



YOUR LONDON. YOUR VOTE

The
Electoral
Commission

Greater London Authority
(GLA) elections

Guidance for candidates and agents

Part 4 of 6 – The campaign

This document applies to Greater London Authority elections (Mayor of London and London Assembly) only. It does not apply to district, borough, county borough, unitary authority, other mayoral or parish/community elections. Our full suite of guidance and resources, including guidance for those elections can be found on our website at: www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-those-we-regulate/candidates-and-agents/

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Essential information

This section of the document contains our guidance on campaigning at the Greater London Authority (GLA) elections. Supplementary information, which may only be of relevance to some candidates, is provided at the back of this document. You can access this supplementary guidance by clicking on the links within this document or by clicking on the chapter heading on the contents page.

We are here to help, so please contact London Elects or the Commission's London office if you have any questions. See our [Overview document](#) for contact details.

In this document we use 'must' to refer to a specific legal requirement and 'should' for recommended practice. For further information on the terminology used in this guidance, see our [Overview document](#). Deadlines mentioned in this document are generic. For deadlines relating to the 3 May 2012 scheduled GLA elections, please see our [election timetable](#).

Campaigning dos and don'ts

When can you start campaigning?

1.1 You can start campaigning at any time. You do not have to wait until you are validly nominated to declare that you will run for election, ask people to support you or publish campaign material.

1.2 However, there are limits on how much you can spend on your campaign. Election spending limits apply from the date a person officially becomes a candidate. For more information on election spending, please see [Part 3: Spending and donations](#).

When does a person officially become a candidate?

1.3 The last date for publishing the notice of election is the 30th working day before the poll. This is the earliest you can officially become a candidate.

1.4 A person standing on a party list will become a candidate on the date the list is submitted to the Greater London Returning Officer. This will be between the 30th working day before the poll and 12 noon on the 24th working day before the poll.

1.5 A mayoral, constituency or individual candidate not on a party list will become a candidate on the 30th working day before the poll if on or before this date they have already declared themselves a candidate at the election (or another person has declared that they are a candidate).

1.6 If after this date a mayoral, constituency or individual candidate not on a party list, or others, declare that they will be a candidate at the election, they will become a candidate on the date such a declaration is made, or on the date that they submit their nomination papers, whichever is the earlier.

1.7 Once you have officially become a candidate you are entitled to a copy of the register (and absent voters' lists) as follows:

- Mayoral candidates are entitled to copies for the whole of the Greater London Authority area
- Individual London Member candidates not on a party list are entitled to copies for the whole of the Greater London Authority area
- Constituency member candidates are entitled to copies for the constituency they are standing in

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- Party list candidates standing for London Member are not entitled to copies, but the election agent for the party list will be entitled to copies for the whole of the Greater London Authority area

1.8 As a candidate, you can also use publicly-funded rooms and schools for public meetings (see paragraph 1.21 below).

During the campaign, you may...

- Encourage people who are not on the electoral register to apply for registration. The deadline for registering to vote in time for an election is eleven working days before the poll. You can find out more about who can register and application forms at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk
- Help voters with information about postal and proxy voting – you can find application forms and information at www.aboutmyvote.co.uk. The deadline for applying for a postal vote for the elections is 5pm on the eleventh working day before the poll. The deadline for applying for a proxy vote for the elections is 5pm on the sixth working day before the poll.

During the campaign, you should...

- If you develop your own application forms, make sure they include all the required information, or the applications will be rejected. In particular, you must make sure that the signature and date of birth fields on postal and proxy application forms are in the correct format. You should use our application forms on www.aboutmyvote.co.uk as a guide.
- Make sure your supporters follow our [code of conduct on handling applications to vote by post or proxy and postal votes](#) – this will help them to avoid situations where their honesty or integrity could be questioned.

- Be aware of the deadlines for appointing an election agent, and agents to attend postal vote opening sessions, polling stations and the count. Deadlines are set out in our guidance documents [Part 2a: Standing as a Mayoral candidate](#), [Part 2b: Standing as a Constituency Member candidate](#) and [Part 2c: Standing as a London member candidate](#).
- Check our guidance on how postal vote openings, the voting process and the count will work so that you know what you can expect to happen and when.
- Check that your systems for recording spending and donations are working. For more information on donations and election spending see [Part 3: Spending and donations](#).

During the campaign, you must not...

- Pay canvassers. Canvassing means trying to persuade an elector to vote for or against a particular candidate or party.

1.9 More information on election offences and how to report these can be found in the supplementary information section at the end of this document (from paragraph **1.43**).

1.10 If either you or your agent have made a mistake and have acted in contravention of the rules, you can apply for relief from the consequences of having made a mistake. See paragraph **1.67** for more information.

Use of the electoral register

1.11 Mayoral candidates and individual candidates not on a party list standing at the election for London Members are entitled to a free copy of the full electoral register and absent voters' lists for all of the London boroughs and the City of London. The agent of a party list at the London Member election will also be entitled to a free copy of the full electoral register and absent voters' lists for all of the London boroughs and the City.

1.12 Constituency Member candidates are entitled to a free copy of the full electoral register and absent voters' lists covering the constituency in which they are standing.

Neither the Greater London Returning Officer nor the Commission regulates these offences. Any complaints should be made to the police.

Registered political parties are entitled to receive a copy of the full electoral register at any time.

1.13 The version you will receive will be the current one at the time of your application. You can also request the list of newly registered electors when it is published five working days before the poll.

1.14 The full electoral register and absent voters' lists contain people's personal data and so their use is very carefully controlled.

1.15 You can use them to:

- complete your nomination form
- help you campaign
- check that donations and loans from individuals are permissible

1.16 You must not release any details that appear only in the full register and do not appear in the edited version of the register which is available for general sale. You must not:

- use the full register and absent voters' lists for any other purpose not listed above, or
- pass copies on to anyone outside your campaign (except for certain data processing companies)

1.17 If you have supplied a copy of the register or absent voters' lists to campaign workers, they must also comply with the requirements above.

Any person found breaching the restrictions on use of the electoral register could face a fine of up to £5,000.

Applying for a copy of the electoral register and absent voters' lists

1.18 Those entitled to copies of the register and absent voters' lists may ask the relevant Electoral Registration Officers for a copy. Their contact details can be found on www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

1.19 The request must be made in writing and the Commission has made a [register request form](#) and an [absent voters' lists request form](#) available for this purpose on its website.

1.20 The register and lists will be supplied in electronic format unless you specifically request a paper copy.

Using schools and rooms for public meetings

1.21 You may want to engage with the public at public meetings, promoting your views and responding to questions from the audience.

1.22 The Electoral Registration Officer keeps a list of all suitable meeting rooms in their area and their availability, and will make this available for candidates and agents to inspect from the day the notice of election is published until the day before polling day. Contact details can be found on www.aboutmyvote.co.uk.

1.23 Mayoral and all London member candidates can use rooms throughout Greater London and constituency member candidates are entitled to use rooms in the constituency they are contesting (or, if they are unavailable, to use rooms in an adjoining constituency).

1.24 You should contact the owner of the premises to make a booking, giving reasonable notice to reduce the risk of the request being refused.

1.25 There is no hire charge for using these rooms, but you must pay for any expenses incurred, such as heating, lighting and cleaning, and for any damage to the premises.

Candidates' right to use rooms does not include hours during which a school is used for educational purposes. Equally, any prior letting of a meeting room must take precedence.

Mayoral address booklet

1.26 If you are a Mayoral candidate, you have an opportunity to tell voters about yourself and your policies in the Mayoral booklet produced by the Greater London Returning Officer. It is called an election address and the booklet in which it features is sent to all households in London before polling day.

1.27 All participating candidates must contribute £10,000 towards the cost of producing the booklet.

1.28 You can obtain more information from the Greater London Returning Officer.

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Campaign publicity dos and don'ts

1.29 You must:

- Use imprints on all your campaign material, including websites. See paragraph **1.32** below for more information.
- Comply with planning rules relating to advertising hoardings and large banners – you should ask the relevant local authority for advice.
- Make sure that outdoor posters are removed promptly after the election – you must do this within two weeks.

1.30 You should:

- Consider how to make your campaign accessible to people who are visually impaired, have learning difficulties or low literacy skills, or whose first language isn't English. You may want to make contact with disability groups in your local area for advice.

1.31 You must not:

- Produce material that looks like the poll cards sent to voters by the Returning Officer.
- Pay people to display your adverts (unless they display adverts as part of their normal business).

Using imprints

What is an imprint?

1.32 An imprint must, by law, be added to campaign material to show who is responsible for its production. It helps to ensure that the campaign is transparent.

What do you need to include?

1.33 On printed material, such as leaflets and posters, you must include the name and address of:

- the printer

- the promoter
- any person on behalf of whom the material is being published (and who is not the promoter)

1.34 The promoter is the person who has authorised the material to be printed. If the promoter is acting on behalf of a group or organisation, the group or organisation's name and address must also be included.

1.35 You can use either home or office addresses.

1.36 If you are putting an advert in a newspaper, your advert does not need to include the printer's details.

Example of an imprint

1.37 A standard imprint should look like this:

Printed by Armadillo Printing Ltd, 20 Barry Avenue, Leeds.
Promoted by J Smith on behalf of the Vote Party,
both of 110 High Street, Stafford.

1.38 You must make sure that it lists all the promoters and organisations involved.

Where do you put the imprint?

1.39 If your material is single-sided – such as a window poster – you must put the imprint on the face of the document. If it is multi-sided, you must put it on the first or last page.

Websites and other electronic material

1.40 You should also put an imprint on electronic material, such as websites and emails. The imprint should include the name and address of the promoter and the organisation on whose behalf it has been produced.

Tellers are volunteers for candidates who stand outside polling stations and record the elector numbers of electors who have voted

Polling day dos and don'ts

1.41 You should:

- Make sure that any tellers working for you follow the Commission's [tellers dos and don'ts](#) and any guidance issued by Returning Officers.

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- Make sure that any agents who are attending polling stations, postal vote opening sessions or the count understand the rules about the secrecy of the ballot. For more information, see the Commission's document setting out the secrecy requirements for [the poll](#), [postal voting](#) and [the count](#).
- Comply with all requests by polling station staff or Returning Officers about campaigning near polling stations.

1.42 You must not:

- Campaign near polling stations in a way that could be seen by voters as aggressive or intimidating (for example, large groups of supporters carrying banners, or vehicles with loudspeakers or heavily branded with campaign material).
- Breach the requirements on secrecy of the ballot. This is an essential part of any modern democracy and breaches are taken seriously. You can find details in the Commission's documents that set out the secrecy requirements for [the poll](#), [postal voting](#) and [the count](#). In particular, if you (or your agents) are attending postal vote opening sessions before the close of poll, you must not seek to identify and publicise how votes have been marked on individual ballot papers.
- Before the close of poll, publish exit polls or any other poll which gives the impression that it is based on information given by people after they have voted

Supplementary information

List of offences

1.43 You should be aware of a number of electoral and non-electoral offences, and should seek your own legal advice where necessary. The following is a list that provides a summary of the electoral offences.

Bribery

1.44 The offence of bribery includes where someone directly or indirectly gives any money or procures any office to or for any voter, in order to induce any voter to vote or not vote.

Treating

1.45 A person is guilty of treating if either before, during or after an election they directly or indirectly give or provide any food, drink, entertainment or provision to corruptly influence any voter to vote or refrain from voting. Treating requires a corrupt intent - it does not apply to ordinary hospitality.

Undue influence

1.46 A person is guilty of undue influence if they directly or indirectly make use of or threaten to make use of force, violence or restraint, or inflict or threaten to inflict injury, damage or harm in order to induce or compel that person to vote or refrain from voting.

Neither the Greater London Returning Officer nor the Commission regulate any of these offences.

For details of how to report any allegations of electoral malpractice see paragraph 1.62.

1.47 A person may also be guilty of undue influence if they impede or prevent any voter from freely exercising their right to vote – even where the attempt is unsuccessful.

1.48 Undue influence doesn't exclusively relate to physical access to the polling station. For example, a leaflet that threatens to make use of force in order to induce a voter to vote in a particular way could also be undue influence.

Personation

1.49 Personation is where an individual votes as someone else either by post or in person at a polling station, as an elector or as a proxy. This offence applies if the person that is being personated is living, dead or fictitious.

1.50 It is an offence for any individual to vote as someone else (whether that person is living or dead or is a fictitious person), either by post or in person at a polling station, as an elector or as a proxy.

1.51 Aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring the offence of personation is also an offence.

False statements

About a candidate's personal character or conduct

1.52 It is an illegal practice to make or publish a false statement of fact about the personal character or conduct of a candidate in order to affect the return of a candidate at an election.

1.53 False statements that are not about another candidate's personal character or conduct are not illegal under electoral law, but could be considered as libel or slander.

1.54 It is also an illegal practice to make a false statement of a candidate's withdrawal.

In nomination papers

1.55 It is an offence to knowingly provide a false statement on a nomination paper. For example, if you know you are disqualified from election you must not sign the consent to nomination.

False registration information and false postal/proxy voting application

1.56 It is an offence to supply false information on a registration, postal vote or proxy vote application form. False information includes a false signature.

False application to vote by post or by proxy

1.57 A person is guilty of an offence if they apply to vote by post or proxy to gain a vote to which they are not entitled or to deprive someone else of their vote.

Multiple voting and proxy voting offences

1.58 There are various offences regarding multiple voting and proxy voting, including voting by post as an elector or proxy when subject to a legal incapacity to vote and inducing or procuring another to commit the offence.

Breaches of the secrecy of the ballot

1.59 Everyone involved in the election process or attending certain proceedings must maintain the secrecy of the ballot. The Returning Officer will give a copy of the official secrecy requirements to everyone who attends the opening of postal votes or the counting of ballot papers and to polling agents.

Campaign publicity material

1.60 Certain offences relate specifically to election campaign publicity material. Election campaign publicity material must contain an imprint, not resemble a poll card and not contain a false statement as to the personal character or conduct of another candidate.

Racial hatred

1.61 Under the Public Order Act 1986, it is an offence to publish or distribute threatening, abusive or insulting material that is

Neither the Greater London Returning Officer nor the Commission regulate the content of campaign material and are not able to comment on the legality of any particular electoral material beyond what is covered in this guidance.

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intended to stir up racial hatred or which is likely to stir up racial hatred.

Reporting allegations of electoral malpractice

1.62 If you have reason to believe that an election-related crime has been committed, you should first raise the matter with the Electoral Registration Officer, the Constituency Returning Officer or the Greater London Returning Officer as applicable.

1.63 If appropriate, the matter will be investigated by the police. The Electoral Registration Officer, Returning Officer or Greater London Returning Officer may refer it to the police or provide you with the details of the police contact for your area so that you can report your allegation. Every police force has designated a Single Point of Contact (known as a SPOC) to lead on election matters.

1.64 If you want the police to formally investigate your concerns you should be prepared to give them a statement and substantiate your allegation.

1.65 You can contact the Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer through the elections office at your local authority. Contact details are available from our About My Vote website www.aboutmyvote.co.uk. Contact details for the Greater London Returning Officer are available in the [guidance overview document](#).

1.66 Please note that if your allegation relates to party, election or registered campaigner finance matters, such as spending or donations, then you should follow the advice given at the following link: www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/enforcement/making-allegations.

What if you have made a mistake?

1.67 If a candidate or agent has acted in contravention of the election rules, they can apply for relief from the penalties for any offence.

1.68 You should always seek legal advice if considering applying for relief.

1.69 For more information:

- visit www.hmcourts-service.gov.uk/HMCSCourtFinder/FormFinder.do, and enter the form number LOC002

or

- contact the Election Petitions Office at the Royal Courts of Justice at:

Supreme Court Cost Office
Room 2.14
Cliffords Inn
Fetter Lane
London EC4A 1DQ
Tel: 020 7947 6423