

Part F – After the declaration of results

UK Parliamentary general election and
local government elections in England
on 7 May 2015: guidance for (Acting)
Returning Officers

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

For information on obtaining this publication in another language or in a large-print or Braille version please contact the Electoral Commission:

Tel: 020 7271 0500

Email: publications@electoralcommission.org.uk

Contents

1	Storage and disposal of documents	1
	The documents that you have a duty to forward.....	3
	Destruction of home address forms.....	5
2	Post-election activity	6
	Providing notice of the UK Parliamentary election results	6
	Return of the writ	6
	Deposits	7
	Returning deposits.....	7
	Forfeited deposits.....	7
	Providing notice of the local election results.....	7
	Statement as to postal ballot papers	9
	Data collection and feedback	10
	Accounting for the election	10
	Payment of creditors.....	10
	Payment of fees to staff.....	10
	Return of equipment.....	11
	Candidates' election spending at the UK Parliamentary election	11
	Spending returns from non-party campaigners at a UK Parliamentary general election	12
	Candidates' election spending at the local election	13
	Candidates' returns – election spending.....	13
	Returns to the Electoral Commission on request	14
3	Challenges to the election results	15
	Election petitions	15
	Who can bring a UK Parliamentary election petition and on what grounds?	15
	Who can bring a local government election petition and on what grounds?	15
	Who is made a respondent?.....	16
	Deadlines for bringing petitions	16
4	Review of election procedures	17
	The review	17
5	Freedom of Information requests	19

1 Storage and disposal of documents

1.1 The election documents listed in paragraphs 1.8, 1.9 and 1.11 must be kept securely for one year from the date of the poll.

1.2 The election documents must be forwarded to the relevant registration officer. The relevant registration officer is:

UK Parliamentary elections

- the registration officer of the local authority in whose area the constituency is situated, or
- if the constituency comprises any part of the area of more than one local authority, the registration officer of the local authority in whose area the greater or greatest (as the case may be) number of electors is registered.

Principal area elections

- the registration officer of the local authority in whose area the principal area election is held, or
- if the electoral area of the relevant election or referendum comprises any part of the area of more than one local authority, the registration officer of the local authority in whose area the greater or greatest (as the case may be) number of electors is registered.

Parish elections

- the registration officer of the local authority in whose area the election is held and in which the parish or community is situated, or
- if the electoral area for the relevant election or referendum comprises any part of the area of more than one local authority, the registration officer of the local authority in whose area the greater or greatest (as the case may be) number of electors is registered.

Mayoral elections

- the registration officer for the local authority in whose area the mayoral election is held, or
- if the electoral area of the relevant election or referendum comprises any part of the area of more than one local authority, the registration officer of the local authority in whose area the greater or greatest (as the case may be) number of electors is registered.

Mayoral referendums

- the registration officer of the local authority by or in respect of which the referendum is held, or
- if the electoral area of the relevant election or referendum comprises any part of the area of more than one local authority, the registration officer of the local authority in whose area the greater or greatest (as the case may be) number of electors is registered.

Neighbourhood planning referendums

- the registration officer of the relevant council, or
- if the referendum area comprises any part of the area of more than one relevant council, the registration officer of the relevant council in whose portion of the referendum area the greater or greatest (as the case may be) number of electors is registered.

1.3 If you are not the relevant registration officer, you should liaise with them at an early stage to put in place arrangements for the forwarding of the prescribed documents after the declaration of results. You should ensure that all of the documentation is kept secure and accounted for during the process of being forwarded to the relevant registration officer.

1.4 In any case, you should maintain a clear audit trail when packaging and forwarding the documents as this will help to ensure that retrieval of documents is facilitated should anyone wish to inspect the public documents. The packaging and labelling system you use should both provide secure storage and support timely retrieval.

1.5 A clear audit trail and transparent process can be achieved by:

- Producing clear labels for each packet. You must seal all of the relevant documentation in separate packets and mark each packet with a description of its contents, the date of the election and the elections to which it relates. In respect of the UK Parliamentary election, the label must include the name of the constituency. In respect of the local government election, you should label the packet with the name of the ward to which it relates. In addition, the labels should state how long the packet is to be kept and when it is to be destroyed (unless otherwise directed by an order of a county court, the Crown Court, a magistrates' court or an election court). The labels for documents open to public inspection and for documents that are not open to public inspection should be different. As a minimum, the packets containing documents not open to public inspection should clearly state this fact.
- Ensuring that you have factored the parcelling up of documents into your verification and count planning.

- Covering packing instructions as part of your training for polling station staff and when training postal voting and count supervisors. Providing written instructions should also help to reduce the risk of documents being packaged wrongly. A [template graphical guide to packaging materials at the close of poll](#) is available, which you could adapt and provide to polling station staff.
- Creating a list of all documents to be forwarded. You should keep a record of all of the materials that you have a duty to send to the relevant registration officer, and ensure that all of the items are accounted for. Paragraphs **1.8**, **1.9** and **1.11** provide lists of documents that you have a duty to forward. You should also:
 - record the number of parcels you have despatched
 - record the details of the relevant registration officer to whom they have been sent
 - obtain a receipt from the relevant registration officer indicating that the parcels have been safely received

1.6 All packets and receptacles containing election documents should be stored securely before being transferred to the relevant registration officer so that no unauthorised persons can tamper with them.

The documents that you have a duty to forward

1.7 You have a legal duty to seal up the election documents listed below and, on the completion of the counting of ballot papers, must forward these to the relevant registration officer.

1.8 From the polling stations:

- The packet containing:
 - list of tendered votes
 - list of voters with disabilities assisted by companions
 - declarations made by companions of voters with disabilities
 - list of votes marked by the Presiding Officer
 - statements relating to votes marked by the Presiding Officer
 - list of persons to whom ballot papers are delivered after the correction of a clerical error or as a result of a decision on a court appeal
- marked copies of the register of electors, the marked list of proxies and any marked copy notices issued as a result of the correction of a clerical error or a decision on an appeal to the relevant court
- the packets containing the completed polling station corresponding number lists
- certificates of employment on duty on polling day

1.9 From the postal vote issues and openings:

- marked copies of the postal voters' list and proxy postal voters' list
- the packets containing the completed postal vote corresponding number lists
- the packets of postal voting statements accepted as valid
- the packets of rejected postal votes
- the packets of rejected postal ballot paper envelopes
- the lists of cancelled, lost and spoilt postal ballot papers
- the packet of spoilt postal ballot papers and accompanying documents
- the packet of lost postal ballot papers containing any part of the postal ballot pack that was not lost and which was returned to you before you issued a replacement
- the packet of postal ballot papers, statements and envelopes that have been cancelled
- unopened postal ballot packs received after the close of poll or returned as undelivered (these can be forwarded at a subsequent date)

1.10 You must also forward to the ERO(s) in your area, at the same time as you are forwarding the above election documents to the relevant registration officer, the statement as to postal ballot papers, the relevant parts of the list of postal votes that have failed the identifier checks. You should also forward at the same time your record of any instances where you suspect an offence may have been committed, so that the ERO(s) know in which cases they should not send out a postal vote identifier rejection notice.



For further information on the contents of the various lists relating to postal voting, see [Part D: Absent voting](#).

1.11 From the count:

- all ballot papers separately stored as:
 - counted ballot papers
 - rejected ballot papers
 - unused ballot papers (both ordinary and tendered) and spoilt ballot papers (placed together)
 - used tendered ballot papers
- ballot paper accounts, the result of the verification of the ballot paper accounts and the statement of rejected ballot papers

1.12 Retention and inspection guidance for [UK Parliamentary elections](#) and for [local government elections](#) to assist with the correct handling of the materials is available for download from our website.

1.13 As (A)RO you are responsible for the UK Parliamentary election count in your constituency. As local government RO you are responsible for the local government election count. Materials that are specific to one of the polls, including counted and rejected ballot papers and all other count materials must be packaged and sealed in separate packets from the other polls.

Mayoral election

At these polls, the packets must be marked with the name of the electoral area for which the election was held.

Neighbourhood planning referendum

At these polls, the packets must be marked with the name of the relevant council (except for postal vote documents, which must be marked with the name of the neighbourhood area).

Destruction of home address forms

1.14 Home address forms must be kept securely stored for a period of 21 calendar days after you have returned the writ. They must be securely destroyed on the next working day after the 21-day period. However, if an election petition relating to the election is presented within the 21 calendar days, the home address forms must be kept securely until the conclusion of the petition proceedings (including any appeal from such proceedings). They must then be securely destroyed on the next working day following the conclusion of the proceedings or appeal.

2 Post-election activity

Providing notice of the UK Parliamentary election results

2.1 You must give public notice of the name of the candidate elected, the total number of votes given to each candidate and the number of rejected ballot papers under each heading. When a candidate has used their commonly used name to stand in the election, you should use both their full name and the commonly used name when declaring the result.

2.2 You should ensure that the notice of results is made available to all interested parties as soon as possible, including by publishing it on your local authority's website.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure that the results are communicated to voters in a clear and timely way.

To demonstrate that the outcomes can be delivered you will need to have in place arrangements for communicating results to voters.

Return of the writ

2.3 After the declaration of the result, you must return the writ to the Clerk of the Crown as soon as possible. The writ must be endorsed with the name of the successful candidate.

2.4 You should ensure that, to the best of your knowledge, the member's full name, any title and their address are given in the full endorsement of the writ.

2.5 The Returning Officer (or the person they have delegated this to) must sign the writ and state the capacity in which they act. A photocopy of the endorsed writ should be made in case it is lost in transmission to the Clerk of the Crown.

2.6 The signed writ should then be returned to the Clerk of the Crown via the relevant Royal Mail Regional Operations Director through whom the writ was delivered (or by other agreed arrangements). This is to ensure that the return of the writ is formally made to the House of Lords no later than noon on Sunday, 10 May 2015.

Further information about the issue, delivery and receipt of the writ can be found in [Part A – Returning Officer role and responsibilities](#).

Deposits

Returning deposits

2.7 At a UK Parliamentary election, the £500 deposit made by or on behalf of a candidate must be returned if the candidate is found to have polled more than 5% of the total number of valid votes cast in the constituency. If the candidate is found to have polled equal to or less than 5% of the total number of valid votes cast, the deposit must not be returned.

2.8 If the candidate polls more than 5% of the valid votes cast, you must return the deposit to the person who made it by no later than the next working day after the result of the election is declared.

2.9 If you are returning a deposit by cheque, it is treated as being returned on the day on which the cheque is posted.

Forfeited deposits

2.10 If a candidate does not poll more than 5% of the total number of valid votes cast, their deposit will be forfeited. You must send any forfeited deposits to Her Majesty. The Cabinet Office will provide further information on this process.

Providing notice of the local election results

2.11 You must inform the Proper Officer of the council, who may be the chief executive or some other senior officer, of the name of each candidate elected. You must also give public notice of the name of each candidate elected and of the total number of votes given for each candidate (whether elected or not), together with the number of rejected ballot papers as shown in the statement of rejected ballot papers.



At parish council elections, you must inform the Proper Officer of the district in which the parish is situated of the name of each candidate elected. You must also inform the Proper Officer of the parish council. If there is no Proper Officer of the parish, you should give notice to the chair of the parish.

2.12 You should ensure that the notices of results for the local elections are made available to all interested parties as soon as possible, including by publishing them on the local authority's website.

Mayoral election

Giving public notice of the result

You must give public notice of the result and inform the Proper Officer of the council of the result of the election. You must give public notice of:

- the name of the successful candidate
- the total number of first preference votes given for each candidate
- the number of rejected ballot papers at the election separated into each reason for rejection, and
- if second preference votes were counted:
 - the total number of second preference votes given for each of the candidates remaining in the contest after the count of the first preference votes, and
 - the number of ballot papers rejected for the purposes of the count of second preference votes on the ground that they were unmarked or void for uncertainty as to the second preference vote.

Returning deposits

At a mayoral election, the £500 deposit made by or on behalf of a candidate must be returned if, after the counting of the first preference votes (including any recount) is completed, the candidate is found to have polled more than 5% of the total number of valid first preference votes polled by all candidates in the election. If the candidate is found to have polled equal to or less than 5% of the total number of valid first preference votes cast, the deposit must not be returned.

If the threshold is met, the deposit must be returned to the person who made it.

The deposits that are required to be returned must be returned not later than the next working day after the result of the election is declared. This deadline would be met should you post a cheque no later than the next working day after the result of the election is declared.

Forfeited deposits

The deposit made by or on behalf of a candidate will be forfeited to the local authority if, after the counting of the valid first preference votes (including any recount) is completed, the candidate is found not to have polled more than 5% of the total number of valid first preference votes polled by all candidates in the election.

Mayoral referendum

You are required by law to inform the Proper Officer of the council of the result of the mayoral referendum. You must, by law, also give public notice of the result of the referendum, the number of ballot papers counted, the total number of votes cast for each answer and the number of rejected ballots separated into each reason for rejection.

Neighbourhood planning referendums

Where the referendum does not cross local authority boundaries

After declaring the result, you are required by law to inform the Proper Officer of the council of the result of the referendum. You are also legally required to give public notice of the result of the referendum, the number of ballot papers counted, the total number of votes cast for each answer and the number of rejected ballot papers separated into each reason for rejection.

Where the referendum crosses local authority boundaries

As Counting Officer, you are required to give public notice of your local totals when authorised by the Chief Counting Officer to do so.

It is the Chief Counting Officer who gives public notice of the overall result. They are required by law to inform the Proper Officer of each council of the result of the referendum. They are also legally required to give public notice of the result, the number of ballot papers counted, the total number of votes cast for each answer and the number of rejected ballot papers separated into each reason for rejection.

Statement as to postal ballot papers

2.13 You have a legal duty to complete a statement as to postal ballot papers for each constituency and electoral area (or for the voting area at a mayoral referendum or referendum area at a neighbourhood planning referendum). Even where the issue of postal votes has been combined, you are still required to produce a statement of postal ballots for each of the polls. These documents are vital for the accounting of postal votes and for ensuring that voters have confidence that their vote will be counted in the way they intended. The statement should form part of the arrangements that you have in place to maintain a clear audit trail of the postal voting and count processes. You should complete the statements accurately using the figures recorded at the issue, receipt, opening and verification of postal votes.



Further details on record-keeping throughout the administration of the postal voting process are provided in [Part D – Absent voting](#).

2.14 The Commission has produced a template statement as to postal ballot papers for the UK Parliamentary election and the local election, which should be used. The accompanying guidance notes should support you in completing these.

2.15 You have a legal duty to forward a copy of the completed statements at the same time and to the same person as you forward the other election documents listed in paragraphs **1.8**, **1.9** and **1.11** above.

2.16 You must also provide a copy of the statements to the Commission and the Secretary of State. The statements must not be provided before 18 May 2015 but must arrive no later than 25 May 2015.

Data collection and feedback

2.17 You will also be requested to send information and data to the Commission relating to the elections.

2.18 Forms for collecting information and data, and accompanying guidance notes for completion, as well as a Commission feedback form, will be circulated separately and will also be [available on the Commission's website](#).

Accounting for the election

2.19 UK Parliamentary elections are funded by the UK Government and claims for fees and charges for the election are administered through the Elections Claims Unit, which is part of the Cabinet Office. Detailed guidance and instructions for accounting for the election, including how to apportion costs where polls are combined, will be provided by the Cabinet Office. Please contact Adam Shoesmith at adam.shoesmith@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk for more information.

2.20 The costs for running a local government election are paid for by the local authority. The local authority will provide you with instructions for accounting for the elections.

Payment of creditors

2.21 You should keep receipts throughout the period of the elections for all services/work provided, and pay all creditors as soon as possible after the elections.

Payment of fees to staff

Income tax

2.22 Changes to income tax arrangements include cessation of the current non-liability to tax declaration (P527) to be replaced by a standard starter checklist which is issued at the time of appointment, and needs only be done once rather than be reviewed every year as with the P527. The P528 form, currently issued in lieu of a P60 will also no longer be used, but you will need to issue a P60 form to the employee at the end of the tax year.

HMRC real-time information

2.23 All election payments made in the tax year beginning in April 2015 will be subject to HMRC's real-time information tax payment system. You should ensure that you liaise with your local authority's finance and HR departments to ensure that you can comply with the tax rules for all your employees, including any temporary and short-term contract staff. Further guidance is available from [HMRC](#).

Automatic enrolment into a workplace pension

2.24 All employers with staff working in the UK must comply with automatic enrolment requirements. Further guidance is available from the [Pensions Regulator](#).

Return of equipment

2.25 You should make arrangements to return any equipment, such as the empty ballot boxes, to storage.

Candidates' election spending at the UK Parliamentary election

2.26 Legislation imposes limits on candidates' spending and the Electoral Commission is required by law to monitor the compliance of candidates and agents with rules on candidates' election spending and donations in respect of spending after candidacy, and in respect of spending beforehand.

2.27 All election agents must submit a candidate's spending return to you, together with relevant invoices and receipts, within 35 calendar days of the declaration of result of the election, i.e. **by 11 June 2015** if the result is declared on Thursday 7 May **or by 12 June 2015** if the result is declared on Friday 8 May.

2.28 The legislation also requires election agents and candidates to submit declarations vouching for the candidate's election spending return. The election agent's declaration must be submitted at the same time as the return. The candidate's declaration must be submitted within seven working days of the election agent submitting the return. However, if the candidate is out of the UK when the return is submitted to you, they must make the declaration within 14 days of coming back to the UK and submit it to you as soon as possible.

2.29 In turn, you must send copies of candidates' election spending returns and declarations to the Electoral Commission as soon as reasonably practicable after the return or declaration is received.

2.30 Please supply the following information to enable us to carry out our compliance duties:

- electorate figures for each constituency used to calculate the candidates' spending limit
- the candidates' spending limit provided to candidates, if applicable
- a list of all candidates who stood for election, including their party (if any) and whether they were successful
- confirmation of who has not submitted a return, has submitted an incomplete return or has submitted a late return and what, if anything, you have already done about such cases
- addresses of election agents for any candidates who failed to submit returns

2.31 You must retain a copy of each election spending return and declaration, and any accompanying documents, for a period of two years beginning with the date when the return is received and, during that period, make copies available for public inspection without charge. Anyone can also request copies of the returns and accompanying documents, which must be supplied on payment of the fee of 20p per side. The addresses of individuals who have made donations to candidates must be removed from all inspection copies and copies supplied on request. At the end of the two-year period if the candidate or the relevant election agent requests them, they must be returned to the candidate. Otherwise the returns and accompanying documents may be destroyed.

2.32 We have produced guidance for candidates and agents on election spending and the required returns; in addition, candidates and agents can also download the return of candidate election spending form with integrated explanatory notes, the declaration by the election agent as to election spending and the declaration by the candidate as to their election spending. These documents can all be downloaded from [our website](#).

Spending returns from non-party campaigners at a UK Parliamentary general election

2.33 You have the power to request a spending return from local non-party campaigners who campaign for or against individual candidates at a UK Parliamentary general election and who are not otherwise required to submit a return. It is important to note that this is a power and not a duty. If you require further information about this power, you should contact your local Commission office.

2.34 You can request a spending return within the period of 6 months after polling day, and the request must be complied with within 21 calendar days beginning with the day on which the request is received.

Candidates' election spending at the local election

Candidates' returns – election spending

2.35 All election agents must submit a candidate's spending return to the Proper Officer of the council, together with relevant invoices and receipts, within **35 calendar days** of the declaration of result of the election, i.e. **by 11 June 2015** if the result is declared on Thursday 7 May **or by 12 June 2015** if the result is declared on Friday 8 May.

2.36 The legislation also requires election agents and candidates to submit declarations vouching for the candidate's election spending return. The election agent's declaration must be submitted at the same time as the return. The candidate's declaration must be submitted within seven working days of the election agent submitting the return. However, if the candidate is out of the UK when the return is submitted to you, they must make the declaration within 14 days of coming back to the UK and submit it to you as soon as possible.

2.37 The Proper Officer must retain a copy of each local government election spending return and declaration, and any accompanying documents, for a period of two years beginning with the date when the return is received and, during that period, make copies available for public inspection without charge. Anyone can also request copies of the returns and accompanying documents, which must be supplied on payment of the fee of 20p per side. The addresses of individuals who have made donations to candidates must be removed from all inspection copies and copies supplied on request. At the end of the two-year period if the candidate or the relevant election agent requests them, they must be returned to the candidate. Otherwise the returns and accompanying documents may be destroyed.

2.38 The Commission has produced guidance for candidates and agents on election spending and the required returns; in addition, candidates and agents can also download the return of candidate election spending form with integrated explanatory notes, the declaration by the election agent as to election spending and the declaration by the candidate as to their election spending. These documents can all be downloaded from [our website](#).

2.39 The Commission has also published [guidance for Proper Officers to help deal with any outstanding candidate spending returns](#) at local elections.



At parish and community council elections, candidates have 28 calendar days to submit their election spending returns, accompanied by a declaration as to spending completed by the candidate, to the Proper Officer of the council. No agent's declaration is required. Guidance and forms for parish and community candidates can be found on our website

at: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/parish-and-community-council-elections-in-england-and-wales>.

Returns for these elections must be retained for a period of 12 months after their receipt. After this period, the Proper Officer if requested, must return them to the candidate, or may destroy them.

Returns to the Electoral Commission on request

2.40 Legislation imposes spending limits and reporting requirements for candidates' campaigns, and gives the Electoral Commission the function of monitoring compliance with the rules on candidates' election spending and donations to candidates.

2.41 If requested to do so, Proper Officers must send copies of candidates' election spending returns to the Commission. Copies of the returns sent to the Commission must include all accompanying documentation, including declarations.

2.42 The Commission may also ask you to provide the following:

- electorate figures for each ward used to calculate the candidates' spending limit
- the candidates' spending limit provided to candidates, if applicable
- a list of all candidates who stood for election, including their party (if any), and whether they were successful
- confirmation of who has not submitted a return, has submitted an incomplete return or has submitted a late return and what, if anything, the Proper Officer has already done about such cases
- addresses of election agents for any candidates who failed to submit returns

Mayoral election

At a mayoral election the Proper Officer must, as soon as is reasonably practicable after receiving a candidates' election spending return or declaration, send a copy of any returns or declarations to the Commission. Additionally, the Proper Officer must send copies of any accompanying documents to the Commission if so requested.

3 Challenges to the election results

Election petitions

3.1 Election petitions can be used to challenge the result of elections.

Who can bring a UK Parliamentary election petition and on what grounds?

3.2 A UK Parliamentary election petition can be presented by:

- a person claiming to have been a candidate at the election, or
- a person claiming to have had a right to be elected or returned at the election, or
- a person who voted as an elector at the election or who had a right to vote at the election, except for an elector registered anonymously

3.3 The allowable grounds for a petition are that there has been an:

- undue election, or
- undue return

3.4 There is a separate judicial process for challenging the election of an MP on the grounds that they were or are disqualified under the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 (as amended). In that case, an application may be made to the Privy Council for a declaration to that effect (provided that a petition is not pending or has been tried in which the alleged disqualification is or was in issue (and where the grounds for the disqualification applied at the time of the elections) or an Order of the House of Commons to disregard the disqualification has not been made). Any person who is considering applying to the Privy Council for a declaration of disqualification should be advised to take their own legal advice.

Who can bring a local government election petition and on what grounds?

3.5 A local government election petition can be presented by:

- four or more persons who voted as electors at the election or had a right to vote (except anonymous electors), or
- a person claiming to have been a candidate at the election

3.6 The allowable grounds for a local government election petition are that:

- the person whose election is questioned was disqualified at the time of the election, or
- the person whose election is questioned was not duly elected, or
- the election was avoided by corrupt or illegal practices

Who is made a respondent?

3.7 The person whose election is questioned by the petition will most probably be made a respondent to the petition. You may also be a respondent to the petition if the petition relates to your conduct of the election.

Deadlines for bringing petitions

3.8 A petition at a UK Parliamentary election must normally be presented within 21 calendar days after the date of the return of the writ to the Clerk of the Crown (which in most cases will be the day after the election).

3.9 A petition at a local government election must be presented within 21 calendar days after the day on which the election was held. If, however, the petition complains of corrupt or illegal practices involving the payment of money or other reward that have taken place since the election, or an illegal practice relating to election expenses, further time may be allowed.

3.10 Any person who is considering presenting an election petition should be advised to take their own legal advice. For any questions relating to election petitions and the process for submitting petitions, including to confirm the deadlines, you should contact the Elections Petitions Office:

The Election Petitions Office
Room E113
Royal Courts of Justice
Strand
London WC2A 2LL

Email: Election_Petitions@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Phone: 020 7947 6877

Fax: 0870 324 0024

4 Review of election procedures

4.1 You should carry out a thorough evaluation of all processes outlined in your project plan, seeking feedback from appropriate stakeholders, and produce a lessons learnt document which will be used to inform the project plan and risk register for future electoral events.

4.2 The Commission has provided, as part of the [template project plan](#), some sample objectives and suggested tools that will allow you to measure the extent to which the conduct of the elections has been successful. The Commission has also provided an evaluation plan as part of the template project plan to assist you with the review process.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to evaluate planning for and delivery of previous polls and identify lessons learnt, updating plans as required. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place planning documentation reflecting lessons learnt.

The review

4.3 The scope of the review should cover all aspects of the elections. Your project plan should be used as the starting point for the review, and each process that was planned for and carried out should be reviewed.

4.4 A key part of the review will be the consideration of the aims and objectives set out in your project plan and measuring your performance against these.

4.5 You should pay particular attention to reviewing:

- your project planning
- whether you were able to secure adequate resources
- if your constituency crosses local authority boundaries, what worked well and what could be improved when working with elections staff from the other local authority/authorities
- how contractors have been managed and whether they delivered work to the required specification
- the equipment and stationery used
- recruitment and training of staff
- the suitability of venues used
- the management of nominations, polling stations, the absent voting process, and the verification and count
- the processing and handling of queries
- any issues affecting the security/integrity of the election

As part of the review you should seek feedback from appropriate stakeholders.

4.6 You should seek feedback from the following:

- your staff and, if your constituency crosses local authority boundaries, elections staff from the other local authority/authorities
- electors
- candidates, agents and political parties
- local organisations of disabled people, older people and minority ethnic groups, and the council's access officers

4.7 To obtain feedback from your staff, for example, you should consider inviting a number of them, including polling station staff, to a discussion in order to address all aspects of the polling station process, from training and briefing sessions through to dealing with difficult situations on polling day. You could also take into account any feedback provided in reports returned by Presiding Officers and polling station inspectors.

4.8 Once you have reviewed all aspects of the election and sought feedback from appropriate stakeholders you should produce a lessons learnt document. The lessons learnt document should include an analysis of what practices were successful and where these could be used elsewhere, what you would do again or do differently, and key recommendations. The lessons learnt report should then be used to inform the project plan and risk register for future electoral events.

5 Freedom of Information requests

5.1 Following the elections you may receive requests under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000. ROs and EROs are not a public authority under this Act and, as such, are exempt from the disclosure requirements imposed by it.

5.2 However, where possible, ROs and EROs should disclose the requested information, provided this information is already in the public domain, or the information requested does not include personal data. An example of non-personal data would be statistical data providing the total number of electors registered in your area or the turnout of postal voters.