



## Frequently Asked Questions - Elections

### Are there local council elections taking place in May 2021?

Yes. Elections are scheduled for all parish, town, and city councils in the Wiltshire area and for several parish and town councils in the Swindon area.

Wiltshire Council unitary elections (for all seats), election of one councillor to each of the wards of Swindon Borough Council (except Chiseldon and Lawn), the Police and Crime Commissioner election (postponed from 2020) and a number of local neighbourhood planning referendums will also be taking place. The polls will all take place on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and polling stations will be open between 7am and 10 pm.

These FAQs refer to the parish, town, and city (local) council elections in both Swindon and Wiltshire areas.

### Where elections are scheduled, will all existing councillors stand down?

Yes. All existing councillors cease to be councillors and will have to be nominated for election if they wish to stand again for the next term (2021-2025)

### Are there specific dates I should know about?

Yes, a timetable of relevant and specific dates can be found at <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/media/4911> It includes, but is not limited to the following:

- 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (no later than) – Publication of Notice of Election
- 8<sup>th</sup> April 2021 – Candidates have from the date stated on the notice of election up to 4 pm on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> April to submit nomination papers
- 8<sup>th</sup> April 2021 – Deadline for withdrawal of nomination (4pm)
- 9<sup>th</sup> April 2021 – Publication of Statement of Persons nominated
- 27<sup>th</sup> April 2021 – Publication of Notice of Poll
- 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 – Day of Poll

### Are there some relevant dates for local councils after 6<sup>th</sup> May?

Yes. The previous council stands down on 10<sup>th</sup> May (4 days after polling day) and the new council takes office on the same day.

Within 14 days of the new council taking office, the annual meeting of the council must be held. The first business of this meeting is the appointment of Chairman.

By 7<sup>th</sup> June. All new councillors must have completed their registration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

Other dates are included in the timetable at the above link.

### **Can anyone be elected to a local council?**

To be able to stand for election (or co-option) to a local council, an individual must meet certain qualifications (by law). They must be:

- Over 18 and a UK, Commonwealth, ROI, or EU Citizen and
- An elector for the parish, or
- For the last 12 months, have occupied land or premises in the parish, or
- Work in the parish (principal or only place of work), or
- Live within 3 miles of the parish boundary

Someone cannot stand for election, if at the time of their nomination and on polling day:

- They are employed by the parish/community council or hold a paid office under the parish/community council (including joint boards or committees).
- They are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order.
- They have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (including a suspended sentence), without the option of a fine, during the five years before polling day.
- They have been disqualified under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (which covers corrupt or illegal electoral practices and offences relating to donations). a person has been reported guilty by an election court or convicted and lasts for five years.

### **How are candidates nominated?**

There is guidance for candidates and nomination forms at <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/local-elections-england>

Candidates should also be advised to check the relevant principal authority website:

[https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20073/elections\\_and\\_voting/937/forthcoming\\_elections](https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20073/elections_and_voting/937/forthcoming_elections)

[www.wiltshire.gov.uk/Elections-2021](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/Elections-2021)

Candidates need to have two subscribers (a proposer and a seconder) and will need to advise them that they will require their Electoral Register number and how it will be used (for GDPR purposes). This information will be in the nomination form and candidate pack.

Nomination papers have to be delivered in person. Wiltshire Council is encouraging appointments to do this and has created a booking system – see <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/elections-town-parish> for details.

### **Will a poll take place for the local council election?**

It depends. If, by 8<sup>th</sup> April only the same number, or fewer candidates than there are seats on the council have been nominated, they will be elected unopposed. If there are more candidates than there are seats on the council – it will go to the poll on 6<sup>th</sup> May.

### **How is the current Coronavirus situation affecting the elections?**

Government has produced a polls' delivery plan which can be read at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/may-2021-polls-delivery-plan](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/may-2021-polls-delivery-plan) and each principal authority is putting plans in place for the safety of polling stations and the count.

With the current situation in mind, councils may wish to encourage their electorate to vote by post. Residents can be directed to:

[Swindon Borough Council – voting by post](#) and [Wiltshire Council – voting by post](#)

Wiltshire Council also has a video about this on its YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7nLOIG23ic>

On 26<sup>th</sup> February, the Government issued guidance on how political parties, candidates, agents and campaigners can undertake COVID-secure campaigning activity for the May 2021 polls. Visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-governments-approach-to-elections-and-referendums-during-covid-19> to read the guidance.

### **How do we hold our Annual Meeting of the Council?**

There is a sunset clause in The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 meaning that the regulations shall cease to have effect after 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021. This means that, at the time of writing, unless there is an extension to these regulations to allow remote meetings to continue, meetings will need to be held in person. WALC will provide any update to this, should it be received.

### **What is the role for local council clerks, chief executives, and officers?**

You will be sent information by the principal authority which will need to be displayed (noticeboards and websites). This includes the publication of notice of

election, publication of statement of persons nominated and publication of notice of poll (see timetable for more information).

Following the election, it will be necessary to furnish new members with any relevant information such as a copy of The Good Councillor's Guide and any other useful publications – see [www.nalc.gov.uk/publications](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/publications) as well as the council's code of conduct, standing orders, timetable of meetings, details of any committees they may wish to join, etc.

The Good Councillor's Guide is also available in hard copy from the WALC office. Access to the building is currently limited, but possible so any orders will be collated and sent at intervals. The books are priced at £3.49 each plus P&P for member councils and £4.99 each plus P&P for non-member councils.

You may also be a point of contact for those interested in standing for election and wanting to find out more about the council.

There will also be the organisation of the relevant Council meetings.

### **How do we encourage people to stand for election?**

Getting information about the council, its activities and work out there as well as what it means to be a councillor and how to stand. Making use of noticeboard, website, and social media platforms.

There is information about the NALC campaign (which includes resources) at [www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/local-elections](http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/local-elections)

Councils do have to be careful about their publicity during the pre-election period (which begins from the notice of election), taking care not to give publicity to any political parties or individual councillors in a way that could be seen as trying to influence the outcome of the election. It is business as usual as far as meetings and decision-making are concerned. There is more information at <https://www.local.gov.uk/short-guide-publicity-during-pre-election-period>

### **Will training be available for new councillors?**

Yes, WALC will be providing a programme of remote training sessions for new councillors; information will be sent out about this a bit closer to the election. We can also provide sessions for whole councils or clusters of councils (up to around 20 people). At present, it is intended that these sessions will be provided remotely but there may be opportunities for face-to-face training later in the year.

### **Where can I find more information?**

For local councils in Wiltshire, Wiltshire Council delivered an Elections' webinar on 24<sup>th</sup> February. If you missed it live, it is available to watch on [Wiltshire Council's YouTube channel](#).