



Committee	Full Council / Agenda Item 17
Month	September 2026
Report Title	Elections Update
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Appendices	Appendix A - Guide to Procedures for Parish Elections from UDC (attached separately) Appendix B - Annotated-Nomination-Paper-Parish-England (attached separately)

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1. Summary

This report provides Council and Councillors with information relating to the elections scheduled for Thursday 6th May 2027. These May elections will be held for:

- (a) Uttlesford District Council
- (b) Town and Parish Councils, including Saffron Walden Town Council

The information provided below is based upon that received from UDC, in preparation for the 2027 elections with changes made by the Town Clerk where LGR no longer applies. Information within this report is therefore subject to amendment to change to meet the changing needs arising from cancellation of LGR in Essex.

2. 6-month rule

The following information is not affected by changes to LGR.

As from Tuesday 10 November 2026, the 6-month rule will kick in. This means that **no** by-elections will be held for any casual vacancies that may arise for whatever reason. Council has the choice whether to fill the vacancy by co-option or leave it vacant until May 2027 – the date of the next ordinary elections. UDC must still publish a vacancy notice but the wording about the 14-day period for 10 LG electors to request the vacancy be filled by a poll is removed.

3. Parish arrangements 2027 – initial

Parish elections are still going ahead next May and presumably will include elections for UDC. Elections would also have included elections for the planned shadow council elections to the new unitary authority for West Essex, and it is assumed these are no longer taking place.

If LGR were being pursued, Parish councillors would have been elected for an **initial 5-year term** to expire on the fourth day after the ordinary day of elections in May 2032. With the cessation of LGR, it is assumed the term of office will revert to the ordinary 4-year term and confirmation on this matter is awaited. Existing members term of office expires on the fourth day after the election so that will be Monday 10 May 2027; this applies even if Councillors are not.

Anyone considering standing should bear this extended term in mind. All Town Councillors who wish to stand again for another term **MUST** seek re-election by completing and submitting a nomination paper in the legal time period once UDC has published the Notice of Election at the end of March that starts the electoral process (see under **Election support** below).

4. Election costs for 2027

As usual, if contested, SWTC will incur 50% costs for the poll - based on a cost share with this council and 100% for parish ballot paper printing. If another poll also takes place on the day, such as a possible Mayoral election, SWTC's costs are further reduced. At time of writing this report, it is unknown if the cessation of LGR will also result in a cessation of a Mayoral authority; further information and advice is awaited on this matter.

Parishes not contested will still pick up a small administrative charge in the region of £45 (per ward if warded).

It is important that SWTC has sufficient budgetary provision for 2027/28 to cover this cost; these are included in the draft 2027/28 budget. Our estimated cost for a full election is IRO £30,000 and our budget further allows for one by-election at an estimated cost of £5,000.

5. Election support from UDC

From this December details will start appearing on UDC's website about the elections next May.

All parish councils go through the nomination process of standing for election again to be re-elected or elected for the first time.

A completed example ballot paper will appear on UDC's website that will be worth reviewing. There is also a free resource from NALC, available here: [parish nominations course](#).

The priority is that each parish council has its minimum number of members standing by completing and submitting a nomination paper before the deadline in order to ensure it can be quorate. UDC will clarify SWTC's minimum number next year although it is likely there will be sufficient candidates to stand at SWTC given the Town Council's election history. This minimum number is most important as without it SWTC will not be able to legally operate, and a re-run of the election will be required; all at additional expense.

Nomination papers do still legally need to be delivered in person – but anyone can deliver them (note SWTC Officers will not undertake this duty, it is the individual's responsibility to ensure safe delivery). UDC will carry out a check while you wait service.

UDC Election Team has always proven to offer a helpful and supportive service to the Town Council and to Councillors and further information and guidance will be issued by them as we move closer to the May election date.

6. Qualifying Criteria for Candidates

Qualification to Stand:

Ultimately, this is for an individual to self-determine if they meet the qualifying criteria to stand for election, it is not for the Returning Officer to judge this.

Prime qualifications include:

- A British citizen, or a citizen of the Commonwealth, or the European Union
- 18 years of age or older
- Live in an area that is served by a local council
- Must be on the register of electors for the parish
- Must work in the parish e.g. business address OR
- Owns or rents a house in the parish

For parish elections there is this additional one of “during the whole of the preceding 12 months resided in the parish OR within 4.8km of it. “ This measure is “as the crow flows” to the nearest point of the boundary so for example any adjoining parish qualifies.

Again, it is for the candidate to satisfy themselves that they meet this criterion and not for UDC or an SWTC Officer to advise on. Candidates should bear this in mind as they could be challenged by another candidate.

You cannot stand for election if you:

- Are the subject of a bankruptcy restriction order or interim order
- Have within five years before the day of the election, been convicted in the United Kingdom of any offence and have had a prison sentence (whether suspended or not) for a period of over three months without the option of a fine
- Work for the council you want to become a councillor for. There are specific rules around candidacy.

The full range of disqualifications for candidates is quite complex and some exceptions may apply.

You should refer to the website of the Electoral Commission for full details:

www.electoralcommission.org.uk

7. Recommendation

- (a) To receive and note this report, provided for information purposes only, with a specific note that information is subject to change pending updates on LGR and elections to any Mayoral Authority.