



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Leaders of local authorities in England

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Dear Colleague,

Publication of councillors' and candidates' home addresses

I am writing to draw your attention to changes the Government has introduced to the rules applying to local government elections and which are now in force. Following a commission by the Prime Minister, the Parliamentary Committee on Standards in Public Life published last year its 'Review of Intimidation in Public Life'. In that review, the Committee recommended that: Government should bring forward legislation to remove the requirement for candidates standing as local councillors to have their home addresses published on the ballot paper.

The Government wishes to avoid capable individuals being deterred from standing for office because they believe the process risks their safety or makes them vulnerable to abusive activity and accepted this recommendation in its response to the Committee's report.

Accordingly, Parliament has now amended the rules that apply to local government, parish council, and local and combined authority mayor elections, removing the requirement that each candidate's home address must be published during the election process and be included on the ballot paper. The requirement for each candidate's qualifying address to be published during that process has also been removed and Returning Officers and other electoral administrators should take care to avoid disclosing such addresses during an election count.

The changes made mean that now all candidates in local government elections in England will be able to request that their home address is not made public. Candidates will have a choice – they can continue to include a home address if they wish to highlight their local connection to their ward. In addition, candidates will in future provide their 'qualifying address' address separately. The Statutory Instruments making these amendments and their explanatory memorandums setting out detail and policy background can be found here:

The Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) (Amendment) (England) Rules 2018
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/1308/contents/made>

The Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) (Amendment) (England) Rules 2018

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/1309/contents/made>

The Local Authorities (Mayoral Elections) (England and Wales) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2019

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/351/contents/made>

Handling of sensitive interests

The Committee also recommended that local authority monitoring officers should ensure that members (councillors) required to declare pecuniary interests are aware of the sensitive interest provisions in the Localism Act 2011.

Guidance for councillors on the sensitive interest provisions in the Localism Act 2011 and declaring of personal interests can be found in the Department's document "Openness and transparency on personal interests: [a guide for councillors](#)".

An interest is classed as sensitive where the member and the monitoring officer, who is responsible for the register of members' interests, consider that disclosure of its details could lead to the member, or a person connected to the member, being subject to violence or intimidation. In these cases, other than stating that the member has an interest, the details are withheld. The Government would encourage monitoring officers to look sympathetically at such requests where there are legitimate concerns of abuse or intimidation.

Conclusion

As the report by the Committee on Standards in Public Life said, "Everyone in public life must play their part in taking responsibility for combatting intimidatory behaviour". Intimidation is unacceptable and it is vital that councillors feel able to raise concerns about intimidation, and that those in leadership positions in councils take any concerns seriously, and deal with them appropriately – whether that is under the Council's Code of Conduct, using staff disciplinary procedures or involving the Police. The Government today is also making a broader update to Parliament on actions being taken to tackle intimidation in public life.

I am copying this letter to all local authority chief executives. I would be grateful if you would bring these issues to the attention of all the current members of your council, and to those officers with responsibilities for these matters – your council's Returning Officer for local elections and other electoral administrators, and your council's monitoring officer. It is a high priority for the Government that our processes for election and for ensuring accountability and transparency do not expose those holding or standing for public office to abusive activity or personal risk.

This letter will also be published on GOV.UK to help provide guidance in the future.



RISHI SUNAK MP