The Electoral Commission

Planning guidance for Police Area Returning Officers

Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales on 5 May 2016

September 2015

In this guidance we use 'must' when we refer to a specific legal requirement. We use 'should' for items we consider to be recommended practice, but which are not legal requirements.

Translations and other formats

This document is also available in Welsh. For information on obtaining this publication in another language or in a large-print or Braille version please contact the Electoral Commission:

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Updates to this document

Updated	Description of change	Paragraph number
March 2016	Re-published to include legal references.	N/A

Contents

1 Introduction

Purpose

1.1   The purpose of this guidance is to support Police Area Returning Officers (PAROs) in carrying out their role at the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections which will take place on 5 May 2016.

1.2   It has been developed in close consultation with members of the UK Electoral Advisory Board (EAB) and the Elections, Registration and Referendums Working Group (ERRWG). It reflects what we, the EAB and the ERRWG believe that PAROs should expect of their staff in preparing for and delivering the 5 May 2016 elections.

1.3   This guidance has been produced taking account of, and should be read in accordance with, the requirements set out in the following legislation (as amended):

- Representation of the People Acts 1983, 1985 and 2000
- Government of Wales Acts 1998 and 2006
- Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000
- Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001
- Representation of the People (Combination of Polls) (England and Wales) Regulations 2004
- Electoral Administration Act 2006
- The Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006
- The Local Elections (Parish and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2006
- National Assembly for Wales (Representation of the People) Order 2007
- The Local Authorities (Mayoral Elections) (England and Wales) Regulations 2007
- The Representation of the People (National Assembly for Wales) (Access to Election Documents) Regulations 2007
- Political Parties and Elections Act 2009
- Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011
- The Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) Regulations 2012
- The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012
- The Police and Crime Commissioner Elections Order 2012
- The Police and Crime Commissioner Elections (Functions of Returning Officers) Regulations 2012
- The Police and Crime Commissioner Elections (Designation of Local Authorities) (No.2) Order 2012
- The Police and Crime Commissioner (Disqualification) (Supplementary Provisions) Regulations 2012
- The Police and Crime Commissioner Elections (Returning Officers' Accounts) Regulations 2012The Police and Crime Commissioner

Elections (Local Returning Officers' and Police Area Returning Officers' Charges) Order 2012

- The Police and Crime Commissioner Elections (Welsh Forms) Order 2012
- Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013
- The Transfer of Functions (Police and Crime Commissioner Elections) Order 2015

1.4   The list above includes only the legislation that makes provision in areas that this guidance relates to and the legislation that currently stands. We expect further legislation to provide for amended conduct regulations, combination rules in Wales, designation of PAROs and fees and charges.

1.5   PAROs are also required to have regard to the public sector equality duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 when carrying out their duties.

1.6   PAROs in Wales must also have regard to the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, which require services in Wales to be delivered equally in English and in Welsh.

How to use this guidance

1.7   This guidance is designed to highlight key considerations in planning for the election, the areas you should liaise with stakeholders (particularly Local Returning Officers (LROs) and other Returning Officers (ROs)) to inform your planning to ensure consistency across the police area and the tools you have available to help you achieve this in practice. This is the first of two parts of guidance to support PAROs with planning for and delivering the polls.

1.8   This part covers:

- the particular context and circumstances of the May 2016 elections
- roles and responsibilities
- planning and organisation
- aspects of the election process that PAROs are directly responsible for and where early preparations can be undertaken

1.9   We will separately publish guidance which covers the detail of administering the nomination process and managing the collation of totals from LROs and the declaration of the results.

1.10 Each of the parts of the guidance cover:

- what you are required to do by law ('musts')
- what we expect you will need to have in place and what we would expect to see to be able to be satisfied that the key outcomes of the Commission's performance standards can be delivered
- recommended practice to assist you in understanding and discharging your duties

> ⓘ The boxes at the start of each chapter summarise the **key actions and decisions** you should take now in relation to planning for the PCC election in May 2016 with detailed guidance on those key actions and decisions set out in the main body of the chapter.

1.11 This guidance is supplemented by resources which can be accessed through links contained in the guidance.

1.12 This guidance does not cover your role and responsibilities as Local Returning Officer (LRO) or as any other Returning Officer or Counting Officer at the May 2016 polls. The Commission has produced separate guidance for:

- LROs in England (where the PCC election is a standalone poll)
- Constituency Returning Officers, Regional Returning Officers and LROs in Wales (where the poll at the National Assembly for Wales election is combined with the poll at the PCC election)
- Local government Returning Officers and LROs (where the poll at a local government election is combined with the poll at the PCC election in England)

1.13 Should you have any questions about our guidance or any other matter relating to the administration of the May 2016 polls, our local Commission teams are available to provide on-going support. We will also be providing an out-of-hours advice service to deal with urgent electoral administration queries in the run up to and immediately following the May 2016 elections. Further information on the out-of-hours service will be provided through our Bulletin for electoral administrators.

2   The May 2016 elections

Understand the context of these polls, the particular challenges in your area and prepare for effective co-operation between all ROs

To be able to effectively co-ordinate the administration of the poll, you will need to ensure you understand the challenges across the whole of the police area and use this to inform your plans. For example:

- Will you have scheduled combined polls in your police area? If so, what will the scale of the combination be? You will also need to ensure your plans cover the potential for any by-elections.

- What is the level of knowledge and experience among LROs in your area of the SV voting system and the processes involved? Ensure LROs are familiarised with the processes involved at SV elections.

- Have there been any changes to the political landscape across all or parts of the police area that could have an impact? For example, there may be greater scrutiny from voters, candidates and the media and you will need to manage the expectations of all those with an interest in the result.

- What will be the likely turnout? The potential for a high turnout should be reflected in all aspects of planning.

- Ensure your plans cover the potential for a significant number of new or less experienced candidates and agents.

To help you meet any challenges, you will need to set up processes for effective co-operation and communication between the different Returning Officers in your police area.

You will also need to put in place detailed and robust plans for monitoring and maintaining the integrity across the police area.

2.1   The 5 May 2016 elections will bring their own particular challenges, and your work to deliver a well-run PCC election will come under considerable scrutiny – from voters, candidates and the media.

2.2   While there are lessons which can and should be learnt from the experience in 2012, this is still only the second set of scheduled PCC elections and so experience of managing this type of poll is limited, even for those who have worked as PARO before. In any case, the changes in legislation – and landscape – since the last poll, together with the scale of combination of polls across Wales and much of England, make this event different from any other electoral event you may have delivered previously.

2.3   This chapter seeks to highlight some of the particular aspects of context relevant to these polls which you should ensure underpin all aspects of your planning.

Combination

2.4   PAROs across England and Wales will each have their own specific challenges, and a key factor impacting on the delivery of the election in each case will be whether the poll at the PCC election is combined with the poll at another election.

2.5   In **Wales**, the combination of the poll at the National Assembly for Wales election with the poll at the PCC election will present particular challenges for planning for and delivering the polls. Early communication and effective on-going working will be required between all relevant Returning Officers and their staff to ensure the delivery of well-run polls.

2.6   In **England**, local government elections (including parish and Mayoral elections), and possibly neighbourhood planning referendums and council tax referendums are taking place across parts of the country and as such there may be some or all voting areas within the police area where the poll for the PCC election will be combined with another poll or polls. Effective co-operation between the different Returning Officers across the police area will be vital. In particular, combination presents particular challenges in respect of voter information and the complexity of the verification and count.

Nature of the contests

2.7   The PCC elections will be substantially different from other elections in the UK. For example, if there are more than 2 candidates standing in the police area, they are held under the supplementary vote system (SV), which is only otherwise used at Mayoral elections and which means many LROs may not be familiar with the processes involved. At an SV election, voters can vote for a first and second choice candidate they want to elect. If a candidate obtains more than 50% of the first choice votes, they will be declared elected. If no candidate obtains more than 50% of the first choice votes, all candidates except for those in first and second place are eliminated. The ballot papers showing a first preference for one of the eliminated candidates are checked for their second preference. Any second preference votes for the remaining two candidates are then added to their first preference votes and the candidate with the most votes is elected.

2.8   Also, the elections involve co-ordination across a number of local authority areas. In addition, there will be challenges around making sure that voters understand what they need to in order to be able to cast their vote – or votes where the poll is combined – in the way they intended.

2.9   The table in Appendix B illustrates the various voting systems that are likely to be used on 5 May 2016 and which could be used within all or parts of your police area.

2.10 The evolving political landscape could mean that even in places where there have traditionally been large majorities this may no longer be the case, meaning the focus and circumstances could be different from anything experienced in your area before.

2.11 There may be a significant number of new or less experienced candidates and agents who are unfamiliar with the practices and processes of an election and who will need your support to be able to participate effectively. Even those who are more experienced will have limited experience of standing at a PCC election given that these polls are still relatively new.

2.12 Given the possibility of close and hard-fought contests, you should be prepared for the integrity of the elections to be scrutinised. Allegations and cases of electoral fraud will not only have a negative impact on the confidence of electors and campaigners, but they may also have a significant impact on your capacity to manage the elections process effectively. It is therefore crucial that you put in place detailed and robust plans for monitoring and maintaining the integrity of the elections in your area. You should work closely with the local police, ensuring you have in place good lines of communication for referring any allegations.

Scale

2.13 Many aspects of planning for the elections will need to reflect assumptions as to the likely turnout. Establishing such assumptions at an early stage in planning is of key importance as the scope for adjusting plans is limited at a later stage in the process. There are always challenges with developing such planning assumptions, with it often being difficult to predict in advance of the election period what the levels of engagement in the particular polls are likely to be. Given the potential for high levels of interest and engagement in the elections, some of which may not emerge until close to the polls, the potential for a high turnout should be reflected in all aspects of planning for the polls.

2.14 As the polls become closer, the context will continue to evolve as the campaigns pick up pace. You will need to be prepared to react to events which could have an impact on the effective delivery of the polls, and this will include having robust contingency plans in place that you can turn to where required. If, for example, there are televised Leaders debates relating to polls taking place elsewhere in the UK on 5 May 2016, these could perhaps result in a late surge on turnout.

2.15 The potential for a high number of applications for registration close to the deadline for the elections should be anticipated and built into planning, reflecting lessons learnt from the experience of the May 2015 elections.

2.16 The media focus on the verification, count and declaration of results could be significant and it will be important to manage expectations, not only of the media but of all with an interest in the results, by consulting on your proposed approach and subsequently communicating clearly what you expect to deliver and by when, particularly where combination will impact on your expected result declaration times.

2.17 There are a range of factors which will impact on how the verification and counting of votes will be managed in each police area - the size, population, geography and demographics of the police area, and the scale of combination, will all have an impact on the available options for managing this part of the process. This re-enforces the need for early engagement and consultation on how these will be managed.

2.18 In particular, turnout will impact planning for the verfication and count, with it being vital that appropriate provision is made to ensure that verification and count processes are as accurate and efficient as possible. The potential need for two rounds of counting at a supplementary vote election means there are additional factors you need to take into consideration in planning the result collation process overall to co-ordinate the timing and organisation of verification and counting to ensure that they are carried out in a timely and effective way across the police area.

3 Roles and responsibilities at the May 2016 elections

> ⚠ **Understand the management structure in place for administering the polls across your police area**
>
> - Decide on your approach for ensuring the polls are administered consistently across the police area (see also Chapter **4** for further information).
>
> - Decide, in consultation with LROs, whether you will reserve for yourself the printing of the PCC ballot paper and the counting of the PCC votes. Where polls are not combined, you may also reserve for yourself the verification of ballot papers.

Police Area Returning Officer

3.1   There are 41 police areas in England (excluding London) and Wales[i]. The Secretary of State is responsible for designating a Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) for each police area, who must be an Acting Returning Officer for a UK Parliamentary constituency falling wholly or partly within the police area.[1]

3.2   PAROs are responsible for the overall conduct of the PCC election, and for liaising with and co-ordinating the work of Local Returning Officers (LROs) in the police area. The job description produced by the Cabinet Office for the purposes of PARO recruitment provides an overview of the role and responsibilities of PAROs.

3.3   As PARO you are personally responsible for the following specific aspects of the PCC election:

- giving notice of the election[2]
- the nomination procedures[3]
- encouraging participation[4]

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[i] At the time of publication, the UK Government had introduced legislation enabling the cancellation of the PCC election in Greater Manchester in 2016 and the election for the mayor of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, who would automatically become the PCC for the area, to take place in May 2017.

- ensuring that the requirements as to the content of candidate election addresses, and the procedures for submitting those addresses, are complied with[5]
- the calculation of votes given for each candidate[6]
- the declaration of the result[7]

3.4 You may also take on responsibility for the following LRO duties by giving notice to the relevant LRO(s):

- printing the PCC ballot papers
- verification (although this does not apply in Wales or those parts of England with combined polls. Where polls have been combined, the responsibility for the verification falls on the Returning Officer for the other poll)
- counting the PCC votes[8]

3.5 Any decision to take on these functions should be made at an early stage in the process, following consultation with the relevant LROs, in order to provide clarity for all involved and to enable these activities to be planned for and taken forward as appropriate.

3.6 As part of your considerations you should take into account the number of voting areas in your police area and the scale of the activities that you will need to undertake. If you do take on any of these LRO duties, you will need to ensure that you are adequately resourced to be able to deliver them effectively.

3.7 You must do whatever is necessary for conducting the PCC election in your police area. You can give general or specific directions to local Returning Officers for any voting area wholly or partly comprised within the police area about the discharge of their functions in relation to PCC elections, including directions requiring local Returning Officers to take specified steps in preparation for a PCC election and directions requiring them to provide you with information that they have or are entitled to have. Local Returning Officers are required to comply with any direction you have given to them. You can give directions that apply to all local Returning Officers, or only to one or some. [9]

3.8 Where the poll at the PCC election is combined with the poll at another election taking place on 5 May 2016, the LRO will not have responsibility for the combined functions, which will limit your power to give directions.[ii] You are only able to exercise your power of direction over LROs in respect of those aspects of the PCC election for which they, as LROs, are responsible (as per

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[ii] In the case of combination **solely** with the poll for a European Parliamentary election, the LRO for the PCC election discharges the combined functions. Where the poll at a PCC election is combined with the poll at any other election, the Returning Officer for one of the other polls discharges these functions. In the case of combination **solely** with a neighbourhood planning and council tax referendum, the LRO and CO will need to agree who will take on the combined functions.

the bullet points underneath paragraph **3.4** above). Your power of direction does not apply to those combined functions that are taken on by other Returning Officers.

3.9 There is, however, one exception and that is in relation to the verification of ballot paper accounts. As PARO you are able to direct the time by which verification procedures must begin and whichever Returning Officer is responsible for discharging this function must comply with your direction.[10]

3.10 Further information on your role and responsibilities as PARO, including guidance on the issuing of directions, can be found in Chapter **4**.

Role and responsibilities of other Returning Officers at the May 2016 elections

3.11 The combination of polls that will be taking place across Wales and in parts of England means that there will be a number of Returning Officers with responsibility for delivering particular elements of the 5 May 2016 elections.

Wales

3.12 In Wales the PCC election will be combined with the National Assembly for Wales election. There are 60 Assembly Members (AMs) in the National Assembly for Wales – 40 constituency AMs and 20 regional AMs, with 4 regional AMs elected to represent each of the 5 electoral regions.

Constituency Returning Officer (CRO)

3.13 At a National Assembly for Wales election the Constituency Returning Officer is responsible for all aspects of the administration of the constituency election and elements of the regional election that fall within their constituency area, including the conduct of the poll and the verification and count.

3.14 The Constituency Returning Officer is the Returning Officer responsible for local government elections in that area, who is normally a senior officer of the local authority and independent of the authority in respect of their electoral functions.

3.15 Where a constituency covers more than one local authority area, the Constituency Returning Officer is designated by Welsh Ministers.

3.16 In addition to being responsible for all aspects of the administration of the constituency election and elements of the regional election that fall within the constituency area, for the 5 May National Assembly for Wales and PCC elections, the CRO will also take on responsibility for the combined elements of the poll[11], including:

- the provision of polling stations[12]
- the appointment and training of Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks[13]
- conducting the poll[14]
- the notice of situation of polling stations[15]
- the equipment of polling stations[16]
- the notification of the secrecy requirements at polling stations[17]
- signing certificates of employment for polling station staff allowing them to vote at the polling station they are working at, as opposed to the one allocated to them[18]
- authorisation to order the removal of persons from polling stations[19]
- verification of all ballot papers[20]
- where it has been decided to combine the issue of postal votes:
  - the corresponding number list
  - the issue of postal votes including creating a copy of the postal voters list and proxy postal voters list and marking it on issue
  - the opening of postal votes including the marking the returned postal vote statements on the lists and the verification of the personal identifiers on the returned postal voting statements[21]

Regional Returning Officer (RRO)

3.17 At a National Assembly for Wales election the RRO is responsible for dealing with nominations for the regional election and for the allocation of regional seats.

3.18 The RRO for each electoral region is designated by Welsh Ministers.

3.19 The RRO is personally responsible for:

- publication of the notice of election for the regional contest
- administration of the nomination process for the regional contest
- directing, if necessary, CROs in your region about the means of informing you of the number of votes given for registered parties and individual candidates for the regional poll in their constituency
- publication of the statement of persons and parties nominated and the notice of poll for the regional contest
- collation and calculation of the number of votes given for each individual candidate and political party in the regional contest, and calculation of the allocation of seats for the electoral region
- declaration of the regional result

The Local Returning Officer (LRO)

3.20 At a Police and Crime Commissioner election, an LRO is appointed for each voting area within the police area. It is our understanding that, in Wales, the voting area will be defined as the Assembly constituency area and the CRO will also be the LRO.

3.21 The LRO for the Police and Crime Commissioner election is the person who acts as Returning Officer for local elections in that area and is normally a

senior officer of the local authority.[22]Where a constituency contains more than one local authority area, the CRO will be designated by Welsh Ministers.

3.22 The personal responsibilities of the LRO at the 5 May 2016 elections in Wales are limited to:

- counting the PCC votes for the voting area (unless the PARO has given notice that they will take on responsibility for this) [23]
- transmitting the voting area result to the PARO[24]
- printing the PCC election ballot papers (unless the PARO has given notice that they will take on responsibility for this)[25]
- managing the postal vote process at the PCC election (but only if the decision has been taken to not combine the issue of postal votes at the Assembly and PCC elections)[26]

England

3.23 In England, local government elections (including parish and Mayoral elections), and possibly council tax referendums and neighbourhood planning referendums are taking place across parts of the country and as such there may be some or all voting areas within the police area where the poll for the PCC election will be combined with another poll or polls.

Local government Returning Officer

3.24 Local elections are run by the local government Returning Officer, who is normally a senior officer of the local authority and independent of the authority in respect of their electoral functions.[27]

3.25 Where polls are combined, in addition to being responsible for all aspects of the administration of the local government elections, the local government RO will also take on responsibility for the combined elements of the poll[28], including:

- the provision of polling stations
- the appointment and training of Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks
- conducting the poll
- the notice of situation of polling stations
- the equipment of polling stations
- the notification of the secrecy requirements at polling stations
- signing certificates of employment for polling station staff allowing them to vote at the polling station they are working at, as opposed to the one allocated to them
- authorisation to order the removal of persons from polling stations
- verification of all ballot papers
- where it has been decided to combine the issue of postal votes:
  - the corresponding number list
  - the issue of postal votes including creating a copy of the postal voters list and proxy postal voters list and marking it on issue
  - the opening of postal votes including the marking the returned postal

vote statements on the lists and the verification of the personal identifiers on the returned postal voting statements

3.26 At a mayoral and neighbourhood planning referendum the referendum is the responsibility of the Counting Officer (CO) who is the RO for principal area elections. [29]

3.27 Where only a neighbourhood planning or mayoral referendum and the PCC election are combined, you should liaise early on in the planning process with the relevant LRO and CO to discuss responsibility for the combined functions.

Local Returning Officers (LROs)

3.28 The Local Returning Officer for the PCC election is the person who acts as Returning Officer for local elections in that area.[30] They are responsible for running the PCC election at a local level.

3.29 Where the PCC election is not combined with any other poll, the LRO will be personally responsible for the conduct of the poll, the issue and receipt of postal ballot papers and the verification and counting of the votes in their voting area (unless the PARO has given notice that they will take on responsibility for the verification and counting of the PCC votes in the voting area).

3.30 Where the PCC election is combined with the poll at another election, the LRO will be the same person as the local government RO and will be personally responsible for the following in their voting area[31]:

- counting the PCC votes for your voting area (unless the PARO has given notice that they will take on responsibility for this)
- transmitting the voting area result to the PARO
- printing the PCC election ballot papers (unless the PARO has given notice that they will take on responsibility for this)
- managing the postal vote process at the PCC election (but only if the decision has been taken to not combine the issue of postal votes at the local and PCC elections)

Electoral Registration Officer

3.31 The Electoral Registration Officer is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters' lists for their local authority area. In England and Wales, the Electoral Registration Officer is normally a senior officer in the local authority and may also be the Returning Officer.

4 Your role and responsibilities as PARO

> **Understand your role and responsibilities as PARO**
>
> - Consider how you will ensure consistency across the police area and how you will monitor the delivery of the PCC election across the police area.
>
> - Ensure that any guidance and directions you issue are compatible with our guidance and performance standards framework. If in doubt, contact us at the earliest opportunity to discuss.
>
> - Put in place a communications plan for communicating any directions and guidance.
>
> - Decide, in consultation with LROs, whether you will reserve for yourself the printing of the PCC ballot paper and the counting of the PCC votes. Where polls are not combined, you may also reserve for yourself the verification of ballot papers.
>
> - Consider your approach to appointing deputies, including the number required and for what purposes you will be appointing them.
>
> - Put in place a procedure for the correction of procedural errors, including those made by LROs.
>
> - Ensure you have appropriate insurance cover in place.
>
> - Ensure you have a clear understanding of your statutory functions and a working knowledge of the legislation.
>
> - Understand the challenges across your police area (see also Chapter **2**).
>
> - Put in place a count protocol for transmitting the local verification and count totals.

4.1 As PARO you are responsible for the overall conduct of the election of a Police and Crime Commissioner for the police area for which you have been appointed.

4.2 In addition to your legal duties as outlined in the previous chapter, you are also responsible for providing leadership and co-ordinating the work of Local Returning Officers to ensure that the election is well-run and that voters

and those standing for election receive a consistently high-quality service across the whole of the police area.

Personal responsibility

4.3   You are personally liable for the conduct of the PCC election relating to your role and duties. Where polls are combined you are personally liable for the functions that fall to you as PARO.

4.4   You may appoint one or more deputies to assist you in delivering the election, and you should take steps to put the arrangements you identify as appropriate in place at an early stage in the process.[32] You should ensure that you appoint one or more deputies to assume your role in case you are unable to act personally as PARO. You should ensure that any deputies appointed have the skills and knowledge required to carry out the functions that they have been assigned. You must make any appointment of a deputy in writing and should include details of the functions that the deputy is authorised to exercise on your behalf.[33] The deputy's acceptance should also be given in writing.

4.5   While you can appoint one or more deputies to discharge any or all of your functions, you cannot delegate your personal responsibility for the conduct of the election or any aspects of it that you are responsible for delivering.

4.6   You are also subject to breach of official duty provisions. This means that if you or your appointed deputies are, without reasonable cause, guilty of any act or omission in breach of official duty you (and/or they) are liable on summary conviction to an unlimited fine. [34]

4.7   You have the power to take such steps as you think appropriate to remedy acts or omissions that arise in connection with any function of the elections and that are not in accordance with the rules.[35]

4.8   This power allows you to correct procedural errors that you, as PARO, or an LRO, an Electoral Registration Officer, a Presiding Officer or a person providing goods or services to you (or any deputies of any of these) make. LROs have the same power to correct procedural errors and you should ensure that they consult you before exercising this power.

4.9   Where you or an LRO use the power to correct procedural errors for the PCC election, you should ensure that the error and corrective action taken is explained to those affected including, where applicable, voters and candidates and agents. You should ensure that you keep a record of:

- any errors identified including what the error was and how it occurred
- the impact of the error
- any advice you or the LRO received (including legal advice)
- what measures were taken to correct the error, and how these were communicated

4.10 Where you remedy an act or omission in full by using this power, you will not be guilty of an offence of breach of official duty.[36] You should remember that the power to correct procedural errors does not enable the votes to be recounted once the result has been declared.

Insurance and indemnity

4.11 You should ensure that you have appropriate insurance cover.

4.12 The Cabinet Office will be providing an indemnity against uninsured claims arising out of the conduct of your duties and you will be sent further information from them in due course. You should be prepared to demonstrate robust planning and decision-making processes in the event of any challenge to the election and a claim against this cover.

Your skills and knowledge

4.13 You should have a working knowledge of the relevant legislation governing the conduct of the election. This means that, in addition to having a clear understanding of your statutory functions, you should have an overview of what the legislation contains and an understanding of how it affects the administration of the election, so that you can review, question where necessary, and quality-assure the whole process in the police area.

4.14 There are management responsibilities attached to your role. For example, you should:

- provide leadership to LROs within your police area, which should be supplemented with advice, guidance and training as required, to ensure that the election can be well-run and that voters receive a high-quality service wherever they are voting
- co-ordinate and administer the planning of the election at the police area level, in line with the legislation and Electoral Commission guidance and performance standards
- take all necessary steps to ensure that the local authority provides you with the resources you need to fulfil your role, as they must do by law
- oversee the planning, project management and risk management of the election at police area level
- provide guidance and support to LROs in preparing and maintaining a proper project plan and risk management approach for the election
- ensure that LROs have the necessary plans and arrangements in place for the conduct of the election in their voting area
- provide guidance and support to your staff, monitor progress and receive regular feedback on activities
- support LROs in administering the election and provide appropriate oversight of their work
- monitor the performance of LROs and identify and oversee any actions necessary to mitigate any issues arising

- ensure that your staff, and LROs and their staff, are appropriately trained to deliver the roles required of them
- ensure that election accounts are completed in a timely manner
- maintain an effective working relationship with your police Single Point of Contact (SPOC)

Performance standards

4.15 The Electoral Commission sets standards and monitors and reports on the performance of Returning Officers.[37] The performance standards applicable to the May 2016 polls can be found at Appendix A – Performance standards for Returning Officers.

4.16 The framework was developed around the key outcomes from the perspective of voters and those who want to stand for election, and in particular whether Returning Officers are taking the necessary steps to deliver the following outcomes:

- Voters are able to vote easily and know that their vote will be counted in the way they intended
- It is easy for people who want to stand for election to find out how to get involved, what the rules are, and what they have to do to comply with these rules, and they can have confidence in the management of the process and the result

4.17 The framework includes a standard which specifically covers the role of statutory office holders with a power of direction, such as PAROs, and focuses on the co-ordination and management of the poll. Elements of performance standards 1 and 2 – which focus on ensuring that planning for and delivery of the poll enables voters to vote easily and know that their vote will be counted in the way they intended and enables people who want to stand for election to find out how to get involved, what the rules are, and what they have to do to comply with these rules so that they can have confidence in the management of the process and the result – are also applicable to PAROs. Throughout this guidance we have highlighted what we expect PAROs will need to have in place and what we would expect to see to be able to be satisfied that the key outcomes of the standards can be delivered.

4.18 The Commission's guidance for other Returning Officers at the May 2016 elections will set out what they will need to have in place and what we would expect to be able to see to be satisfied that the key outcomes of the standards relating to their functions can be delivered. The performance standards framework and guidance should give PAROs a good indication of what they should be expecting of LROs within their police area, to inform their work to monitor and support LROs in their area, which the Commission's teams will support them with and which is covered in more detail below.

Managing and co-ordinating the poll

4.19 In deciding on how you will manage the PCC election in your police area, you will first need to establish the scale of combination in your area. You will need to work closely with the other Returning Officers in the police area to ensure you fully understand the context and challenges across the whole of your area. It will be important to agree planning assumptions at an early stage, recognising that these will need to be kept under review to respond appropriately should circumstances change.

4.20 We recognise the importance of local knowledge and experience and that there is no 'one size fits all approach' which can be applied to, or even within, each police area. Every police area has its own set of circumstances which will influence your decisions on how best to ensure a consistent, high-quality experience for those voting and standing for election across the police area.

4.21 The PCC election is one election delivered across a number of local authority areas. You should therefore consider at an early stage how you will ensure that the election is administered to a consistent standard across the police area, so that voters receive a consistently high quality of service regardless of where they live and the election produces a result that is accepted, and this should be reflected in the objectives and success measures set out in your project plan.

4.22 There will be aspects of the election process where you will particularly want to ensure that there is consistency, most notably in the areas that impact on the voters' experience – for example, the issue of poll cards and postal votes, and the staffing of polling stations – as well as in respect of the verification and counting of votes.

4.23 There are various tools available to you to ensure consistency. It is for you to decide, based on factors such as your knowledge, experience and relationships with the ROs in your area, and taking into consideration issues of scope and scale, how to best achieve the objectives set out in your election plan. Your power to give directions is one tool available for you to use, but whether to give directions, on what matters, and to whom is at your discretion.

4.24 Where the PCC election is combined with the poll at another election the power of direction will not always be capable of being used for some aspects of the process depending on which RO is responsible for them in practice, therefore other tools to ensure consistency – such as cooperation and consultation – will be crucial.

4.25 Your project plan should reflect how and when you will reach a decision on your approach to managing and co-ordinating the poll in your police area and how you will implement this approach in practice. It should also include a communications strategy to support this work.

4.26 As a minimum, you should have in place processes for monitoring the delivery of the PCC elections across the police area, including compliance with any directions and/or guidance you have given and the Commission's performance standards. You should think about how you will support other Returning Officers and electoral administrators in the area in managing the polls and any emerging issues.

4.27 The Commission's teams across England and Wales will be available to support you throughout the PCC election. Further detail on our plans for support and monitoring at the May 2016 elections will be included in a future bulletin, available no later than the end of November 2015.

4.28 You may choose to issue written guidance to Local Returning Officers on particular aspects of the election. In order to effectively manage the result collation process, you should put in place a protocol for the transmission and receipt of local verification and count totals.

4.29 In addition, you should arrange training and/or briefing sessions for LROs and their staff.

> To be able to achieve the outcome set out in performance standard 3, you will need to have arrangements in place to ensure the consistent delivery of the poll.
>
> To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to set out how you intend to ensure consistency of delivery, including whether you have issued (or intend to issue) guidance, and whether and how you have used (or intend to use) your power to give directions.

4.30 As part of your planning process you should identify what directions you are planning to issue to LROs, although there may of course be issues that arise at a later stage on which it becomes desirable or necessary for you to give directions at short notice. Should you decide that the use of directions is appropriate, your project plan should include specific plans for developing and issuing directions and a communications strategy to support this process.

4.31 If you are considering giving directions or guidance to LROs you should take into account any relevant criteria in the performance standards framework and/or Electoral Commission guidance. The performance standards framework and Commission guidance reflect what we and the UK Electoral Advisory Board (EAB) agree that Returning Officers need to do to prepare for and deliver well-run elections. This shared agreement, along with the flexibility in how the standards are achieved, should reduce the potential risk of conflict between the criteria of the standards and any guidance or directions issued by PAROs.

4.32 However, in order that LROs can be clear as to precisely what is expected of them, if you do intend to give any guidance or directions that are different or contrary to the criteria of the standards, please contact your local

Commission office in the first instance to discuss the implications so that we can avoid as far as possible there being any unresolved conflicting requirements placed on LROs.

4.33 In deciding whether to give a direction on a particular aspect of the election, and what that direction should be, you should aim wherever possible to consult your LROs, so that you can take into account any relevant local factors in making your decisions. This consultation should help to reduce the risk of any directions having unintended consequences and potentially maximise the ability of LROs to comply with them.

4.34 In particular, you should ensure that when you are deciding on any potential directions you intend to give, you have considered and consulted with other Returning Officers on whether and how the direction applies in areas where polls are combined.

4.35 Any consultation on possible directions should be planned for and completed in good time to enable the prompt and timely communication of your decision and any associated directions to LROs, to enable them to plan and prepare for the election accordingly.

4.36 If you decide to exercise your power of direction, you should do so with regard to the following principles and aims:

- trust: people should be able to trust the way our elections work
- participation: it should be straightforward for people to participate in our elections (whether as campaigners, candidates or voters) and people should be confident that their vote counts
- consistency across the police area
- transparency
- professionalism
- accurate results in which people can have confidence

4.37 You should communicate any directions to LROs at the earliest opportunity, and in particular any requiring them to take specified preparatory steps. You should keep a record of what directions have been given, when, and to whom.

4.38 Your plans for giving directions should take account of the fact that there may be circumstances where LROs are unable to comply with a direction, for whatever reason. You should therefore ensure that you develop plans to deal with these situations, which may include establishing a process for considering requests for exceptions to your directions. You should keep a record of any instances where you have agreed that a LRO can deviate from a direction.

We will ask you for updates on any use of your power to give directions to Local Returning Officers at regular points during the election planning period. More details are provided in Appendix A.

5 Planning and organisation

> **Prepare a project plan and risk register, treating each as a 'living document' and use them to monitor progress and manage risks**

- Set out what you want to achieve and what success would look like.

- Evaluate the planning and delivery of previous polls, if not already done so, and use your findings to feed into your planning.

- Ensure your plan covers contingency planning and business continuity arrangements.

- Liaise and seek input from LROs in developing your risk register and ensure they are aware of any risks you identify, as well as any mitigating action. Ensure any mitigating actions are taken forward.

- Set up a project team.

- Set up a communications plan to support consistency in the delivery of the election across the police area.

- Establish a schedule of regular meetings with LROs.

- Ensure plans cover how you will coordinate any public awareness activity across the police area. Establish a communications network involving a representative of each LRO to help share information and coordinate activity.

- Ensure the Commission's national registration campaign feeds into your plans and seek to co-ordinate activity in your area with national activity where possible.

- Ensure stakeholder communication is embedded throughout your planning, with particular arrangements in place for work with the media.

5.1 The key objective of implementing project and risk management processes is to ensure that adequate preparations are made in advance of the poll, with risks identified and properly managed, so that the poll can be delivered effectively. You should set out at an early stage what you want to achieve and what success would look like for you, and this should be reflected in the objectives and success measures set out in your project plan. You should work with LROs in developing these objectives and success measures and ensure that they also reflect these in their own plans.

Project plan

5.2   You should prepare a project plan in relation to your functions as PARO, treat it as a 'living document', keep it under regular review and use it to monitor progress. You may choose to integrate some or all of this into your wider May 2016 election planning documentation. Whichever option you choose, you should ensure that your planning supports the delivery of the following outcomes:

- Voters are able to vote easily and know that their vote will be counted in the way they intended
- It is easy for people who want to stand for election to find out how to get involved, what the rules are, and what they have to do to comply with these rules, and they can have confidence in the management of the process and the result

To be able to achieve the outcome set out in performance standard 3, you will need to develop and implement robust project management processes. This should include evaluating the planning for and delivery of previous polls and identifying lessons learnt, updating plans as required. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place project planning documentation which is kept under regular review. This part of the guidance sets out what this project planning documentation should cover.

The Commission has produced a template project plan that you may wish to use and adapt to fit your local circumstances. The template includes a number of example deliverables and tasks including all of those that should be included to be able to demonstrate that the outcomes set out in the performance standards can be delivered. In addition to those identified in the template you should also add in any other deliverables and tasks you identify as necessary, including ones specific to the circumstances in your electoral region.

5.3   Before starting your detailed planning, you should set out what you want to achieve and what success would look like. The Commission has provided some sample aims and suggested tools that will allow you to measure the extent to which the conduct of the election has been successful as part of the template project plan.

5.4   If you have not already done so, you should evaluate the planning for, and delivery of, previous polls and identify what worked well and what did not, and use these findings to inform your planning. In particular you should identify any lessons learnt from previous similar electoral events, particularly those with a regional management aspect – the 2012 Police and Crime Commissioner elections and the European Parliamentary elections in 2014 – which should assist with informing your planning. If you have not worked as PARO or delivered any poll with an element of regional co-ordination

previously, you should consider how you can learn from the experiences of others who have carried out such a role. Even if you have worked as PARO previously, there may still be benefits to be gained from taking into account any lessons learnt not just from your own area, but from other police areas.

5.5　Your project plan for the election should also include a plan to evaluate procedures post-election and identify lessons learnt.

5.6　Your project plan should cover contingency planning and business continuity arrangements. The continuity arrangements should include provisions to cover loss of staff and loss of venues during the election period.

5.7　Additionally, your project plan should identify the resources and staffing required. You should take all necessary steps to ensure that the local authority makes the necessary resources available to you to enable you to discharge your functions.

5.8　The Commission has published timetables for the May 2016 elections – for a standalone PCC election, for combined PCC and local government polls in England and for combined National Assembly for Wales and PCC polls. The timetables contain the statutory deadlines as set out in the election rules which can be used to assist you in your planning.

Risk register

5.9　You should prepare a risk register, treat it as a 'living document' and keep it under regular review, using it to monitor the risks and document any changes in risk, as well as ensuring that mitigating actions are identified and are being taken forward, including by LROs where appropriate. Your risk register should consider risk and risk management in relation to your functions as PARO, plus any key risks relevant to the administration of the poll across the police area. It should identify the seriousness of any risk by indicating both the likelihood of the risk occurring and the impact of the risk if it did occur.

5.10 In developing your risk register you should ensure that you liaise with and seek input from LROs as necessary, and that they are aware of any risks you identify that may directly affect the election in their voting area, as well as any mitigating actions for which they are responsible.

5.11 The Commission has developed a template risk register that you may wish to use. The template provides some example risks and suggestions for mitigating those risks. In addition to the risks identified in the template you should also identify any other risks, including ones specific to your police area, and how you would mitigate those.

Staffing

5.12 You should establish a project team to support you in carrying out your functions as PARO. The project team should include the relevant key staff to

support you in each specific function, including encouraging and co-ordinating electoral participation across the police area and ensuring that candidates' election addresses are compliant with legislation.

5.13 In addition to yourself your project team should include:

- other Returning Officers in the police area
- any appointed deputies
- other election staff members
- any other key personnel you consider appropriate

5.14 The project team should have a clear remit and understanding of the tasks to be carried out. At the planning stage a schedule of meetings should be prepared, and a record of each meeting should be kept as an audit trail of what was discussed and of any decisions made.

Communications

5.15 As PARO you will need to put in place communication plans to support the delivery of the election. These plans should support you in effectively liaising with and coordinating the work of LROs to ensure the consistent delivery of the poll across the police area, and with managing stakeholder coordination and communication, including media liaison.

5.16 When developing your communication plans you should identify and document how you will communicate in relation to key aspects of your approach to managing and co-ordinating the poll, including:

- consulting on and giving guidance and, where appropriate, directions
- disseminating information
- monitoring LRO planning and performance
- communicating your plans for the processes for which you are responsible, particularly nominations and result collation
- coordinating public awareness activity
- providing advice and support to, and dealing with enquiries from, LROs and their staff

5.17 You should establish a schedule of regular meetings with LROs from across the police area to discuss options and issues, with a view to, where possible, reaching consensus on the decisions you need to make to deliver the election and meet the identified objectives and success measures. A record of each meeting should be kept as an audit trail of what was discussed and of any decisions made.

> To be able to achieve the outcome set out in performance standard 3, you will need to develop and implement plans for communicating with LROs. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place plans for communicating with LROs.

Raising awareness

5.18 You must take such steps as you think appropriate to encourage the participation of electors in the election, and in carrying out such activity you must have regard to any guidance issued by the Electoral Commission.[38] As PARO you should actively take the lead in promoting and sharing good practice and in coordinating awareness activity across the police area.

5.19 Your planning should take into account the need to work with LROs in your police area to ensure that local and police-area wide awareness activity is coordinated and that clear, consistent messages are communicated effectively to electors.

5.20 When preparing the public awareness strategy for your police area, you should document:

- the identification of your target audience
- the objectives and success measures of the activity
- risks – identification and mitigation
- resources – financial and staffing

5.21 Implementation of your strategy should be included within your overall project plan.

5.22 You should establish a communications network involving a representative of each LRO in your police area to share information and coordinate public awareness activity across the police area. This network can also be used to ensure that any communication relating to specific aspects of the election, such as the verification and counting of votes or the declaration of result, or issues that arise, for example allegations of electoral fraud, are dealt with effectively and consistently across the police area.

> To be able to achieve the outcome set out in performance standard 3, you will need to develop and implement a strategy for coordinating and delivering public awareness and engaging with electors across the police area. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place a strategy for coordinating and delivering public awareness activity and engaging with electors across the police area.

Information to electors

5.23 In order to effectively communicate information to electors you should consider who you want to reach through your awareness activity and the method of communication to be used. You should take advice and seek input from relevant staff at your local authority. You should also take into account the national registration campaign being carried out by the Electoral Commission and seek to co-ordinate activity in your area with the national activity as appropriate.

5.24 'Information' covers any information required by the elector in order to successfully participate. This may include information on:

- the election(s) themselves
- the date and hours of poll
- the location of polling stations
- any key deadlines (e.g. deadlines for applying to register to vote and for postal or proxy votes)
- how to vote (i.e. how to mark the ballot paper(s))
- what assistance is available to electors (e.g. information for disabled voters)
- how and when votes are counted
- how the result will be made known

5.25 You should ensure that all outgoing communications provide appropriate contact details to allow anyone to respond and obtain further information. You should consider what contact details are most appropriate in each case, working with LROs and their staff as required.

5.26 The public may also proactively make enquiries and you need to consider how a consistent approach to addressing such enquires can be achieved. You could, for example, consider developing agreed responses to FAQs for front line staff.

> The Commission will also provide templates and tools on our website to support you with providing information on elections. We will provide you with more information on what we will be making available and when in a future Bulletin.

There is also a frequently asked questions page on About My Vote, which will have FAQs relating to the elections and which people should be directed to, for example by providing a link from your own web pages to the About My Vote website.

Media liaison

5.27 You should ensure that stakeholder coordination and communication is embedded throughout your planning, with particular arrangements in place for working with the media, including:

- plans for coordinating media liaison within the police area, and strategies for dealing with both proactive communication and media liaison in relation to specific events such as the verification and counting of votes and the result declaration
- dealing with general media enquiries
- reactive handling of any issues that arise in relation to the election, for example allegations of electoral fraud

5.28 It is important that media communication is managed in a coordinated and consistent way across the police area in order to maintain public confidence that the election is being well-run. To achieve this effectively there should be a clear process in place for the police area to be followed by you, LROs and your respective communications teams to respond to any issues that arise.

6 Specific aspects of the election process

> This guidance is designed to provide PAROs with an overview of those aspects of the election process they are directly responsible for and aims to highlight where early preparations can be undertaken. Detailed guidance for PAROs on managing the nomination process and the verification and count will be available by the end of the year, although this will be dependent on the necessary legislation being clear in time to enable this.

Candidates and agents

- Work with LROs to coordinate engagement with candidates and agents across the police area. Put in place communication plans to ensure candidates and agents are provided with relevant information in a timely way. Consider with LROs how local information will be provided to candidates.

- Plan for candidate briefings.

- Estimate how many candidates might stand for election and feed this into your plans.

- Start discussions with EROs to determine how best to supply copies of the electoral register to candidates and your approach for the required candidate subscriber checks.

Production of ballot papers

- Decide, in consultation with LROs, whether you will print the PCC ballot papers centrally or whether they will need to be printed locally by the LROs.

- Agree, in consultation with LROs and (if combined, the relevant RO), the colour of the ballot papers to be used across the police area.

- Agree a print specification for PCC ballot papers as early as possible.

Absent voting

- Consult LROs on plans for issuing postal votes to ensure the timing for the receipt of postal votes by electors is consistent across the police area.

- Where polls are combined, agree with the relevant RO whether the issue of postal votes will be combined.

Maintaining the integrity of the election

- Put in place a single police area integrity plan that covers the specific steps you will take to identify an deal with any potential electoral fraud and how you will communicate your approach to provide public confidence.

- Liaise with your SPOC and ensure all LROs across the police area are communicating regularly with their SPOC.

- Ensure LROs' integrity plans fit into your police area integrity plan.

Verification, counting and collation of results

- Work closely with LROs in your area to inform any decisions about how the verification, counting and result collation will be organised and managed across the police area. However the verification and count are organised, you should ensure that LROs' plans will deliver a consistent standard of administration. Engage LROs at an early stage to inform the development of your approach. Also engage others with an interest, such as candidates, political parties, voters and the media.

- Decide, in consultation with LROs, whether you will take responsibility for counting the PCC votes. Where the polls are not combined, also decide in consultation with LROs, whether you will take responsibility for the verification. Notify LROs early in the planning process of your decision.

- In developing your plans, have regard to the Commission's principles for a well-run verification and count and consider other practical factors that may affect the organisation and timing of the verification and count.

- Record all decisions regarding the verification and count and communicate these to those affected, bearing in mind that there may be different arrangements in place in different parts of the police area.

- Put in place protocols for the two-way communication of verification and count information between you and LROs, including the communication of local count totals.

Candidates and agents

6.1   It should be straightforward for those campaigning to participate in elections. As PARO you are responsible for putting in place effective communication plans to ensure that candidates and agents are provided with clear and timely information – including information about local arrangements – to enable them to engage effectively in the election process. You will need to work with LROs in your area to coordinate engagement with candidates and agents both locally and at the police area level.

6.2   As PARO you are responsible for all aspects of the nomination process at the PCC election. You should take steps at an early stage to estimate how many candidates might stand for election as this can have a significant impact on various elements of the electoral process, including the printing of ballot papers, nominations, the management of the candidate information process, and the verification and count. In order to develop this estimate, and to keep it under review, you should consider how many candidates stood at the last PCC election, make early contact with political parties, monitor any expressions of interest and, in due course, monitor requests for nomination packs.

The register of electors

6.3   Each Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) in the police area is required to supply you with such copies of the electoral register as are required for the different aspects of the election.[39] For nominations you will need to have access to the registers for all voting areas within the police area in order to check whether the subscribers are valid and that subscribers have subscribed only one nomination paper within the police area.

6.4   A candidate at a PCC election can request a copy of the full register and absent voters' lists for every voting area within the police area in which they are standing. Registers can only be supplied if the candidate has made a written request.[40]

6.5   While the legal responsibility for receiving requests and supplying registers to candidates rests with the ERO for each voting area, you should start discussions with EROs at an early stage to determine how best to ensure that all candidates can be supplied with registers in such a way that they have timely and easy access to them, and decide how this will be communicated.

6.6   For example, you could decide to supply the registers centrally on behalf of the EROs as part of the nomination pack. The benefit of this approach is that it could operate so that candidates would only need to complete one request form covering all voting areas and receive their registers from a single place, instead of having to approach each ERO separately with individual requests. If you are considering supplying the registers centrally, you will have to discuss and agree with the EROs how the various registers could be brought together for subsequent supply and consider how this would work for both printed and data copies. The registers must be supplied in data form unless a printed copy has been specifically requested.[41] You will need to ensure that whatever arrangements you put in place are clearly communicated to the candidates and their agents to enable them to use the registers to campaign and obtain the necessary subscribers.

6.7   During nominations, in order to check whether subscribers are valid, you will need to have access to the electoral registers for all voting areas in the police area. You should start discussions with the relevant EROs at an early stage about how this can best be achieved in practice. For example, you may

want to collect copies of the register from all EROs in your police area to enable you to carry out the checks yourself, in which case you would need to decide whether you will receive the registers in hard copy or in data form. Alternatively you may wish to delegate the checking to individual LROs, requiring them to confirm to you whether the subscribers are entitled to subscribe the nomination paper.

6.8   In deciding how to manage this process, you should consider how you will ensure that your proposed approach will enable the checks to be carried out in a timely way. You will also need to take into account any practical issues related to managing registers if they have been produced by different software suppliers.

Guidance for candidates and agents

6.9   As part of your plans for engaging with candidates and agents and supporting their participation in the election, you should consider with local Returning Officers how information about local arrangements will be provided to candidates. Local arrangements will include details from local Returning Officers including their contact details and information on the dates, times and venues for the key election processes, including:

- postal vote issue and openings
- polling
- the verification and count

6.10 You could decide to collate and disseminate local information centrally, or to advise candidates and agents to contact the relevant local Returning Officer directly. Whatever method you choose you should ensure that candidates can easily access all the information they need in a timely way in order to be able to participate in the election.

> To be able to meet the outcome set out in performance standard 2 you will need to ensure that information on the election process and spending is easily available for candidates and agents, including through ensuring they are issued with written guidance. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place written guidance to be issued to candidates.

6.11 Briefing sessions should highlight the importance of following the election rules. In particular, you should provide a briefing on the nomination process, including deadlines, submission rules, the use of commonly used names, and the use of party names, descriptions and emblems, to ensure that those who want to stand for election have the necessary information to enable them to understand what they need to do. At your briefings, you should emphasise the importance of candidates understanding the qualifications and disqualifications that apply, as some are different to those that typically apply at other elections (particularly, the one relating to being convicted of an imprisonable offence) and could cause confusion even amongst those who have stood for election before.

6.12 The briefings should allow for the fact here may be a significant number of new or less experienced candidates and agents who are unfamiliar with the practices and processes of an election and who will need your support to be able to participate effectively. Even those who are more experienced will have limited experience of standing at a PCC election given that these polls are still relatively new.

> To be able to meet the outcome set out in performance standard 2 you will need to ensure information on the election process and spending is easily available for candidates and agents, including through providing briefing sessions. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to arrange briefing sessions and produce briefing resources.

6.13 Each candidate at a PCC election may provide an election address to the PARO for publication on a website provided by the Secretary of State. A candidate's election address must be prepared by their election agent and submitted to you on a form prescribed in law by a deadline set by you.[42] As part of your planning, you will need to consider how you are going to manage this process in practice. Further guidance on the website will be provided by the Cabinet Office or the Home Office.

Production of ballot papers

6.14 LROs are responsible for the production of ballot papers for their voting area. You may take on responsibility for printing ballot papers in any or all voting areas by giving notice to the relevant LRO. If you intend to take on this responsibility you should notify the relevant LROs at the outset of the election planning process, and provide them with information as soon as possible about when and how ballot papers will be delivered to them for issue in postal ballot packs and use in polling stations. If you do decide to take on the functions of the LRO in this area, the effective management of contractors and suppliers will be critical. General guidance on the management of contractors and suppliers, which would also be relevant for any PAROs taking on responsibility for the printing of ballot papers, can be found in our guidance for Returning Officers for England and Wales and our checklist on managing contractors and suppliers.

6.15 The form and content of the ballot paper is prescribed in legislation[43]. However, you should liaise with the local Returning Officers regarding ballot paper production and take such steps as you consider necessary, including giving specific guidance or directions to local Returning Officers as you think appropriate, to ensure that the form and content of the ballot papers issued at the election meet the legislative requirements and is consistent across the whole of the police area.

Ballot paper colour

6.16 The colour of the ballot paper is not prescribed, nor is the colour to be used for tendered ballot papers, although tendered ballot papers must be a

different colour from the ordinary ballot papers.[44] As PARO you should decide early on what colour the ballot papers will be in your police area and consult with LROs before making your decision. You should also consider consulting print suppliers about the colour to ensure that your choice does not give rise to supply or production difficulties.

6.17 At combined polls, different-coloured ballot papers must be used for each poll.[45] As PARO you will need to work closely with all the relevant Returning Officers across the police area to agree on the colour of the ballot papers to be used.

6.18 In deciding on the ballot paper colour you should take into account accessibility issues relating to colour and contrast. Section 6 of the Commission's Making your mark good practice design guidance contains advice on choosing colours.

Printing specifications

6.19 You should consult with LROs early on in the planning process about the production of ballot papers to enable them to confirm their requirements and printing arrangements with their suppliers at an early stage in the process.

6.20 Although the final content of the ballot paper cannot be confirmed until nominations have closed, in addition to confirming the colour, you will need to make decisions about the following elements of the ballot paper at an early stage:

• ballot paper numbers
• unique identifying mark
• the 'official mark'

6.21 In particular, you will need to consider how to ensure that no two ballot papers in the police area are duplicates. The unique identifying mark will need to be unique to each ballot paper across the police area. If you reach a decision that the unique identifying marks to be used across the police area are to be formed of a repeat of the ballot paper number with a prefix, you should consider developing unique prefixes for each voting area which would then give LROs flexibility as to how they number the ballot papers within their voting area.

Absent voting

6.22 You should consider how you are going to work with LROs to ensure that all absent voters across the police area receive a consistently high quality of service, irrespective of where they are registered. In particular you should consult with LROs about their plans for issuing postal votes in their voting area with a view to ensuring that the timing for the receipt of postal votes by electors is consistent across the police area.

6.23 If there are combined polls in your area, the relevant Returning Officer will need to decide whether to do a combined or separate issue of postal votes, and you will need to liaise with the relevant officer to ensure their decision is reflected in your overall plans.

Maintaining the integrity of the election

6.24 In order to ensure that voters and candidates can have confidence that votes will be cast and counted in the way voters intended, you will need to have in place plans and processes to identify any patterns of activity that might indicate potential electoral fraud. Your plans should include specific steps to identify and deal with any potential electoral fraud, and should also identify how you will communicate your approach to maintaining electoral integrity in order to support public confidence in the election.

6.25 You should take the lead on integrity issues to produce a single police area integrity plan in discussion with the police and all LROs to add to your overall project plan.

6.26 LROs' own integrity plans should fit within the police area plan and include any issues they have identified locally. Guidance for LROs on integrity plans can be found in our guidance for Returning Officers at the 2016 polls. for England and for Wales. You should ensure that you have considered the specific risks relating to each of the voting areas within the police area as a whole, including taking into account previous allegations of electoral fraud and the risk of electoral fraud allegations relating to other polls taking place on the same day as the PCC election.

6.27 You should also share the approach to tackling electoral fraud with parties, candidates and agents at briefing sessions and/or within the information provided to them and consider, where appropriate, inviting the police to attend any such briefing sessions.

6.28 In some cases, where there is a significant risk of electoral fraud allegations, you should also consider communicating your approach to tackling fraud more widely in advance of polling day to provide reassurance to voters and campaigners.

> Following consultation with Returning Officers, police forces and political parties, the Commission has issued a Code of Conduct for campaigners at elections and referendums. The Code applies to all campaigners, and sets out agreed standards of appropriate behaviour before and during an election or referendum. The Code also makes it clear that if a Returning Officer considers it appropriate to address further specific local risks, and has consulted with relevant national and local parties, we will support them in introducing additional local provisions which go beyond the terms of the nationally agreed Code.

6.29 You should establish and maintain contact with the police at an appropriate level. The police Single Point of Contact (SPOC) officer will be

able to provide you with contact details for the relevant force command or lead unit, and will also be able to explain any divisional structure within the force if appropriate. You should ensure that you are provided with the contact details of any divisional SPOCs, and ensure that the LROs in your area schedule regular contact with them.

6.30 You should also be aware that, because of the unique nature of the Police and Crime Commissioner elections, there may be instances when the police force decides that it would be appropriate to ask another force to investigate allegations of electoral fraud relating to these elections. In such an instance, you should ensure that you make contact with the relevant lead officer from the force leading the investigation as quickly as possible.

> More detailed guidance on maintaining the integrity of the election, including dealing with allegations of electoral fraud is in Part B – Planning and organisation of our guidance for LROs in Part B – Planning and organisation of our guidance for LROs England. and in Wales.

Verification, counting and collation of results

6.31 One of the aspects of the election process where you will particularly want to ensure that there is consistency is the verification and counting of votes and collation of the result. You will therefore need to consider when, where and how the votes are verified and counted by LROs.

6.32 You should work closely with the LROs in your area to inform any decisions early on about how the verification, counting and result collation is to be organised and managed across the police area, including the processes to be followed in collating the result, in order for them to develop their own plans for verification and counting accordingly.

6.33 Where the PCC election is combined with another election, effective co-operation between the different Returning Officers across the police area will be vital due to the increased complexity.

6.34 Where the poll at a PCC election has not been combined with the poll at another election, you may take responsibility for the verification and counting of the votes in any or all voting areas by giving notice to the relevant LRO. If you intend to take on this responsibility you should notify the relevant LROs early in the election planning process, and liaise with them regarding when and how the ballot papers are to be delivered to you.

Principles for effective verification, count and result collation processes

6.35 In developing your plans, processes and protocols you should have regard to the following key principles:

- All processes are transparent, with a clear and unambiguous audit trail.
- The verification produces an accurate result. This means that the number of ballot papers in each box either matches the number of ballot papers issued as stated on the ballot paper account or, if it does not:
  - the source of the variance has been identified and can be explained, and/or
  - the box has been recounted at least twice, until the same number of ballot papers is counted on two consecutive occasions.
- The count produces an accurate result, where the total number of votes cast for each candidate and rejected votes matches the total number of ballot papers given on the verification statement.
- The verification, count and result collation are timely.
- The secrecy of the vote is maintained at all times
- The security of ballot papers and other stationery is maintained at all times.

6.36 In developing a result collation process, you will need to consider each key stage that contributes to the overall result, including verifying the ballot papers and counting the votes in each of the voting areas, collating the local totals and calculating the result, and ensure that these are organised, managed and delivered in such a way as to ensure these principles can be met.

The verification and count

6.37 The potential need for two rounds of counting at a supplementary vote election means there are additional factors you need to take into consideration in planning the result collation process overall and in coordinating the work of LROs in organising and managing the verification and counting of votes for their voting areas.

6.38 Under the supplementary vote system all of the first preference votes in the police area must be counted, the local count totals must be provided to the PARO, and the result of that count must be declared, before you can calculate whether or not a candidate is elected.[46] If no candidate is elected, you must identify which of the candidates remain in the contest following the first count, after which the second preference votes can be counted.[47] If a second count does take place this is likely to take less time than the first count due to the reduced number of candidates remaining in the contest and the need to only count the second preference votes of voters whose first preference votes were cast for an eliminated candidate. These factors demonstrate the need for you as PARO to co-ordinate the timing and organisation of verification and counting to ensure that they are carried out in a timely and effective way across the police area.

6.39 In addition to considering how to meet the key principles, you should consider other relevant practical factors that will affect organisation and timing, such as:

- other polls taking place in the police area
- the number of local authorities within the police area
- turnout
- the geography of the police area
- size and capacity of venues
- transparency for candidates
- cost

The decision-making process

6.40 You should engage with LROs at an early stage to inform the development of your approach to co-ordinating the verification and counting of votes. You should consult with LROs on your proposals for when, where and how to verify and count the votes, identifying any planning assumptions you have used to inform your proposals. You should also engage in dialogue involving others with an interest before making your decision, including prospective candidates, political parties, voters and the media. You should explain what factors are relevant to your decision and make clear the implications of your proposals for when the result may be declared. While you should seek input from those affected or interested to inform your decision-making, ultimately the responsibility for making decisions remains with you as PARO.

6.41 Your consultation, dialogue and decision-making should be planned for and completed in good time, before the formal election campaign period begins, to enable your decisions to be communicated to LROs so that they can reflect them in their planning for the verification and count.

6.42 Once made, you should record your decisions about when, where and how to verify and count, and the information you took into account in making them, and be able to explain the reasons for your decisions if asked. You should communicate your decisions to those who may be affected or interested, including candidates and agents, voters, and the media and others whose views you sought or received before making your decisions.

6.43 If different arrangements will be in place in different parts of the police area, you should ensure that you communicate clearly to candidates and agents, and others who may be attending or observing verification or count processes, which aspects of those processes may differ, and why.

> To be able to achieve the outcome set out in performance standard 2, you will need to ensure verification and count processes are designed and managed to secure an accurate result. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place information on how the verification and counting is to be organised and managed, including the process you followed to arrive at your decision.

When to verify and count the votes

6.44 LROs must begin verifying the ballot paper accounts and counting the votes as soon as practicable after the close of poll.[48] They must also process any postal votes received on polling day, including those delivered to polling stations. As PARO, you will need to consider the timing of the verification, count and result calculation across the police area, and how you will ensure LROs are able to deliver to these timings.

6.45 Subject to the provision requiring the verification and counting of votes to begin as soon as practicable after the close of the poll, you can direct the time at which LROs must begin the verification process. Where the PCC poll is combined with another poll you can direct whichever Returning or Counting Officer is responsible for verification and counting of the ballot papers as to the time by which the verification is to begin. Any such direction as to timing should be developed in consultation with the relevant Returning or Counting Officer(s) to ensure that it can be met in practice.

6.46 The overarching principle that should underpin Returning Officers' decision-making in relation to the timing of election counts, is, the need to ensure an accurate result in which voters, candidates and political parties have confidence.

6.47 As PARO you should consider this principle carefully in deciding when, where and how the votes in each voting area will be verified and counted. You need to ensure that you are confident that both your and Local Returning Officers' processes are managed and resourced in a way that enables counting to produce a timely outcome, whether there are one or two counts. Your decision as to the timing of the verification and count should be capable of achieving the following principles:

- Each PCC election is a single poll producing one result for the police area as a whole. Each voting area's total counts towards a result for the police area as a whole and therefore it will be important to identify a defined period of time during which all the votes will be counted and totals announced for each voting area.

- The result of the election must be accurate. Underpinning the approach to the timing of the verification and count is the need to ensure an accurate result in which voters and candidates can have confidence. This means that the period of time specified for the verification and count to take place must be such that local Returning Officers can resource and conduct a well-run verification and count process within it.

- The potential for and extent of combined polls in the police area. Where polls are combined, whether in some or all voting areas, you will need to take this into account in identifying the options for timing of the verification and counting of the votes for the PCC election. You should obtain information from LROs about the other polls taking place and plans for verification and counting at the other polls, and use this

information to inform your planning assumptions. When you communicate the plans for when to verify and count the votes you should make clear what factors related to combination you have taken into account in making them, and any particular implications of your decisions for areas with combined polls. You should also ensure that you provide candidates and agents at the PCC election with information for all voting areas, highlighting where combination exists and has had an impact on the decision, including where this has resulted in different arrangements being in place. You should keep your plans under review to deal with any emerging situations, such as by-elections being called for the same day as the PCC election poll.

- Other practical considerations. There are also a number of other practical factors that you may want to take into account in developing your proposals and making your decision about when the votes will be verified and counted, such as: the fact that the election will be held under the supplementary vote system wherever there are three or more candidates; the number of voting areas in the police area; the extent of combination in the police area; resources, including availability of staff and venues.

Timing of the count

6.48 As PARO, you and the project team agree the approach to be taken in respect of the timing of the verification and the count. Where polls are combined you will need to liaise with the RRO and LRO's in the area and make decisions as early as possible in the process.

6.49 The Commission recommended in its report 2012 report, Timing of election counts that 'In order to allow political parties and candidates to campaign and voters to make their choices on the substantive issues at the heart of the election, decisions on the timing of the count should be taken outside of the campaign period proper. That is, before notice of election is issued'. For fixed term elections, the Commission recommends that decisions should be made by PAROs, RROs and ROs are made 'not later than the end of January preceding an election taking place in early May' with the default position that all electoral regions plan to count the votes at the same time.

Organisation of the verification and counting

6.50 There are a variety of ways in which verification and counting can be organised across the police area, and you will need to decide which is the best option for your police area, based on the combination of polls, whether deputies have been appointed, your local circumstances and those of the LROs and, where relevant, other Returning Officers in your police area.

6.51 At a standalone PCC election, LROs are responsible for the verification of the ballot paper accounts and the counting of the votes for their voting area, unless you have reserved that responsibility for yourself by notifying the relevant LROs.

6.52 On completion of the verification procedure at a standalone PCC election, LROs must inform you of the total number of ballot papers counted.[49]

6.53 If the votes are counted at a different venue to where verification takes place, LROs must seal the verified ballot papers in packets with contents lists and send them, along with the ballot paper accounts and the verification statement, to the count venue.[50] You may direct LROs to carry out further additional verification procedures once these documents have been delivered to the count venue.

6.54 Where the poll at a PCC election has been combined with the poll at another election, the relevant Returning Officer will be responsible for verifying the ballot papers at all polls. The LRO will, however, remain responsible for the counting of the votes for their counting area. Therefore where polls have been combined, you should liaise with the relevant Returning Officer to ensure consistency in the verification across the police area.

6.55 Where polls have been combined, you will need to obtain the verification statement from the relevant Returning Officer to enable you to check the local count totals against the verification statement and identify any potential variances. LROs must also inform you of the contents of the statement of local count totals, once it has been prepared.

6.56 Where polls are combined, you will need to liaise as early in the planning process as possible with your project team and decide the way the verification and count will be organised in your area to achieve the more effective and transparent process.

> The Commission has produced guidance on the verification and count process.
>
> Guidance on the principles of an effective verification and count process is contained in Part E – Verifying and counting the votes for England Part E – Verifying and counting the votes standalone. poll or combined polls and for Wales. For practical guidance on the verification and count process, see our verification and count resource 'Planning for an effective verification and count: a toolkit for Returning Officers'.

6.57 There are two broad options for organising the count processes for the PCC election in the police area:

- **Individual local counts and the central collation by the PARO:** This option would see LROs verify and count the votes in their voting area and forward their local totals to you at a central hub, similar to the approach normally followed at a European Parliamentary election. In this case, you would need to ensure that the process in place for the transmission and receipt of totals from each LRO to the central hub is

capable of establishing a clear audit trail, is timely, and supports the development of an accurate result.

- **Central police area count:** There are two main variations of a centralised count: a count where votes are verified locally before being transferred to a central counting venue, where all of the votes for the police area would then be counted; or a count where votes for all voting areas are both verified and counted in one central counting venue.

6.58 There are, however, variations within these two options and the potential for other ways of organising counts within a police area. For example, across a police area some local authority areas could count locally, while others come together and hold counts on a more centralised basis.

6.59 You should liaise closely with the LROs in your area when deciding on the approach. In areas where the poll at the PCC election is combined with the poll at another election, you should work closely with the relevant Returning Officers to agree an approach. Whichever option is chosen, there will be risks and benefits associated with it. You will need to identify these when you develop your proposals for consultation and, once a decision has been made, work with LROs (or the relevant Returning Officers in case of combined polls) to plan how you will manage and mitigate the risks.

6.60 We have set out here some of the key factors you will need to consider in deciding how to organise and manage the verification and counting of the votes in your police area:

- **Consistency of approach**: LROs and their staff will have past experience of running election counts in their voting area and will have their own processes and workflows that they are used to following. While this knowledge and experience will be useful in helping to decide how best to organise and manage the verification and counting, you should consider how you will ensure consistency in the approach to verification and counting across the police area, regardless of where the processes are to be carried out.

- **Staff resources and availability**: The identification, recruitment and training of sufficient, capable staff to conduct the count will also be a key consideration. For example, depending on the geography of the police area it may be more difficult to recruit the necessary numbers of suitable staff to work in a central location than it would be to recruit people to work at a venue closer to their home, who are also more likely to be experienced staff who have worked on election counts in the past.

- **Deployment of staff:** You should also consider how to make the most efficient use of staff. If there are more than two candidates, there is the potential that a second round of counting will be required. The first round of counting will need to be completed by all Local Returning Officers and the totals collated before any second round can commence. This could mean that, unless counts are completed within a similar time, count staff for some voting areas may have completed the process while others are

still counting. If count staff are in one (or several) central locations they can be deployed flexibly to maximise productivity in the interests of a timely outcome to the count. If staff are at separate local count centres it is likely that count staff in some areas may have completed the process while others are still counting. You will need to consider how to ensure that the count arrangements enable all voting areas to complete their counting within a reasonable time of each other.

- **Venues**: Any venues used will need to be of a sufficient size and capacity to accommodate the necessary processes and staff, and enable processes to be carried out effectively and in clear view of those entitled to attend, taking into account potential media attendance at the declaration of the result. LROs will already have venues (and reserve venues) that they have used in the past and are familiar with, along with the verification and count workflows and layouts that work for these venues. If you are using a central venue, the scale of the space needed will depend on the size of the police area and number of electors. You will also need to identify and put in place contingency arrangements, which may include identifying suitable venues of an equivalent size and capacity in case of the loss of a venue.

- **Transmission of local totals**: LROs need to transmit their local totals to the PARO to enable the police area result to be calculated. You will need to ensure that you provide instructions on the method to be used for transmitting the information accurately and securely, and carry out a test of the process in advance. There are greater risks with this process if counting is carried out locally, for example, as a result of technical issues, and you would need to develop contingency arrangements to be deployed in the event of technical problems occurring.

- **Security and logistics**: You should ensure that ballot papers are stored securely at all times. This will be an important consideration in any proposals that would require ballot boxes to be transported to a central venue, or between venues after being verified. You should consider carefully the potential security risks associated with the transportation of ballot boxes and the associated logistical challenges, including how to ensure that where polls are combined the correct ballot papers for each poll are in the right place so that all ballot papers can be included in the appropriate count.

6.61 Your decisions as to when, where and how the votes are to be verified and counted should be taken in accordance with the principles and considerations set out in this chapter. Once you have made your decisions you should consider how best to ensure that local Returning Officers' plans for managing and resourcing their verification and counting processes will achieve these principles in practice.

How to verify and count the votes

6.62 However the verification and count are organised and managed, you should ensure that LROs' plans will deliver a consistent standard of administration of these aspects of the election, so that the election as a whole delivers an accurate result in which everyone can have confidence.

6.63 There is a variety of methods for verifying the ballot papers and counting the votes. You can decide whether to require local Returning Officers to use particular methods, or to leave it to each LRO to choose their preferred method based on what is most appropriate for their local circumstances and explain it to you. It is for you to decide in conjunction and consultation with LROs in your area which approach to take.

6.64 Whatever counting method is used it should be transparent and lead to an accurate outcome. Calculating an accurate result relies on accurate verification and count figures, and you will need to consider specifically how you will ensure that the local totals you receive from LROs to collate the result are accurate before you accept them. You should produce templates of all documents which LROs will be required to complete during the verification and count process to provide a clear audit trail.

6.65 Breaking down the verification and counting of votes into areas smaller than the whole of the voting area is one counting method that is particularly effective in achieving an accurate result. Breaking down the verification and count into parts smaller than the voting area is particularly effective in achieving an accurate, timely result with clear audit trails. The results from those 'parts' are then aggregated to achieve an overall local total for the voting area. Any counting issues that may arise will be limited to a more manageable area and any re-counts that may happen as a result, may be limited.

6.66 Whatever your decision, you should be able to satisfy yourself that LROs' plans for verifying and counting can meet the principles for an effective verification and count and will deliver a result that is accurate and in which everyone can have confidence.

The result collation

6.67 You should ensure that a result collation process for the police area is in place to enable you to calculate the result of the election.

6.68 You should ensure that there is consistent and transparent communication about the result collation process both at the result collation venue and at any other count venues, depending on how the verification and counting is organised in your police area, to candidates and agents, the media and other relevant stakeholders. If verification and/or counting is being carried out at a central venue(s) you will need to provide information to attendees about those processes.

6.69 As PARO you must collate the contents of the local verification statements and count totals for each voting area, and calculate and declare the overall result for the police area. It is for you as PARO to determine how

best to manage this process in your police area. Your project plan should include plans to deliver the calculation of the result.

Collating the result

6.70 You should decide on the process and mechanism you will use to collate local verification and count totals from LROs in order to calculate the result of the election. You should also consider what you may need to put in place to support these processes, including protocols, mechanisms and systems, and ensure that they are followed consistently and build contingencies into your plans in case any facility, building or technology that you intend to use becomes unavailable.

6.71 You should consider how best to organise and manage the two-way transfer of information between you and LROs, and the checking, recording and collating of information from LROs and the calculation of the result. You should develop and implement protocols as necessary for the communication of information between LROs and the PARO, including the communication of local count totals.

6.72 You should determine whether you need to put in place IT systems or programmes to facilitate this. As a minimum you should produce a protocol for the communication of information and local totals between LROs and you and your staff working on the result collation process, including the process for checking local totals and authorising them to be shared publicly.

6.73 Whatever processes and systems you use for collating the result, you need to ensure that they meet the principles set out in paragraph **6.35** above.

> To be able to achieve the outcome set out in performance standard 3, you will need to develop a process for receiving and submitting local totals. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place arrangements for managing the process of collating local totals, including any protocols and guidance issued to LROs.

Accredited observers and Commission representatives

6.74 Observers accredited by the Commission are entitled to observe:

- the issue and receipt of postal ballot papers
- the poll
- the verification and counting of the votes
- the calculation of the result at the PCC election by the PARO[51]

6.75 Your project plan should include processes to manage potential enquiries from observers and to support their attendance at the electoral processes they are entitled to attend. This should include providing observers with information on the location and timing of the above processes.

6.76 Commission representatives are also entitled to observe these processes and, in addition, are entitled to observe your working practices.[52]

6.77 Accredited observers and Commission representatives do not need to give advance notification of where they intend to observe, but will carry with them a photographic identification card issued by the Commission.

6.78 If you are in doubt about the status of a particular individual seeking to gain access to election processes, you can check the registers of observers on the Commission's website.

6.79 You have a legal duty to have regard to the Commission's Code of practice for observers when managing the attendance of observers.[53] Observers will have agreed to comply with the standards of behaviour set out in the Commission's Code of practice. If you think there has been a breach of the Code of practice, please inform your local Commission office.

Appendix A – Performance standards for Returning Officers in Great Britain

Performance standard 1: Voters

Ensuring that planning for and delivery of the poll enables voters to vote easily and know that their vote will be counted in the way they intended

Outcome	What does the RO need to do to achieve the outcome	What will demonstrate how the outcome has been met
Voters receive the information they need, in an accessible format and within time for them to cast their vote	• Develop and implement robust project management processes • Evaluate planning for and delivery of previous polls and identify lessons learnt, updating plans as required • Put in place arrangements to manage contractors and suppliers to ensure that the work is delivered as required by the specification • Ensure robust processes are in place for ensuring that there are no errors on voter materials, notice of poll and notice of election • Ensure poll cards are received by voters as soon as possible so that	• Project planning documentation which is kept under regular review • Planning documentation reflecting lessons learnt • Arrangements in place for the management of contractors and suppliers • Processes for the proof-checking of voter materials, notice of poll and notice of election • Information on the method for delivery of poll cards, including an estimation of when poll cards will be delivered • Information on the poll easily

	voters have the maximum amount of time to act on the information • Ensure information on the poll, including the notice of election and notice of poll, is easily accessible to voters, such as through the local authority website	accessed through the local authority website
Voters receive a high-quality service	• Ensure that access needs are taken into account when planning for and setting up polling stations • Decide on the allocation of electors and staff to polling stations to ensure polling stations are properly staffed so that voters receive a high-quality service, giving consideration to the factors set out in Commission guidance • Ensure polling station staff are trained to set-up polling stations in such a way that takes account of voter needs • Ensure postal ballot packs are received by voters as soon as possible so that voters have the maximum amount of time to act on the information	• Assessment regarding access needs, identifying any problems and actions taken to remedy these • Approach taken to allocating electors and staff to polling stations • Guidance/training provided to polling station staff • Information on the method for delivery of postal ballot packs, including an estimation of when postal ballot packs will be delivered

| Voters have confidence that their vote will be counted in the way they intended | • Maintain a clear audit trail of the issue, receipt and opening of postal ballot packs
• Have in place processes to identify any patterns of activity that might indicate potential integrity problems, including what steps are to be taken to deal with any such problems
• Maintain the secure storage of ballot papers and postal ballot packs at all times
• Put in place appropriate resources to ensure the verification and count is timely
• Ensure the results are communicated to voters in a clear and timely way
• Ensure count processes are designed and managed to secure an accurate result, with a clear audit trail | • Arrangements to maintain a clear audit trail of the issue, receipt and opening of postal ballot packs
• Processes for dealing with integrity problems
• Arrangements for securely storing ballot papers and postal ballot packs
• Information on how the verification and counting is to be organised and managed, including the process you followed to arrive at your decision
• Arrangements for communicating results to voters
• Arrangements in place to maintain a clear audit trail of the count processes |

Performance standard 2: Those who want to stand for election

Ensuring that planning for and delivery of the poll enables people who want to stand for election to find out how to get involved, what the rules are, and what they have to do to comply with these rules, and enables them to have confidence in the management of the process and the result

Outcome	What does the RO need to do to achieve the outcome	What will demonstrate how the outcome has been met
People who want to stand for election receive all the information they need to take part	- Ensure information on the election process and spending is easily available for candidates and agents, including through providing briefing sessions and ensuring they are issued with written guidance - Ensure that candidates have the opportunity to have their nomination papers informally checked prior to their formal submission	- Written guidance issued to candidates - Date(s) of briefing sessions and briefing resources - Arrangements in place for candidates to have their nomination papers informally checked prior to formal submission
Candidates have confidence that the process is well-managed, and have confidence in the results	Ensure that those entitled to attend postal vote opening sessions are able to follow what	- Layout plan of postal vote opening sessions - Information provided to attendees

	is happening, where and when • Ensure count processes are transparent, with everything at the verification and count carried out in clear view of all those entitled to attend, with information provided to attendees on the processes to be followed • Ensure count processes are designed and managed to secure an accurate result, with a clear audit trail • Have in place processes to identify any patterns of activity that might indicate potential integrity problems, including what steps are to be taken to deal with any such problems	at postal vote opening sessions • Layout plan of the count • Information provided to attendees at the count • Arrangements in place to communicate progress at the count • Arrangements in place to maintain a clear audit trail of the count processes • Processes for dealing with integrity problems

Performance standard for statutory office holders with a power of direction

Performance standard 3: Co-ordination and management of the poll		
Co-ordinating the planning for and delivery of the poll to ensure a consistent high-quality experience for voters and those wanting to stand for election		
Outcome	What does the statutory office holder need to do to achieve the outcome	What will demonstrate how the outcome has been met
To ensure that local ROs have the necessary arrangements in place to deliver well-run elections in their area	• Develop and implement robust project management processes • Develop guidance and issue directions where necessary to ensure the effective administration of the polls in each local RO area • Develop and implement plans for communicating with local ROs • Develop and implement a strategy for co-ordinating and	• Project planning documentation which is kept under regular review • Arrangements for ensuring the consistent delivery of the poll, including guidance issued and whether and how you have used your power to give directions • Plans for communicating with local ROs • A strategy for co-ordinating and

	delivering public awareness and engaging with electors across the area • Where appropriate, develop a process for receiving and submitting local results	delivering public awareness activity and engaging with electors across the area • Arrangements on how you intend to manage the process of collating local results, including any protocols and guidance issued to local ROs

Appendix B

Wales		England	
Electoral event	**Voting system**	**Electoral event**	**Voting system**
National Assembly for Wales election	Additional member system	Local election (single vacancy – principal area or parish)	First-past-the-post
PCC election (only two candidates standing for election)	First-past-the-post	Local election (multiple vacancies – principal area or parish)	First-past-the-post
PCC election (more than two candidates standing for election)	Supplementary vote	Local referendum	First-past-the-post
Local by-elections	First-past-the-post	Mayoral election (only two candidates standing for election)	First-past-the-post
		Mayoral election (more than two candidates standing for election)	Supplementary vote
		PCC election (only two candidates standing for election)	First-past-the-post
		PCC election (more than two candidates standing for election)	Supplementary vote

[1] Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 s.54, SI 2012/1917 Art.2, and SI 2015/2031.

[2] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 para 4.

[3] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 paras 5-16.

[4] SI 2012/1918 Reg.7.

[5] SI 2012/1917 Art 52(2) and Sch.8.

[6] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 paras 57-61.

[7] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 para 62.

[8] SI 2012/1918 Reg.3(4).

[9] SI 2012/1918 Reg.4(1).

[10] SI 2012/1918 Reg.4(2).

[11] Police and Crime Commissioner Elections (Amendment) Order 2015 Art.6, SI 2012/1917 Art.13A and Sch.4.

[12] SI 2012/1917 Sch.4 para 21.

[13] SI 2012/1917 Sch.4 para 22.

[14] SI 2012/1917 Sch.4 paras 29 to 37.

[15] SI 2012/1917 Sch.4 para 19.

[16] SI 2012/1917 Sch.4 para 24.

[17] SI 2012/1917 Sch.4 para 27.

[18] 2012/1917 Sch.3 para 34(4).

[19] SI 2012/1917 Sch.4 para 30

[20] SI 2012/1917 Sch.4 paras 38-42.

[21] Police and Crime Commissioner Elections (Amendment) Order 2015 Art.5, SI 2012/1917 Sch.2 paras 29 to 59B.

[22] SI 2012/1917 Art.2.

[23] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 paras 48-56.

[24] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 para 57.

[25] SI 2012/1918 reg.3(3).

[26] SI 2012/1917 Sch.2 Part 3, Sch.3 paras 25 and 33.

[27] Representation of the People Act 1983 s.35.

[28] SI 2012/1917 Art.13 and Sch.4. See references above at paragraph 3.16 for details of the provisions of SI 2012/1917 Sch.4 that apply for each of the duties listed here.

[29] SI 2012/2031 Art.9 and SI 2012/323 Art.9.

[30] SI 2012/1917 Art.2.

[31] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3. See references above at paragraph 3.22 above for details of the provisions of Sch.3 that apply for each of the duties listed here.

[32] SI 2012/1918 Reg.5(1).

[33] SI 2012/1918 Reg.5(2).

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[34] SI 2012/1917 Art.19.

[35] SI 2012/1918 Reg.6.

[36] SI 2012/1917 Art.19(4).

[37] Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act 2000 s.9A.

[38] SI 2012/1918 Reg.7.

[39] SI 2012/1917 Sch.1 para.1.

[40] SI 2012/1917 Sch.1 para.2.

[41] SI 2012/1917 Sch.1 para 2(3).

[42] SI 2012/1917 Art.52 and Sch.8.

[43] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 paras 19 and 70, forms 8A and 8B.

[44] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 para 43.

[45] SI 2012/1917 Sch.4 para 15.

[46] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 para 57.

[47] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 paras 59 and 60.

[48] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 para 48(1).

[49] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 para 49(6).

[50] SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 para 50.

[51] Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act 2000 s.6C. SI 2012/1917 Sch.2 paras 31 and 32, Sch.3 paras 34, 48, 51, 58.

[52] Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act 2000 s.6A. SI 2012/1917 Sch.2 paras 31 and 32, Sch.3 paras 10, 34, 48, 51, 58.

[53] Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act 2000 s.6F(7).