



## Introduction of a Single Election Date – Implementation Plans

The revised Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils approved in 2021 included the introduction of a single election date to be implemented in 2024. This means that a full election for every Community Council in Aberdeenshire will be held on a single date in 2024, and every three years thereafter. This will provide a consistent Aberdeenshire-wide approach, be more efficient and allow for increased publicity to generate interest in getting involved with Community Councils.

**Election Timing:** To try to avoid clashing with local and national elections, it is proposed that Community Council elections will be held in late summer/early autumn, after the school summer holidays and before October half-term.

		<b>Proposed 2024 dates</b>
Call for nominations (15 working days)	August	Monday 19 August 2024
Close of nominations	September	Sunday 8 September 2024
18 September 2024 - Current Community Councillors stand down at Midnight		
Ballot (if required)	September	Thursday 19 September
20 September 2024 – Count takes place		
Inaugural meeting (first meeting of new CC)	September/October	By 11 October 2024

If any Community Councils receive less than the minimum required nominations, a second call for nominations will be issued following the October holidays.

All existing Community Councillors would stand down at 12 midnight on Wednesday, 18 September 2024. All candidates elected, including those elected unopposed, would start in post as Community Councillors following the declaration at the completion of the count on Friday 20 September 2024.

**Inaugural Meetings:** AGMs will be separated from the election process and instead an “inaugural meeting” will be held following elections. At the inaugural meeting, the Community Council will approve its constitution, confirm meeting dates for the year and appoint office bearers (if there are changes to the office bearers it will be necessary for Community Councils to ensure they have appropriate banking forms for completion to amend signatories on the bank account, handing over of equipment and files). It will also provide an opportunity for Members to introduce themselves and highlight the knowledge, skills and experience they bring to the table. The Returning Officer or their nominee will Chair the meeting until a Chair is elected.

**Implications for AGMs:** Community Councils would continue to hold their AGMs in May/June to consider the Community Council’s annual report and independently verified statement of accounts. Following election at the inaugural meeting, office bearers may continue in post until the next set of elections/inaugural meeting or may be elected/re-elected annually at the AGM, at the discretion of the Community Council and in line with its constitution.

**Communications Plan/Publicity:** The elections will be widely promoted including through the Council website, social media including video case studies, and news media. Community Councils will be expected to promote elections in their areas and will be equipped with tools to help through the use of template posters for printing or use on social media.

**Election Roles and Responsibilities:**

Area Offices/Election Team will organise:

- Public Notice and Aberdeenshire-wide promotion of elections
- Election administration including ballot venue/arrangements.
- Inaugural meeting including venue and agenda (in liaison with existing CC secretary)
- Online induction training

Community Councils will arrange:

- Local promotion of elections
- Handover arrangements for bank accounts, equipment etc.

**Vacancies between elections:** If vacancies arise in the years between elections these can be filled by co-option as long as (a) the Community Council's membership is not below the minimum required and (b) the number of co-opted Members does not make up more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the Community Council's maximum membership number. (For example, a Community Council with a minimum membership of 5 and maximum of 10, with 7 elected members may co-opt up to 2 members).

If a Community Council has filled all its co-option places, but is becoming low in numbers it is possible to hold an interim election. This can be done at any time in discussion with the Area Office. If the Community Council has interested parties and is not low in numbers, it may be possible that they are associate members in the short term.

In order to streamline this process and to reduce the need for interim elections, Officers have been considering the potential for automatic regularisation (co-options becoming a full member automatically) after a defined period of time. This would then free up co-option places to allow the Community Council to continue with its business without having to have extra elections which can be disruptive to the Community Council business. This is being trialled as part of the new procedures for the single election to see how well it works before changes to the Scheme are proposed.