

LOCAL ELECTION CANDIDATE SURVEY, 2009

We are conducting this survey to collect information from **candidates** to learn more about the people who stand at local elections, their experience of selection and their opinions of the process. All answers will be treated confidentially.

THE 2009 LOCAL ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATION PROCESS

1. We would like to know how you personally were informed about the process of standing for election in 2009.

Please indicate who provided you with information or assistance on each of the areas listed below, by **ticking any of the boxes** which apply to you.

Please **leave blank** any boxes which do not apply to you

	<i>Political Party</i>	<i>Election Agent</i>	<i>Local Authority</i>	<i>Electoral Commission e.g. documents, telephone, website</i>	<i>Other</i>
How to stand as a candidate					
How to obtain nomination papers					
How to complete nomination papers					
When and where to return nomination papers					
Rules about election expenses					
How to obtain a copy of the register of local electors & postal voters					
Rules about postal voting					
The electoral timetable					
How to obtain a list of local polling stations					
Procedures at the election count					
How to challenge the election result					

2a. Please say whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the advice and guidance that was available to you. (please **tick only one box** in each row)

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Tend to Agree</i>	<i>Tend to Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
The introductory briefing session by the Returning officer / electoral staff was useful					
The Returning Officer / electoral staff were available for advice during the campaign					
The Electoral Commission's written <i>Guidance for candidates and agents</i> was clear and easy to use					
The information in <i>Guidance for candidates and agents</i> which covered election spending and donations was clear and easy to use					
I am aware that the Electoral Commission offers advice by email and telephone on spending and donations					

2b. We are also interested to learn about your experience of the 2009 election from nomination through to the count (please **tick only one box** in each row)

In my opinion...	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Tend to Agree</i>	<i>Tend to Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't know</i>
Nomination papers were available in good time					
Nomination papers were difficult to complete					
The register of local electors included all those people who were entitled to be on it					
The register of local electors included some people who were not entitled to be on it					
The rules concerning election expenses were confusing					
Elections staff made it clear what was happening during the postal vote verification process					
Elections staff made it clear what was happening at all stages of the count.					
Decision-making processes at the count were satisfactory					
The electoral timetable allows sufficient opportunity for people to stand for election if they want to.					
Overall the administration of the local elections in my area was satisfactory					

- 3a How much of a problem, if at all, do you think electoral fraud is in Great Britain?
(please **tick only one box** in the row)

<i>A very big problem</i>	<i>A big problem</i>	<i>Not a very big problem</i>	<i>Not a problem at all</i>

- 3b. How concerned, if at all, were you about electoral fraud or abuse in your local council elections? (please **tick only one box** in the row)

<i>Very concerned</i>	<i>Fairly concerned</i>	<i>Not very concerned</i>	<i>Not at all concerned</i>

YOUR EXPERIENCE OF SELECTION

4. When you stood for the 2009 election what was your estimation of the probability of winning this seat on a scale of 0 - 10? (Please circle **one** number.)

Highly improbable 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Highly probable*

5. Do you currently live in the ward / division for which you stood at the recent election?

Yes ₁ No ₀

To be answered by candidates for registered political parties only

If you stood in 2009 as a non-party or Independent candidate, please go to **Question 10**

6. For how long have you been a member of the party that you represented at the 2009 election? (Please tick **ONE** box)

<i>More than 5 yrs</i>	<i>More than 1 yr</i>	<i>Less than 1 yr</i>	<i>Not a member</i>

7. Before the 2009 election were there more people seeking selection for your party in this ward / division than there were available seats?

Yes ₁ No ₀

8. Did you apply for more than one seat in 2009?

Yes ₁ No ₀

9. In your opinion why were you selected to contest this particular seat?

	<i>Tick those that apply</i>
Incumbent	
Previously a councillor	
Local resident	
Likely to win this seat	
Good reputation	
The only volunteer	
Prepared to stand as paper candidate	

THE 2009 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

10. Canvassing during the campaign. (Please tick **ONE** box in each row.)

	Yes	No
Did you produce a campaign leaflet for distribution?		
Did you deliver the campaign leaflets?		
Was your leaflet delivered to all addresses in your ward?		
Did you canvass by telephone?		
Did you canvass by the internet /email?		
Did you contact any of the local media in order to publicise your campaign?		

If you produced a campaign leaflet please answer Q.11 if not go to Q12.

11. In your campaign literature how important was it to include the following information for voters? (Please tick **ONE** box in each row.)

	Very Important	Quite Important	Not Very Important	Not At All Important
Your personal background				
Your previous political experience				
Your record of local community involvement				
Your competency for public office				
Comment on the record of other parties / councillors				
Your party's local priorities				
Your party's national policies				
Political party information to increase membership				

12. Thinking back to the recent campaign, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Please tick **ONE** box in each row.)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The campaign received sufficient coverage by the local press					
The campaign received sufficient coverage by local radio					
Local newspaper coverage of the campaign was fair					
National issues and not local issues were allowed to dominate the campaign.					
National party leaders should keep a low profile and let local elections be decided by local factors alone					

13. Did you campaign in other wards?

Yes ₁ No ₀

14. Approximately how many hours a week did you spend campaigning during the election period?

Hours

15. Overall, did you enjoy campaigning?

Yes ₁ No ₀

16. Would you be prepared to stand as a candidate for local election again?

Yes ₁ No ₀

STANDING FOR PUBLIC OFFICE

17. Almost all adults are eligible to become local councillors, yet relatively few come forward to be candidates. Do you agree or disagree with these possible reasons for the non-involvement of most citizens? (Please tick **ONE** box in each row.)

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Being a councillor is too time consuming					
Councillors don't have the power to make a difference					
Councillors are insufficiently paid					
Once elected councillors receive insufficient support from the council					
Most people are not interested in local government					
Intrusive media coverage of personal life may discourage some people from standing					
There is a general lack of public knowledge about local government					
Political parties dominate local government and this discourages people who don't want a party allegiance					
Political parties should recruit some local candidates who are not party members					

18. One of the aims of recent modernisation initiatives in local government is to attract a greater cross-section of people to serve as councillors. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Please tick **ONE** box in each row.)

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
There should be more women as councillors.					
There should be more younger (18-35 years) people as councillors					
There should be more Black, Asian and minority ethnic people as councillors					
Greater social diversity amongst councillors would improve the public image of local government.					
Greater social diversity amongst councillors would increase voter turnout					
Greater social diversity amongst councillors would improve the quality of decisions made by local councils					

19. There are a variety of ways to publicise the role of councillors and to encourage more people to stand as candidates. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Please tick **ONE** box in each row.)

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Local authorities should provide more public information about the work of councillors.					
It is the responsibility of the political parties to recruit candidates					
Councillors are in the best position to recruit new candidates					
Local authorities should advertise for candidates					
Local authority websites should contain information about becoming an election candidate					
Local authorities should enclose leaflets about becoming a candidate with the council tax notification					
National parties should do more to project positive images of local councillors					
There should be a national advertising campaign to attract local election candidates from outside the political parties					

20. Do you agree or disagree with the following general explanations of why there are relatively few women in local politics? (Please tick **ONE** box in each row.)

<i>Women...</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
are not interested in politics					
don't have the confidence for politics					
put their families above a political career					
don't like the confrontational style of politics					
are put off by the councillor stereotype of white, male and middle aged					
In general, local parties don't do enough to recruit women candidates					
In general, too few women come forward to be candidates					
In general, women councillors have different policy priorities than men					

21. Do you agree or disagree with the following general explanations of why there are relatively few people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds in local politics? (Please tick **ONE** box in each row.)

<i>Black, Asian and minority ethnic people...</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
are not interested in politics					
don't have the confidence for politics					
put their families above a political career					
don't like the confrontational style of politics					
are put off by the councillor stereotype of white, male and middle aged					
In general, local parties don't do enough to recruit Black, Asian and minority ethnic candidates					
In general, too few Black, Asian and minority ethnic people come forward to be candidates					

22. Do you agree or disagree with the following general explanations of why there are relatively few younger people (18-35 years age group) in local politics? (Please tick **ONE** box in each row.)

<i>Younger people...</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
are not interested in politics					
don't have the confidence for politics					
put their families before politics					
don't like the confrontational style of politics					
are put off by the councillor stereotype of white, male and middle aged					
In general, local parties don't do enough to recruit younger people					
In general, too few younger people come forward to be candidates					

23. In your opinion which of these reasons account for councillors standing down after just one four-year term?

	<i>Please tick those that apply</i>
They have achieved what they set out to do	
Being a councillor is too time consuming	
Find it difficult to get time off work for council meetings	
Can't balance family commitments with council duties	
Councillors don't have the power to make a difference	
Councillors are insufficiently paid	
Councillors receive insufficient support from the council	
Intrusive media coverage	
Party political domination	

YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A COUNCILLOR

Questions 24 – 27 should be answered only by those who had experience as a councillor, PRIOR to the 2009 election. Otherwise please go to Question 28

24. Approximately how many hours a week did you spend on council duties?

Hours

25. In your capacity as a councillor did you have additional responsibilities e.g. leader of the council, or other portfolio holder?

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26. Approximately how much time did you spend travelling to and from a council meeting?

Hours Minutes.....

27. Approximately how frequently were you involved in the following activities relating to your position as a councillor? *(Please tick **ONE** box in each row.)*

	<i>More than once a week</i>	<i>More than once a month</i>	<i>About once a month</i>	<i>Less than once a month</i>	<i>Never</i>
Hold ward surgeries					
Circulate newsletters					
Receive letters from residents					
Receive telephone calls from residents					
Receive emails from residents					
Contact an MP on behalf of a resident					
Attend community events					
Attend party meetings					
Contact local media to publicise ward news					
Approached by local reporters to give interviews					

YOUR POLITICAL CAREER

Your experience of becoming a candidate for the first time

28. How positive or negative were the following people in encouraging you to become a candidate the **FIRST TIME** you stood for election? (Please tick **ONE** box in each row.)

	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative	Not Applicable
Your spouse or partner						
Other family members						
Personal friends						
Community groups						
Business associates						
Party members						
Party agents						
Local Pressure Group						
Women's groups						
Trade unions						
Employers						
Others						

29. Thinking about your experience of standing for the first time, was the initial decision to put yourself forward for selection? ... (Please tick **ONE**)

a)	entirely your own decision		1
b)	consequence of being approached or encouraged by others		2

Please now answer EITHER 29a OR 29b

29a. **If entirely your own decision** was this because: (please tick **ONE** that most applies)

You saw it as an important step in beginning a career in politics	
You felt strongly that you could make a difference	
You did it for general volunteering reasons	
You knew someone else who was serving on the council	

29b. **If consequence of being approached or encouraged by others** was it because you were approached by: (please tick **ONE** that most applies)

A serving councillor	
A member of the local political party	
A friend/neighbour	
A member of a local trade union	
A member of a local community group	
A member of a local club, e.g. rotary club	
Other (please specify)	

Your previous election experience

30. If you have ever **been elected** to a principal local authority, e.g. metropolitan/London borough, district and/or county council, please tick **every box** that includes an election year when you were successful.

Pre 1973	1973 - 1979	1980 - 1985	1986 - 1990	1991 - 1996		
1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	

31. If you have ever **stood unsuccessfully** for election to a principal local authority, e.g. metropolitan/London borough, district and/or county council, please tick **every box** that includes an election year when you were unsuccessful.

Pre 1973	1973 - 1979	1980 - 1985	1986 - 1990	1991 - 1996		
1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	

32. Also, have you ever been a **candidate** for parish / town councils? Yes ₁ No ₀

33. If yes to Qn32, have you ever **served** as a parish / town councillor? Yes ₁ No ₀

34. If yes to Qn33, how were you elected? (please tick all that apply)

<i>Won contested election</i>	<i>Elected unopposed</i>	<i>Co-opted</i>

Other political and community experience

35. Please tick in the „Yes“ column below for any of the activities that apply to you and also tick the „before standing“ column if this occurred **before you first stood as a local election candidate**:

	Yes	Before standing
Stood as a Parliamentary candidate		
Held a local party office		
Held office in a charitable organisation		
Held office in a professional association		
Held office in a trades union		
Held office in a women’s organisation		
Served on a public body		
Had a position of responsibility in a local pressure group		
Had a position of responsibility in a local community group		

FINALLY, A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU

36. Are you ? Male ₁ Female ₂

37. What was your age last birthday?years.

38. Ethnic origin (please choose **ONE** from section A – E, then tick the appropriate box)

A. White

British ₁

Irish ₂

Other White (please specify) ₃

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B. Asian

Asian British ₄

Indian ₅

Pakistani ₆

Bangladeshi ₇

Other Asian (please specify).....₈

C. Mixed

White and Black Caribbean ₉

White and Black African ₁₀

White and Asian ₁₁

Other Mixed (please specify) ₁₂

D. Black

Black British ₁₃

Caribbean ₁₄

African ₁₅

Other Black (please specify).....₁₆

E. Chinese or other ethnic group

Chinese ₁₇

Any other (please specify) ₁₈

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39. Educational qualifications: (Please tick the highest that you have obtained.)

No qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
GCSEs or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
“A” levels or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
First degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
Higher degree	<input type="checkbox"/>	5

40. Which of the following best describes your current occupation? (Please tick **ONE**.)

In full time paid employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	1
In part-time paid employment	<input type="checkbox"/>	2
Self-employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	3
Permanently sick or disabled	<input type="checkbox"/>	4
In voluntary occupation	<input type="checkbox"/>	5
Registered unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	6
Full-time student	<input type="checkbox"/>	7
Retired	<input type="checkbox"/>	8
Looking after home / family	<input type="checkbox"/>	9
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	

41. If currently employed, what is your occupation, or if unemployed/retired what was your previous occupation?

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42. How would you describe your current or previous occupational status? (Please tick **ONE**.)

Professional occupation		1
Managerial and / or Technical occupation		2
Skilled occupation, non manual		3
Skilled occupation, manual		4
Partly skilled occupation		5
Unskilled occupation		6

Please feel free to add any observations of your own about the experience of being a candidate or about the electoral process.

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. All replies will remain confidential.

If you would be willing to take part in a follow-up interview please write in a telephone number or email address.

Telephone No:.....

Email address:

Mary Shears, Research Officer.
LGC Elections Centre