

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON LOCAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Why would I want to be a councillor?

Local (parish and town) councillors are passionate about their communities and seek to make a change to help improve the lives of their residents. Local councils run numerous services, depending on their size. These include introducing solar panels, setting up Dementia-friendly groups, organising community buses, creating neighbourhood plans, implementing suitable housing, establishing youth projects, managing allotments and open spaces, and maintaining footpaths, public seating and litter bins.

Becoming a councillor is a rewarding experience. A councillor's role can include developing strategies and plans for their community, helping with problems and ideas, representing the community, working with other local community groups, decision-making and reviewing decisions and talking to the community about their needs and council decisions.

How do I become a councillor?

There are six simple steps to becoming a councillor:

1. Check for elections in your area by emailing your elections officer (<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>).
2. Submit your nomination to the returning officer – learn more about the process and the criteria (<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/local-elections-england>).
3. Wait for your nomination to be accepted.
4. Your nomination is made public by the principal authority.
5. Start your elections campaign.
6. Polling day.

Am I eligible to stand for election?

You must be:

- A British citizen or a citizen of the Commonwealth, or the European Union.
- 18 years of age or older.
- Live in an area that is served by a local council.

What do councillors do?

Local councillors have three main areas of work:

- Decision-making: through attending meetings and committees with other elected members, councillors decide which activities to support, where money should be spent, what services should be delivered and what policies should be implemented.
- Monitoring: councillors ensure that their decisions lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how well things are working.
- Getting involved locally: as local representatives, councillors have responsibilities towards their constituents and local organisations. These responsibilities often depend on what a given councillor wants to achieve and how much time is available. The day-to-day work of a councillor may include the following:
 - Going to meetings of local organisations and community groups.
 - Attending meetings of bodies that affect the wider community, such as the police, the Highways Authority, schools and colleges.
 - Taking up issues on behalf of public members, such as making representations to the principal authority.
 - Running surgery for residents to bring up issues.
 - Meeting with individual residents in their own homes.

What do local (parish and town) councils do?

Your local council has overall responsibility for the wellbeing of your local community. Their work falls into three main categories:

Delivery of services

- Allotments
- Leisure facilities
- Bus shelters
- Litter bins
- Car parks
- Local illuminations
- Community centres
- Parks and open spaces
- Public toilets
- Street lighting

- Festivals and celebrations

Improve the quality of life

- Local housing and infrastructure through neighbourhood plans
- Promoting dementia-friendly communities
- Tackling loneliness
- Acting as community hubs
- Funding community projects and vital services

Give communities a voice

- To the local police and health services
- On planning matters with principal authorities and developers
- To parliamentarians and government

What training and support is there?

Councillors can receive training and support via their county association (<https://www.nalc.gov.uk/about/find-your-local-county-association>), the representative bodies for local councils in their area.

What is the time commitment?

NALC's Local Councillor Census Survey found that councillors put aside, on average, three hours a week for council work. Council work often includes attending meetings, engaging with residents and speaking to local groups and bodies on behalf of the council.

For more information, please get in touch at policycomms@nalc.gov.uk.