



Becoming a County Councillor

In May 2021 the term of office of the current members of Nottinghamshire County Council comes to an end and elections are held for a new administration. These pages tell you briefly how to stand for election.

The conduct of County Council elections are prescribed by law so although this is an accurate statement of the law it does not cover all circumstances. If necessary you should take advice. There are several elections offences that can have serious consequences, so you should acquaint yourself with more detailed guidance – www.electoralcommission.org.uk. Elections take place every 4 years.

How many County Councillors are there?

There will be 66 County Council members elected on 6th May 2021, each representing an electoral division. Details of boundaries down to polling district level are available from the relevant District / Borough Council.

What do County Councillors do?

All county councillors are expected to:

- represent the interests of the residents of their area;
- use their local knowledge and views to help to make Council decisions;
- ensure as far as reasonably practicable the quality of County Council services in their area;
- provide advice and support to local people who want information or want to use County Council services.

Councillors do this by:

- attending County Council and Committee meetings where policies and strategies are agreed and the performance of the Council is monitored;
- working in partnership with other agencies that operate in their area;
- making themselves available to meet constituents who may have issues they would like to see addressed by the council, or need to find out more about the council and its services.

Who can stand as a candidate?

To be a candidate for a local council you must:

- a. Be **18 years** of age **and** be a British citizen, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen or a citizen of any other member state of the European Union.
A qualifying Commonwealth citizen is a person who either does not need permission to remain in the UK, or has indefinite leave to remain in the UK.
- b. Meet **at least one** of the following four qualifications on the day you are nominated and on polling day
 - be registered as a local government elector for the local authority area in which you wish to stand, or
 - have occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises in the local authority area during the whole of the 12 months before the day they are nominated, or

- your main or only place of work during the last 12 months has been in the local authority area, or
- you have lived in the local authority area during the whole of the last 12 months

In short, to stand in the County Council election you must have lived, worked, owned land or property in Nottinghamshire (excluding Nottingham City), and/or been registered to vote.

Am I disqualified from standing?

You cannot be a candidate if at the time of your nomination or election you:

- are employed by Nottinghamshire County Council or hold a paid office under the Council;
- hold a politically restricted post;
- are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order;
- 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 election day (i.e. since 6 May 2016);
- have been disqualified under Part III of Representation of the People Act 1983 (which relates to donations and other offences) or under the Audit Commission Act 1998.

You may also be disqualified from election if you have been convicted or reported guilty of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court or if you have been disqualified from standing for election to a local authority following a decision of the Adjudication Panel for England.

Returning Officers

Anthony May is the County Returning Officer and has overall responsibility for the County Council elections. However, he has appointed the Chief Executives and other officers in each district and borough council as his deputy. The Deputy Returning Officers will run the election for the electoral divisions in their area. If you need advice you should contact the Deputy Returning Officer at the district council in the area in which you plan to stand.

Standing for election

Anyone who meets the criteria set out above is eligible to seek nominations from local electors to stand. You could stand as an independent candidate or on behalf of an established party. The Electoral Commission is responsible for registering political parties – new parties can be registered with the Commission before the election - www.electoralcommission.org.uk .Political parties each have their own arrangements for selecting candidates.

Getting Nominated

The notices of election will be published on Monday 29th March. From the date the notice is published you will have until 4pm on Thursday, 8th April to submit a set of nomination forms. Forms are available from the Deputy Returning Officer in your area.

Nomination papers must include your full name and address and be signed by the required number of registered electors from the Division in which you wish to stand (**the Government has reviewed this number as part of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and for the May 2021 elections the number of nominations will be reduced from ten to two**). Those nominating you must be on the electoral register on 1st March 2021. It is recommended that you submit the nomination forms earlier and ask the Deputy Returning Officer to check that they are valid.

If you change your mind you can withdraw your nomination by writing to the Deputy Returning Officer before 4pm on Thursday, 8th April 2021. To withdraw your nomination you must submit a withdrawal

notice, witnessed by one other person who must also sign the notice. A notice of withdrawal form is available from the Deputy Returning Officer in your area.

The Campaign

If you are nominated the following information will be useful:

1. Candidates are entitled to a copy of the electoral register for the division for which they are standing for use for electoral purposes. Candidates should be aware that there are penalties for misusing this information.
2. Candidates are entitled to the use of rooms for meetings in public buildings, each District Council keeps a list of buildings available for use in their area.
3. In local elections there is no provision for free postage for an election address so you have to make arrangements for delivery or postage of any communications with the electorate and you are required to meet the costs.

The Government has reviewed arrangements for campaigning during the ongoing pandemic lockdown period and further guidance is now available:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-governments-approach-to-elections-and-referendums-during-covid-19/the-governments-approach-to-elections-and-referendums-during-covid-19>

4. You may use canvassers to try and persuade electors to vote for you but you cannot pay canvassers.
5. Any campaign publicity issued on your behalf must comply with specific requirements under election law as well as with the general civic and criminal law.

Getting help

The election agent is legally responsible for the proper management of a candidate's campaign. Candidates may act as their own agent but need to notify the Deputy Returning Officer of who they have appointed as their agent by 4pm on Thursday 8th April 2021. The candidate can revoke the appointment of an agent and appoint a new agent but the agent cannot resign having signed the acceptance.

Election Expenses

There are restrictions on what candidates can spend during the County Council election campaign. You must produce a statement of expenses after the election to show that you have not exceeded these limits.

This is a link to the Electoral Commission's latest guidance on spending and donations produced for the May 2021 elections:-

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-02/Locals%20England%20Part%203%20C%26A%202021%20FINAL.pdf>

For the County Council election, the limit is £806 per candidate plus 7p per registered local government elector in the division. For joint candidates fighting the division together and sharing election facilities the total is reduced. The reduction is 25% if there are two joint candidates, or 33% if there are three or more joint candidates.

Election expenses can include:

- advertising;
- unsolicited material addressed to electors (eg leaflets);
- transport;

- public meetings;
- services of an election agent or other staff;
- accommodation and administrative costs;
- costs of designing and operating a website for the campaign.

You would have to meet the costs of your election campaign. You may receive donations in cash or kind from supporters to help cover these costs.

Candidates may only accept donations of more than £50 from certain “permissible donors”. These include:

- an individual registered on a UK electoral register;
- a Great Britain-registered political party;
- a UK-registered company;
- a UK-registered trade union;
- a UK-registered building society;
- a UK-registered friendly society;
- a UK-registered limited liability partnership;
- a UK-based unincorporated association.

Candidates, or their agent, must satisfy themselves that any donation over £50 is from a permissible donor and must record all donations over £50 on their expenses return.

Your expenses return must be submitted within 35 days of the result being declared, the last day being Friday, 11th June 2021.

Polling Day

Polling Day is Thursday 6th May 2021. Polling Stations will be open from 7 am to 10 pm.

After the polling stations are closed the ballot boxes will be sealed and kept securely. Local arrangements are being made for the verification and you should contact your local Deputy Returning Officer for information on their arrangements.

The count for the County Council elections will take place on Friday 7th May beginning at 10.00 am, (except for Rushcliffe Borough Council, who take a slightly different approach by verifying that day at 9.00 am, with the count commencing thereafter).

Each Deputy Returning Officer will undertake the count in their district, will declare the result, and will report the results to County Hall where an overarching results service will operate giving the results and state of the parties across Nottinghamshire.

Becoming a County Councillor

The results of the election held on 6th May become effective on Monday, 10th May 2021, when the terms of office of existing councillors not re-elected cease.

Before undertaking the role of councillor you will need to sign the declaration of acceptance of office. Arrangements are in place for this to happen week commencing Monday, 10th May 2021. You will also be provided with ICT equipment and a smartphone once you have accepted office. **It is therefore very important that you are available in the week commencing 10th May to enable this.**

The County Council will have a phased induction programme in place for new councillors to support them in this challenging role.