

Liberal Democrats in Sevenoaks, Dartford and Gravesham

Candidates for County Council Election May 2021

Thank you for your interest in standing as a candidate. We hope this document will help you understand what is involved. We are very keen to support you in this process so do not hesitate to ask if there is anything you wish to clarify or you need any advice. You may contact any member of the executive committee except those listed below, on the Approval Panel. You can use the email address candidates@sevenoakslibdems.org.uk but the accompanying email gives details for your personal contact who will be very happy to discuss anything with you.

County Council Seats

These seats are called '**divisions**'. Across Kent, the Lib Dems currently have seven seats but none are within our area. They also have a number of **target seats**, which they aim to win, and which they will support with extra funds.

We have one clear target, Sevenoaks Town. The candidate we select here will be the focal point of an active campaign. The **Campaign Plan** is currently being drawn up and will become available during July 2020. Party members and supporters in Sevenoaks will be involved in campaign activities, including canvassing, leafleting, social media activity, local media appearances and press releases throughout the period up to the election. The candidate will be the main public face for these activities, often along with the local **parliamentary spokesman** (effectively the person expected to be the parliamentary candidate at the next general election). He is Gareth Willis.

There are also **development seats**. These are areas that Kent Lib Dems and local parties are keen to use to extend local activity. In a good year, some of these might elect Lib Dems. At present, one of these is being finalised in Gravesend and one or two in Sevenoaks; others will be added to this list across our area.

A lot of divisions are much less likely to return a Lib Dem councillor but we still want to put up candidates. This allows every possible voter to have a Lib Dem choice and shows us to be serious about winning power, which has an impact on our support across the country. In these wards, we are usually looking for someone to be a **paper candidate**. We are unlikely to be able to put many resources into fighting such seats but this is open to local negotiation. Nevertheless, there is always a chance that national political circumstances might mean that we win some of these seats. Anyone who stands as a paper candidate also agrees to serve as a councillor in the admittedly unlikely event that they are elected.

A job description is attached. Please note that this is a confidential document. It mentions allowances. The Kent County Council website gives the following information about these:

All councillors receive a basic allowance (£15,138.07 for 2018/19) to perform their duties. These include:

- preparing for and attending all formal and informal meetings that they are invited to
- meetings with constituents
- dealing with enquiries from their constituents.

The basic allowance also covers the use of an elected member's home for conducting Kent County Council business, particularly in their division, the costs of phone calls and general stationery.

Elected members are allowed to claim travelling expenses for their official duties at the rates set by HMRC for business travel. Currently ... 45p [per mile]. Taxi fares are only reimbursed on production of a receipt if it is not practical to use public transport or their own car. Elected members are also allowed to claim expenses for caring responsibilities, either for a child under 16 or a dependent adult.

Just like any other salary all allowances are subject to tax and national insurance and elected members have no other provision to claim from the council, other than mileage.

Applying to Stand

Any Lib Dem member may stand as long as they meet the legal criteria. These are:

- You must be on the electoral register in this locality.
- You must be over 18.
- You must be a British, Commonwealth or *EU citizen (*subject to whatever the government eventually decide in the light of Brexit).
- You cannot stand for any council that employs you.
- There are various restrictions on those with certain types of criminal conviction, detailed on the application form. If you are concerned that this or any other factor might cause problems, then please discuss these with our President, Roger Walshe (contact details). He will keep such discussions entirely confidential from the rest of the executive committee.

Any member wishing to stand must complete an application form, even if they have stood before. This is called *KCC Candidate Application Form 2020* and is attached. On this form, paper candidates (which they call 'paperless' here!) need only complete a few sections. For our target seat of Sevenoaks Town and, potentially, any development seats, more detail is required.

Applicants to be the candidate for Sevenoaks Town will then be interviewed by an Approval Panel. This consists of three members. One will be an existing county councillor (name to be confirmed). The others will be Tony Clayton and Kirsty Thomas. Because they need to remain impartial, please do not approach them to discuss any aspect of your application.

The successful candidate for Sevenoaks Town will be supported to undertake training called 'Kickstart' with the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors. This will either be online or, if circumstances allow, may be a weekend residential course. We may be able to support other candidates wishing to undertake this training, subject to later discussion.

The timescale for the Sevenoaks Town selection will follow but the process will be complete before the end of August 2020. For all other seats, we will confirm a timescale but we will aim to complete the process as soon as possible.

I hope this document does not seem too off-putting. We are really keen to encourage you to stand and we will give you every support. Even if you are standing in a division with low prospects and no real campaigning, we hope you will be involved in our campaigns elsewhere in the area. Thank you so much for your interest and do get in touch if we can help in any way.

John Death

Chair, Sevenoaks, Dartford and Gravesham Liberal Democrats

4.7.20