This document applies to parish and community council elections only. It does not apply to district, borough, county, county borough and unitary authority elections, or mayoral elections. Our guidance and resources for all local elections in England and Wales can be accessed from our website at: www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-those-we-regulate/candidates-and-agents.
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Essential information

This section of the document contains our guidance on what happens after the results at a parish council election in England and community council election in Wales have been announced. Supplementary information, which may only be relevant to some candidates, is provided at the back of this document. You can also view this supplementary guidance by clicking on the links within this document or by clicking on the chapter heading on the contents page.

In this document, we use ‘you’ to refer to the candidate. We use ‘must’ to refer to a specific legal requirement and ‘should’ for recommended practice.

Deadlines mentioned in this document are generic. We have published a [generic election timetable on our website](#). Once an election has been called, you will be able to obtain a copy of the specific timetable for that election from the Returning Officer.

Declaration of acceptance of office

1.1 If elected, your appointment as councillor will become effective on the fourth day after the election. You must sign the declaration of acceptance of office. By signing the declaration, you agree to follow the parish/community council’s Code of conduct.

1.2 The declaration must be made in the presence of a member of the parish/community council or of the proper officer of the parish/community council. The declaration must be made and delivered to the council before or at the first
meeting of the parish or community council after your election (unless the council at that meeting permits you to do so before or at a later meeting fixed by the council). If you fail to submit your declaration by this deadline, the seat will be declared vacant and a by-election will be held.

Election petitions

1.3 The outcome of a parish/community council election can be challenged through an election petition. For further details on challenging an election, see paragraph 1.6.

What happens to the election paperwork after the result is announced?

1.4 All election documents are retained by the Electoral Registration Officer and most are available for public inspection. Please note that ballot papers are not open to public inspection. If you wish to inspect election documents, see paragraph 1.12 for further information.

Submitting your election spending returns

1.5 You are responsible for managing your election spending. You must complete a spending return and declaration and submit them to the Returning Officer within 28 calendar days after the day of the election. For further guidance see Part 3 – Spending forms and notices.
Supplementary information

Lodging an election petition

1.6 Only certain people can lodge an election petition, and only under specific circumstances.

1.7 An election petition can be presented by:

- someone claiming to have been a candidate at the election, or
- at least four electors who had a right to vote at the election (note that they need not have voted)

1.8 The allowable grounds for a petition are that:

- the successful candidate was disqualified at the time of the election
- the successful candidate was not duly elected
- the election was invalidated by corrupt or illegal practices
- the election was invalidated because of general corruption or the employment of a corrupt canvasser/agent

1.9 Normally, a petition must be presented within 21 calendar days after the date of the election. However, if the petition complains of corrupt or illegal practices involving the payment of money or other reward, or an illegal practice relating to election spending, further time may be allowed.

1.10 For any questions relating to election petitions, including to confirm the deadlines for lodging an election petition, you should contact the Election Petitions Office:
There are costs attached to an election petition. If you are considering lodging an election petition, we strongly recommend that you take independent legal advice.

Inspection and supply of election-related documents

Election documents available for supply and inspection can be provided by your Electoral Registration Officer, except for the election spending returns, which are kept by the Returning Officer. Contact details for Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers can be found on the Commission’s About My Vote website www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

Inspection and supply of the marked registers and absent voters’ lists

The marked electoral registers and absent voters’ lists show who has been issued with a ballot paper, who has returned their postal ballot paper, and who has had a proxy vote cast on their behalf.

You can inspect or obtain copies of the marked register of electors and absent voters’ lists after the election if you make a request in writing to the Electoral Registration Officer. Note that you can only use the information obtained from these documents for research or electoral purposes.

The request for inspection must specify:

- which documents are requested
the purposes for which the information in any document will be used
where the request is to inspect the marked register or lists, any reason why inspecting the full register or unmarked lists would not be sufficient to achieve that purpose
who will inspect the documents
the date on which they wish to inspect the documents, and
whether they would prefer to inspect the documents in a printed or data form

1.16 Inspection is under supervision and will be free of charge. You won’t be able to take copies, but may make handwritten notes.

1.17 The request for supply must specify:

- which of the marked register or lists (or the relevant part of the register or lists) are requested
- whether a printed copy of the records or lists is requested or a copy in data form
- the purposes for which the marked register or lists will be used and why the supply or purchase of a copy of the full register or unmarked lists would not be sufficient to achieve that purpose

1.18 The requested document will be supplied for a fee of £10 plus £2 for printed and £1 for data versions per 1,000 entries.

1.19 Note that after 12 months these documents will be destroyed, unless a court order directs otherwise.

Inspection of other election documents

1.20 You can inspect other election documents, but you will not be allowed to make any notes or take copies of these documents. The only documents that cannot be inspected are:

- the ballot papers
- the corresponding number lists
the certificates allowing polling station staff to vote at the polling station they are working at

1.21 After 12 months all of the election documents will be destroyed, unless a court order directs otherwise.

**Election spending returns**

1.22 Spending returns can be inspected by any person after they have been submitted. Copies can also be made for a fee of 20p per side.

1.23 Spending returns are kept for one year and you can request to have them returned to you at the end of this period. If you do not want them back, they will be destroyed.