



## ELECTIONS - Some simple pointers from ALCA

**FIRST TIME CANDIDATES** - Are you eligible to stand for election as a Local Councillor?

To qualify you must be able to answer 'Yes' to both of the questions below

Are you a British citizen, a Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of a European Union country?	
Are you 18 or over?	

To qualify you must be able to answer 'Yes' to at least one of the questions below

Are you on the electoral register for parish you wish to stand for?	
Have you lived either in the parish, or within three miles of its boundary, for at least a year?	
Have you been the owner or tenant of land in the parish for at least a year?	
Have you had your only or main place of work in the parish for at least a year?	

You must also be able to answer "No" to all of the questions below to be eligible to serve as a councillor

Are you the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order?	
Have you within the last five years been convicted of an offence in the UK, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man which resulted in a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of three months or more without the option of a fine?	
Are you disqualified by order of a court from being a member of a local authority?	
You have been convicted for the failure to register or declare disclosable interest under the Localism Act 2011 (England)	
Are you, or have you been in the last twelve months, in paid employment of this Local Council?	

## **IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE AND WISH TO STAND FOR ELECTION YOU MUST:**

- Take responsibility for your own nomination papers - they must be delivered to the relevant Unitary Authority, you cannot post them. Do not ask the Clerk of the council to do it for you!
- Nomination packs - South Gloucestershire [HERE](#). B&NES [HERE](#) North Somerset [HERE](#)
- Campaign responsibly and if spending money, stick within the limits. Your spending limit is £740, plus 6p per local government elector in the parish, community or town council area which you are standing. You must make the return (with supporting invoices) before the deadline. The return and declaration form is [HERE](#)
- Avoid engaging in corrupt or illegal practices – bribery, impersonation, treating, false declaration of expenses, making illegal payments, making false statements about a candidate
- If publishing any election material (poster, advert, leaflet etc.) it must include the name and address of the printer, promoter and publisher
- Don't leave things to the last minute, especially if you want to take advantage of an Officer of the UA checking your nomination papers before submission.

## **KEY DATES**

- Publication of Notice of Election: 18th March in Bath & North East Somerset, 19th March in North Somerset and 22nd March in South Gloucestershire
- Delivery of nomination papers: by 4pm on 3rd April
- Deadline for withdrawal of nominations: by 4pm on 3rd April
- Publication of statement of persons nominated: by 4pm on 4th April
- Publication of Notice of Poll: not later than 24th April
- Polling Day: 2nd May
- The count: will vary from UA to UA
- New councillors take office: from Tuesday 7th May (the 6th is a Bank Holiday)
- Deadline for return of election expenses: 30th May

## **PURDAH**

Purdah is governed by The Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity and will run from the when the Notice of Election is posted in each UA until the close of polling on 2nd May

Publicity covers a broad range of activities and will cover not only newsletters, press releases, posters and leaflets issued by the council but also websites, public meetings, local consultation exercises, press advertising and any spoken words broadcast to the public through radio, television or the internet. If in doubt play it safe

Purdah does not mean that all council activity must ground to a halt

### **PURDAH: THINGS TO AVOID**

- Proactive publicity of candidates and other politicians involved directly in the elections
- Publicity that deals with controversial issues that could specifically be linked to a relevant election
- Publicity that reports views, proposals or recommendations in such a way that it identifies them with individual members or groups of members directly involved in the elections
- Quotes from and photographs of members directly involved in the election in press releases, publications and other published material
- Refrain from organising photo opportunities or events which could be seen as giving candidates, members or other political office holders directly involved in the election a platform for political comment

### **ELECTIONS - THINGS FOR COUNCILS TO DO**

- Budget for an election and don't resent the concept of having one – you cannot put a price on democracy
- Promote the election in your area and encourage participation before nominations open
- Day to day business can continue (including responding to planning applications) but it is best to park controversial matters unless they are unavoidable
- Remember that if your election is uncontested, the current members remain in office until the 7th May
- Observe the Purdah rules. Parish Assemblies (the public meeting that must be held between the 1<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> of June) are fine during the purdah period, but all talk and presentations must be in terms of accomplishments of the council as a corporate body, NOT individual councillors (including the UA Members)

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## **ELECTIONS -THINGS FOR CLERKS TO DO**

- Put up the notices when asked to do so by the Unitary Authority
- Have nomination papers available to distribute to candidates – you are **not** there to help fill out the forms or return them but you may need to supply electoral roll numbers
- Know where to go to for forms and guidance and signpost accordingly (see below)
- Normal day to day council business continues
- Get prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Council post polling day (once the new councillors can assume office) – don't forget that all members must sign a declaration of acceptance of office before they can act as a councillor and that the first order of business is to elect a chairman, who must sign a separate Declaration of Acceptance of that role.
- Put together Councillor Handbooks with Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, all key policies etc., (in hard copy or electronically) to give out at the May meeting

If your council did not have sufficient candidates there will also be co-options to consider

## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

UA website and electoral services team – there may be some clerks' briefings as well  
ALCA/NALC dedicated website areas (open to public)

Come to ALCA with any specific queries (the earlier the better)

Some post-election Councillor training sessions are now advertised on the ALCA website and we are also happy to do a training session at your venue for all your councillors (£200) but book early as demand is likely to be high