

Elected Representatives: Contents

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Elected representatives

Elected representative is an individual who has been chosen by the voters within an area to work on their behalf and in their best interests. There are no specific qualifications that are necessary to access elected office, but there are some particularly useful skills, like the ability to communicate effectively.

Elected representatives; covers:

- Ministers of Parliament (MPs)
- House of Commons
- Councillors
- Greater London Authority
- Police and Crime Commissioner

Ministers of Parliament (MPs)

MPs represent the interests and concerns of the public in the House of Commons. The people living in each constituency elect their local MP.

MPs are usually elected at a General Election. Following legislation in 2011, parliaments will run for fixed terms of five years, with the next General Election due on 7th May 2015. In certain circumstances, by-elections can be held to select an MP, for example if a serving MP resigns, retires or dies.

To find your local MP, visit: <http://findyourmp.parliament.uk>

MPs represent their constituents in Parliament, at the House of Commons. In particular, they speak in debates, ask questions of Ministers and serve on Committees looking at specific issues, such as the work of a Government Department.

MPs listen to and advise their constituents on problems and issues that they raise with them. This work can include writing to the relevant Minister on behalf of their constituents. As well as their duties in Westminster, MPs spend time in their constituency, keeping in touch with and listening to the issues of concern to local people, businesses and organisations.

Some MPs in the party, or parties, which form the Government will be appointed by the Prime Minister to positions of responsibility for specific areas, such as Justice, Education and Defence. These MPs are known as Ministers.

For more information about the role of MPs, visit: <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>

House of Commons

Sometimes the Chamber of the House of Commons can be a loud place, with speakers facing interruptions and noise from all around. If you have a hearing impairment you should not let this put you off. In fact, much of the business is conducted outside the Chamber.

What written records are there?

Parliament publishes Hansard, a daily transcript of all Parliamentary debates. It can be accessed at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications>

British Sign Language interpreters

Even in noisier meetings there are ways around, as David Buxton found: "When I attended a meeting in the House it didn't matter that I was Deaf and unable to use speech. With BSL interpreters I was able to meet people, debate, share ideas/policy, campaign/lobby and so on."

If you have serious hearing loss, you could use a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter or palantypist.

Loudspeakers

In the House of Commons Chamber there are small loudspeakers fixed to the backs of benches, which you could sit near to.

Councillors

Councillors are directly elected to represent the people and therefore have to consider not just the interests of their local electorate, but those throughout the whole area.

There are various types of local authority in England, including county councils, metropolitan borough councils, district city councils, unitary and town and parish councils.

For more information about the role of councillors, download [Making a difference: A guide to becoming a councillor for people with disabilities](#) which was produced by the Local Government Association.

Members of councils have a complex role and must act in a number of capacities: as committee member, ward representative and (unless they are an independent member) party representative. Councillors have individual and collective responsibilities for their council's activities. They need to listen to issues of concern to local people.

Individual councillors do not have the authority to make decisions on behalf of the entire council but work with the other council members as a team.

Responsibilities

Each type of local authority works in different ways and/or serves different areas.

Their work varies, and much of it is determined by Central Government. Services they might be responsible for in their local area include culture, education, environment, social services, planning and housing.

Election

Councillors are elected every four years, but not necessarily at the same time. This means councils may hold elections on a relatively regular basis, often 'by thirds', meaning that a third of the seats are available during one election.

More information about local elections can be [found here](#).

Engagement

Some councillors also take on other responsibilities, such as joining school or college governing bodies. Councillors keep in touch with their local community, for example through residents' committee meetings, police monitoring meetings, or meetings concerning local activities and events.

Part-time

The majority of councillor roles are not full-time, so many councillors also have a full-time job. Legally, employers must allow councillors time off during working hours to perform their duties properly. This varies depending on their duties and how this would affect the business.

Councillors are not paid a salary; instead they receive a 'member's allowance' for their time and the expenses they incur whilst conducting council business.

Greater London Authority

The Greater London Authority (GLA) consists of the Mayor of London and the London Assembly. It shares local authority powers with the City of London and the 32 boroughs of Greater London. This form of government is unique to the capital.

The GLA's three main areas of responsibility are economic development and wealth creation, social development, and environmental improvement.

Mayor of London

The London Mayor has far greater powers than a local council mayor.

The Mayor has specific powers and duties and a general responsibility to promote economic, social and environmental improvement in London. The Mayor of London also acts as the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police Area through the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPaC).

Before using many of his powers, the Mayor must consult with Londoners and, in all cases, the Mayor must promote equality of opportunity.

The London Assembly

The London Assembly keeps a check on the Mayor's actions, and makes proposals to the Mayor based on its research.

The Assembly's Planning and Housing Committee holds the Mayor to account by examining his strategies and activities in relation to planning and housing. The Mayor must consult the Assembly on these strategies and respond to any comments submitted to him.

Elections

Elections for London Mayor and the Assembly members are held simultaneously every four years, with the next elections due in 2016. Each voter has the following votes:

- First choice for Mayor of London
- Second choice for Mayor of London
- Constituency member of the London Assembly
- London-wide member of the London Assembly.

Visit the [GLA website](#) for more information on the role of the London Mayor and the Assembly.

Police and Crime Commissioner

On 15 November 2012 the public across England and Wales elected the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to provide stronger and more transparent accountability.

Why elect PCCs?

PCCs hold chief constables and the force to account, making the police more answerable to the communities they serve. They'll also work in partnership across a range of agencies at local and national level ensuring a unified approach to preventing and reducing crime.

What do they do?

PCCs act as the people's voice to the police, making the public feel more involved in their work. They will be accountable for how crime is dealt with in their area, setting targets and priorities to make their police force more effective and efficient.

Community needs

PCCs aim to address the needs of the community, increasing public confidence in the police. They will bring about greater accountability, making chief constables more answerable to the public.

Working approach

PCCs work with the police, public and various local and national agencies, bringing together resources in an effort to cut crime.

Where do they work?

PCCs are elected to cover every police authority in England and Wales, with the exception of London, which will maintain its police authority (the Metropolitan Police) and be accountable to the Mayor of London.

More information

For additional information about PCCs, visit gov.uk and [the Electoral Commission Website](#).