

Press release: Government to toughen rules banning sex offenders from councils

Rules to prevent people found guilty of serious crimes from serving on local councils will be strengthened, Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak MP announced today (18 October 2018).

The new rules will mean any person who is subject to an Anti-Social Behaviour Injunction, a Criminal Behaviour Order, a Sexual Risk Order or who is on the Sex Offenders' Register, will no longer be able to stand for elected office in their community.

Current conditions make clear that anyone convicted of an offence carrying a prison sentence of more than 3 months is banned from serving as a local councillor.

The new measures will strengthen this further by bringing disqualification rules in line with modern sentencing to include the alternatives to a prison sentence as a barrier to becoming a councillor.

These changes to the rules for who can stand for election, or hold a post as a councillor, will make sure those who represent their communities are accountable and held to the highest possible standards.

Local Government Minister Rishi Sunak MP said:

Elected members play a crucial role in town halls across the country, and are the foundations of local democracy. They are community champions, and have a leading role to play in building a better society for everyone.

With such an important role comes great responsibility, and these changes will protect residents while upholding the values and high standards of behaviour we all expect.

Anyone convicted of a serious offence that results in a sentence covered under the new disqualification criteria will be banned from standing for election, or would be forced to step down if they were convicted whilst in post.

The changes will better reflect rules governing standards of MPs, where members face suspension from the House for anything that contravenes the parliamentary code of conduct.

Futher information

Government will look to identify a suitable legislative opportunity to bring the changes into law. It will require changes to primary legislation, in particular the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, and the Greater London Authority Act 2009.

Once the rules are implemented, councils across England will have the power to prevent individuals from standing as a councillor or mayor at the point they trigger the revised disqualification criteria. These proposals will not apply retrospectively.

This consultation was open to everyone between 18 September 2017 and 8 December 2017. We particularly sought the views of individual members of the public, prospective and current councillors and those bodies that represent the interests of local authorities and councillors at all levels.

A [summary of consultation responses and the government response](#) has been published today.

Office address and general enquiries

2 Marsham Street

London
SW1P 4DF

Contact form
<http://forms.communiti...>

General enquiries: please use this number if you are a member of the public
030 3444 0000

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Email
newsdesk@communities.gov.uk

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[News story: DASA dial in event: Behavioural Analytics](#)

DASA will be hosting a dial-in event on 29 October 2018, 10am to midday. The competition team will provide a short briefing on the Behavioural Analytics competition followed by an open forum Q&A session.

Following the dial-in there will also be an opportunity to book a 20 minute one to one slot with the competition team to discuss questions specific to your proposal.

Further information about the competition can be found in the [competition document](#), where you will find links to register for the dial-in and one to one meetings.

[Press release: ‘Forgotten lands’ to receive forestry boost](#)

A new project to help landowners create vital new woodland and unlock the economic benefits of forestry has been launched in Cumbria’s ‘forgotten lands’.

The government’s Tree Champion Sir William Worsley today visited forestry project Snowdon Close in the area to launch the pilot Forestry Investment Zone.

With Cumbria’s ‘forgotten lands’ not traditionally seen as ripe for tree planting, the government will trial a new approach and work to encourage investment in the zone through measures such as the existing Countryside Stewardship and Woodland Carbon Fund grant schemes. A Forestry Investment Zone officer will also offer tailored support to businesses.

Government will also work with the forestry and timber processing industry to

accelerate planting as new approaches to rural funding and payment for public goods are developed.

The pilot launch comes during Green GB Week, an annual week dedicated to highlighting the opportunities clean growth offers the UK – and raise understanding of how business and the public can contribute to tackling climate change.

Forestry Minister David Rutley said:

Planting more trees is central to our ambition to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.

This innovative new pilot project will not only help landowners realise the benefits of woodland creation, but also drive forward our commitment to plant 11 million trees.

The Cumbria pilot is the first of its kind, with the ‘forgotten lands’ being the perfect place to establish large-scale forestry projects in order to bring economic and environmental benefits to the area. The project will focus on productive forestry, landscape enhancement, farming and local employment.

During his visit to the north east, Tree Champion Sir William Worsley said:

It is wonderful to be in Cumbria today to see this exciting new pilot kick off and to witness what will hopefully be the beginning of widespread investment in the forestry sector.

By making it easier for this area to be used for woodland creation we are not only helping the environment, but also giving the region a valuable economic boost.

The Cumbria Forestry Investment Zone pilot is scheduled to run for two years, and will be used as a test-case for rolling out the initiative more widely around the country.

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