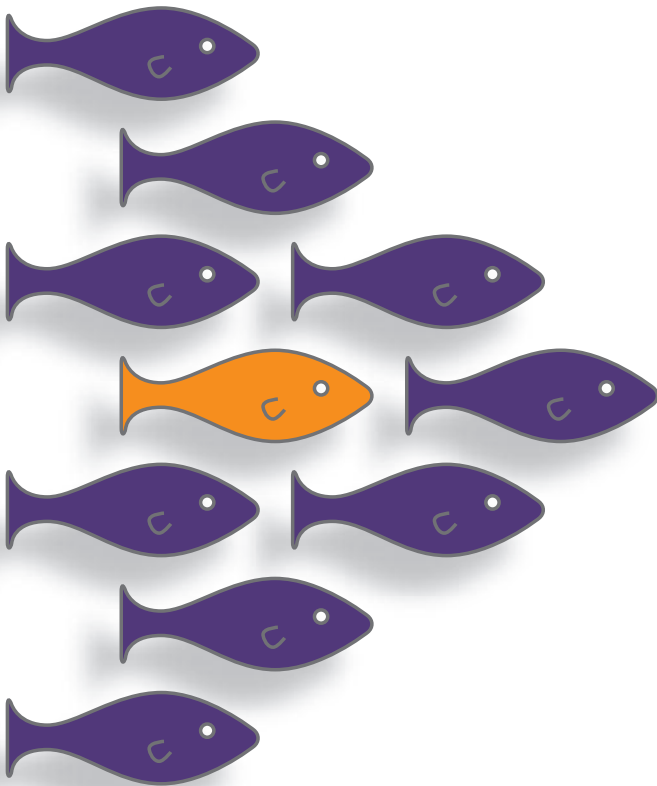


# the 2008 survey of local election candidates

Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher  
with Mary Shears



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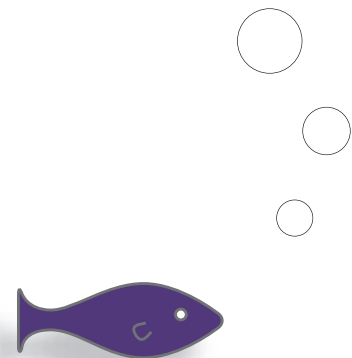
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This report aims to highlight the motivations, perceptions, and experiences of election candidates for English and Welsh councils.

The survey was carried out in May 2008 by the University of Plymouth's Local Government Chronicle Elections Centre, in partnership with the IDeA, and features the views of more than a thousand local election candidates.

It is based on the results of postal surveys, but unlike previous years also includes information collected via telephone interviews. This approach gave those taking part the opportunity to go into more detail about personal experiences, although their comments remain anonymous in the final report.

The survey covers all aspects of the election process, from a candidate's initial decision to get involved, all the way through to how those successfully elected do their job.

In response to the findings of the Councillors Commission report in December 2007, this survey highlights two particular challenges – how to ensure greater councillor diversity and retention.

How can we move away from the dominance of white, male, middle-aged and retired councillors? Or as one respondent put it, how to shake off the image of "male, pale, and stale".

Candidates were asked if attempts to redress the balance – specifically by encouraging more women, younger people and those from ethnic minorities to get involved in local government – had been successful.

And once on board, why do so many of the newly-elected step down again after a single four-year term? At the other extreme, should councillor turnover be encouraged by introducing a retirement age, or a limit on successive terms served?

The empirical evidence of these findings speak for themselves and should act as a mirror to reflect the realities of the current situation back to parties, candidates, councils and government.

All those working to ensure that local democracy is as vibrant, representative and engaging as possible should find this survey both interesting and challenging, though inevitably it will in many ways lead to more questions than answers.

What is certain is that the findings will be an invaluable resource, particularly for all of us engaged in meeting some of the key challenges thrown up by the 'Communities in control' White Paper.

*Pascoe Sawyers, Programme Manager, Political Leadership, IDeA*

### The key findings are:

More than two out of three local election candidates in 2008 are men.

A large majority of candidates describe themselves as 'white British'. Those putting themselves in any of the white categories account for more than nine in 10 of the total.

Half have a university degree qualification or its equivalent.

A third of candidates are in some form of paid employment while a further third are now retired. A majority of candidates belong to the professional/managerial occupational groups.

For just over a quarter of candidates, this was their first experience of contesting an election; just over half of candidates live in the ward they contest.

More than four in 10 spent 10 hours or more campaigning for each week of the election; one in five is selective about which addresses receive a campaign leaflet.

The majority campaign in other wards and enjoy the campaign experience; a large majority would contest again.

Two-thirds stand for election to support their local party while less than a fifth stand because they think that they can win.

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A majority receive positive support from friends and family and a larger proportion acknowledge support from fellow party workers.

Only one in three make the initial decision to stand for election – two-thirds of all candidates are asked to stand by someone else.

There is broad consensus that councils generally would benefit from the election of younger people, more women and more people from the black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities.

More information for candidates could be provided by local authority websites but opinion is against local or national-run advertising campaigns.

Local parties and party members are regarded as the best means for recruiting new candidates.

Three-quarters of candidates believe the reason many councillors stand down after just one term is because of a combination of pressures of time, family and work commitments.

Opinion divides two to one against introducing an enforced retirement age or a restriction on the number of consecutive terms served by councillors.

A postal survey was issued on 2 May 2008 to a one in four sample of candidates among the English local authorities conducting elections, and a one in five sample of all of the local councils in Wales. Candidate details including name, address and – where applicable – party description, were obtained from the nomination forms published by each local authority. A total of 3,142 questionnaires were issued and 1,095 replies were received, a response rate of 35 per cent. The responses were compared with the range of candidates contesting the elections and found to be a representative sample in terms of sex (sample has 31.3 per cent women, actual election 30.8 per cent), party affiliation and type of council.

The responses to questions about each candidate's electoral experience of fighting and winning council seats allow them to be clearly categorised where appropriate. For example, respondents for whom the 2008 local election was their first-ever experience of being a candidate may be identified separately from seasoned incumbents seeking a further four-year term. All unsuccessful candidates may be sub-divided as first time contenders or experienced campaigners while all those with some familiarity of life on the council benches may be sub-divided into current and previous councillors. Considering respondents in this way makes it easier to identify the similarities and differences across the range of candidates. Are new candidates seeking to replace incumbents different in terms of their sex, age and ethnicity, for example? Does the new crop of councillors differ from those elected before?

An innovation for this year's survey was to strengthen the analysis with a number of telephone interviews with candidates who had indicated their willingness to be contacted in this way. The cross-section of these candidates was similar to the sample overall. The aim was to delve deeper into their personal experiences as a candidate, although their identities are protected in this report.

More than two-thirds (68.7 per cent) of the candidates that stood for election in 2008 are men. Some 55 per cent are aged 55 years and over. Only 16.1 per cent are aged 40 years or younger but more than twice as many (39.1 per cent) are aged 60 years or older.

Nine in 10 candidates describe themselves as either white British or Irish. Including other white candidates, this group makes up 98 per cent of the total. Asian British candidates comprise 0.7 per cent with no other separate ethnic group exceeding 0.2 per cent.

Only one in 10 candidates has no formal education qualification but almost a third hold a university degree or equivalent and a further 22 per cent possess a higher degree.

A third of candidates are in full-time paid employment and a further 9 per cent are part-time employed. A significant proportion (14.2 per cent) are self-employed, while retired people comprise almost a third of candidates. Those in full-time education (3.3 per cent), outnumber those looking after a home and family (2.2 per cent).

A majority of candidates describe themselves as belonging to a profession, with a further quarter having a managerial or technical post. Those in the skilled occupations comprise one in six of respondents. The partly skilled and unskilled occupations account for just 6 per cent of the total.

The survey asked candidates about their role in the wider community. The most frequently mentioned activity was school governor with almost four in 10 citing this, while fewer than one in 10 belonged to a healthcare trust. A quarter of candidates sit on a public board or committee of some kind and almost six in 10 carry out un-paid voluntary or charity work.

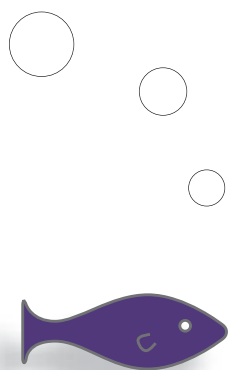




table one: social characteristics of candidates by candidate status 2008

		candidate status					all
		winning incumbent	first time councillor	previous councillor	previous candidate	first time candidate	
sex	male	70.6%	72.8%	76.9%	65.3%	64.3%	68.9%
	female	29.4%	27.2%	23.1%	34.7%	35.7%	31.1%
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
age	below 55 years	32.9%	49.2%	28.4%	45.5%	60.2%	44.0%
	55 years and over	67.1%	50.8%	71.6%	54.5%	39.8%	56.0%
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
ethnicity	British white	91.6%	86.7%	88.9%	87.8%	88.8%	89.0%
	other white	6.8%	10.4%	9.0%	10.1%	8.2%	8.8%
	other	1.6%	3.0%	2.1%	2.1%	3.0%	2.3%
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
education	no qualification	12.4%	11.1%	9.7%	5.5%	6.8%	8.7%
	GCSE or A level	44.8%	38.5%	32.6%	29.8%	39.0%	36.9%
	degree	42.8%	50.4%	57.6%	64.7%	54.2%	54.4%
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
employment status	paid employment	36.1%	47.8%	37.4%	47.5%	40.8%	41.9%
	self-employed	14.9%	16.2%	14.3%	11.1%	16.0%	14.2%
	retired	40.0%	26.5%	39.5%	28.3%	19.7%	30.5%
	other	9.0%	9.6%	8.8%	13.1%	23.5%	13.4%
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
occupation	professional	43.5%	47.1%	50.3%	55.9%	46.6%	49.0%
	managerial/technical	29.8%	23.5%	25.9%	22.2%	22.3%	24.7%
	other	26.7%	29.4%	23.8%	21.9%	31.1%	26.3%
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%





For 27.6 per cent of our respondents this was their first experience of contesting a local election. Women comprise 35 per cent of this group, slightly higher than for the sample as a whole. This new intake of candidates had an average age older than other candidates with prior experience. The proportion of Asian British contesting for the first time was, however, twice as large as that for the overall sample. Three-quarters of new recruits belong to the professional and managerial occupations while more than one in five are school governors.

Among those with more experience of campaigning, the largest section, a fifth, covers those candidates who contested just once before. Some 18 per cent claimed two previous campaigns while one in eight had three or four experiences. One respondent is a veteran of 30 previous election campaigns while 3 per cent first contested in the pre-reorganisation era.

A majority of candidates, 55 per cent, live in the ward they contest and most hold realistic views about their chances of winning. More than half rated their chances of electoral success at worse than evens and only 11 per cent believed that it was highly probable that they were going to be elected. It would appear that winning is not the only motivation for standing.

Under a third contacted the local media to publicise their personal campaign but among those that did almost seven in 10 obtained a response. A large number, one in five, did not produce a campaign leaflet but those with leaflets nearly always helped distribute them personally.

Impressions of how much time was spent in distributing leaflets may be inaccurate but more than four in 10 claimed 10 hours or more a week over the campaign. One in five is selective about which electors are given an election leaflet, indicating some campaign targeting.

A large majority (89 per cent) think it very important that their literature includes personal information and two-thirds believe previous political experience should be mentioned. Negative campaigning – commentary on the record of other parties and candidates – is viewed as unimportant by the majority. While local issues are important for nearly all, only 55 per cent feel the same way about national issues.

Slightly less than a third believe that the campaign received sufficient coverage by the local newspapers, but 42 per cent disagree. An even smaller proportion, just 11 per cent, believe local radio coverage had been sufficient with 51 per cent taking a contrary view. About half the candidates believe there is too much coverage of national rather than local issues while a larger number think that during local election campaigns the national party leaders should maintain a low profile.

A majority of candidates, 53 per cent, campaign in wards other than their own. Generally, this is to assist colleagues deemed to have a better chance of success. Almost nine in 10 candidates enjoy campaigning and opinion is overwhelming in wishing to repeat the experience.

### how were you recruited?

“I was a member of the Conservative party and locally we had an open day where the chairman came to talk about a day in the life of a councillor. A fellow member invited me to go along, the purpose of this was to recruit candidates. I was also taken to council meetings to see how it all works.”

male councillor, 40–49, north west shire district council

### have you recruited other people to be candidates?

“I’ve tried to encourage people, we are a small community. You know you get a lot of knockers, grumbling on about things. But when you suggest they take that extra step and stand for council, they edge back.”

male councillor, 60–65, northern shire district

Two-thirds of respondents say they are motivated to stand by a desire to help the party and to improve the area for local residents. A slightly smaller proportion, 59 per cent, stand because they are asked. Less than a fifth contest because of the prospect of victory and around a quarter because they feel dissatisfaction with previous councillors, or know someone on the council.

Two out of three candidates get positive support from their immediate family and three-quarters are supported by friends. The strongest source of support, however, comes from within the party membership network – nine in 10 reported this. This was not matched among business associates, trade unions, and employers where positive support was encountered by only one in five candidates.

Respondents were asked about their initial decision to stand for local election: was the decision entirely their own or did it follow from someone asking and encouraging them to stand? In line with previous surveys, two-thirds act only after being approached. In this aspect, there was little difference between re-elected incumbents, first-time councillors and other types of candidates. There are significant differences between men and women. Almost four in 10 men decide themselves to stand but fewer than three in 10 women do so.

table two: reasons for standing

	% selecting
support party	64.0%
improve area for residents	64.0%
asked to stand	59.0%
felt strongly about issue	37.0%
knew people on council	26.0%
dissatisfaction with previous councillors	24.0%
thought I could win	18.0%



However, non-whites are as likely as white respondents to have been asked to stand.

While 39 per cent of Labour and Plaid Cymru candidates initiated the decision to stand, this was about eight percentage points higher than for either Conservatives or Liberal Democrats. Unsurprisingly, a majority of candidates that contest as Independents make their own decision to stand.

For those making their own decision to stand the clear motive is a feeling that standing could make a difference. Three in four favour this explanation compared to only one in eight who regard standing for local election as an important step in their political career.

Among those encouraged to stand, two-thirds are approached by a party member and a third by a serving councillor. Only one in twenty are encouraged by a friend or neighbour and still fewer by members of non-party political groups, clubs and organisations. Party networks, it appears, are vital for recruitment; candidates respond to those networks either when approached or subsequently for support after deciding to stand.

**“The first time I was asked to be a paper candidate, it was an unwinnable seat. Since then things happened in our locality that I wasn't happy about so I decided to stand again – I wasn't elected.”**

woman candidate, 30–39, metropolitan borough

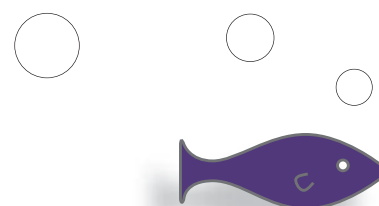
There is a one in four chance that a candidate faces a rival for the ward party nomination. Only one in twenty candidates apply for a seat other than the one they eventually contest. Candidates were asked to identify those qualities that led to their nomination. For returning councillors a majority believed that the fact they currently held a seat had been a vital factor but generally speaking personal reputation was seen as the determining factor. However, a quarter of candidates were prepared to admit that their selection was doubtless related to them being the only volunteer.

Almost three in 10 stood only after there was an agreement that they could be a paper candidate. Further examination of paper candidates reveals that they:

- are representative – just over a third are women
- have a mean age of 52 years
- are predominantly professional and managerial while a third are full-time employed with slightly fewer than that being retired
- are more likely to live outside the ward which they contest.

However, only one in 10 of the Independents and a slightly larger number of Plaid Cymru candidates thought this description applied to them. While between a fifth and a quarter of Conservative and Labour respondents described themselves as paper candidates, some four in 10 of Liberal Democrats and candidates representing minor parties did so.

What was the single most important quality that led to a candidate's nomination? The most popular choice among candidates was personal reputation – selected by 44 per cent. This criterion is thought to be more important than previous political experience and community involvement. A third believes that being known to the selection committee is important. There is much less support for the idea that personal characteristics (age, gender and ethnicity) are relevant – fewer than one in twenty thought so.



### does a councillor's age or sex matter?

**“Better to have a balance if you can. We are getting better. This council used to have only daytime meetings, now we have piloted different times. I chair a committee and we put people on the committee who can get to evening meetings. This helps. My perspective is we need to change – if you want a range of councillors you must be flexible.”**

male councillor, 30–39, northern shire district

**“It is easier to get men to stand because they have a different attitude to leisure time than women – if you can call being a councillor a leisure activity!**

**Men have hobbies, a man will go fishing all day. You wouldn't find a woman doing that – she would say she's too busy.”**

female councillor, 60–69, southern shire district council

What do the candidates think about recruitment and the public perception of councillors? The strongest agreement is that the general public's lack of knowledge about the tasks administered by local authorities hinders the recruitment drive. Almost three-quarters believe that the role of councillors has become too time-consuming but only a third agree that inadequate allowances may deter people. Elected councillors take a different view about pay – a majority believe the low remuneration does adversely affect recruitment.

Almost half the total sample agree that potentially intrusive media coverage of councillors deters some people from standing. A similar number thinks that the presence of political parties may discourage those without a party allegiance to stand. Less than one in five think a lack of support from council staff matters when recruiting. Significantly perhaps, fewer than three in 10 believe that parties should recruit some of their candidates from outside the membership ranks.

Candidates generally, therefore, subscribe to a view that the demands of being a councillor, the public image of and knowledge about local government and the potential for intrusive media coverage provide stronger explanations for the problems of recruitment than do the role of parties

and the level of pay and support received by elected councillors.

There is broad consensus that local government modernisation should include changing councils' social composition. The stereotypical councillor is a middle-aged white professional male. Three in four respondents agree that more younger people should be recruited, while half feel that more women and people drawn from the black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) populations should be recruited. While three-quarters agree that women bring different insights into council work only a third thought their policy priorities were different to those of men. Over 60 per cent support the view that greater social diversity among the council benches would improve local government's image but fewer thought that it might increase voter turnout.

The survey sought to probe deeper into these views. While two-thirds agree that younger people are not interested in politics, only a third think they lack sufficient confidence. Still fewer, one in six, believe that putting family before politics or the confrontational style of politics are reasons that younger people do not come forward. A large majority put the blame with younger people – 84 per cent think it is their fault for not becoming



table three: reasons why so few people come forward to be candidates

	strongly agree/ agree	strongly disagree/ disagree
being a councillor is too time-consuming	72.3%	11.7%
councillors don't have the power to make a difference	33.1%	49.2%
councillors are insufficiently paid	33.0%	33.8%
councillors receive insufficient support from council	18.8%	41.1%
most people are not interested in local government	75.9%	12.1%
intrusive media coverage discourages some people	47.7%	25.7%
general lack of knowledge about local government	91.1%	2.7%
political parties discourage people who don't want party allegiance	46.4%	30.8%
political parties should recruit some candidates who are not party members	27.6%	51.4%

engaged but two-thirds feel that parties could do more to recruit among this demographic.

A lack of interest in politics and a shortage of confidence are not factors in the under-representation of BAME candidates. Neither is the prioritisation of families (only one in five thought this) nor the knockabout style of local politics (one in eight adopted this view). While rather more of our respondents, four in 10, agreed that recruitment is adversely affected by the councillor stereotype and the failure of parties to be more proactive, the biggest support, 60 per cent, was for the suggestion that the problem is that too few people from ethnic minority groups offer themselves as candidates.

Less than one in five agree that the under-recruitment of women candidates might be caused by a lack of interest in politics while one in four think it is a lack of confidence. More than four

in 10 feel that women's recruitment is hindered by image problems – they are put off by the male stereotype and the perceived confrontational style of politics. Less than a third of the sample hold the view that parties are not trying hard enough to recruit. Instead, there was more support for the idea that women preferred putting families above politics, or were failing to volunteer as candidates.

Views on female under-representation differ from men to women. Three-quarters of women disagree with the viewpoint that women are not interested in politics but this is much higher than the barely half for the men. The proportion of women signalling lack of confidence as an issue in recruitment is twice as high as for men. Women emphasise more the negative image of the councillor stereotype although there is broad agreement among the sexes that parties are trying hard and women themselves should come forward more to contest local council seats.

## what additional information would you have found useful as a candidate both when deciding to stand, and once the process had begun?

“More about the whole process, it’s very complicated. There is a lot of paperwork, it’s long-winded and has technical jargon. I know other people who are put off by this.”

male candidate, 20–29, northern shire district

It appears that improving public opinion about local government starts with the national parties since eight in 10 agree that these should do more to project a stronger image. Thereafter, it is the local authorities that should exploit any increase in people’s willingness to stand. For example, 87 per cent agree that each local authority website should contain simple instructions about becoming a local election candidate. Generally, councils should be publicising the work of councillors. While website-based information is favoured, a majority also support the suggestion

that leaflets about becoming a candidate could be enclosed with each council tax notification. Three-quarters favour political parties as the principal recruitment agency but only 44 per cent think that serving councillors are best placed to recruit new candidates.

There is little support for recruiting candidates with advertising campaigns, organised either locally or nationally. Only a third agree with local authority commissioned adverts or a national campaign that recruited candidates from outside the established political parties.

table four: support for a modernising agenda

	strongly agree/ agree	strongly disagree/ disagree
more women councillors	51.5%	10.1%
more young people as councillors	72.8%	12.2%
more BAME councillors	49.4%	12.1%
parties to recruit candidates	72.8%	11.9%
local authorities to advertise for candidates	33.5%	40.9%
national advertising campaign to attract candidates	35.2%	32.2%
	yes	no
councillors should retire after 70th birthday	29.2%	63.7%
should be a limit on number of terms served	29.0%	64.3%
compensation if forced to retire	34.1%	59.0%
compensation if exceed term limit	30.5%	61.4%

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For some observers, local councils are faced by a double whammy. There is too much turnover among newly elected councillors, with a sizeable proportion standing down after serving for a single four year term. At the same time there is too little turnover among long-serving councillors because they are protected from the electorate by virtue of representing safe seats.

Respondents explained why they believed there was a high turnover among newly elected councillors. Three-quarters select a trio of inter-related themes – councillors standing down because council work is too time consuming and clashes with both work and family commitments. Interestingly, among elected councillors these proportions are higher, reaching 90 per cent pointing to excessive hours. Only a fifth of all respondents are prepared to believe that those standing down do so after achieving their objectives, or because they are dissatisfied with support from the council and disenchanted with media intrusion. Slightly more, a quarter of our sample, think that party political domination and dissatisfaction with the level of financial reward (44 per cent amongst councillors) is pivotal.

In some parts of the UK financial incentives to encourage retirement among longer-serving councillors is advocated. Opinion divides more than two to one against forcing councillors to stand down at the election after their 70th birthday. The same split is found against imposing term limits, which would limit councillors to a fixed number of consecutive terms. Among the minority that favour term limits, the preference lies between two or three elective periods.

Should enforced retirement be introduced as a means for change there is relatively little support for financial compensation for those forced to stand down; only a third support a compensation package with almost two-thirds against. Few respondents, roughly one in twenty, do not hold clear views on these issues. Opinion, therefore, is very sharply divided although there is a clear majority view that statutory measures of this kind are inappropriate means for a radical and rapid transformation of council benches.





**“The pay should be reasonable. Councils shouldn’t be afraid to pay a decent salary otherwise you will only get retired people. This is something that people don’t talk about but if you work and have a family you should be paid.”**

male councillor, 40–49, north west shire district council

The survey asked people who had served as a councillor about the nature and level of their council responsibilities, including the time commitment. Two of our respondents described their weekly commitment as 168 hours – a 24/7 responsibility! Another, reporting just 150 hours, was clearly allowing for a period of rest and recreation. Excluding such extreme values, the average councillor’s commitment is 23 hours per week.

All councillors, current and past, were asked about the nature and frequency of a range of council duties. About a third report holding ward surgeries more than once a month, but a fifth reported surgeries less frequently than that, or even not having them at all. One in four circulated a newsletter at least monthly although one in 10 never issued such a communication.

It is clear that councillors are kept busy, answering the telephone, receiving and responding to mail, both post and increasingly electronic. Some 37 per cent received more than one letter a week from a ward resident while a further 35 per cent received more than one a month. One in eight received a letter less than once a month. The preferred method of communication is via the telephone; two-thirds were contacted weekly and a further 23 per cent monthly. However, it seems this means of communication will shortly be surpassed by email. More than half, 53 per cent, were in weekly email contact with their constituents and 24 per cent in monthly contact. Following these communications a large proportion of councillors, 83 per cent, found it necessary to contact their local MP. For a small minority, one in twenty, such contacts took place more than once a week but most, 37 per cent, consulted with MPs less than once a month.

An important aspect of a councillor’s duties is attending community events and political meetings. Four in 10 attended such an event more than once a month but a third did so more than once a week. Half attended a party meeting more than once a month but one in eight were rather busy, including a party meeting in their itinerary more than once a week.

Finally, it appears councillors must engage, proactively and reactively, with local media. A small minority, one in twelve, were highly proactive, contacting local media more than once a week in order to publicise ward events. One in five took a slightly more relaxed approach but still made contact more than once a month. The largest group, 38 per cent, contact local media less than once a month on average.

There is balance between councillor-initiated media contact and responses to media requests. Fewer than one in 10 either contacted the media, or was contacted by them, to publicise ward news more than once a week. On the other hand, about 40 per cent reported having those experiences less than once a month. Of course, the balance between contacting and being contacted by the media may simply be local reporters responding to councillors who had contacted them initially.

### what could be done generally to make the role of being a councillor more attractive?

“Our council has made great strides forward, there is good member development and training. We have a good structure both locally and nationally, and courses are available through the LGA and IDeA. These are not formal qualifications like NVQs but good knowledge. There is a three day induction for all new councillors through to bespoke course on IT, public speaking, and speed reading for example. This council has the national charter. Recently parish councillors have been invited to sign up for our training. We have a bigger budget and the resources to provide more. Take up is slow but I’m sure the word will spread.”

male councillor, 50–59, metropolitan borough

2008 is the third national survey of local candidates and means that we can begin to take a broader view of candidates’ backgrounds and experiences. Table five does just that and compares findings from 2006 to 2008. For the most part the findings are rather stable over the period. The proportion of men to women candidates remains at two to one and rather more BAME candidates challenged in 2006 but that is explained by the occasion of the London borough elections. Around a third of candidates are in full-time employment, one in 10 are part-time workers, slightly more are self-employed but a large proportion are retired. Those candidates from the professional and managerial occupations dominate with very few drawn from skilled and unskilled manual jobs.

Differences do appear in terms of whether or not a candidate resides in the ward that they contest. In both 2008 and 2007 a majority did so but that picture is different from 2006 when most candidates lived outside the ward boundaries. This is possibly due to the densely populated wards in the capital and the relatively small geographies involved making it easier for candidates to contest outside their own areas. There are differences too in candidates’ experience with campaigning. A smaller proportion this year than before profess to having had prior experience although a larger percentage had been elected than was the case in 2006.

Ending on a positive note, we find consistently that a large percentage of candidates enjoy their time campaigning during the local elections and a large majority hope to repeat the experience.

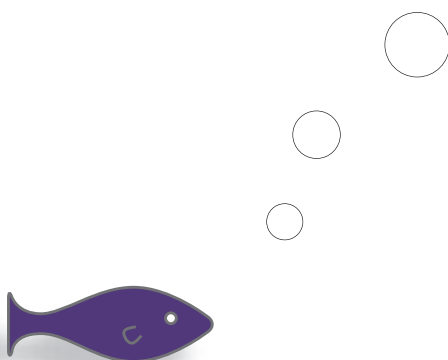


table 5: candidate background and experience, 2006/2008

		2006	2007	2008
gender	male	66.7 %	66.9%	68.7%
	female	33.3%	33.1%	31.3%
ethnicity	white	92.8%	97.9%	97.7%
	asian	4.9%	1.8%	1.1%
	caribbean	2.1%	0.2%	0.5%
	other	0.3%	0.1%	0.7%
current occupation	in full-time paid employment	37.9%	29.3%	33.6%
	in part-time paid employment	11.2%	11.6%	9.4%
	self employed	15.5%	17.7%	14.2%
	in voluntary occupation	2.9%	3.1%	4.5%
	registered unemployed	2.1%	1.0%	1.1%
	full-time student	1.5%	1.7%	3.3%
	retired	26.2%	33.3%	31.5%
	looking after home/children	2.7%	2.3%	2.3%
current or previous occupational status	professional occupation	50.6%	47.8%	51.5%
	managerial /technical occupation	28.4%	27.1%	26.1%
	skilled occupation, non manual	9.4%	9.2%	9.1%
	skilled occupation, manual	5.7%	8.1%	7.1%
	partly skilled occupation	3.8%	5.4%	4.0%
	unskilled occupation	2.1%	2.5%	2.2%
resident in the ward	no	52.1%	41.5%	44.6%
	yes	47.9%	58.5%	55.4%
previous candidate	no	32.2%	30.9%	27.6%
	yes	67.8%	69.1%	72.4%
elected previously	no	67.7%	57.9%	62.3%
	yes	32.3%	42.1%	37.7%
enjoy campaigning	no	16.1%	15.6%	12.7%
	yes	83.9%	84.4%	87.3%
prepared to stand as a candidate again	no	10.5%	11.4%	9.3%
	yes	89.5%	88.6%	90.7%

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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.

