

Becoming a Parish Councillor

Would you like to influence the way local services are provided? Have you thought about getting more involved in the community?

This page tells you how you can stand for election for your Local Parish Council serving your area.

Who can be a Councillor?

You can stand for election for your local council if:

- You are over 18
- You are a British, Commonwealth, Irish or European Union citizen
- You are registered to vote in the council's area (*or if you have lived, owned or rented property in the locality (the parish and a 3 mile radius) for at least 12 months preceding nomination or if your principal place of work is within the locality.*)

You **cannot** stand for election if:

- You are bankrupt
- You have been sentenced to 3 or more months in prison in the last 5 years
- You have been disqualified for corrupt and illegal practices
- You are an employee of the council, or if you hold a politically-restricted post in any council.

What do Councillors do?

Councillors help make decisions about the way local services are provided, and how the council tax and government grants are spent. The matters they are involved in depends on the type of council:

- **Braintree District Council** provides major local services such as refuse collection and recycling, social housing, planning and development control, economic regeneration, museums, parks and leisure services, cemeteries and crematorium, car parking, food hygiene and environmental protection.
- **Essex County Council** provides county-wide services such as schools, libraries, social services, trading standards, planning and development policy, road safety, highway maintenance and civic amenity sites.
- **Parish Councils** are consulted by the Borough and County Councils on various matters affecting the local area, such as road and housing developments. They can lobby for improvements to services provided by other organisations, and they also provide some local services such as maintenance of village greens and playgrounds.

Standing for election

Parish and town councils have elections every four years on the first Thursday in May.

Parish and town councils vary in size from 5 to 17 Councillors depending on the population of the parish; Feering Parish Council has 9 members. Meetings are held once a month on the third Tuesday of the month with the exception of August.

Some parish and town councils are sub-divided into parish wards. Each parish ward has a separate election and you can only stand in one ward of the parish.

It is common for Parish Councillors to be elected without a ballot because the number of candidates at an election is not more than the number of vacancies. By increasing the number of candidates, you can help to make sure voters get a chance to cast their vote.

How to become a candidate

The elections office of Braintree District Council manages all local and national elections in the Braintree area. They will put up a Notice of Election at the Town Hall (and in each parish) telling you where and when to apply to be a candidate.

To become a candidate you must:

- Ask the elections office for a nomination pack containing all the forms and information you need for the election
- Find 2 electors in your parish (or parish ward) to sign your nomination for the parish council

Political parties

You don't need to be a member of a political party to be a Councillor. Anyone can stand as an independent candidate. In parish and town councils it is rare for candidates to stand as party candidates.

Helping local democracy

By standing for election, and letting electors know who you are and what you stand for, you are helping local democracy by giving voters a choice. If you get elected, you will know that you have the support of the people who voted for you.

For more information

Contact Braintree District Council elections office for all types of elections in the Braintree area:

- Phone 01376 552525