

## 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, maintaining footpaths, public seating and litter bins.

Becoming a councillor is a rewarding experience. A councillor's role can include responsibilities such as 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](#).
2. Submit your nomination to the returning officer — find out more about the [process](#)
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 - find your [polling station](#)

### 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, and;
- meet at least one of the following four criteria:
  - a. You are and will continue to be, registered as a local government elector for the parish in which you wish to stand from the day of your nomination onwards.

- b. You have occupied as owner or tenant any land or other premises in the parish area during the whole of the 12 months before the day of your nomination and the day of the election.
- c. Your main or only place of work during the 12 months prior to the day of your nomination and the day of election has been in the parish area.
- d. You have lived in the parish area or within three miles of it during the whole of the 12 months before the day of your nomination and the day of the election.

To find out more about eligibility criteria, please visit the [Electoral Commission website](#).

### **What do councillors do?**

Local councillors have three main areas of work:

1. 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.
2. Monitoring: councillors make sure that their decisions lead to efficient and effective services by keeping an eye on how well things are working.
3. Getting involved locally: as local representatives, councillors have responsibilities towards their constituents and local organisations. These responsibilities often depend on what the councillor wants to achieve and how much time is available. The day-to-day work of a councillor may include:
  - going to meetings of local organisations and community groups
  - going to meetings of bodies that affect the wider community, such as the police, the Highways Authority, schools and colleges
  - taking up issues on behalf of members of the public, such as making representations to the principal authority
  - running surgeries for residents to bring up issues

## What do local councils do?

Your local council has overall responsibility for the wellbeing of your local community. They have a range of powers and duties that relate to the community in which they serve. Their work falls into three main categories:

1. Delivery of services including allotments, leisure facilities, bus shelters, litter bins, car parks, local illuminations, community centres, parks and open spaces, public toilets, street lighting, and festivals and celebrations.
2. Improve the quality of life through local housing and infrastructure through neighbourhood plans, promoting dementia-friendly communities, tackling loneliness, acting as community hubs, and funding cut community projects and vital services.
3. Give communities a voice to the local police and health services, on planning matters with principal authorities and developers, and to parliamentarians and government.

## What training and support is there?

Councillors can receive training and support via their county association, which are the representative bodies for local councils in their county area.

## What is the time commitment?

NALC's *Diversity in Local Councils in 2018* report found that councillors put aside, on average, three hours a week for council work. This works out to an average of 144 hours per annum.

For more information, please get in touch with [policycomms@nalc.gov.uk](mailto:policycomms@nalc.gov.uk).