

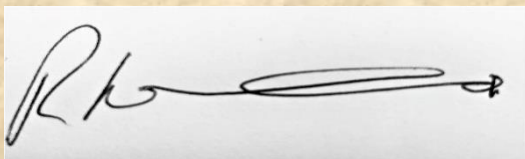
MAKE A DIFFERENCE BECOME A COUNCILLOR

Parish Elections 2025

LOCAL GOVERNMENT is at an important point in its evolution with increasing responsibilities as powers are devolved. Many changes are likely to take place, and the importance of community engagement and local representation cannot be ignored. This Guide is to address local involvement and encourage people to stand for election. It contains information to assist Councils to inform and encourage its residents to get involved at election time, and to raise awareness of:

- **The need for people to become local Councillors**
- **How to navigate the election process**
- **How to advise on what is required from someone who is thinking of becoming a Councillor**

Use this Guide to promote the role of parish and town Councils in the community, highlight the importance of voting and encourage many to stand as future Councillors.



Councillor Ray Wickson
Chairman
Shropshire Association of Local Councils

February 2025

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Councils

Budgeting for Elections

The Elections Team take into account costs of printing (poll cards, postal vote packs), staff costs (polling station, counting, opening postal votes), polling stations and equipment (hire, delivery and collection of equipment) and overall management. Invoices will be raised in February/March 2026. For uncontested elections, Councils are advised to allow approximately £180, although the precise fee has yet to be determined.

What Councils should do

The role of the Clerk

- Publish notices as requested by the Returning Officer
- Encourage local residents to be involved in the election process
- Assist prospective candidates with any queries about the election process or give election office contact details
- After the elections: Ensure that new Councillors complete their Acceptance of Office form (witnessed by the Clerk or another Councillor – they cannot take part in the annual meeting until they have done so) and complete the Register of Interest Forms (these need to be submitted to the Monitoring Officer at Shropshire Council within 28 days of taking up office) ***These forms can be downloaded from SALC's website on this link***

The role of the Council

- Agree to actively raise awareness of the upcoming elections and agree how that will happen
- Promote the work and role of the Council encourage residents to vote

Pre-Election Awareness Campaign

What Councils should do to raise awareness of elections to recruit councillors. This step-by step programme of events will enable Councils to raise awareness of upcoming elections and encourage people to stand for election.

PLACE Articles in local/community newsletters on council websites to raise awareness of upcoming elections

DISPLAY Posters on Council websites, social media and noticeboards to highlight what councils do, why people should vote and who should stand for election (see Resources for sample posters). Also, in other places - colleges, surgeries, pubs, shops.

ENCOURAGE existing councillors to take part in local radio interviews. (Please read the section on the Pre-election Period to ensure you are working within the law.) Encourage potential candidates to attend Council meetings.

HOST an awareness-raising event/ open day for the public and possible candidates – a good opportunity to encourage people to stand for election and for those less sure to ask questions. (Remember to provide refreshments).

PLACE more articles in local community newsletters and on website, social media to advise on how and where to get nomination forms including encouragement for voters to take part in their 'Local' elections.

Pre-election Period

The Pre-election Period (PEP) and previously known as Purdah is used to describe the 6 weeks immediately before an election. The work of the Council should go on during this period but should give no publicity to any Councillor's campaign. No Councillor should circulate any election materials, political posters or leaflets before, during, or after, any meeting of the Council. Such materials must not be displayed on any Council premises or property including noticeboards. Other points to note:

- Councillors can attend events organised by other organisations but mustn't use them to publicise their election campaign
- Council staff must always be careful not to give the impression of supporting any political party or candidate
- Council newsletters can be circulated as normal provided they are about local issues and remain a-political
- Councils should not publish anything on controversial issues or report views in a way that may identify the Council with an individual candidate or group
- Councils must not publish any material relating, in any way, to a candidate
- Councils must not publish anything which may seek to influence voters

Roles and Responsibilities

Council Powers

Statutory functions are conferred on local Councils, meaning they are given to the full Council. Thus, formal decisions (resolutions) about the discharge of those functions and their related responsibilities must be decided at a full Council meeting. Since it can be impractical for the full Council to meet each time that a decision must be made, Councils are allowed to delegate the performance of these functions to a committee, a sub-committee or an officer of the Council. There are exceptions to this however as a Council cannot delegate certain functions, like:

- levying or issuing a precept
- borrowing money
- adopting or revising the Council's Code of Conduct
- approving the Council's annual accounts
- considering an auditor's report made in the public interest

Role of the Councillor

The role of the Councillor is to:

- participate constructively in the governance of the Parish/Town
- participate fully in the formation and scrutiny of the Council's policies, budgets, strategies and service delivery including the Parish/Town Plan
- ensure, with other Councillors, that the Council is properly managed
- keep up to date with developments affecting the Council at local, regional and national levels
- promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Parish/Town
- effectively represent the interests of the ward (if applicable) for which the Councillor is elected and attend to parishioners' enquiries, representations and complaints
- represent the whole electorate, listen and represent the views of the whole community when discussing Council business and working with outside bodies
- play an active role in the Council's arrangements to build community capacity
- attend Council meetings
- prepare for meetings, properly informed on issues to be discussed

- take part in meetings and form sound judgements based on what is best for the community and then abide by majority decisions
- represent the Council on outside bodies and organisations to which the Councillor is appointed
- maintain proper standards of behaviour as an elected representative
- fulfil the statutory and locally determined requirements of an elected member of a Council, including compliance with all relevant codes of conduct and maintaining high ethical standards, (including not disclosing confidential information and not using Council resources for political purposes or for any other reason unless agreed by the Council)

Role of the Chairman/Mayor

Chairmen on their own have no power to make decisions; they must have the resolution of the Council and should not involve themselves in the day-to-day administration of the Council. The Chairman/Mayor is elected by the members of the Council at the Annual Council meeting and serves for twelve months. The Mayor's/Chairman's main role is to:

- run Council meetings, ensuring effective and lawful decisions are taken
- guide activities by managing the meetings of the Council (assisted by the Clerk)
- involve all Councillors in discussions
- ensure that Councillors keep to the point
- summarise the debate and facilitate the making of clear resolutions
- keep discussions moving so that the meeting is not too long
- use their casting vote; the first vote is a personal one as a member of the Council. If there is a tied vote, the Chairman can have a second, casting vote
- manage the public participation element of the meetings

The Chairman/Mayor will often be the public face of the Council and will represent the Council at official events and may be asked to speak on behalf of the Council. In such circumstances he/she should only express the agreed views of the Council.

Elections, the Detail

The Elections Act came into effect in April 2022 and set the scene for a number of changes to the election process.

Elections Act Changes

THE BIGGEST CHANGE was that from May 2023, all electors need to show photo identification when voting at the polling station. This includes:

passport; driving licence; blue badge; bus passes etc.


Out of date ID is acceptable provided the photo is still a likeness to the person. If an elector doesn't have the appropriate ID, they will be able to ask for a Voter Authority Certificate. They will need to apply for this before the election and will need to verify their identity with their date of birth and national insurance number as well as providing a photo. The Electoral Registration Officer will need to check each application to make sure the person is registered at the address given, that the personal details match and that the photo is acceptable i.e. a full-face photo has been uploaded. A certificate will then be posted to the elector for use on election day.

The Returning Officer must also ensure that all polling stations are ACCESSIBLE for voters. If you know of any particular issues with your local polling station, get in touch.

Timetable of Events (May 2025)

The Town and Parish Council and its Clerk have an important role to play, especially in giving advice to prospective candidates prior to the four-yearly ordinary elections and in the preliminary arrangements for the filling of casual vacancies, including by-elections.

Notices (in red below) will be issued by email to local Town and Parish Council Clerks for display at various key dates during the election timetable. This information will also be displayed on Shropshire Council's website – www.shropshire.gov.uk
(Webpage link to be inserted)

1 Feb	Register of Electors republished	The deadline is 11 April for registering to vote on 1 May 2025. To register to vote, follow the link 
10 March	Notice of Election Published and displayed <i>Published by the Elections Office, displayed by Shropshire Council and by Town/Parish Councils</i>	The Notice also provides eligible people within that area with the key dates to apply to register or apply for postal or proxy voting, should a poll take place. It also provides where nomination papers for candidates can be obtained, where to send them back to and the deadline.
10 March	Councils enter Pre-election Period (PEP)	
11 March	Nominations open <i>Nomination papers will be available from the Elections Office, Packs may also be sent to Clerks, so they can be handed to members who wished to stand again for election.</i>	Candidates' Nomination Papers <u>must be delivered</u> , NOT posted or emailed. (The Notice of Election will provide details of when and where.)
4pm Wednesday 2 April	Nominations close <i>(Formal notice of validity sent to candidates by the Elections Team)</i>	Close of Nominations is stated on the notice of election and on nomination papers.
Not later than 4pm on Thursday 3 April	Statement of Persons Nominated <i>Displayed on SC website and Issued to Clerks for display on PC websites</i>	This shows which candidates have submitted valid nomination papers to stand at the election.
As soon as practicable after 4pm on Wednesday	Notice of Uncontested Election <i>Published by the Elections Office, displayed by Shropshire Council and</i>	In the event that there are fewer than or an equal number of candidates as there are seats available, this notice informs electors of those candidates

2 April	<i>issued to Clerks for display by Town/Parish Councils</i>	remaining validly nominated, who are then elected unopposed.
Not later than Wednesday 23 April	Notice of Poll <i>Published by the Elections Office, displayed by Shropshire Council and issued to Clerks for display by Town/Parish Councils</i>	Should there be more candidates than seats available, this notice informs local electors of the date and time of the poll, and which polling station they should attend on polling day.
1 May	Election Day	
	Applications to vote by Proxy: Postal Proxy deadline - 5pm Monday 14 April Proxy deadline - 5pm Wednesday 23 April Emergency Proxy deadline - 5pm Thursday 1 May	
Results expected on Saturday 3 May	Declaration of Results Displayed on Shropshire Council Website	For all contested elections, this notice records the results of votes cast in the poll, including any rejected votes and the reason for their rejection.
6 May	Existing Councillors retire from office Newly elected Councillors take office (and those from uncontested elections) First date Council can hold its Annual Meeting	
22 May	Last date Council can hold its Annual Meeting (within 14 days of new councillors taking office, excluding Sundays and bank holidays)	

For further information – please see [Local elections 2025 | Shropshire Council](#)

Contested vs Uncontested Elections

Uncontested

If the number of validly nominated candidates does not exceed the number of councillors to be elected, those candidates are declared to be 'elected unopposed', and are automatically elected as Councillors. Uncontested elections regularly occur in local Council elections. When this happens, Councillors are elected without any votes being cast. Uncontested elections are not reflective of a healthy democracy. So how do you solve an uncontested election? The first challenge is to make your residents aware of the upcoming election and the role the Council plays in their everyday lives.



If there are not enough candidates to fill all the vacancies, the Representation of the People Act 1985, Section 21 allows the elected members, provided there is a quorum (i.e. – one third of the whole number of members with a minimum of three) to co-opt members to fill the remaining vacancies.

If the town/parish council fails to exercise the power to co-opt within seven weeks (35 days) or if there is no quorum, Shropshire Council may order a fresh election to properly constitute the town/parish council.

Contested

Having a contested election allows your Parish/Town to seek a diverse and dynamic Council that represents the wishes of residents as closely as possible. Even better, contested elections engage the public more. People are much less likely to vote when they feel an election is already decided. Greater engagement encourages greater transparency and is one way Councils can maintain residents' trust. Remember, it is vital to have competitive, contested elections in order to get your community engaged enough to vote. A vibrant community engagement strategy in the months leading up to the elections will allow your residents to get a good understanding of what Councils do.



Standing for Election

What Candidates should do

Check for Elections: You may be aware from the media or advertising that there are local elections upcoming you can also check with your local council's Clerk, your elections officer or visit the Electoral Commission's website.

Eligibility: You can be a Councillor for several Councils at the same time: County, District and Parish/Town Council. You can be a Councillor if you have a full-time job; by law your employer must allow you to take a reasonable amount of time off during working hours to perform your duties as a Councillor. You do not need to belong to a political party to stand for election and can stand as a candidate to become a Parish/Town Councillor if:

You are over 18 or over on the day you submit your nomination paper and are a British, Commonwealth or European Union Citizen and at least one of the following:

- a registered local government elector in the electoral area you are wanting to stand as a candidate
- have resided in the area for the whole 12 months preceding the day of nominations, or
- work in the electoral area in which you want to stand and have for at least the past 12 months
- own property in the electoral area you are wanting to stand and have for at least the past 12 months
- for all of the previous 12 months you have lived in the Parish/Town or within 3 miles of the boundary

Disqualified: A person is disqualified from being elected or being a Councillor if:

- You work for the Council
- You are subject to bankruptcy restrictions or interim orders
- Within five years of the election date you have been convicted of any offence and sentenced to a term imprisonment of at least three months (suspended or not) without the option of a fine

- You have been found guilty of corrupt or illegal practices, or are responsible for incurring unlawful expenditure

Submit Nominations: To stand as a candidate, you will need to complete a set of nomination papers for the electoral area you are wanting to represent. Your nomination papers will need to show that you have been formally nominated by a particular number of registered electors in the electoral area you are wishing to stand. These are a proposer and seconder who support your nomination in the Parish/Town or Ward (if warded) you are wanting to represent. Nomination papers must be hand delivered to the Elections Office and will be checked upon delivery to ensure they are correctly completed. Please check on your local authority website whether an appointment is necessary.

Nomination forms are available from all Parish and Town Council offices, and the Elections Office (Shropshire Council).

Nominations Accepted (or not): The Elections Office will notify candidates in writing via the post; this is the formal notice of validity.

Nominations made Public: The Statement of Persons Nominated is published on the Shropshire Council website following the Close of Nominations.

If there are more candidates than seats, an election will be held. If not, all candidates take office 4 days after the election which is usually a Monday. Existing Councillors go out of office on the same day and newly elected Councillors take office on this day. New Councillors must sign the acceptance of office before they can officiate. This is normally done before the start of the Annual Council Meeting and must be witnessed by the Clerk.

Start Campaigning: We strongly recommend that all candidates should read and understand the rules on spending and attending events. They must *ensure they understand* the do's and don'ts of campaigning, using the electoral register and how to publicise their candidacy without committing any offences. Please see the Guidance set out on the Electoral Commission's website which can be accessed here [Guidance for Candidates and Agents at UK Parliamentary general elections in Great Britain | Electoral Commission](#)

and includes information on:

- Campaign Do's and Don'ts
- When you can start campaigning
- When you officially become a candidate
- Use of the electoral register
- Publicity Do's and Don'ts
- List of Offences
- Electoral Fraud

Ideas to consider when you start your campaign may include:

- Research: Attend Council meetings, understand the community concerns, their priorities and vision for the future.
- Design Campaign material such as flyers for distribution
- Will you have a slogan or campaign message?
- Build your team of helpers to help in delivering flyers or door to door canvassing
- Use your own social media and don't be afraid to talk to the media

After the Elections

Annual Meeting

A Town/Parish Council must hold an annual meeting each year on any day in May they choose. Following an Election, the annual meeting must be held on, or within fourteen days after, the day the new Councillors take office (i.e. the fourth day after the day of the election, which is usually a Monday).

Acceptance of Office

If you are elected and do not make a declaration of acceptance of office at or before the first meeting of the Council after the election (or a later meeting if that is permitted by the parish council) your seat will become vacant and a further notice of casual vacancy will need to be published. Your Council Clerk will have ready the form to sign.

Register of Interests

Within 28 days of becoming a Councillor you must notify the Monitoring Officer of any disclosable pecuniary interests and non-pecuniary interests. If re-elected, or re-appointed, the councillor must notify the

Monitoring Officer of any interests not already included in their register. Your Council Clerk will have ready the Register of Interest forms to complete.

The Monitoring Officer of Shropshire Council must establish and maintain a register of interests of the members of the Councils in its area. Such interests include any pecuniary interests and non-pecuniary interests included in the Code of Conduct adopted by a Council. The Monitoring Officer must ensure that the register of interests is available for inspection at all reasonable hours at a place in the principal authority's area and must publish the register of interests on its website. A parish Council with a website must publish the register of interests of its members or links on the Principal Authority website to the Register.

Election Expenses

A reminder: Some candidates believe that they can claim their campaign expenses back from Shropshire Council, but this is NOT the case.

At the end of the election period, even if no poll has taken place, each Candidate (whether successful or not) must submit a Statement of Election Expenses/Declaration to show the expenses (if any) incurred as part of their election campaign. These documents are required by law to be available for public inspection and failure to return one (even if it is a 'Nil Return') is an electoral offence.

Within nomination packs, there is a comprehensive guide detailing how Candidates should complete the election returns. Staff in the Elections Office are purely the recipient for the elections returns – they are not permitted to advise on how to complete forms or to check their accuracy.

Councillor Induction & County Association: Councillor Induction material is available on SALC's website for clerks to access. There is an 'Introduction to your Council' for the use of Clerks to smaller councils, and an 'Induction Guide for Councillors' that Clerks to larger Councils may find useful.

County Associations are representative bodies for local councils in their area. They play a key role in the work the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) feeding information from their member councils to NALC to be discussed or lobbied at a national level. NALC is the only representative body for town and parish councils. The County

Association is the first point of call for Parish and Town Councils. NALC supports the County Association to provide the best and most up-to-date guidance. County Associations provide many services to their member councils including

Advice
Training
HR Services
Locum and Internal Audit
Networking
Public Works Loan Application
Regular Briefings and news
Templates and Toolkits
Assistance with Recruitment

Contact SALC at:
alc@shropshire.gov.uk
Tel: 01743 252340

At the start of a new term of office

The retiring Chairman's last responsibility is to preside at the first meeting of the new council (annual meeting of the council) until the successor is elected. The retiring chairman must note members who are present, or absent, receive nominations and count votes in the election of a new Chairman. If the Chairman cannot be present the Vice-Chairman will preside. In the event that they are both absent a Councillor, chosen by the Councillors present, presides. The Vice Chairman holds office until immediately after the election of the Chairman of the new council.

If the retiring Chairman has been re-elected as a Councillor and is present at the meeting, they shall preside until a new chairman has been elected. They have an original vote but are not under a duty to cast it. The retiring Chairman must give a casting vote in the event of an equality of votes. The original and/or casting vote may be used to vote for himself/herself.

If the retiring Chairman has not been re-elected as a Councillor and is present at the meeting, he shall preside until a new Chairman has been elected. However, they do not have an original vote. In the event of a tied vote, the retiring Chairman must give a casting vote

By-Elections and Casual Vacancies

A by-election is an election that takes place during a term of office. It can take place for a number of reasons and may include if a Councillor:

- resigns
- dies
- fails to attend meetings for six consecutive months and whose absence has not been approved
- Ceases to be qualified/is disqualified

There is no requirement to hold a by-election if:

- the vacancy occurs within six months of the Council retiring for its ordinary elections; the council must still publish that a casual vacancy has arisen and may co-opt if they want to
- fewer candidates are nominated than seats available

A further by-election must be called by the principal council to fill the remaining vacancies.

If the Council has a casual vacancy to fill, the Clerk must:

1. Notify the Elections Team of the resignation/cessation of office
2. Post the public notice produced by the Elections Team
3. Monitor dates

If, within 14 days of notifying the public of a vacancy (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays), at least ten electors request an election to fill the vacancy via written notice to the principal authority, and there are more nominations than seats, a by-election occurs.

Co-option

If no by-election is called, the Council must, as soon as possible after the 14 days of public notice, fill the vacancy by co-option. If the vacancy falls within six months of the Council retiring for an ordinary election, the Council may but does not have to fill the vacancy. Provided the Council is quorate (three or one third of the total number of Councillors, whichever is greater) the Council may co-opt any person/s to fill vacancies, providing the person meets the qualification criteria. Councils may not reject a candidate unless they are legally

disqualified from being a Councillor. A person is eligible to be co-opted if he/she meets the Councillor qualification criteria.

It is not necessary for candidates wishing to be co-opted to submit nomination form or declarations that they meet the qualification criteria. However, candidates must certify in writing that they meet the criteria and are not disqualified. A Council may need to evidence this if eligibility is challenged.

A Council may indicate that people with particular skills are welcome to apply, however, this should not form part of the official notice and it must be clear that those without the skills are also welcome to apply. If there are more applications than there are vacancies, those skills could be taken into account when the Council fairly considers who to co-opt.

Where the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of vacancies the person must be appointed to the Council, provided they meet the eligibility criteria.

The New Council

WELCOME all new councillors and as a priority get them to sign the Acceptance of Office form as they cannot act as a Councillor until they have done so. (See Induction)

BUILD a team and consider:

- Arranging a day for Council and officers to get to know each other before the annual meeting of the Council
- Discussing feedback as candidates, they received to pinpoint any issues that concern residents
- Arranging a Parish Tour

BOOK training – see www.alc@shropshire.co.uk/training to find our training calendar that SALC provides for all councillors, new and re-elected.

RESOURCES

NALC has designed several resources to help promote becoming a councillor and local council elections, which includes an editable

promotional poster and information flyer, press release, email text, social media posts and visual assets. These are downloadable here [Make A Change communications pack](#)

SALC has produced two template documents available for Clerks when

- **'Introduction to your Council'** which is available for Clerks' use to help with providing information to new councillors of smaller parish councils
- **'Induction Guide for Councillors'** which may be useful for Clerks to the larger councils.

(Both templates are available for download [Elections | SALC](#) .)

SALC is also producing **several short videos** which will be downloadable when ready: *(We will inform you when this is.)*

And finally We hope you have found this guide useful. If there is a topic that you think we have missed out, please let us know. The Guide may be updated as further information is available and we will let you know via our weekly briefings if so.