

Electoral Commission media briefing on the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) elections – 12 November 2012

Contents

1. Background.
2. Public awareness and voter information.
3. Other elections taking place on Thursday 15 November.
4. Timing of the count and declaration of results.
5. The voting system and how the results are calculated.
6. The responsibilities of election staff on the ground.
7. What's been done to make sure the elections are fair and transparent.
8. What the Electoral Commission will report on after the election.
9. Contact numbers and links to useful resources.
10. Count details and PARO contacts.

1. Background

Police and Crime Commissioner elections are taking place in 41 police force areas across England (excluding London) and Wales on Thursday 15 November.

These are new elections: they are for a new role; with different constituencies to any other poll; are taking place at an unfamiliar time of year for voters; and are using a voting system with which most voters will be unfamiliar.

The Home Office has set the legislation and the rules for these elections, including the qualifications candidates need to meet in order to stand and the amount of the deposit (£5,000). These rules have meant that a number of people who intended to stand as candidates have had to withdraw.

Police Area Returning Officers (PAROs) are appointed by the Home Secretary and are responsible for the overall conduct of the election in their area, including the declaration of the results.

The Electoral Commission's role has been to:

- provide guidance to Police Area Returning Officers and their staff to help them comply with the rules and to ensure that the elections are well run.
- provide guidance to candidates and agents on the rules. This includes spending and donations, campaigning and the qualifications for standing.
- monitor and report back on these elections.
- raise awareness of the PCC elections.

2. Public awareness and voter information

Ensuring that voters have information about the elections and the candidates has been a key issue.

a) Public awareness of the elections

The Electoral Commission has sent a booklet with factual information on what the elections are for, when they are taking place and how to vote to 21 million households across England (outside London) and Wales. It also included details of the Government's candidate information website address and telephone number for requesting printed information. The booklet has been backed up by a public awareness campaign including TV, radio and online advertising, which began on 22 October and will run until polling day.

The Home Office also ran a TV, radio and online public awareness campaign during October. We made clear to the Home Office we did not agree with their decision to do this because questions could be raised about the neutrality of it by voters. Once it was clear the Home Office were going to proceed we focussed on co-ordinating our campaign with theirs.

b) Information about candidates

The Home Office has provided a candidate information website (www.choosemypcc.org.uk) where voters can find out who is standing for election in their area and read their election addresses. There is also a phone number for voters who want to request printed information (0800 1 07 07 08).

The use of a website is a significant departure from what is provided for candidates standing at Parliamentary elections (where they get a freepost mailing) or mayoral elections (where they can supply information for a locally distributed booklet).

The Electoral Commission highlighted concerns from summer 2011 that the Government had not identified an adequate mechanism for making sure all voters received information about the candidates in their area.

We recommended that the Government provide for a booklet with addresses from each candidate to be sent to households in each of the 41 Police Authority areas (a similar arrangement as for mayoral elections). We also made clear that if this happened we would provide information to be included in these booklets (such as how to cast your vote and polling station opening hours) and would not then produce our own general booklet about the elections.

Ministers decided against this approach and once it was clear they were going to proceed we focussed on making the arrangement work for voters as well as possible. We are monitoring the effect of this on voters and will make recommendations for future polls in our report on the PCC elections early in 2013.

3. Other elections taking place on Thursday 15 November

In addition to the Police and Crime Commissioner elections a number of other elections are taking place on Thursday 15 November:

- three Parliamentary by-elections in: Cardiff South and Penarth; Corby and East Northamptonshire; and Manchester Central.
- one mayoral election in Bristol.
- a number of local council by-elections.

4. Timing of the count and declaration of results

Each Police Area Returning Officer is responsible for deciding when to do their count. All but one police force area are counting on Friday 16 November. The only overnight PCC count will be in Wiltshire. In addition the Cardiff South and Penarth; and Manchester Central by-elections will be overnight counts.

Across England and Wales, police force areas are made up of a varying number of local authorities. They range from two local authorities in Durham and Wiltshire; to 14 in Essex, Hampshire and Lancashire; and 16 in Thames Valley.

Some police force areas are doing local counts and feeding the results to the central count venue. Others will verify the ballots locally and then securely send them to the central count venue for counting.

To attend the declaration of the results, media should contact the relevant local authority press office directly for press passes.

The details of when the counts will take place and press office telephone numbers for the PAROs are **in section 10, page 7**.

5. The voting system and how the results are calculated

The voting system

PCCs are elected using the Supplementary Vote – the same system used in mayoral elections. However where there are only two candidates the First Past the Post system will be used. This will be the case in three areas: Dyfed-Powys, North Yorkshire, and Staffordshire.

Under the Supplementary Vote, voters put a cross for their first choice candidate in the left hand column. They can then put a cross for their second choice candidate in the right hand column if they wish. As long as a cross is marked in the first choice column, then their vote will count. Where First Past the Post is used, voters will be asked to mark one cross by the candidate they want to win.

Calculation of the results under the Supplementary Voting system

If a candidate receives more than half of all first choice votes, they are elected immediately.

If this does not happen, the two candidates with the most first choice votes go through to a second round. All other candidates are eliminated, but their second choice votes for either of the top two candidates are added to the totals for those two candidates from the first round.

The candidate with the highest combined total of first and second choice votes will be elected as the PCC.

6. The responsibilities of election staff on the ground

Police Area Returning Officers (PAROs)

PAROs are responsible for the overall conduct of the PCC election for their area. Their duty is to co-ordinate the work of the Local Returning Officers in the police area.

In addition to calculating and declaring the result, the PAROs are by law responsible for giving notice of the election; managing the nomination process; and the submission of candidates' election addresses.

Local Returning Officers (LROs)

Local Returning Officers (LROs) are personally responsible for the administration of the PCC election in their voting area. Their responsibilities include the printing of the ballot papers; appointing Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks; and managing the postal voting process.

Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)

Electoral Registration Officers are responsible for the preparation and maintenance of the electoral register and list of absent voters within their area.

The Government brought forward the Annual Canvass period so that it ended in October, rather than December, to help EROs ensure the electoral register is as complete and accurate as possible.

7. What's been done to make sure the elections are fair and transparent

The responsibility for ensuring robust plans to prevent and detect electoral fraud are in place lies with Police Area Returning Officers. The police investigate allegations of fraud.

PAROs, their local Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers, the police and the Electoral Commission have been working together since June to ensure measures are in place.

Anyone, including candidates, politicians and members of the public, who has evidence of electoral fraud taking place should go straight to the police.

But equally important, candidates and political parties must ensure that their supporters don't cross the line between robust and lively campaigns and fraud.

a) Electoral fraud

The Representation of the People Act 1983 specifies a number of criminal offences relating to electoral fraud. The relevant police force for the area in which elections were taking place would investigate any allegations that an offence may have taken place. Every police force has designated a Single Point of Contact to lead on election-related crime.

What the Electoral Commission has done to prevent fraud

The Electoral Commission has scrutinised the annual canvass and electoral integrity plans from all Electoral Registration Officers in England (excluding London) and Wales, focusing on their:

- plans for dealing with registration and absent voting applications (for example, ensuring properties where large numbers of people have applied to be on the electoral register are checked); and
- arrangements with the relevant police force for identifying and responding to potential electoral fraud.

The Electoral Commission has been working with local Returning Officers and police forces well in advance of the polls focusing on their:

- procedures for monitoring the issuing and processing of returned postal votes
- training for polling station staff on the risk of personation.

b) Campaign spending

Spending limits for candidates in each police area were set by the Government; these limits vary depending on the police area.

The limits apply to any spending incurred during the regulated period (Monday 8 October until polling day, Thursday 15 November). The limits also apply to spending that took place before the regulated period on things (such as leaflets) which are then used during the regulated period.

PCC candidates must submit their campaign spending returns for the regulated period to their Police Area Returning Officer within **70 days of the result**. The return must also include donations of money, items or services worth more than £50.

Before the regulated period began, under the law, candidates only needed to report any donations over £1,500 to the Electoral Commission.

8. What the Electoral Commission will report on after the election

The Electoral Commission has a statutory role to report on these elections. The report will be presented to Parliament in early 2013 and will look in particular at:

- how the law was made and how the detail and timing of it affected voters.
- the late laying of the Welsh Forms Order which almost resulted in ballot papers in Wales not being bilingual.
- the role of the Home Office – a department not usually tasked with the running of elections.
- what impact the use of a candidate information website had for voters.
- whether voters received the information they needed in order to participate.
- the experiences of candidates, both those that stood and those that withdrew, of these elections.

9. Contact numbers and links to useful resources

Electoral Commission press office

Karim Aziz – Senior Media Relations Officer
020 7271 0704 / kaziz@electoralcommission.org.uk

Rosemary Davenport / Johnny Skillicorn-Aston – Media Relations Officers
020 7271 0704 / rdavenport@electoralcommission.org.uk /
jskillicorn-aston@electoralcommission.org.uk

Rhydian Thomas – Deputy Head of Wales Office
02920 346 800 / rthomas@electoralcommission.org.uk

Out of office hours: 07789 920 414
Email: press@electoralcommission.org.uk
Twitter: www.twitter.com/ElectoralCommUK

Home Office press office

020 7035 3535

The Government's candidate information website / order line is:
www.choosemypcc.org.uk / 0800 1 070708

Visit our Youtube channel to see our TV adverts and an animated video showing people how to mark their ballot paper under the Supplementary Vote:
www.youtube.com/Electoralcommission1

The Electoral Commission's detailed Media Handbook for PCC elections:
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/149824/PCC-Media-Handbook-final.pdf

To see the Electoral Commission's most recent briefing to Parliamentarians visit:
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/150503/Briefing-on-PCC-elections-September-2012.pdf

10. Count details and PARO contacts

Each police force area has a lead local authority, these are listed below.

The information on counts has been supplied to the Electoral Commission by each PARO.

Police force area	Lead local authority	Date and start time of count	PARO name and press office number
Avon & Somerset	Bristol	16/11 – 12pm	Stephen McNamara 0117 922 2650
Bedfordshire	Luton	16/11 – 10am	Trevor Holden 01582 547 402
Cambridgeshire	East Cambridgeshire	16/11 – 12pm	John Hill 01223 699 285 / 01353 616 260
Cheshire	Halton	16/11 – 2pm	David Parr 0303 333 4300 Swb
Cleveland	Stockton-on-Tees	16/11 – 11am	David Bond 01642 526 162
Cumbria	South Lakeland	16/11 – 11am	Debbie Storr 01539 797 767
Derbyshire	Amber Valley	16/11 – 12pm	Peter Carney 01773 841 655
Devon and Cornwall	Cornwall	16/11 – 11am	Kevin Lavery Online Form
Dorset	Poole	16/11 – 9.30am	Paul Morris 01202 633 633 Swb
Durham	Durham	16/11 – 12pm	Colette Longbottom 0300 026 8064 / 8066
Dyfed-Powys	Pembrokeshire	16/11 – 9am	Bryn Parry-Jones 01437 775 387
Essex	Chelmsford	16/11 – 10.30am	Steve Packham 01245 606 730
Gloucestershire	Stroud	16/11 – after verification	David Hagg 01453 766 321
Greater Manchester	Manchester	16/11 – 12pm	Sir Howard Bernstein 0161 234 1010
Gwent	Newport	16/11 – 9am	Tracey Lee

			01633 656 656
Hampshire	Southampton	16/11 – after verification	Mark Heath 02380 832 000
Hertfordshire	Broxbourne	16/11 – 11am	Mike Walker 01992 785 577 Swb
Humberside	East Riding of Yorkshire	16/11 – 11.30am	Nigel Pearson 01482 391 440
Kent	Dover	16/11 – after verification	Nadeem Aziz 01304 872 020
Lancashire	Blackburn with Darwen	16/11 – after verification	Graham Burgess 01254 585 480 / 305
Leicestershire	North West Leicestershire	16/11 – 12.30pm	Christine Fisher 01530 454 546
Lincolnshire	Lincoln	16/11 – 2pm	Andrew Taylor 01522 873 443
Merseyside	Liverpool	16/11 – after verification	Ged Fitzgerald 0151 225 2611
Norfolk	Norwich	16/11 – 2pm	Phillip Hyde 01603 212 991
North Wales	Flintshire	16/11 – 9am	Colin Everett 01352 752 121 Swb
North Yorkshire	York	16/11 – TBC	Kersten England 01904 551 068
Northamptonshire	Kettering	16/11 – TBC	David Cook 01536 410 333 Swb
Northumbria	Sunderland	16/11 – 11.30am	Dave Smith 0191 561 1136
Nottinghamshire	Rushcliffe	16/11 – TBC	Allen Graham 0115 914 8555
South Wales	Neath Port Talbot	16/11 – 9am	Steven Phillips 01639 686 868 Swb
South Yorkshire	Barnsley	16/11 – 1pm	Andrew Frosdick 01226 773 443
Staffordshire	Stoke on Trent	16/11 – 2pm	Paul Hackney 01782 232 621
Suffolk	Suffolk Coastal	16/11 – after verification	Stephen Baker 01394 444 361
Surrey	Guildford	16/11 – after verification	Richard Lingard 01483 505 050
Sussex	Brighton and Hove	16/11 – after verification	Lee Harris 01273 291 555
Thames Valley	Aylesbury Vale	16/11 – after verification	Andrew Grant 01296 585 099
Warwickshire	Stratford on Avon	16/11 – 11am	Paul Lankester 01789 260 104/5
West Mercia	Shropshire	16/11 – 10.30am	Claire Porter 01743 252 826
West Midlands	Birmingham	16/11 – 9.30am	Stephen Hughes 0121 303 3287

West Yorkshire	Wakefield	16/11 – 11am	Joanne Roney 01924 305 295
Wiltshire	Swindon	15/11 – overnight	Stephen Taylor 01793 445 500 Swb

Swb = switchboard for the council

Parliamentary by-elections

Constituency	Returning Officer	Date and start time of count	Press office number for Returning Officer
Cardiff South and Penarth	Jon House	15/11 – overnight	02920 872 964
Corby and East Northamptonshire	Paul Goult (Acting)	16/11 – 9.30am	01536 464 020
Manchester Central	Sir Howard Bernstein	15/11 – overnight	0161 234 1010

Mayoral election

City	Returning Officer	Date and start time of count	Press office number for Returning Officer
Bristol	Stephen McNamara	16/11 – 9am	0117 922 2650