

Scheduled Elections 2023

Now is the time to plan for your scheduled election.

Who arranges the elections?

Principal authorities are responsible for the management of all elections within Leicestershire and Rutland:

- Blaby DC
- Charnwood BC
- Harborough DC
- Hinckley and Bosworth BC
- Melton BC
- North West Leicestershire DC
- Rutland County Council

This includes elections for parish and town councils, elections within their own authorities, Leicestershire County Council, general elections, referendums, parish polls and anything else with an organised vote.

All references to parish councils, councillors and clerks throughout this document should be taken to include town councils, councillors and clerks.

More information – *Legal Topic Note 8*

[Electoral Commission](#)

How do elections work in towns and parishes in our area?

Towns and parishes in Leicestershire and Rutland operate 'all-out' elections every four years, with elections due in 2023, 2027, 2031 and so on. All parish councillors will retire from office in May 2023 and must decide before then whether to stand for election again. This applies regardless of whether they were elected at a scheduled election, elected at a by-election or co-opted. Parish elections will be held at the same time as district and borough elections in Leicestershire and county elections in Rutland. Our only local authority operating with a different schedule is Leicestershire County Council.

Changes for 2023

The Elections Act 2022 will require voters to show photographic identification at polling stations. Watch out for guidance on this from your principal authority.

Candidate briefings

Look out for briefings arranged by principal authorities and LRALC for prospective candidates and agents.

Standing for election?

Nomination papers for retiring councillors seeking re-election and new candidates will be available from your principal authority. In some cases, a limited number of election packs will be sent to parish clerks to hand out to potential candidates. Completed nomination papers need to be returned by the candidate in person to the principal authority offices for checking, not to the parish clerk. Some principal authorities will only accept nomination papers during normal office hours. A few may extend opening hours on publicised days. Potential candidates should check with the principal authority whether they need to make an appointment.

Is a candidate qualified to stand for election?

Qualifications for election include residence, occupation of property and place of work. If a candidate has more than one qualification, they should identify them all on the nomination form. Qualifications and disqualifications for office can be found in Local Government Act 1972, sections [79](#) and [80](#).

Timetable for the 2023 elections.		Additional notes
Nominations for candidates will open	Likely to be 20 th or 22 nd March.	<i>Check with your principal authority</i>
Pre-election period (or period of heightened sensitivity) starts	Probably the date the nominations will open. Latest date that this will start is likely to be 27 th March. Lasts right up to the election.	<i>Previously known as purdah¹ but this term is not used any more. Council activity and publicity should be restricted during this period. Normal council business is allowed.</i> <i>See LGA guidance.</i>
Deadline for receipt of nominations	4 th April, 4pm	<i>Statutory deadline: 4pm on the 19th working day before the election.</i>
Withdrawal of nomination		
Election	4 th May	
Count	Can be as early as overnight immediately after the election. More likely to take place on Friday 5 th or possibly the following week.	<i>Coronation is planned for Saturday 6th May. Guidance will be issued if this affects the election or the count.</i>
New council takes office	Tuesday 9 th May	<i>Additional bank holiday has been announced for Monday 8th May</i>
Annual Meeting of Parish Council	Wednesday 10 th - 25 th May inclusive	<i>Note from NALC Legal update 061222:</i> <i>Our view is that councillors will now take office on Tuesday 9 May making the relevant 14-day meeting period for the purposes of paragraph 7 (2) of Schedule 12 to the Local Government Act 1972 Wednesday 10-Thursday 25 May inclusive. This an area where we are aware there have been different interpretations of the computation of days and we have not counted Sundays in our 14 day calculation.</i>

How will we know if there will be an election in our parish?

By 4th April, your principal authority will know if an election will be held in your parish, depending on how many candidates have been nominated. They'll let your parish council know soon after that. Elections for principal

¹ The term 'purdah' is no longer used as potentially offensive to people of South Asian origin.

authority seats will be held at polling stations in your parish on the 4th May if sufficient nominations are received, regardless of whether parish council elections are contested or uncontested.

Uncontested election	Contested election
Number of candidates for parish council is equal to or fewer than the number of seats available.	Number of candidates for parish council is greater than the number of seats available.
Election for parish council will not be held in polling stations across your parish on 4 th May.	Election for parish councillors will be held in polling stations across your parish on 4 th May.
All candidates are elected and will take their seats on council on or after 9 th May.	Successful candidates are elected and will take their seats on council on or after 9 th May.
Council will have ordinary vacancies which may be filled by co-option .	Council will be full at the point of the election.

If your parish council has wards, each ward will be treated separately. You may find that you have elections in some wards but not others.

If sufficient nominations are accepted, a parish council election will be called and candidates may start to campaign. They may produce digital resources or leaflets and posters to put through letterboxes or onto noticeboards. Legislation is strict about what must be included. Printed material must include an imprint with the name and address of the printer, the promoter and the person for whom the material is produced. [More guidance](#) on all forms of campaigning is available from the [Electoral Commission](#).

All candidates, whether elected or unsuccessful, must keep a record of all their election spending and submit it to the Returning Officer at the principal authority after the election. Even if no expenditure has been made, this still needs to be declared. The current limit for spending is £806 plus 7p per local government elector. This changes if candidates campaign together. More guidance [here](#).

Benefits of filling your seats at election

The obvious benefit is that residents have the chance to get involved in the democratic process, so councillors know they have a mandate to represent them. Alongside this, there are two benefits open to councils with councillors who take their seat through a scheduled election or by-election.

General Power of Competence	Local Council Award Scheme
Your council can affirm this if two thirds of your councillors are elected and your clerk holds CiLCA or a Level 5 Community Governance degree.	Your council can apply for Quality or Quality Gold status if two thirds of your councillors are elected.
This allows a council a much wider range of possibilities in the services they can offer.	This is a peer-reviewed accreditation that demonstrates to your community that you are reaching and exceeding the standards expected of a parish council.

What happens if ...

... we have enough candidates to be quorate but council isn't full?

Council can meet as long as enough candidates are nominated to allow a quorum. This is three members or one third of the total number of seats, whichever is the greater. Council may then co-opt any qualified person to fill a vacancy within 35 working days. If vacancies are not filled within 35 days, the principal authority may require a further election, may take other appropriate action to fill the vacancies or may allow the council to co-opt in due course. Check with your own principal authority.

Vacancies following a scheduled four-yearly election are called *ordinary vacancies*. These are treated differently to casual vacancies which occur through death, resignation, non-attendance or other disqualification. Electors are not given the opportunity to request a by-election for ordinary vacancies. A quorate council with ordinary vacancies can start to fill the spare seats straight away through co-option. When a council is quorate following an ordinary election, it may co-opt within 35 working days of the election. This should be advertised across the parish to make residents aware and encourage them to apply. Hopefully, some or all of these vacancies can be filled at the next meeting of the council. Advice on good practice for co-option is given [below](#).

If the parish council does not fill ordinary vacancies through co-option within 35 working days, the principal authority may

- call another election
- appoint councillors to fill the vacant seats.

It is preferable that the parish council uses the power of co-option and encourages local people to join the council rather than rely on the principal authority to enforce appointments. If another election is called, this is likely to be paid for by the parish council.

... we don't have enough candidates for council to be quorate?

A local council won't be properly constituted if it doesn't have enough members to meet.

In this situation, the principal authority may do anything which appears to be necessary to allow a parish council to carry out its functions and carry out normal business. This may include

- calling another election
- appointing one or more ward councillors to the local council
- supporting the co-option process

If a further election is called, there will be a period during which council will continue to exist but does not have councillors. The chairman will remain in office until a successor is elected, but they have no power to take decisions on behalf of the council.

Council should be made aware after 4th April if insufficient nominations have been received for council to be quorate. If this is the case, council needs a scheduled or extraordinary meeting in April. It should have an agenda item which allows delegated authority to be given to the clerk to deal with urgent items, liaise with the principal authority relating to filling the seats and anything else that is appropriate.

It would also be sensible for the council to complete the statement of accounts and AGAR at this meeting before the term of office for the current council ends.

... we were quorate, but mid-term resignations mean that we are no longer quorate?

Speak to the electoral officer at the principal authority as soon as possible.

Who pays for the election?

The simple answer is your council. How much? That answer is less simple. All we can say here is that it depends. You will be sent an invoice some time afterwards by your principal authority depending on how much work their officers have had to do.

Depends on what?

Let's start with an uncontested election. There will be administration costs associated with notification of the election. Staff at your principal authority will have to prepare documents advising residents that a poll will be held and asking for nominations. Nomination packs will be put together - these are surprisingly large sets of documents with a great deal of printing. Officers will then have to check the nomination papers of all those putting themselves forward for election. On 4th April, officers will notify the council and residents that insufficient nominations were received and that all candidates were elected unopposed. All of these officer tasks will have a charge attached.

For a contested election, it is more complicated. All administration tasks will be completed as above until 4th April. After that, the paperwork will relate to an election being held. This is where the workload and costs increase. Bookings will be made for halls and other buildings used as polling stations. Presiding officers and poll clerks will need to be appointed. Publicity will be created and distributed for the election. Ballot papers will be printed. Paperwork will be sent out for postal votes - remember, postage will have to be included in this. Polling cards may be sent to residents. Stationery and booths will be needed on the day. Secure boxes will be needed to collect the completed ballots. And afterwards, staff will count the votes, the returning officer will make a declaration and the paperwork announcing the result will be created and sent to you.

All this needs to be paid for. The good news for parish councils is that some of this can be offset. If another election is being held at the same time, some of these costs can be shared. A shared election may also have a higher turnout. If the election is only for the parish council, you'll have to pay all of it.

So how much will it cost our council?

The bad news is that it is very hard to identify this in advance. It will depend on the specific charges from your own principal authority. It will also depend on a great many factors including how many polling stations you have, how many candidates, your electorate, how many postal votes and how many actual votes cast. All you can do at this stage is make sure you've put money aside in your budget for election costs.

The recommendation from most of our principal authorities is to look at costs for 2015 and 2019 and add an amount to cover inflation. Harborough DC have sent guidance to their councils based on the projected cost of a shared election or an uncontested election. We expect that other principal authorities will contact their own parish councils in due course. For an uncontested election, Hinckley and Bosworth BC has suggested costs of between £25 and £100.

We don't need to worry about costs. We don't have elections.

So your council has not had an election recently? Your residents don't engage in elections? You don't think you need to put any money aside? Unfortunately, you can't count on past experience. Just because you didn't have a contested election in 2019 doesn't mean that it won't happen this time. People move in and out of communities. Residents' priorities and concerns change. 2023 could be the year that you do have candidates putting themselves forward. Make sure you can afford to hold the election. Plan well ahead for this sort of thing. Rather than trying to find a big sum every four years, put something aside every year. Keep it as an earmarked reserve specifically for elections and you will then be prepared for a scheduled or a mid-term casual vote. Make sure residents know that you are preparing for an election. Democracy comes at a price. Be prepared for it when it is needed.

And don't look at it as a cost the council can do without. See it as an investment, a positive expense for your council to encourage democratic participation. Your ideal situation would be one where every vacancy is contested because residents want to join your council. It's sometimes easier and cheaper to co-opt, but this doesn't necessarily reflect democracy. Make sure you plan in your budget.

A very unscientific survey of councils with elections in 2019 has brought forward the following:

District	Parish	Uncontested	Contested
Charnwood	A	£100	
	B	£110.59	
	C		£1,347.94
	D		£3,585.21
	E		£4,029
	F		£5,506
Harborough	G		£885.37
	H		£1,218.30
	I		£3,586.46
Hinckley and Bosworth	J		£1,110
	K		£7,700
Rutland	L		£775.94

Taking office

The term of office for the retiring council finishes and for the new council would normally start on the Monday following the election. For 2023, this is complicated because of the additional bank holiday announced for the coronation. This means that the term of office should now start on Tuesday 9th May 2023. Please watch out in case any election counts are delayed or not announced.

If you have an uncontested election, you can get on with planning your Annual Meeting of Parish Council in advance. This must be held on or within 14 days of the date after the new council takes office, not counting Sundays. You can send your summons and agenda to your new councillors with the usual three clear days' notice when you are ready.

If you have a contested election, you'll be able to set the date of your Annual Meeting of Parish Council but you won't be able to send the summons and agenda until you know who your new councillors are, probably not till 9th May. In this case, plan your meeting for 10th to 25th May.

In all cases, the first task for the new councillors will be to sign the declaration of office. Make sure you have forms printed off ready for the meeting. The clerk will keep these forms. Members won't be able to join the council table until they complete their declaration which must be made in the presence of the clerk or another councillor using [The Local Elections \(Declaration of Acceptance of Office\) Order 2012, Statutory Instrument 1465](#)

You'll also need to get the relevant forms ready so that councillors can complete their registration of interests. They are responsible for sending their own form to the monitoring officer within 28 days.

Induction

Suggested induction pack for new councillors. Some of these will vary depending on your council:

- Declaration of Office
- Register of interests
- Code of Conduct
- Standing Orders
- Financial regulations
- Other council policies
- Committee terms of reference
- Most recent minutes of full council and committee meetings
- Contact details for council officers
- Council website log in
- LRALC training schedule and course outlines
- LRALC website login
- *Good Councillors' Guides* including *Being a Good Employer*
- Parish map
- Other documents specific to your parish council

For more guidance about the first meeting of the new council, see [How to manage an Annual Meeting of Parish Council](#)

Co-option following a scheduled election

Co-option to fill *ordinary vacancies* following a scheduled election should be carried out within 35 working days. There is no set method for co-option. The co-option procedure is managed by the parish council and should be fair and transparent. Councils should set up their own policy and processes so that all residents, councillors and employees are aware of how co-option will be carried out.

The following procedure could be followed as a recommendation:

- The vacancy is advertised asking prospective local councils to write to the council. They should explain why they would like to join, highlighting the skills and experience that they could bring to the role. The vacancy could be advertised on noticeboards, other printed materials eg local magazine or newsletter, website, social media and anywhere else that a council may routinely use to contact residents.
- The council should check, as far as reasonably possible, that the candidate is eligible in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 section 79 and 80.
- Councillors may choose to co-opt based on information solely in the written application or they may invite candidates to attend a meeting to introduce themselves and answer questions.
- Council should be aware of confidentiality in part of the co-option process. The part where candidates speak to the meeting is not expected to be prejudicial to the public interest so may be carried out in public. Any discussion of the merits of candidates or personal characteristics or achievements could involve discussion of personal information and may need to exclude members of the press and public. The public should then be allowed back into the room for voting which should be carried out according to normal practice as outlined in standing orders.

What if...

... the number of candidates for co-option is greater than the number of seats available?

Most decisions made by council are made on a simple majority vote. Co-option is different. If the council has more than two applicants for a vacancy, the successful applicant must receive not just a majority of the votes cast but an absolute majority. In simple terms, the person elected must receive more votes than all other candidates added together. Votes must be counted and reported correctly, especially when there are several candidates.

Example:

4 people are standing for one seat, 7 councillors voting.

Candidate	A	B	C	D
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Votes	2	2	1	2
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No candidate has more votes than all the others together. In this scenario, Candidate C is eliminated and the council votes again on the remaining three. Subsequent votes may be needed with further eliminations until eventually one candidate has an absolute majority.

If two or more seats are available, the first successful candidate will be co-opted to the first seat. Council will vote again with the remaining candidates in the same fashion for the remaining seats.

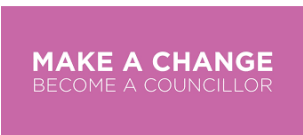
... the number of candidates is equal to or fewer than the number of seats available?

NALC’s opinion is that in this case, candidates *shall* be appointed to the council as long as they are eligible under Local Government Act 1972 sections 79 and 80. Council cannot be selective here; if a candidate is qualified to hold public office, they should be co-opted. See LTN8.

So what can my parish council do now, well in advance of the election?

You can publicise the election now and encourage existing councillors and eligible candidates to get involved. Keep inviting residents to attend council meetings and events. Let them know what standing for election involves and what they can expect once they are elected. Use existing councillors to explain what council does and show it from their perspective. Promote elections through your own communications - newsletters, website, social media, local magazines.

Use your Annual Parish Meeting to promote the elections. We’ve got free briefings in January to help give ideas for this. Book via [our website](#). There are also a lot of election resources available online for free. Keep an eye out for further updates as these are likely to be added to in the next few months.



Links to these and many other resources can be found at our LRALC [Elections webpage](#)

You’ll also find information and guidance from your principal authority.

And watch out for election briefing meetings and further communications from LRALC.