

Supplementary guidance for candidates at parish and town council elections in England

Who this document is for

Prospective candidates who want to know the rules on standing for election at a parish or town council election in England.

Throughout this document we use 'you' to refer to the candidate.

The document covers

- qualifications and disqualifications to stand for election
- information about the nominations process
- role of an agent
- standing for a registered political party
- the rules and good practice on campaign activity
- where to find out about election processes

Related documents

- [Can you stand for election?](#)
- [Qualifications and disqualifications](#)
- [Getting nominated](#)
- [Election agents](#)
- [Standing for political party](#)
- [Commonly used names](#)
- [Campaigning 'Dos' and 'Don'ts'](#)
- [Postal voting](#)
- [The poll](#)
- [The count](#)

Forms

- [Nomination papers](#)

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How to use this document

This guide is designed to act as a supplement to our [guidance for candidates and agents at elections to principal areas](#) and should be read alongside it.

Many of the provisions for standing as a local government candidate at a principal area election also apply to standing as a candidate at a parish or town council election. This document contains links to the relevant guidance and highlights where the provisions for standing as a candidate at a parish or town council election differs from that of a candidate standing at a local government election in England.

Throughout the guidance for candidates standing at a local government election we use 'local authority'. For the purposes of a parish or town council election, this should be read as 'parish or town council'.

Can I stand for election?

Qualifications and disqualifications

To be able to stand as a candidate you must be qualified to stand and not be disqualified.

The same [qualifications and disqualifications](#) apply for prospective candidates at a parish or town council election as they do for prospective candidates at a local government election.

In addition, if you have lived within 4.8 kilometers of the parish or town council area during the whole of the last 12 months you also qualify.

The disqualification of politically restricted posts is not applicable for prospective parish and town council candidates.

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Getting nominated

Much of the process for completing and submitting nomination papers is the same for candidates at parish and town council elections as it is for candidates at a local government election, with the exceptions as outlined below. For further information on completing and submitting nomination papers see [Getting nominated](#).

The nomination form

Signatures of subscriber

Each nomination form must contain **signatures of two registered electors** (subscribers) for the parish or town (or ward if the area is warded).

The first will sign as **proposer** and the second as **seconder**.

Each elector may only subscribe as many nomination forms as there are vacancies in the ward or area being contested.

For example, in the case of a parish or town ward with only one vacancy, an elector may subscribe to one candidate's nomination form in that ward. If two candidates submit nomination forms signed by the same person, the nomination papers that were submitted first will be accepted, but the second and subsequent nominations will be invalid. In the case of a parish or town ward with two vacancies, an elector may subscribe two nomination papers; if there are three vacancies a person may subscribe three nomination papers; and so on.

Description

The options regarding the description, as listed in [Getting nominated](#), apply to parish and town council candidates with one exception – option five – the use of a joint description. There is no provision for you to use a joint description.

Important

If a nomination form contains more than two subscribers' signatures, only the first two will be accepted.

If any of the first two subscribers is invalid, the Returning Officer must hold the nomination form invalid, regardless of whether the form contains more than two.

In addition, you can use a non-registered description of no more than 6 words, which does not have to be registered. This can be any description and does not have to refer to your rank, profession or calling providing that it is sufficient to identify you along with the other particulars. Examples of types of descriptions that might commonly be used are 'Farmer', 'Baker in High Street', or 'Member of Village Action Team'. The Returning Officer will hold the nomination paper invalid if the description exceeds six words.

Where can I obtain nomination papers?

Your local elections office will be able to provide you with nomination papers on request. Contact details can be obtained from our About My Vote website (www.aboutmyvote.co.uk). Alternatively, the Commission has produced a set of [nomination papers](#) that you could use.

Further information

See our guidance document '[Getting nominated](#)' for information on the following:

- Your consent to nomination
- Nomination in more than one ward of the same parish or town council (warded councils only)
- Statement of persons nominated
- Inspection of nomination papers
- Withdrawing as a candidate
- Uncontested elections

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Election agents

There is no requirement for election agents at parish and town council elections, unlike at elections for principal areas. This means that candidates have responsibility for all aspects of their election campaign and for controlling expenditure and submitting the relevant expenditure returns.

If you do wish to appoint election agents, see [Election agents](#) for further information. In addition, it will be the election agent's responsibility to complete the spending return and submit it to you within 23 days of the election.

For further information on spending see www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-those-we-regulate/candidates-and-agents

Standing for a political party

If you are standing on behalf of a registered political party, you should read our guidance '[Standing for a political party](#)' for further information.

However, while most of the rules for standing in parish/town council elections are the same as those for standing in a local government election in England, there are two notable differences:

- At parish/town council elections you cannot use a joint description
- At parish/town council elections you can use a non-registered description of no more than 6 words (see page 4)

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Campaigning 'dos' and 'don'ts'

For further information about the rules and good practice on campaign activity see our guidance ['Campaigning 'dos' and 'don'ts'](#).

Election processes

For further information about the postal voting process, what happens at polling stations, what to expect at the election count and the appointment of agents to attend those processes see our guidance:

- [postal voting](#)
- [the poll](#)
- [the count](#)

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How we can help

You can view our full range of guidance and up-to-date resources on our website.

If it is easier, you can also contact us on the numbers below or email us. We are here to help, so please get in touch.

London

Call us on: 020 7271 0689

Email us at: london@electoralcommission.org.uk

Eastern and South East

Call us on: 020 7271 0600

Email us at: easternandsoutheast@electoralcommission.org.uk

Midlands

Call us on: 02476 820086

Email us at: midlands@electoralcommission.org.uk

North of England

Call us on: 01904 567990

Email us at: north@electoralcommission.org.uk

South West

Call us on: 01392 314617

Email us at: southwest@electoralcommission.org.uk

Translations and other formats

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Tel: 020 7271 0500

Email: publications@electoralcommission.org.uk