

## **Becoming a Common Councilman (Councillor)**

Becoming a Common Councilman (Councillor) is a rewarding and privileged form of public service. It enables people to play a part and make difference to how the Square Mile is run and other services. Unlike elsewhere, the position of a councillor in the City is purely voluntary and whilst **not** remunerated, help is available to cover some loss of earnings. The City is divided into [25 Wards](#). Each has one Alderman (elected for six years) and between two and ten councillors, depending on the size of the electorate (elected for four years). In total, there are 25 Aldermen and 100 Councillors. The next local election of Common Council is on **23 March 2017**.

### **The work of a Common Councilman - what is involved**

**Decision making:** participating in the process by attending meetings of the [Court of Common Council](#) and its [various committees](#). These meetings generally take place during the day, typically 11.30, 1.00pm or at 1.45pm. A modest lunch is often provided after or before meetings – which gives a good opportunity for informal discussion.

**Time commitment:** the amount of time spent on civic duties depends on the extent to which individuals get involved and the commitments taken on i.e. the number of committees, Court meetings, committee visits and ceremonial events. Visits and ceremonial events, whilst important, are voluntary. Preparation time for meetings also need to be factored in. At a minimum, councillors can expect to spend the equivalent of half a day on City business spread over a working week. New members can take advantage of a comprehensive induction programme to help them be effective as soon as possible.

**The election process:** the qualifications for the office of Common Councilman are similar to that of local authorities with one exception, namely, that a person standing must also be a Freeman of the City of London. For prospective candidate this is a technicality which the City will arrange (See Annex A for more precise details of the qualifications).

### **Support and Finding Out More**

Most councillors are representatives of political parties. There is nothing to stop political parties putting up candidates in the City but they rarely do. Most Members are therefore independent of party politics. Candidates standing as independents do not have a party “machine” to help this. If you are interested in becoming a Member it is useful to make your interest in standing known to existing Members as vacancies can arise unexpectedly. You could also considering becoming involved in a [ward club](#) (every ward has one), or a local residents’ association e.g. the [Barbican Association](#), [Golden Lane Estate](#) and [Middlesex Street Estate Residents' Association](#). Attending the public session of the [Court of Common Council](#) or a [Committee](#) and reading the items of business before them is another way of finding out more. Alternatively contact Simon Murrells, Assistant Town Clerk) on, 0800 587 5537 or at [simon.murrells@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:simon.murrells@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

The City arranges one or more open sessions for prospective candidates before each local election. The next session will be held in the Autumn of 2016.

### Qualifications for Standing for Election

#### **Candidates must:-**

- be 18 years of age;
- be a British citizen or a citizen of a Commonwealth or European Union Country;
- be a [Freeman of the City](#). The City Corporation will arrange for the freedom to be granted immediately and at no cost to a candidate;

#### **AND**

- be on the register of voters for City ward elections – not necessarily for the Ward in which the person intends to stand. To be included in the register a person must live in the City or occupy premises, including business premises, as an owner or a tenant. If a person works in or for a City-based organisation, they can also be on the register provided they are appointed to vote by their employer.

#### **Or**

- own freehold or leasehold estate in the City. In practice, this can be as simple as having a nominal interest in a small space. For example, this could be just a very small part of an office. (It should be noted that while this would make people eligible to become a candidate for election it would not make people eligible to vote in City elections as that requires actual occupancy of the premises concerned.) It is not, therefore, necessary to be on the electoral register in order to stand for election which effectively puts the City on a par with the requirements elsewhere;

#### **Or**

- have for the whole of the previous 12 months resided in the City of London.

**NB: The requirements for becoming an Alderman are different from those of a Common Councilman.**

If you want to know more contact the [Electoral Services Office on 020 7332 1430](#)