

Applying to become a councillor?

Even those who have stood as councillors before may forget what the process was like 4 years ago. Whilst relatively easy it is strict and if not followed exactly, will result in disappointment and rejection for the wrong reasons! The rules are there to ensure that only those who are eligible to stand for election in your community are considered and that those put forward have agreed to stand for election. Parish Councillors are elected by the public and serve four year terms in office; these were unpaid positions until 2004 when allowance schemes were introduced to encourage more people to stand for election. Allowances, which tend not to be very large, are at the discretion of the individual councils and most still choose to maintain an unpaid status.

If you wish to stand as a councillor you must satisfy these requirements:

- From polling day, you need to be over 18 years of age
- On the Electoral Register for the council area for which you wish to stand, or have worked in the area for the preceding 12 months
- A citizen of the European Union
- A local government elector of the parish; or a person who during the whole of the twelve months before nomination as a candidate occupied land or other premises as owner or tenant in the parish. Or has, during the same period, resided in that area or within three miles thereof, or has during the same period, had a principal or only place of work in that area

You cannot stand for election if you:

- Are bankrupt and an Order or Interim Restriction Order has been imposed.
- Have, within five years before the day of the election, been convicted in the United Kingdom of any offence and have had a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine
- Work for the council where you are intending to standing for election (but you can work for other local authorities, including the principal authorities that represent the same area).

The Election Procedure:

Ordinary elections of local councillors take place on the first Thursday in May every four years. Reorganisation of local government may cause alteration of the Election Day and election year in some cases.

A few terms that you will encounter explained:

- **Returning Officer** – person empowered to run an election.
- **Standing** - Putting your name forward for election.
- **Electoral Register** – Names and addresses, together with election identification numbers of all people within a community who are registered to vote.
- **Election Timetable** – dates when specific forms must be publicised or submitted.

- **Warded** – Areas are split up into what is called ‘wards’ so that councillors are elected by a specific smaller number of people and will be aware of their local concerns rather than having to represent all people within a whole parish.
- **Expenses** – If you do produce your own leaflets/pamphlets you need to declare how much you have spent on this.

1. Publication of the Notice of Election.

The Chief Executive of the District/Unitary Council is the Returning Officer and therefore has the power to call an election. Election staff in the District/Unitary Council Elections Office have all the papers you will need and will be able to give advice and may check nomination forms.

2. Getting the nomination forms

You will probably need to contact your District/Unitary Council Elections Office to ask for the appropriate forms. Parish and Town Councils are sent a certain number of forms and may make them available in the community, but the District/Unitary Council will send additional forms to anyone who requests a pack. Anyone who is eligible to stand can request these forms.

3. Completing the nomination forms

You will need to fill in all your personal details and those of the people nominating you. You and those nominating will be asked to fill in your Electoral Register number. This is the district code on the front of the Electoral Register i.e. A Village might be ‘SX’ then this is followed by the number that appears next to your name, or next to the name of the person nominating you. The entry in this box will therefore read something like ‘SX 413’.

You must get your form completed and signed by those nominating you and it will help to copy the numbers of those nominating you when you obtain your own Electoral Register number.

4. Sending the nomination forms back.

It is imperative that you submit your forms in accordance with the Timetable of Proceedings. Failure to do so will render your application null and void!

Checklist:

- Do not forget to get **everyone** mentioned to sign the forms
- Ensure that all addresses are in **full** with no abbreviations
- Include the whole Electoral Register reference **letters and numbers**
- **Be careful not to miss important dates** (see insert 12 ‘Election Timetable’ enclosed)