

# **BECOMING A COUNCILLOR IN BOLSOVER DISTRICT**



## **A Guide for Prospective Candidates**

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# So you're thinking of becoming a councillor ...?

Are you interested in representing your local community ...? Read on and find out what it's like to be a Councillor and how you can stand for election.

In May 2015, all 37 seats on Bolsover District Council are up for election. This offers the perfect opportunity to stand as a representative of your local community and become a Bolsover District Councillor (also known as an elected member).

Councillors play a vital role in providing local leadership by representing local residents' views and making decisions as to how the area is managed. Local democracy depends on people like you getting involved. We hope the information in this pack will help you to think through whether to become a Councillor.

The local election process for Bolsover District Council begins in March 2015 when a Notice of Election will be published in public places throughout the District.

If you are thinking about standing as a candidate you will have to formally submit your nomination papers. Information about the nomination process and what candidates need to do can be found later in this pack.

If you would like to talk with someone about becoming a Councillor please contact Matthew Kane, Governance Manager, on (01246) 242505. You can find out more information about the work of the Council and elected members on our website: [www.bolsover.gov.uk](http://www.bolsover.gov.uk)

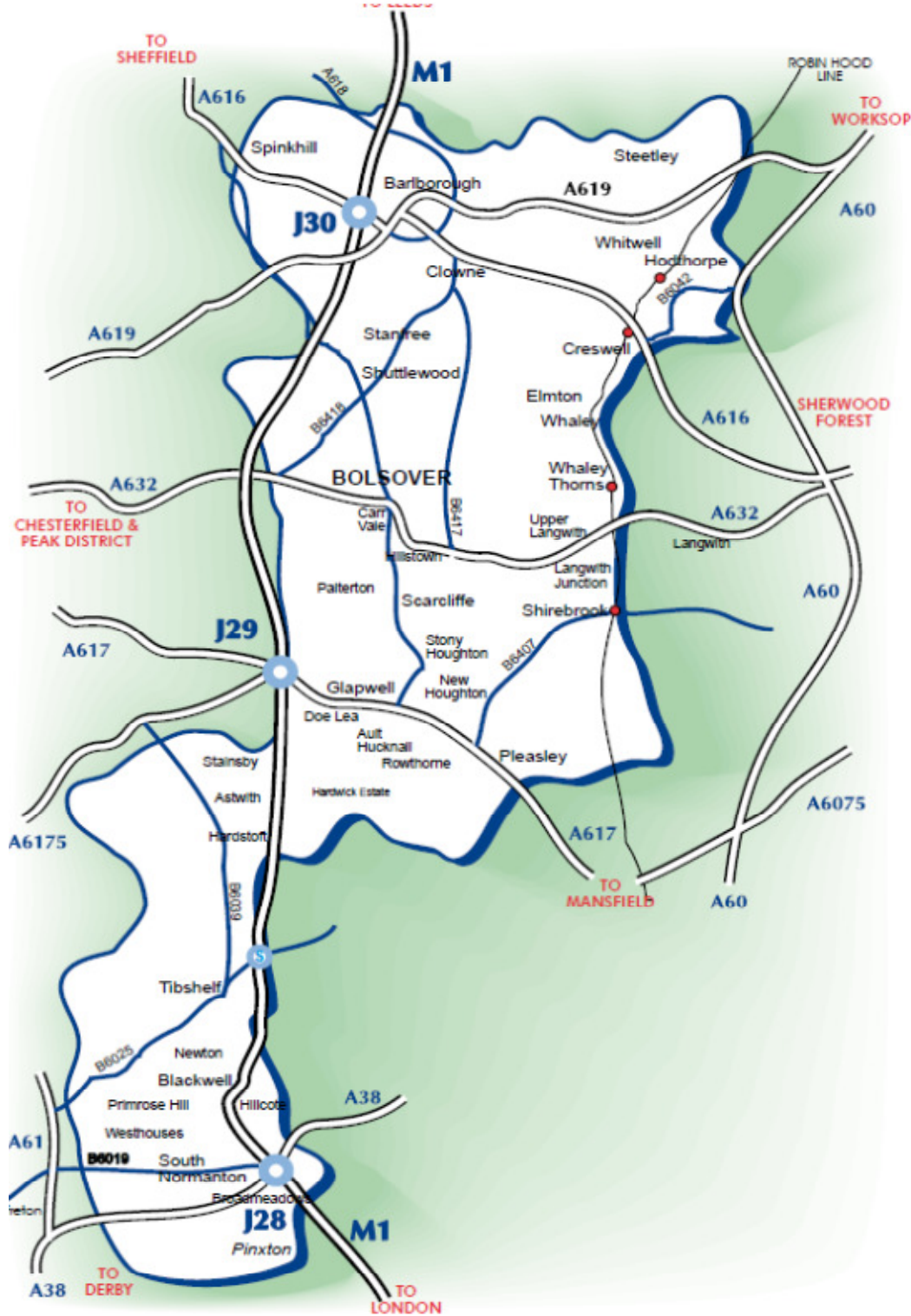
Thank you once again for your interest in becoming a Councillor.



Wes Lumley  
Chief Executive

# About Bolsover District

The District of Bolsover is one of eight district councils in Derbyshire. It lies in the north-east corner of the county and stretches between junctions 28 and 30 of the M1 motorway, covering an area of 160 square kilometres.



Above: A map of Bolsover District.

The District has a *growing population* of 76,700, and a working population of 48,300 based around the four main towns of Shirebrook, Bolsover, Clowne and South Normanton. The largest town is Bolsover with a population of 11,400.

The representation of ethnic communities is broadly in line with the national average.

### The Connected District:

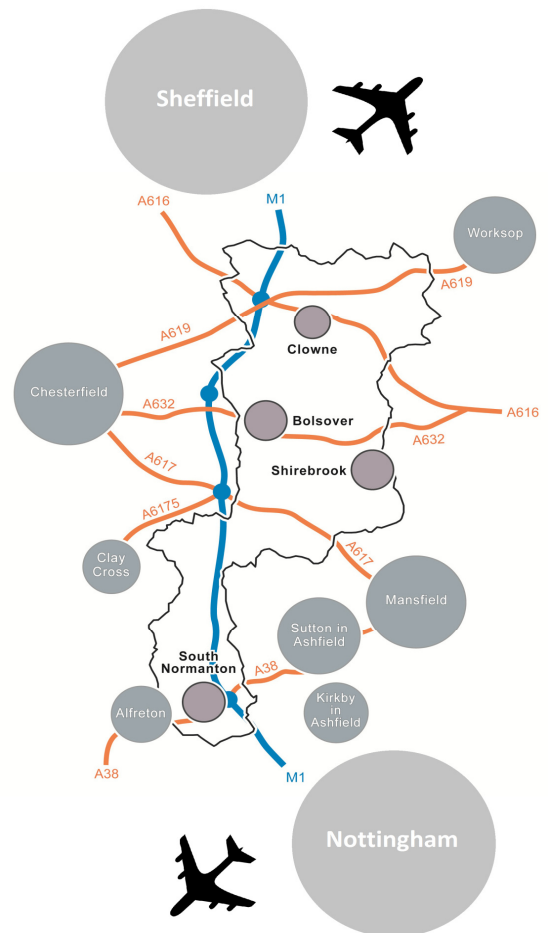
Bolsover District is located between the economically important Core Cities of Sheffield and Nottingham and is connected to these via the M1 motorway.

Bolsover District Council is also connected by its geography to two Local Economic Partnerships (LEP) Areas. This includes the Local Economic Partnership areas of the *Sheffield City Region* and the *Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire LEP (D2N2)*.

The District is linked to the *fast road network* - i.e. the UK and European Motorway Network.

The District also has local access (less than an hour away) to two International Airports; East Midlands Airport and Doncaster Airport, and both these carry passengers and cargo.

The District has benefited from Derbyshire County Council's 'super fast broadband' roll out.



### In 2014, the Bolsover District economy had:

- The projected fastest rate of employment growth of any Derbyshire Authority - a net extra 4,100 jobs by 2030 (ref - Oxford Economics, DCC report)
- Projected the greatest annual average Gross Value Added growth out of all Derbyshire District Authorities. (Ref: Oxford Economics, DCC report)
- A higher enterprise share than regional or UK averages, with proportionately greater numbers of small, medium and large businesses (Ref: Bolsover Economic Development and Housing Strategy 2015).
- Unemployment levels below the national average (Office for National Statistics 2014)
- Higher numbers of self-employed in the District, higher than the East Midlands and national average (Office for National Statistics 2014)
- House prices below the national and regional average (Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2012)

## A changing economy

Like all economies, Bolsover District's economy has changed and will continue to change.

These changes are influenced by global, political, social, economic and technological changes. The Council monitors the local economy and works with a range of partners to shape, steer and deliver growth and prosperity by helping businesses grow, invest and develop in Bolsover. The Council ensures access to support and finance for different business sectors to ensure the Bolsover District remains competitive.

### The District has some challenges too:

- House prices affordability varies across the District.
- Under unemployment - people not being employed to their full capacity or are paid less to do the same level of job when compared with regional or UK averages.
- Maintaining the vibrancy and vitality of its four main towns.
- Developing ex-industrial sites to make them available for employment and modern work based development and premises.
- Some higher levels of sickness in the non-working population when compared to other areas.
- Lower than average qualification levels.

# About the Council

## In summary

The Council consists of 20 wards represented by 37 Councillors who are elected every four years. The political balance of the authority is currently:-

- Labour - 31 seats
- District Residents - 3
- Independent - 2
- Vacancy - 1

The Council adopted a corporate plan for 2011-15 called **Family and community life at the heart of everything we do** and our vision for the District is *'To enhance and improve the wealth profile, well-being and quality of life for the communities of Bolsover District.'*

The Council's key corporate priorities are around community safety, customer focussed services, the environment, regeneration, social inclusion and strategic organisational development.

The Council is currently consulting on a new Corporate Plan which will be approved in July 2015.

## How are decisions made?

All 37 District Councillors attend full Council meetings, which are held every month. Council decides the overall policy direction for Bolsover District Council and sets the budget.

The Council appoints a Leader who in turn appoints an Executive which also includes a Deputy Leader and up to a maximum of eight other councillors whose role it is to make day-to-day decisions affecting the following areas of responsibility:-

- Finance and Policy;
- Regeneration;
- Housing;
- Environment;
- Customer Services;
- Community Safety;
- Social Inclusion.

The remaining Councillors are eligible to serve on one of the Council's three scrutiny committees, which each comprise ten members. These committees provide 'checks and balances' on the Executive and also undertake reviews into corporate priorities or issues of local concern. The work of these committees is overseen by an eight member Scrutiny Management Board. All members are also eligible to sit on the Budget Scrutiny Committee.

In addition, the Council has a number of regulatory committees. The Planning Committee decides planning applications in the District, the Licensing Committee determine applications made under the Licensing and Gambling Acts and also deal with matters relating to Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licence Holders while the Audit Committee oversees the Council's financial and governance position.

Another important committee on the Council is the Standards Committee, whose role it is to uphold high standards of conduct within the District Council and in Bolsover's town and parish councils and to hear complaints that members have breached the members' code of conduct.

There are a number of other committees and working groups to which councillors may be appointed. Each year, the Council also appoints to a number of outside bodies which include both national organisations and local networks.

## The Role of Officers

The Council employs members of staff called officers. Following a recent restructure, the Council has a joint management structure with North East Derbyshire District Council which comprises a Chief Executive responsible for Growth, two Directors responsible for Operations and Transformation and ten Assistant Directors responsible for different service areas. The Council also partly funds an Associate Director of Public Health.

The role of officers is to put policies into effect and to organise the provision of services. Officers may be delegated by Councillors to make policy decisions. There are certain officers which the Council is required to have by law. This includes the:-

- Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) who is responsible for the staffing of the Council, ensuring the work of different departments is co-ordinated and making sure the organisation runs effectively.
- Monitoring Officer (Assistant Director - Governance and Monitoring Officer) who is responsible for warning Councillors about anything the Council does that is likely to lead to legal action or a finding of maladministration by the Local Government Ombudsman.
- Section 151 Officer (Director of Operations) whose task it is to monitor all the financial affairs of the Council.

## Who Does the Council Work With?

The Council works with a number of other organisations to deliver its services including private contractors such as H.W. Martins to deliver recycling as well as other local authorities on areas such as IT, Building Control and Internal Audit and other public non-council authorities such as the Chesterfield Royal Hospital on procurement.

Since 2011, the Council has been in a strategic alliance with North East Derbyshire District Council. In addition to the joint management structure, there is a joint Environmental Health service (hosted by NEDDC) and a number of managers and other officers who operate across both councils.

Another important partnership is the Bolsover Local Strategic Partnership which brings together the main service providers and agencies from across Bolsover District in an effort to drive local regeneration and service improvement. This means that the public, private, community and voluntary sectors can work together for the benefit of the District.

The Council works in partnership with various other agencies in the public, voluntary and business sector on a range of specific projects.

# Being a Councillor

## What responsibilities do Councillors have?

Councillors are elected to represent a number of local residents in an area called a ward. A ward may be served by a number of Councillors, depending on the size of its population. The role of a Councillor can be very varied and it is up to each individual Councillor how they work, although there are a range of activities that they can get involved in. Councillors have responsibilities to their ward, the Council and to the community.

Ward responsibilities include:-

- Listening to and representing the views of residents to make sure services are run effectively in their ward;
- Trying to secure extra resources for their ward;
- Helping out individual residents on specific issues, known as 'case work'.

Council responsibilities include:-

- Helping to form policy;
- Helping to develop the Council's budget and agreeing the level of Council Tax;
- Making or scrutinising decisions.

Community responsibilities include:-

- Stimulating local organisations and individuals to take up opportunities to express their views;
- Representing local level concerns and perspectives;
- Maintaining a link between the users and providers of services;
- Encouraging the community to organise services for themselves;
- Working with other community leaders in the voluntary, community and business sectors;
- Offering vision and direction to local groups and building support for that vision;
- Brokering agreement between different interests and partners;
- Contributing as an effective partner in neighbourhood arrangements;
- Speaking up for and on behalf of residents and groups;
- Encouraging residents to engage and participate;
- Participating in plan making and planning decisions;
- Communicating residents' concerns to the Council and other providers, such as the Police but at the same time not losing sight of the strategic context of the Council area as a whole.

Finally, Councillors have a responsibility to uphold high levels of ethical standards in public life. If elected, you will be required to complete a register of interest form. This form must be updated within 28 days of any changes in circumstance.

## What skills and qualifications do I need?

No formal qualifications are needed. The most important skills that Councillors bring are those that they have gained through life experience. Most people become Councillors because they have an interest in speaking on behalf of local people and making their voices heard and improving aspects of local communities and services. Some councillors have had previous experience of working with their local communities while others bring skills that they have gained through paid or voluntary work.

## Do I have to belong to a political party?

People who are interested in becoming a Councillor do not have to belong to a political party. Some people do, but some also stand as independent candidates. If you are thinking of standing as a candidate for a particular party, then you will need to be a member of that party's local organisation.

## How big a commitment will it be?

It is for you to decide the level of commitment you are able to give to being a Councillor. It also depends on your role in the Council and the number of duties you decide to take on. It could range from a few hours each week to a few hours each day.

Here are some of the issues you will need to consider:

- How your role as a Councillor might affect your family and personal relationships? You will need their support and understanding, as you may be spending a lot of your spare time on Council business;
- The people you represent will look to you for help in dealing with their problems. You are likely to receive a lot of post, emails and telephone calls. People may call at all times of the day;
- There are usually full Council meetings each month which you will be expected to attend. You are also likely to be a member of at least one committee. A large proportion of these meetings take place during the daytime and the average length of a meeting is approximately two hours;
- Many Councillors also represent the Council on one or more outside bodies and background reading and attendance at these meetings would increase your time commitment;
- For most of the meetings you attend there will be papers that you will need to read beforehand. These can be quite detailed and take time to read and understand;
- If you are elected as a Chair of a Committee or Member of the Executive the role can be very demanding;

- Most councillors hold a regular drop-in surgery with their constituents. You may also spend some of your time visiting constituents in their homes or in the Council offices and you may also have to meet with officers of the Council to help you with any issues;
- If you are a member of a political party there will be additional calls on your time. Political groups require their members to attend group meetings, which are normally held in advance of Council meetings;
- The Council is committed to continuous member development. The Council holds regular member development sessions, which provide learning opportunities on upcoming legislation and changes to Council services. There is also training offered for Councillors on specific committees;
- You will receive a lot of information as a Councillor and managing and prioritising this will be important if you want to make an impact.

## Can I be a Councillor and have a job?

Yes. If you are working then by law your employer must allow you to take off reasonable time during working hours to perform your duties as a Councillor. The amount of time you will be able to take will depend upon your responsibilities and the effect of your absence on your employer's business. You should discuss this matter with your employer before making the commitment.

## What support will I get?

Information to help you deal with ward matters and other work you do as a Councillor will be provided by Council officers. There will always be someone who is able to offer advice or support and all you have to do is ask. This should be done through the more senior officers, including the Chief Executive and Senior Management, as well as the Governance Team who have a specific role in supporting Councillors.

If you are elected, you will be provided with an I-Pad and Council email facilities which will allow you to access important Council documents, including agendas and briefings via the Internet. The Council is committed to providing all committee papers electronically, so you will be expected to use these facilities in meetings and for dealing with casework. All our committee rooms are equipped to enable you to access these documents via your I-Pad.

You will also have access to a number of other facilities including:

- A Council yearbook setting out contact details for all members and Council services in addition to details of all meetings over the year and other useful information;
- Use of the Members' Room at The Arc, which includes newspapers, magazines, periodicals, briefing papers and agendas together with facilities for making hot drinks;

- Headed paper and business cards are available on request;
- Your own webpage on the Council's Internet site, [www.bolsover.gov.uk](http://www.bolsover.gov.uk) where you can display your contact details, information about yourself, register of interests and surgery times;
- Photocopying and typing services, should you need them.

The Council aims to ensure that all Councillors and staff are treated fairly and without discrimination. All the main Council buildings have a lift and a hearing loop is fitted in all the main committee rooms.

## Will I get any training?

There will be a full induction immediately after the 2015 election for all members, new and old. The details for this are as follows:

<p><b>Session One (attendance is necessary for all councillors)</b> At The Arc on Monday 11 May 2015 from 10am (to end with lunch)</p>
<p>To cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signing of acceptance of office</li> <li>• Photographs</li> <li>• Completion of forms</li> <li>• Introduction from the Chief Executive and Executive Directors</li> </ul>

<p><b>Session Two (attendance is recommended for all councillors)</b> At The Arc on Thursday 14 May 2015 at 10.00am (to end with lunch)</p>
<p>To cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles and Responsibilities of Council, Councillors and Officers (led by the Monitoring Officer and Governance Team )</li> <li>• Planning (Assistant Director - Planning and Environmental Health)</li> <li>• Licensing (Licensing Coordinator)</li> <li>• Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Assistant Director - Customer Service and Improvement)</li> </ul> <p>The Councils' Members' IT and Training Officer will hold a drop in for members an hour before this session on use of the I-Pad.</p>

**Session Three (attendance is recommended for all councillors)**

At The Arc on Wednesday 20 May 2015 at 10.00am (to end with lunch)

To cover:

- Physical protection, Internet and reputational protection, public relations and FOI from a member perspective
- Corporate Plan and the Growth and Transformation Agenda (Chief Executive, Executive Director - Transformation and Assistant Director - Customer Service)
- Handling the Media and Social Media (Communications Manager)
- Local Government Finance (Director of Operations)

The Councils' Members' IT and Training Officer will hold a drop in for members an hour before this session on use of the I-Pad.

There will also be an ongoing programme of learning and development opportunities for Councillors which will include regular member development sessions and committee specific training. Each Councillor will also be asked to participate in a personal development interview and complete a personal development plan (PDP) which will inform future learning and development opportunities.

## Will I get paid for duties as a Councillor?

There is no salary for being a Councillor however you will be paid an allowance to reimburse you for time and expenses you incur while on Council business.

Councillors are entitled to an annual basic allowance and extra payments for special responsibilities that they take on, e.g. a Portfolio position on the Executive or the chairmanship of a committee.

Travel and subsistence will be covered as appropriate and a carer's allowance is also payable.

## I have some more questions, who can I contact?

For more information about becoming a councillor in Bolsover, please contact the Council's Governance Manager, Matthew Kane, on 01246 242505 or email [matthew.kane@ne-derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.kane@ne-derbyshire.gov.uk).

# The Elections Process

## Who can become a Councillor?

To stand for election you must be aged 18 or over on the day of nomination and a UK, Republic of Ireland, EU or Commonwealth citizen.

You must also meet at least one of the following four criteria:

- Be registered to vote in Bolsover;
- Have occupied, as owner or tenant, any land or premises in Bolsover;
- Have had your main or only place of work in Bolsover for the past 12 months;
- Have lived in the District for the past 12 months.

You cannot stand for election if:

- You work for Bolsover District Council;
- You hold a politically restricted post for another local authority;
- You are the subject of a Bankruptcy Restrictions Order or Interim Order;
- You have, within five years prior to the election, been convicted in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man, of any offence and have had passed on you a sentence of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) for a period of not less than three months without the option of a fine; or
- You have been disqualified under any legislation relating to corrupt or illegal practices.

## Nominations

Once you have decided to stand for election as a Councillor, you will need to be proposed and seconded by two people and have a further eight people as 'assentors' to your nomination.

Full details of the electoral process including the nomination timetable and procedure are available on request from:-

Kath Whittingham  
Head of Election Services  
Bolsover District Council  
The Arc  
Clowne  
Derbyshire  
S43 4JY

Telephone 01246 242422  
E-mail [kath.whittingham@bolsover.gov.uk](mailto:kath.whittingham@bolsover.gov.uk)

The nomination pack will include nomination forms, timetables and guidance notes. As a candidate, you will be invited to a meeting held by the Council to inform you about things like postal votes, where the polling stations are going to be and where the count of the votes will be held and to answer any questions you may have.

It is your responsibility, or your election agent's responsibility, to present your nomination papers to the Returning Officer before the statutory deadline.

## Nomination Forms

Some points you should consider:-

- Do not leave completing the nomination forms until the last minute, as there may be a mistake in your papers and you will need time to rectify this;
- The Returning Officer, or his nominated deputy, can prepare a nomination paper on your behalf ready for you to collect signatures;
- Make an appointment with the Head of Election Services for an informal check of your nomination before submitting them formally. Details of dates and times available will be provided in your nomination pack;
- It is important to read the nomination papers and supporting material and make a careful note of when each of the following papers needs to be returned. The Returning Officer can help with any queries;
- When collecting your 10 signatures, which must be from the ward you are standing in, it is useful to take a copy of the electoral register with you. You can then compare the name in the register with that on the nomination form and write down the assessor's number.
- If you are standing for a political party you must be authorised by them to use their description and any registered emblems.

## Guidance for Candidates

The Electoral Commission, who regulates political parties, produces guidance for candidates on all aspects of the election process. This can be downloaded from their website at [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk) or from Bolsover District Council's election website at [www.bolsover.gov.uk](http://www.bolsover.gov.uk)

## Electoral Register

From the publication of the Notice of Election, candidates can have a free copy of the electoral register for the ward in which they are standing, which lists the residents who can vote at the next election.

## Do I Need an Election Agent?

You do not have to have an election agent - you can take on this role yourself - but most people standing for election find that having an agent is a great help.

It is the agent's responsibility to make sure that all the necessary forms are sent in at the correct times and to keep a clear and accurate record of financial expenditure to be submitted after the election. You should work closely with your agent and act as a 'double check' that everything has been done correctly. If you are in a political party, it is quite common to share an election agent with several other candidates.

## What are Polling Agents and Counting Agents?

Polling agents and counting agents play an important role in making sure that the elections are seen to be fair. You can nominate your own polling and counting agents.

Polling agents are people you can nominate to go into the polling stations to witness that things are being done correctly and run fairly. Counting agents attend the count to witness that everything is done fairly and accurately. Polling agents and counting agents are not permitted to ask the polling station staff who has or has not voted.

You may find that your friends and helpers are keen to be involved as polling or counting agents.

## Election Expenses

If you decide to become a Councillor, it is important to note that you will have to pay for your own publicity material, property, services or items used for your election campaign.

However, if you are a member of a political party, or some other group, you may find that they may provide some financial help with your campaign. You will need to check this with your political party or group.

Furthermore, although you or your party or group pays your election expenses, you or your agent must keep all your receipts. You will need to submit a statement of election expenses, supported by receipts, to the Head of Elections Services shortly after the election. This is done to make sure that the money you spend on the election campaign does not go over the set limit. The limit is currently £740 plus an additional 6p for every entry in the electoral register of the ward in which you are seeking to be elected.

If you have any queries about election expenses please contact the Head of Elections Services.

# Useful Contacts

## Useful Local Government Contacts

Local Government Association (LGA)  
Local Government House  
Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3HZ  
Tel: 020 7664 3131  
[www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)

Local Government Improvement and Development  
Laydon House  
76-86 Turnmill Street  
London  
EC1M 5LG  
Tel: 020 7296 6880  
[www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)

Local Government Information Unit (LGIU)  
22 Upper Woburn Place  
London  
WC1H 0TB  
Tel: 020 7554 2800  
[www.lgiu.gov.uk](http://www.lgiu.gov.uk)

Electoral Commission  
3 Bunhill Row  
London EC1Y 8YZ  
Tel: 020 7271 0500 (switchboard)  
Fax 020 7271 0505  
Textphone: 18001 020 7271 0500  
For information and requests: [info@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:info@electoralcommission.org.uk)