

# Your Vote Your Voice

**Easy to Read Guide to Voting**

**Sligo County Council**



**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE SHLIGH  
SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Sligo.**

## Sligo County Council

### What does Sligo County Council do?

Sligo County Council carries out a broad range of activities that makes a significant contribution to the physical, cultural, social and environmental development of our communities. The Council works closely with the elected Council to deliver the full range of services, implement local policy decisions, and deliver on strategic objectives in accordance with the policy direction of the elected Council at both full Council and Municipal District level.

#### **Services of Sligo County Council:**

- Roads and Parking
- Social Housing
- Planning and Enforcement
- Environmental Services
- Water Services (in co-operation with Uisce Éireann)
- Community & Economic Development
- Arts
- Fire Service
- Civil Defence
- Libraries
- Local Enterprise Office
- Recreation & Sports

### Who is Sligo County Council?

- Sligo County Council is made up of **County Councillors** who are elected by the people who live in County Sligo.
- The **County Councillors** are elected at **Local Elections** held every five years.
- The **Councillors** work closely with the staff in Sligo County Council to deliver a full range of services, implement local policy decisions, and deliver on strategic objectives.
- In County Sligo there are currently **18 County Councillors**, who are elected from three **Municipal Districts (Electoral Areas)**.

Sligo County Council has three **Municipal Districts, i.e.**

1. Borough District of Sligo (6 Councillors)
2. Ballymote/Tubbercurry Municipal District (7 Councillors)
3. Sligo/Drumcliff Municipal District (5 Councillors)

- In a Local Election, you vote for the people you want to be elected in the Municipal District (Electoral Area) where you live.

## What is an Election?

**An Election** is the process of voting to choose someone to be their political leader or representative in Government. There are **different types of Elections** that take place at different times. Elections determine who will represent the people of Sligo in the various Government Structures in Ireland, which are National Government (Dáil Éireann), Local Government (County & City Councils) and the European Parliament (E.U.).

### National Government

- **National Government** is the group of people who are responsible for ensuring **the laws of the Country** are followed.
- The Government provides money for important services in the Country such as schools, hospitals, transport, social welfare, etc.
  - The Government of Ireland is called **Dáil Éireann**
  - **Dáil Éireann** means *Assembly of Ireland* in the Irish language
  - **The Dáil** has 160 members.
  - A member of **Dáil Éireann** is called a **Teachta Dála (T.D.)**
  - **Teachta Dála** means *Deputy of the Dáil* in the Irish language
  - **Dáil Éireann** elections generally take place every 5 years

**General Elections** – This election is to choose who we would like to represent the people of County Sligo in Dáil Éireann (T.D.s)

### Local Government

- **Local Government** is responsible for providing services (see page 1) at a local level.
- **Local Government** is comprised of the **elected Councillors**, and is the policy making forum for the Local Authority (i.e. County or City Council).
- The **elected Council** represents the views and issues that are important to the people who live in their communities.
- **Local Government** in County Sligo is called **Sligo County Council** (see page 1 for details).

**Local Elections** – This election is to choose who we would like to represent the people of Sligo in Sligo County Council (County Councillors).

### European Parliament

Ireland is a member of the **European Union (E.U.)**.

The **European Parliament** is the Government that represents the people of all the countries that are members of the E.U.

The **European Parliament** holds its meetings in **Strasbourg** in France and **Brussels** in Belgium.

The main functions of the **European Parliament** are:

**Legislative:**

- passes EU laws, together with the Council of the E.U., based on European Commission proposals,
- decides on international agreements,
- decides on enlargements
- reviews the Commission's work programme.

**Supervisory**

- democratic scrutiny of all EU institutions,
- electing the Commission President and approving the Commission as a body,
- approving the way E.U. budgets are spent, examining citizens' petitions and setting up enquiries,
- discussing monetary policy with the European Central Bank,
- questioning Commission and Council.

**Budgetary**

- establishing the E.U. budget, together with the Council,
  - approving the E.U.'s long-term budget.
- o There are **705 Members** of the European Parliament (M.E.P.)
  - o **13** of these Members are **from Ireland**
  - o The **European Elections** to **elect M.E.P.s** take place every five years

**European Elections** – This election is to choose who we would like to represent our constituency (and Ireland) in the European Parliament (M.E.P.s).

### **The President of Ireland**

- The **President** of Ireland **represents the people** of Ireland.
- The Presidents **signs the laws** of Ireland.
- The **President** of Ireland is **elected by the people** of Ireland.
- The President is elected for a term of **7 years**.
- The President cannot be president for more than **14 years altogether**.
- The current President is **Michael D. Higgins**.

**Presidential Election** - This election is to choose who we would like to be President of our Country.

## What is a Referendum?

- **The Irish Constitution** is a legal document that sets out the role of the Government and the President of Ireland.
- **The Irish Constitution** also includes the basic rights of all people living in Ireland.
- **The Irish Constitution** is also called *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, which means **Basic Law of Ireland** in the Irish language.
- The Government cannot change anything in **The Irish Constitution** without asking the permission of the people who live in Ireland.
- When the Government asks the people to decide about changing the Constitution, it is called a **Referendum**.

## Who can vote in Ireland?

- If you are an **Irish Citizen**, and you are over 18 years of age, you can vote in every Election and Referendum.
- If you are a **British Citizen**, and you are over 18 years of age, you may vote at General, European and Local Elections.
- If you are a **citizen of any other EU country**, and you are over 18 years of age, you may vote at European and Local Elections.
- If you are a **citizen from a country that is not part of the EU**, and you are over 18 years of age, you can vote at Local Elections only.

## Why should you Vote?

- It is your **right** to vote.
- In the past **many people did not have the right to vote**, people fought with governments to change the laws and allow people to vote.
- Everyone has the right to take part in choosing who they would like to see working for their community and their country.
- Taking part in Elections can be very exciting and can make you feel like you are a part of the community where you live.
- If you don't vote, other people choose who is elected in your community.

## Register of Electors

The Register of Electors is a continuously updated database of persons who are eligible to vote in particular elections and referenda. Only persons whose names appear on the Register are entitled to vote at electoral events.

A person can apply to register or update their details at any time. However, if an election or referendum has been formally called, the latest date for receipt of application is 15 days before polling day (excluding Sundays, public holidays and Good Friday).

## Register to Vote

Anyone who is ordinarily resident in Ireland, and is over 18 years of age, may register to vote. Persons aged 16 and 17 years may apply to be added to the "Pending Electors List" and, **once they reach the age of 18**, they will automatically be added to the Register of Electors. It is important to note that people on the "Pending Electors List" are not permitted to vote until they turn 18.

- To vote in any Election or Referendum, you must register your details with Sligo County Council.
- You can do this by logging on to [www.checktheregister.ie](http://www.checktheregister.ie) or by completing a hard copy application form, which must be witnessed at a Garda Station or local authority (if you have not provided a PPSN on the form). Forms are available on the Council's website at [www.sligococo.ie](http://www.sligococo.ie) or can be accessed by e-mailing [registerofelectors@sligococo.ie](mailto:registerofelectors@sligococo.ie) or by telephone to 071 9111012.
- In order to register, you will need to provide your name, address, PPSN, date of birth and contact details.
- You must register at the address where you are ordinarily resident.
- Registering to vote is easy and staff of Sligo County Council can assist you.

**If your name is not on the Register of Electors, you cannot vote!**

## Check if your name is on the Register

There are a few ways you can **check if your name** is on the Register of Electors for Sligo:

- You can check online at [www.checktheregister.ie](http://www.checktheregister.ie)
- You can telephone Sligo County Council at 071 9111112
- You can e-mail Sligo County Council at [registerofelectors@sligococo.ie](mailto:registerofelectors@sligococo.ie)
- You can inspect a copy of the Register of Electors by calling into the County Council Offices at County Hall, Riverside, Sligo, F91 Y763 to check for your name.

You can find out more information about the **Register of Electors** on Sligo County Council's website [www.sligococo.ie](http://www.sligococo.ie)

## Postal Voters List

If you are unable to go in person to a Polling Station to vote on the day of an Election or Referendum, you may be entitled to apply for a Postal Vote. The types of electors who can register for a Postal Vote are:

- Members of the Defence Forces
- Irish Diplomats working abroad (and their partner/spouse with Irish citizenship)
- Members of An Garda Síochána
- Persons detained in Prison
- Persons unable to go to a Polling Station due to illness or disability
- Persons who are working on the day of an election/referendum and cannot attend their local Polling Station, e.g. full-time students studying away from home, polling staff, or persons whose regular work takes them away from home, e.g. cabin crew, long distance truck driver, etc.
- A person whose safety may be at risk if their details are published (this also applies to people living with such persons). Such persons can apply to become anonymous electors

Applications for postal votes may require documentary evidence to be submitted in support of eligibility. An elector registered as a postal voter may vote **by post only** and may not vote at a Polling Station.

## Special Voters List

Electors who are residing full-time in a nursing home, hospital or similar institution, and are unable to go to their local Polling Station due to illness or disability, can apply to have their name added to the Special Voters List.

Such applications must be certified by a registered medical practitioner.

Electors included on the Special Voters List will be able to vote where they live, e.g. in the nursing home.

## Registered to Vote

- If you are registered to vote, before Polling Day, Sligo County Council will send you a **Polling Card**.
- Your **Polling Card** will include your name and the name of the Polling Station where you go to vote and your Polling number.
- Your **Polling Card** will have the time and date of when the election/referendum is scheduled to take place.
- You should bring your **Polling Card** and some form of photographic identification with you when you go to vote.

## Voting in Ireland

Ireland uses a way of voting called a **Secret Ballot**. A **Secret Ballot** means your choices in an Election or a Referendum are secret.

If you have never voted before or if you are unsure of how to vote, there are people working at every Polling Station who can help you.

**It is important you make your own choice about voting.**

## Who should you vote for?

A person who would like you to vote for them is called a **candidate**.

Before an election, each candidate will be in the community asking people to vote for them. This is called **canvassing**.

Look out for posters, leaflets and social media adverts from candidates telling you why you should vote for them. Candidates may call to your home, workplace or community centre asking you to vote for them. Candidates may appear on the television or radio asking people to vote for them.

You should find out about all the candidates and their policies before choosing who you think would do the best job.

## Making your decision in a Referendum

**A Referendum** can be confusing, so it is good to find out about the Referendum before you vote. **The Electoral Commission** is an organisation that will tell you about any Referendum that is taking place.

You can contact the Referendum Commission by

- Checking their website: [www.electoralcommission.ie](http://www.electoralcommission.ie)
- Information about the **Referendum** will also be included on your **Polling Card**

## Polling Day

- The day on which the election is scheduled is called **Polling Day**.
- On **Polling Day**, every person in the Country, who is included on the Register of Electors, can go to their Polling Station and vote.
- The Polling Station normally opens at **7.00 am** and stays open until **10.00 pm**.
- You should bring your **polling card** to the Polling Station. However, if you don't have a polling card, you can still vote if you bring **identification** with you to the Polling Station.

- The Presiding Officer/Polling Clerk working in the Polling Station may ask you for photograph identification, as well as your polling card.
- If you have any questions, or need any help, you can ask the staff working at the Polling Station.

### How do I Vote?

- When you get to the Polling Station you will see the **Polling Staff** sitting at a desk.
- You should give them your Polling Card and/or photo ID. Once they locate your name on the Register of Electors, you will be given a **Ballot Paper**.
- **A Ballot Paper for an Election** is a sheet of paper with a list of the candidates that you can vote for. It will contain the names and photographs of all the candidates who are contesting the election.
- **A Ballot Paper for a Referendum** will have the question about the Constitution amendment that the Government are asking the electorate to vote on.
- On a Polling Day, there may be more than one election happening. In such an event, you will get a different coloured **Ballot Paper** for each ballot that is taking place on the day.

### Voting Booth

When you receive your Polling Card, you will go to a private voting booth, where you can complete each Ballot Paper with your preferences/choices.

The voting booths are designed for voters to fill out a Ballot Paper while standing up. There will be an accessible voting booth available for voters who would like to fill out a Ballot Paper while sitting down. You can ask staff in the Polling Station to help you get to the voting booth.

## The Election Ballot Paper

<b>DOYLE – LIBERAL SOCIALISTS</b> MARY DOYLE, of 10 High Street,			
<b>LYNCH –URBAN PARTY</b> JANE ELLEN LYNCH, of 12 Main Street, Ardstown, Shopkeeper.			
<b>MURPHY</b> PATRICK MURPHY, of 12 Main Street, Ballyduff,			
<b>Ó BRIAIN – CUMANN NA SAORANACH</b> SÉAMUS Ó BRIAIN, as 10 An tSráid Ard, Carn Mór,			
<b>O'BRIEN –THE INDEPENDENT PARTY</b> EAMON O'BRIEN, of 22 Wellclose Place,			

***A Ballot Paper for an Election will look a little like this***

The people who are listed on the Ballot Paper are called **candidates**.

The Ballot Paper will include **the name, photograph and box** for each candidate who would like you to vote for them. If a candidate belongs to a **Political Party** the sign or logo for that Political Party will be beside their name.

If a candidate does not belong to a Political Party, you will see **“Independent”** or **“Non- Party”** beside their name.

### Filling out an Election Ballot Paper

<b>DOYLE –</b> MARY DOYLE		<b>3</b>
<b>LYNCH</b> Joe Lynch		<b>1</b>
<b>MURPHY</b> PATRICK MURPHY		
<b>Ó BRIAIN</b> SÉAMUS Ó BRIAIN		<b>2</b>
<b>O'BRIEN</b> EAMON O'BRIEN		

- You must use numbers when filling out an Election Ballot Paper.
- Put number 1 beside the candidate you would most like to be elected.
- Put number 2 beside the next candidate you would like to be elected.
- You can put a number beside every candidate on the **Ballot Paper** if you wish.
- If you find writing numbers difficult you can ask staff working in the Polling Station to assist you.
- You can take as long as you need to fill out the Ballot Paper.

## Filling out a Referendum Ballot Paper

**An Reifreann ar Aois Iarrthóirí Uachtaránachta | Age of Presidential Candidates Referendum**

An bhfuil tú ag toiliú leis an togra chun an Bunreacht a leasú atá sa Bhille thíosluaite?  
Do you approve of the proposal to amend the Constitution contained in the undermentioned Bill?

An Bille um an gCúigiú Leasú is Tríocha ar an mBunreacht (Aois Intofachta chun Oifig an Uachtaráin), 2015  
Thirty-fifth Amendment of the Constitution (Age of Eligibility for Election to the Office of President) Bill 2015

Ná cuir marc **ach san aon chearnóg amháin**  
Place a mark in **one square only**

**Má thoilíonn** tú, cuir X sa chearnóg seo .....  
If you **approve**, mark X in this square .....

	<b>Tá Yes</b>
	<b>Níl No</b>

**Mura dtoilíonn** tú, cuir X sa chearnóg seo .....  
If you do **not approve**, mark X in this square.....

- **The Referendum Ballot Paper** will ask if you agree with the amendments that the Government would like to make to the Constitution.
- **The Referendum Ballot Paper** will include the details of the amendments to the Constitution that people are being asked to vote on.
- Some of the Referendum Ballot Paper **information** will be written in the **Irish language**, this information will also be written **in English**.

The Referendum Ballot Paper will include:

- One box for **YES** (if you agree)
- One box for **NO** (if you don't agree)
- Put X in the box beside **YES** if **you agree** with the changes the government would like to make to the Constitution.
- Put X in the box beside **NO** if you **don't agree** with the changes the government would like to make to the Constitution.
- If you have any difficulties, you **can ask staff** working in the Polling Station to **help you**.
- You can take **as long as you need** to fill out the Ballot Paper

## Help with Voting

Anyone who may find it difficult to read or fill out a Ballot Paper can get help to vote at the Polling Station.

You can get help to:

- Be guided to the polling booth
- Read out loud the words on the Ballot Paper (must be in a part of the polling station where a conversation in normal tones cannot be overheard)
- Mark the Ballot Paper (on the elector's instructions)
- A support person is not allowed to tell you who to vote for

## Who can help me to vote?

### The Presiding Officer

- The **Presiding Officer** is the person in charge at the Polling Station.
- It is the job of the Presiding Officer to make sure anyone who needs help to vote gets the assistance they require.
- There are other people working in the Polling Station with the Presiding Officer, called **Poll Clerks**.

### Companion Voting

- If you have a disability that prevents you from voting without help, a companion or a friend can help you to vote.
- A companion must be at least 16 years old.
- An Election Candidate, or someone who is working on an Election Candidate's campaign, cannot act as a companion.
- A companion may not help more than two people at an election.
- If you don't have a companion or friend to help you, you can ask the staff at the Polling Station for assistance.

## Rules at the Polling Station

- No photographs – you cannot take photographs in a Polling Station (no photographs of you filling out the Ballot Paper, no photographs of your choices on the Ballot Paper and no selfies inside the Polling Station).
- No canvassing – no candidate, or candidates’ representatives, can canvass within 50 m of a Polling Station. This includes canvassing for any choice in a Referendum. Canvassing includes wearing stickers, badges, etc. in support of a candidate or choice in a Referendum, or asking voters to vote for a specific candidate or choice in a Referendum.

## The Ballot Box

- When you have filled out the Ballot Papers, you then fold the Ballot Paper and put it into a **Ballot Box**.
- This will be a **large box** that will be clearly marked with the name **Ballot Box**.
- The Ballot box **is locked** and won’t be opened until the election is over.
- Once you have put your Ballot Papers in the ballot boxes you have **VOTED!**

Your Vote  
Your Voice



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