Guide for
Council Candidates

Local Government Elections
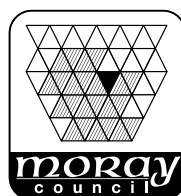
moray
council

Foreword

If you are interested in becoming a councillor, this guide is aimed at you to give an insight into the election and work of a councillor in the Moray.

This guide provides you with the first steps explaining the elections process, information on eligibility to become a candidate and outlines the role of the Councillor in a Local Authority in Scotland.

The Elections Office encourages a range of candidates to stand for election. We hope that you find this short guide a useful starting point.

Contents

Introduction

Moray Local Authority area has a population of over 93,000 with approximately 72,000 electors, split across 8 multi-member wards as listed below.

The 8 wards are represented by a total of 26 local government councillors, also known as local or elected members.

Ward No.	Ward Name	No. of Councillors	Areas covered
1	Speyside Glenlivet	3	Tomintoul, Aberlour, Ballindalloch, Craigellachie, Archiestown, Dufftown, Drummuir, Mulben, Glenlivet, Rothes, Dallas, Knockando, Cabrach
2	Keith & Cullen	3	Keith, Cullen, Rothiemay, Deskford, Newmill, Grange, Portknockie
3	Buckie	3	Buckpool, Buckie, Arradoul, Portessie, Findochty
4	Fochabers Lhanbryde	3	Fochabers, Lhanbryde, Fogwatt, Garmouth & Kingston, Spey Bay, Portgordon, Clochan, Mosstodloch, Urquhart
5	Heldon & Laich	4	Lossiemouth, Hopeman, Burghead, Cummingston, Duffus, Miltonduff, Spynie, Alves
6	Elgin City North	3	Elgin North incl. Bishopmill, Seafield, East End
7	Elgin City South	3	Elgin South incl. West End, New Elgin
8	Forres	4	Forres, Kinloss, Dyke, Rafford, Edinkillie, Findhorn

Ward maps are available at www.moray.gov.uk/elections

The council's role

The Moray Council alongside its community partners, provides a large number of diverse public services as listed.

- **Learning & Education**
  Education & Social Care, Schools, Community Learning and Development, Youth Work, Libraries & Information Services, Arts, Early Learning & Childcare, Outdoor Learning, Additional Learning Support, Educational Psychology, Sensory Services, Grants & Bursaries

- **Social Care & Health**
  Care Services, Health & Wellbeing, Adult Protection, Youth Justice, Adoption & Fostering, Home Care, Occupational Therapy, Carers Support, Day and Outreach Services, Living with a Disability, Child Protection, Children and Families

- **Roads &Transport**
  Street Lighting and Cleansing, Road Maintenance & Safety, Road Permits, School Travel & Public Transport, Taxi testing, Traffic Management, Harbours, Sustainable Travel, Parking & Car Parks

- **Housing**
  Council Housing, Housing Support and Housing Needs, Homelessness, Sheltered Accommodation, Landlord registration, Gypsy Travellers, Property Services

- **Environment**
  Planning, Building Standards, Flood Management, Recycling & Waste, Environmental Health, Energy Conservation, Animal Services, Food Safety

- **Business**
  Business Gateway, Economic Development and Funding, Emergency Planning, Regeneration, Environmental Health, Licensing, Permits, Procurement, Trading Standards

- **Community Life & Leisure**
  Community Planning, Community Support, Leisure Centres, Swimming Pools & Fitness Rooms, Community Centres, Libraries & Museums, Parks, Gardens and Playing Fields, Outdoor Access, Bus Travel Scheme, Community Safety & Anti-Social Behaviour, Community Councils

- **Council & Governance**
  Customer Care, Equalities, Elections, Performance and Scrutiny, Emergency Planning, Budgets and Annual Reports, Benefits, Grants and Funding, Committees and Meetings, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages

In addition to being a service provider and a major employer, the council has a regulatory role in relation to services such as Environmental Health, Trading Standards and licensing of pubs and taxis. The council also has an advocacy role in promoting community interests through community planning.

The councillor's role

As a councillor you will have numerous roles and responsibilities. You will have a duty to represent the views of your community and their needs.

This is not restricted to your own ward as you must be objective and take into consideration the needs and well-being of all Moray residents and the community as a whole.

As a councillor you are required to:

- provide political / strategic leadership

- make decisions about local and national issues

- lead the community and others in identifying the priorities for the area, the outcomes to be targeted and a plan to achieve them

- work in partnership with outside bodies such as Community Planning Partners, National Health Service, Police, Fire and Rescue Service, HIE Moray, Communities Scotland and the Voluntary Sector to provide better services

- hold surgeries to discuss issues with individual members of your community

- communicate the work of the council to constituents

- develop links with all parts of the the community

- ensure statutory duties of the council are carried out

- adhere to the National Code of Conduct for Councillors

- be accessible, open and transparent

Councillors have a duty to scrutinise the performance of the Council in delivering against the priorities and targets which are set. Continuous scrutiny of targets against outcomes is vital.

Councillors have a duty to deliver the priorities set by the government and to decide how best those priorities can be delivered in a local context.

Most of the council's income is derived from central government and the council must work within tight limits when setting budgets.

To date the council has opted for a system of committees to govern its business. Councillors take decisions at these committee meetings, which can take a great deal of time.

Councillors also spend a great deal time with their constituents and attending local bodies such as Community Councils, Community Organisations and Local Area Forums meetings, as well as partner agencies.

It is a wide ranging and onerous position but can be very rewarding.

How the council works

At the heart of every one of Scotland's 32 Councils there are councillors working on behalf of their communities. In Moray, 26 of them are elected to the Moray Council every 5 years.

Moray Council consists of elected members from different political parties and Independent councillors. An Administration (like the government in parliament) is formed from the group(s) with the largest number of seats.

Two members sit as the Convener and Leader who head the Council.

Moray Council has a Constitution which sets out how the Council operates and how decisions are made. Councillors are responsible for the major decisions taken by the Council including budget setting, approving key policies and ensuring that services are delivered in line with the priorities of the council and central government direction in order to improve the quality of life in the area and provide vital services.

Many day to day operational decisions are made by Council Officers underpinned by the policies and budgets agreed by the elected councillors.

The Council works in partnership with the other public service providers in Moray. There is a focus on consultation, engagement, measurement of performance and continuous improvement.

Committees, meetings & decision making

The full council meeting is a public meeting of all 26 councillors. Here they discuss the major strategies and policies of the council, oversee the other committees and set the budget for the council.

There are also a number of committees of which a selection of the councillors will sit on:

• Audit & Scrutiny

• Children's & Young People

• Communities

• Economic Development & Infrastructure

• Licensing

• Moray Local Review Body

• Planning & Regulatory Services

• Police and Fire & Rescue Services

• Policy & Resources

Beneath these committees there are also sub-committees to deal with specific issues such as School Placings and Appeals.

Committee meetings of Moray Council are open to the public, webcast and broadcast live on the internet for the public to view. A small amount of the council's business is conducted in private, for example: dealing with commercial matters or issues affecting staff.

More information about this and the structure, membership and remit of each of these committees can be found at www.moray.gov.uk, follow the links to 'Council and Government'.

Why become a councillor?

Important decisions are made by elected councillors, which directly affect the welfare and quality of life of everyone in the community.

Being a councillor is a life changing and rewarding position because it allows you to make a difference in the community through helping to develop and shape Moray for the better.

- Assist the community by raising the profile of Moray within the Scottish Parliament and Westminster.

- Make use of your skills and experience.

- Become actively engaged in local politics and make a difference.

- Perhaps you have a sense of duty or you want to 'give something back'.

Many councillors have identified their interest in the community as a major reason for standing as a candidate; however the reasons for standing vary with each person's individual view. It is, however, a challenging and fast moving environment that requires significant time commitment.

Eligibility to become a local government councillor

In order to become a councillor you must become a candidate in the Local Government election or By-Election.

Do I need any qualifications to be a councillor?

No formal qualifications are needed, however dedication, a genuine interest and awareness of political, financial and social issues in Moray and the country as a whole are essential.

Councillors will also be vetted under the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 (see end note).

What requirements are there to become a candidate?

Candidates must be:

• at least 18 years old on the day of the election.

• be a citizen of the UK, Commonwealth, Republic of Ireland or other qualifying foreign national.

Candidates must meet at least one of the 4 conditions below:

• Be registered as a Local Government elector for the Moray council area on the day they are nominated and the day of election;

• For 12 months before the date of nomination you have been the owner or tenant of any land or premises in the Moray Council area;

• During the past 12 months your main or only place of work has been in the Moray Council area;

• You have lived in the Moray Council area for the whole of the last 12 months.
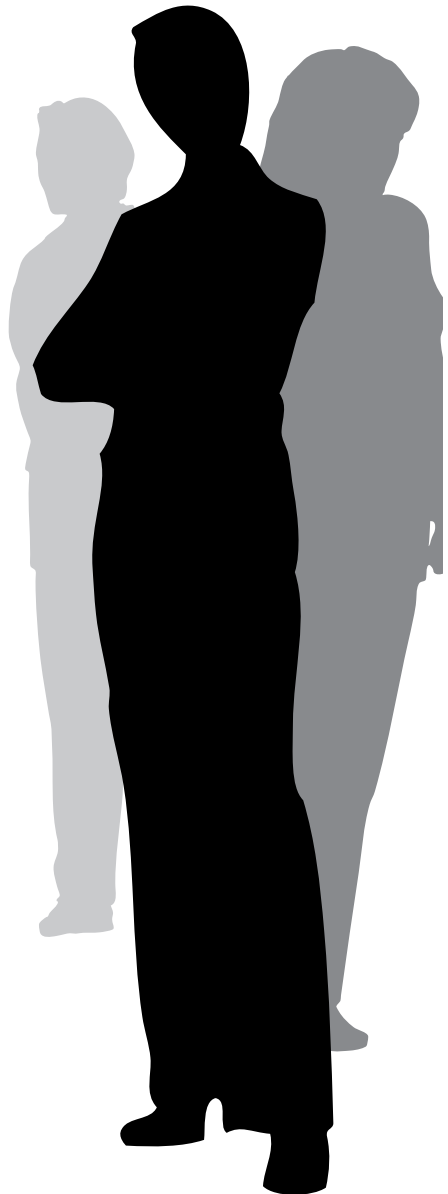
What could disqualify me from becoming a councillor?

You must not:

- be declared bankrupt

- have any of your estate sequestrated

- have had a criminal sentence of more than 3 months (suspended or not) without the option of a fine, during the previous 5 years

- You or your business partner cannot be in paid employment for Moray Council (see below) or a member of any joint committee, the expenses of which are defrayed in part by the council. Although you can be a councillor in one council area and be employed in another.

If you are currently an employee of the council and are considering becoming a candidate/councillor this does not debar you from standing but please contact the Elections Office for more information.
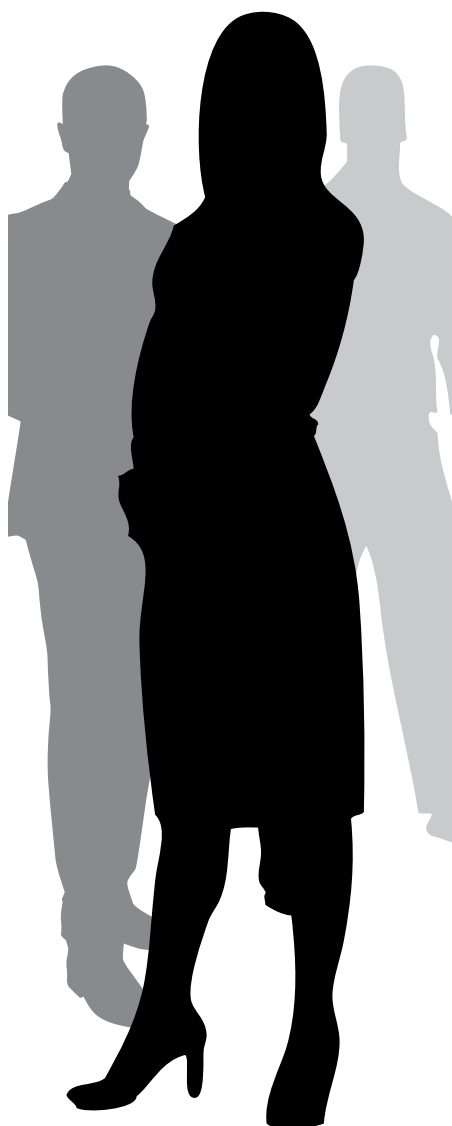
What skills do I need?

There are certain skills that councillors should have, **or pursue**, in order to become effective representatives and decision-makers for the local community:

- Communication and presentation skills to express needs of local residents during meetings and become a voice for the council;

- Interpersonal skills when managing surgeries and conversing with the community;

- Commitment towards representation of the electorate;

- Maintain an objective, analytical and critical mind;

- Be a strategic thinker with the ability to deal with a variety of complex issues;

- Able to make sense of large amounts of complex information, such as financial budgets;

- Knowledge of IT, such as email and Microsoft Word;

- Leadership ability to chair meetings;

- Effective reader.

Standing for election

Elections in Moray are administrated by the Returning Officer for Moray, being the Corporate Director of Corporate Services and the Election team, based within Moray Council.

Nomination Process

Nearer to the time of an election, around 7 weeks before the date of an election (or by-election), the Council will place an advert in the local newspapers advising of the election, the vacancies available and notifying interested parties/persons where and when they can obtain a nomination pack.

Those wishing to become candidates are either nominated by their registered political party or can act independently.

The nomination pack contains nomination forms which must be completed by each individual wishing to stand for election and also detailed information explaining the statutory process.

You will be required to submit an official nomination form to the Returning Officer by the deadline.

For the nomination to be valid the nominee must state that he/she agrees to be nominated.

The candidate must also state that he/she is not disqualified from standing. It should contain a description of the candidate eg. 'Independent' or 'Party Name' which will appear on the ballot paper.

Candidates must ensure that all completed nomination papers are delivered within the date specified in the election timetable which will be provided.

There is no monetary candidate deposit required for local government elections.

Election agent, campaigning & expenses

The candidate must appoint an Election Agent which will be done at the time of nomination, although the candidate can appoint him/herself for this position.

The Election Agent deals with correspondence from the Returning Officer about the forthcoming election as well as handling the candidate's campaign expenses.

Election Agents and Candidates are entitled to attend the opening of postal votes, polling stations and the verification and the counting of votes and will be provided with information about this closer to the time.

All candidates' campaign material must adhere to electoral, civil and criminal legislation concerning published material. Please contact the Elections Office for more information.

Following the election, each candidate is required by law to complete a statement of expenses to show how much money has been spent during their campaign. This must be completed and returned within 35 days of the result declaration.

Election expenses are also open to public inspection. (NB. Election campaign expenses are **not** reclaimable from the council)

Method of voting

Since 2007 Scottish Local Government elections have used the Single Transferable Vote (STV) as the method of voting. This type of voting is also known as proportional representation.

This is a preferential method of voting and instead of marking an 'X' on the ballot paper the voter marks their order of preference for the candidates on the ballot paper using 1, 2, 3 etc.

STV doesn't require the winning candidate to have a majority of the votes (unlike the First Past the Post method used in other elections). The candidate is only required to have achieved a quota or a certain 'share of the votes'.

As a result the counting of the votes and calculation of the final election result is more complicated than a First Past the Post election.

For more information and further explanation on STV please see the 'useful links section'.

The count

Candidates are entitled to attend, the count and opening of postal ballot papers, together with their spouses and election agent (if any) and any appointed counting agents.

The count for a full council election is conducted by a computerised system to scan and record votes in accordance with the 'Weighted Inclusive Gregory' method. For by-elections a simplified version is used and counted manually, the day after the poll.

More information about your access to the electorial process will be provided when candidates are formally nominated and notice of the poll published.
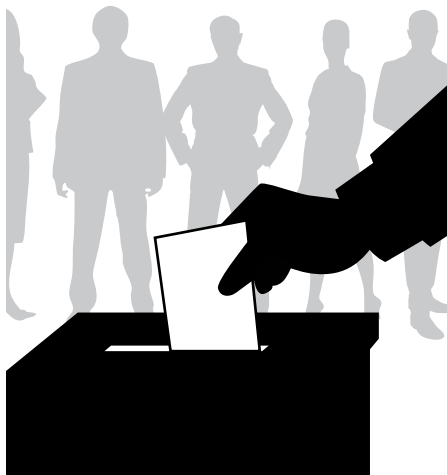
Frequently Asked Questions

Will there be any training for councillors?

Training will be provided as all councillors are expected to understand a great deal of information about local and national regulations, policy and how the council currently operates.

Councillors have a responsibility to themselves and the local community to gain an understanding of their duties as quickly as possible so as to produce effective and well-informed decisions for Moray.

As a result, induction training sessions will be provided for all councillors regarding a wide range of matters to support them in understanding their roles, responsibilities and restrictions.

Councillors will be supported to prepare personal development plans, aimed at equipping them with the skills necessary for advancing the effectiveness of the council as a whole and ultimately the progress of Moray itself.

An induction pack is provided to for all newly elected councillors; outlining their roles and responsibilities.

What support is there for councillors?

The Members Support section provides administration support and Corporate Services provides advice and support to individual councillors and the council as a whole.

- Council officers and managers are available to provide advice

- Written guidelines such as the code of conduct for councillors to follow are provided

- Councillors internal information portal

- Training within the council

- IT equipment and telephones are provided to councillors

Will working as a councillor take up a lot of time?

As a councillor the majority of your time will be spent in meetings within the council building or with outside bodies. Council meetings usually take place during normal working hours but other meetings such as Community Council meetings take place in the evenings.

For most of the meetings you attend there will be papers and reports which you will need to read beforehand in preparation.

The councillor's role requires making strong links with the community.

This usually involves direct contact through regular surgeries, telephone calls, written correspondence and even via email. Many councillors also represent the council on one or more outside bodies.

Whilst time spent working as a councillor is continuous and busy, some find it possible to combine the role with other employment where there is flexibility in their working time.

The people you represent will look to you for help in dealing with their problems, whether or not these fall strictly within the council's remit.

You are likely to receive a lot of post and many telephone calls and emails.

Councillors Salary

Elected councillors receive a basic salary of £17,470 per year. 10 of the 26 councillors receive a higher salary of £21,840 for accepting the additional responsibilities eg. committee chair. The Council Leader's salary is £29,119.

Would I need to travel elsewhere for meetings?

The amount of travel will depend on the level of responsibility held; eg. the Convenor travels regularly to COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities), and the Scottish Government in Edinburgh.

The Chairs of committees are encouraged to attend relevant meetings outside Moray.

Travel and subsistence is also provided to allow you to undertake your duties but you are required annually to publicly declare these and the council will publish this.

Can I resign during the term of office?

Councillors can resign before their term in office officially ends.

A by-election will then be held within 3 months from the resignation date to fill the vacancy.

The current term is 5 years.

Are there rules on standards and ethics for councillors?

The Councillors National Code of Conduct sets out the expected behaviour of elected members.

There is also a Code of Conduct for staff which has been set by the council. Adherence to both is scrutinised.

The code of conduct is based upon nine general principles:

• Duty

• Selflessness

• Integrity

• Objectivity

• Accountability and stewardship

• Openness

• Honesty

• Leadership

• Respect

A copy of the National Code of Conduct is provided to all councillors when they are elected. Also available at www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/

End Note

The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003 introduced the 'Disqualification from Working with Children List' and it is an offence for an individual who is on that list to apply for a childcare position. It is also an offence for an organisation to offer work, whether paid or unpaid, in a childcare position to an individual who is on the list. The definition of 'childcare position' is broad and includes 'an Elected Member of a Committee, including Joint Committee of a local authority (or any sub-committee thereof) which is concerned with the provision of education, social services or health care services to children' and therefore there will be the requirement for Elected Members to be vetted.

Useful Links

Improvement & Development
Agency – Being a Councillor

www.idea.gov.uk

Electoral Commission

www.electoralcommission.org.uk

Electoral Reform Society – What is
STV?

www.electoral-reform.org.uk

Contacts

If would like to find out more about
becoming a Councillor; and the
elections process please contact:

Elections Office
Moray Council
High Street
Elgin
IV30 1BX

Depute Returning Officer
01343 563016 / 563459

Public Elections Helpline
01343 563334
election.enquiries@moray.gov.uk
www.moray.gov.uk/elections

Information within is relevant
to candidates standing for Local
Government Elections and By-
Elections.

Your Notes