of any interests that might affect the participation of a member of a group in a discussion or vote. A copy of the form for the group register is attached as an appendix.

- 13.II.2(C)(i) and (ii) require members to agree in writing to abide by the rules and standing orders of the group and by any code of conduct issued by their authority, and to register as members of the Labour group. An officer of the group is required to request members to do this and it would be logical for this officer to be the chief whip.
- 13.XIII gives the chief whip responsibility for the implementation of NEC guidance on disciplinary procedures and any possible breach of rule by a member of a Labour group.
- The section 13.II. – Aims and Values – sets out the expectations the party nationally and local party members have of their locally elected representatives. This ranges from things like activities in the community, attendance at meetings and comradely behaviour to being a member of the Association of Labour Councillors and meeting all legal and statutory requirements. The chief whip will have a duty to ensure all members are abiding by these, and to watch for any members that may be having a difficulty in doing so, so that any necessary action may be taken.

## **ii) Qualification and disqualification – Taken from the Local Government selection pack 2016**

### **Introduction**

There are both party requirements and also certain legal provisions about who can and cannot be a local councillor.

The Labour party's rules state that:

*'Nominees must be legally qualified, and not disqualified, to stand for the local authority at the election concerned. It is required of LCFs that they take steps to check on disqualifications under the relevant legislation as well as any party requirements when compiling their panel of prospective candidates.' NEC procedural rule D.iv.*

and

*'This party shall not accept as qualified for inclusion in its panel of approved candidates any sitting councillor whose sole legal qualification for standing for election in the local government area is existing service as a councillor.' NEC procedural rule D.viii.*

### **Party expectations**

In addition to meeting the legal requirements, the Labour Party expects that nominees for the panel of local election candidates should:

- be normally resident in the area of the relevant local authority, and
- hold their party membership in the area of the relevant local authority, and
- have been members of the party for at least 12 months – although Local Campaign Forums may decide to make exceptions

### **Exceptions**

It is within the discretion of the Local Campaign Forum to consider nominations from individuals otherwise legally qualified, but that discretion must only be exercised having taken advice from the party's regional or constitutional officers.

### **Legal provisions**

In addition, there are legal provisions relating to qualification and disqualification.

Each nominee for the panel is required to sign a declaration confirming that he/she knows of no legal reason or party rule that would prevent him/her from being a candidate or being elected as a councillor in the local elections.

It is absolutely essential that every nominee is properly questioned to establish that s/he is both qualified and not disqualified. If there is any question about this – especially arising from employment – s/he must seek advice from the council's solicitor before being appointed to the panel of approved candidates. Every approved candidate must be reminded of the importance of remaining qualified and of checking the implication for qualification of any change in circumstance (eg employment).

### **Qualification**

The law says that, on the day of nomination, you must:

- have attained the age of 18 years, and
- be a British subject or citizen of the European Union<sup>1</sup> and
- be and thereafter continue to be on the electoral roll for the area of the authority<sup>2</sup>, or
- during the whole of the previous 12 months have occupied, as owner or tenant, land or premises in that area, or
- had your principal or only place of work in the area during the previous 12 months, or
- have resided in the area for the whole of the previous 12 months.<sup>3</sup>

### **Disqualification**

Certain people are disqualified from standing for election or from being a member of a local authority.

The law says that you are disqualified if, on the day of nomination, you:

- are subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or an interim order made in connection with creditors (excludes Individual Voluntary Arrangements)
- have been surcharged for more than £500 by the district auditor in the last five years
- have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for three months or more, in the last five years
- have been disqualified under Part III of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (this relates to donations and other offences as well) or under the Audit Commission Act 1998.
- are disqualified by virtue of section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972 and/or the political restrictions provisions of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989.<sup>4</sup>

**(iii) Code of conduct for local government selections – Taken from the Local Government selection pack 2016**

This code of conduct has been produced for all potential candidates in the selection of candidates for the {name of local authority}, in order to assist the smooth running of all stages of the process.

No materials calling for support in the selection process will be produced or distributed by or on behalf of any individual prior to the publication of the timetable for selections in {name of local authority}.

Potential candidates who are on the approved panel of candidates are entitled to a list of ward secretaries from the Secretary of the Local Campaign Forum. Once shortlisted by a ward, potential candidates will be entitled to a list of eligible members for that ward from the CLP Secretary. In order to receive this list, potential candidates will have to pay the relevant CLP an administration charge of £5.

The list of eligible members (or list of Party Units and Affiliates) is supplied solely for the purposes of the current selection/election campaign of the aspiring candidate to which it is supplied and is not transferable to any other campaign or person or for any other use whatsoever. Use of the list for any other purpose will lead to disqualification as an aspiring candidate and potential further disciplinary action. The selling or providing a list for commercial purposes will lead to automatic exclusion from the party for five years.

Following publication of the timetable for a ward potential candidates are permitted to mail eligible members direct, as well as Labour Party Units and affiliated organisations, with any canvassing/promotional material.

No potential candidates or persons acting on behalf of any potential candidate will use their own material or access to publicity to disparage any other potential candidate.

Canvassing is specifically allowed following publication of the timetable and from this period onwards potential candidates may approach members personally or by telephone to seek their support. Contact with members must not be carried out in a manner likely to cause offence or be seen as applying pressure to any member.

No financial inducement or inducement in kind may be offered to attempt to secure support.

Only designated officers will be authorised to issue statements to the media about any aspect of the selection procedure, and then only after consultation with appropriate senior Party Officers. This does not preclude potential candidates undertaking press, Radio or TV interviews on other matters, though under no circumstances should any potential candidate disparage any other potential candidate.

Party staff will not use or abuse their position, Party resources or time in the process of an internal selection or election so as to further the interests of themselves or their personal preferred candidate(s). This does not preclude normal contact or general conversation undertaken in their capacity as a member of the Party. The General Secretary is answerable to the NEC for the conduct of staff in all internal elections.

Once a potential candidate has declared an interest in an elected position s/he cannot attend the part of any meeting that is dealing with selection business of the ward in question, unless specifically invited in their role as a potential candidate.

No potential candidate or members acting on her/his behalf will interfere with or put under duress any member in regard to how they vote at any stage during the process.

Potential candidates (and those making donations of money or in kind to their selection campaign) are regulated by the Political Parties, Elections & Referendum Act and are required to comply with the provisions on accepting and reporting of donations of £500 or more. Contact the Compliance Unit for more information.

Any member breaching this code of conduct or knowingly allowing others to do so on her/his behalf will be liable for disciplinary action. The NEC will not hesitate to use its powers of disqualification and suspension to impose sanctions to enforce the code.

1. A person is qualified to be elected if he/she is:

A British subject (includes persons who have the status of Commonwealth citizens under the 1981 Act and certain persons who had the status of British subject under earlier legislation);

A citizen of the Republic of Ireland;

A citizen of the European Union (ie not a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of the Republic of Ireland)

2. If only the electoral registration qualification is used, it would be necessary, if elected, to continue that electoral registration throughout the term of office.

3. The party does not accept as qualified in its panel of approved candidates any sitting councillor whose sole legal qualification for standing for election is existing service as a councillor – see NEC procedural rule D8.

4. Broadly, anyone working for a public authority and who holds a politically restricted post will be ineligible, as will anyone who holds office or employment with the local authority for which the election is being held, or whose paid post is confirmed by that local authority. Restrictions may also apply to individuals working for an organisation which is significantly funded and/or controlled by the council, or party to a contract with the council or to another local authority which jointly funds their position. See separate section on conflicts of interest arising from employment.

