

A guide to the annual Parish Election process

Key dates for parish elections 2023

Friday 6 October

List of positions for election published in Gazette Officielle

Monday 23 October

Deadline to return nomination form to parish office (4pm)

Wednesday 1 November

Elections held at parish meetings

Wednesday 15 November

Date reserved for deferred elections

Step 1 – check you are eligible

To be a Douzenier, Constable or School Committee member you must:

- Live in the parish
- Be on the electoral roll
- Be 18 or over
- Have lived in Guernsey for the previous two years or five years in total
- Have not been sentenced to more than six months in prison in the last five years

Eligibility for Deputies and parish officials is the same, so for a more detailed version of these rules go to: <https://election2020.gg/standing/become-a-deputy/>.

Step 2 - do your research

Call or visit your Douzaine Room or Constables Office. Contact details and website addresses for all parishes are here: www.gov.gg/parishes.

Ask the parish clerk how many posts are up for election in the main elections in November and how many existing parish officials are re-standing for those posts. Also ask to be kept informed if a by-election comes up - posts are sometimes filled at other times of the year.

Ask for a nomination form. Some parishes have the forms on their website.

Ask how your parish organises its elections. At the parish meeting will your name just be read out or do you need to make a short speech? Does your proposer need to say a few words about you? What happens if you are the only candidate for a position? (The details of the election process vary from parish to parish).

Ask if you can have a chat with one of the existing Constables, Douzeniers or School Committee members about the role and the projects the Douzaine is currently engaged in.

You could even ask if you could volunteer to help with a current project, just to get a feel for how things work in the parish.

Download a full list of all the Douzeniers and Constables across the Island, and the date that their terms expire, at www.gov.gg/DouzaineLiaisonGroup.

Step 3 – find a proposer and seconder

Find two people to propose and second you. They must live in the parish and be on the electoral roll. They don't need to be VIPs – just ask two friends or neighbours who believe in you and will support you.

The main responsibility of your proposer and seconder is to sign your nomination form.

But it would also be helpful if one or both of them could come to the November parish meeting to support you – and **bring other supporters from the parish** with them if it's a contested election.

Your proposer may be asked to briefly explain why you would make a great Douzenier, Constable or School Committee member – the format varies in different parishes.

Step 4 – check the Gazette Officielle

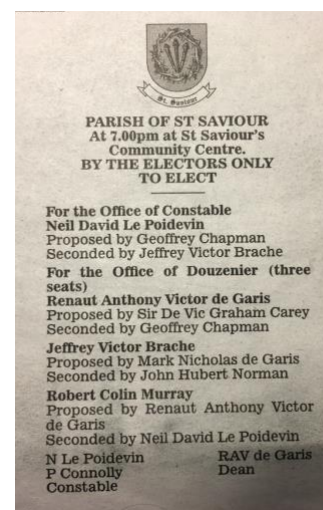
By law, parishes must announce their elections in the Gazette Officielle and also announce the list of nominations so parishioners know who is standing.

The Gazette Officielle is published in the back pages of the Guernsey Press. If you don't take the Press you can view the Gazette online here:

<http://gazette.guernseypress.com/>

Here are the Gazette notice dates:

6 and 13 October:	Elections announced
26, 27 and 28 October:	Nominations announced



Douzeniers serve for a four-year term. The end dates of those terms are staggered so that three terms finish each year (or four in the Vale or five in St Peter Port as their Douzaines are larger).

The Elections notice will make clear whether Douzeniers are retiring completely or are standing for another term. Douzeniers who are not re-standing have an asterisk next to their name. Or your parish office can tell you. Inevitably, it is easier to win an empty seat than one where you are competing against an existing Douzenier but don't let that put you off standing against an incumbent. It's important for our Island's democracy and the evolution of the Douzaine that existing officials should face a competitive election at the end of their term, just as Deputies have to.

There may be more than three Douzenier posts available because of people retiring early, before their term is up. However, if you take one of these additional seats, you will only serve for the remainder of the previous person's term of office - which could be as short as a year. At the end of that initial period you can re-stand for a full four-year term. Taking on a shorter term can be a good way of testing the water.

Constables are elected for a three-year term but the convention in many parishes is to only serve for two years – one as Junior Constable and one as Senior Constable. Your parish may not call for nominations for Constable in a particular year because neither Constable is coming to the end of their term.

School Committee members are elected for a three year term.

Step 5 – get your nomination form in

You must return your completed nomination form by **4pm on Monday 23 October 2023** at the latest. The order in which the nomination forms are received can have an impact on which successful candidate takes which term of office. In an uncontested election, seats with full terms of office are allocated first and then the seats with shorter terms. In a contested election, the person with the most votes gets the longest term.

Step 6 – go to the parish meeting

There are two parish meetings each year, usually in April and November. These are different to the monthly meetings of the Douzaine itself because parishioners are invited. Elections take place at the November parish meeting which is held on the first Wednesday of the month. This year the date is **Wednesday 1 November 2022**.

The time and location of the parish meeting will be stated in the election notice published in the Gazette Officielle on 26, 27 and 28 October or you can check with your parish clerk. By way of example, in 2022 St Peter Port met at 7.30pm at Les Cotils and Torteval met at 7pm in the parish church hall.

Uncontested election: If there are fewer candidates than the number of seats, there will not be an election. Your name will be read out and you will be appointed automatically. Some parishes may still ask you or your proposer to say a few words so that parishioners can get to know you.

Contested election: If there are more candidates than the number of seats available for a particular post, the meeting will be asked to decide if the election should be held that evening or deferred until a later date. If a minimum of seven electors vote by show of hands for an election to be deferred, it must be deferred.

If an election is not deferred and is held that same evening, the parishioners in the room decide who should be elected. That includes any friends, neighbours or family that you bring with you, so long as they live in the parish and are on the electoral roll in the parish.

Elections are held by secret ballot. Each parishioner present is given a voting slip and the slips are collected and counted. The results are announced at the end of the count.

If seven or more electors vote to defer, the elections do not take place at the parish meeting. Instead, a notice is published in the Gazette Officielle advertising a new date, the candidates and where polling stations will be. Everyone in the parish who is on the electoral roll is entitled to vote if they wish. Voters must go to the polling station on the day of the election, **there is no postal voting**.

Deferred elections are held on the third Wednesday of November which will be **Wednesday 15 November** this year.

Step 7 – go campaigning [deferred election only]

In a deferred election, candidates are competing for votes from the entire parish. You may print leaflets, put up posters, go canvassing door to door, advertise in the Press, post on social media etc, just like a general election.

However, unlike a general election, there is no grant for election materials so you have to meet all the costs. There is a limit on how much you can spend on campaigning - the amount depends on how large the parish is. More detail in our infosheet "Campaigning in a Parish Election".

Step 8 – go to the declaration [deferred election only]

The results of the vote in a deferred election are announced on the evening of polling day, usually at the Douzaine Room or Constables Office.

Step 9 – go to your first Douzaine meeting!

If you are elected in November your term of office will not start until 1 January but you may be asked to sit in on Douzaine meetings prior to that to learn the ropes. If you are not successful, you are free to stand again at a future parish election.

This information sheet has been researched and prepared by Women in Public Life volunteers and is believed to be accurate and up to date as at July 2023. No liability is accepted for any loss arising from its use. If you have a question or wish to make a correction, contact hello@womeninpubliclife.gg.