

# What skills and qualities will I need?

## SKILLS

**The following are some of the skills you need to be an effective elected member.**

### Time management

The most important resource you have is your time. Being an elected member is a busy enough job in itself, let alone if you are also involved in other projects and trying to find time for family and friends.

Don't let paperwork and emails spiral out of control. Learn to prioritise. You should use your time to reflect your priorities. It is never a good idea to ignore strategic and long-term issues because you may begin to feel overwhelmed by your day-to-day work. Keep asking yourself what is urgent? And what can wait? If you can manage your time effectively you may have more time to catch up on reading and policy issues.

### Listening

Listening is hard work and the least valued of all skills, yet it's the most important.

Listen to what people say and watch the way they say it, people will give out all sorts of information by what they do and don't say.

### Relationship building

Building productive relationships with others is a critical skill. Be pragmatic and strategic about networking. Think in advance about the kinds of people you want to work with. They may have skills you don't have or they may have access to people or information that will be useful. Everyone can benefit from networking.

Good networking doesn't mean ignoring people who you don't think are useful. Getting on with people is vital. Try and understand other people's points of view. Listen with respect, be polite and courteous.

### Influencing and negotiating

Successful local government politics is increasingly due to successful negotiating and influencing behind the scenes. To get things done you need to win hearts and minds and winning over people relies on selling your ideas.

### Media skills

Being an elected member is a public role and it is likely you will need to work with the media at some stage. Working with the media will require good preparation and it can be quite time-consuming. However, think of the media as an opportunity to put your point of view across.





## QUALITIES

In January 2001 the Local Government Commissioner for Rodney prepared a Code of Governance based on best practice. The following code is based on commonly accepted values and statutory obligations of councillors.

### Faithful

Councillors must act in the interests of the community within their powers. Councillors should always promote the integrity of the council's decision making process and should not take part in any activity that conflicts with their governance duties.

### Impartial

Councillors must listen carefully to advice and weigh up the pros and cons before making recommendations or decisions. Councillors need to take into account the interests of the whole community rather than one small group.

### Just

Councillors must make sure that everyone and all groups get a 'fair go'.

### Prudent

Available resources often don't meet community expectations. Existing resources must be managed prudently and councillors should consider sustainability when making decisions.

### Responsible

Councillors should work hard to promote issues or actions that they believe are right for the public good.

### Efficient

Councillors have an obligation to perform duties to the best of their ability.

### Open

Councillors should be proactive in giving out information about council decisions and activities.

### Representative

Councillors need to establish a balance between acting on the wishes of individuals and groups and their own view of what is best for the whole community.

### Temperate

In debate councillors should argue the issue under discussion rather than attack the competence or ethics of the opposition.

### Sincere

A councillor's words and actions should be a sincere representation of their purpose so as to maintain the public trust in the integrity of the democratic process.

