The Electoral Commission

- English
- Cymraeg

Guidance for Candidates at Parish council elections in England

Introduction to our candidates guidance

This guidance aims to provide practical advice for anyone who wants to stand as a candidate at a parish council election in England. Standing for election can be complicated, but we hope that our guidance will make it as straightforward as possible.

Candidates and their agents must follow certain rules set out in legislation. Our guidance sets out the stages that you need to go through when standing at a parish council election. You do not have to follow this guidance, but if you do, you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law.

It includes relevant factual material as well as links to sources of further information. Each section includes a number of forms and resources, which can be directly accessed via links in the text.

You can find out more in How to use our guidance.

Election timetable

We have published a generic election timetable on our website. For scheduled polls we will publish a specific timetable which will be made available below.

If a by-election has been called, you will be able to obtain a copy of the specific timetable for that election from the Returning Officer.

Data protection

Please note that data protection legislation applies to the processing of all personal data. Please contact the Information Commissioner's Office for further information about how the current data protection legislation affects you.

We are here to help, so please contact us if you have any questions. Please see Contacting us for contact details.

Terms and expressions we use

We use ‘must’ when we refer to a specific requirement. We use ‘should’ for items we consider to be minimum good practice, but which are not legal or regulatory requirements.

We use ‘you’ refer to the candidate in this guidance.

Throughout the guidance we have used the term ‘parish council’ to refer to both town and parish councils.

Some parish councils are subdivided into wards for the purposes of administering elections. In the case of a parish that is un-warded; any references to ‘ward’ should be read as ‘parish’.

Updates to our guidance

Change log

Date of update	Description of change
November 2024	Publication of dates for May 2025: • When do the candidate spending laws apply? • Deadlines Updated to provide clarity on candidate spending: • Personal expenses

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