

Polling station handbook insert: local authority mayoral and local elections in England

How to use this document

Where a local election in England is combined with a local authority mayoral election, most of the polling station procedures will be the same. However, there are a number of procedures that will be different from those described in the [‘Handbook for polling station staff: Supporting local government elections in England and Wales’](#).

The polling station handbook should therefore be read alongside this document. Any references to ‘elections’ in the polling station handbook should be taken to include a local authority mayoral election and any references to ‘local government election’ should be read as also applying to a local authority mayoral election, unless otherwise stated in this document.

We have included the changes / additions on individual sheets in this document, so that they can be printed off and inserted into the relevant parts of the handbook for ease of reference.

Summary of changes

Section headings affected	Replacement or addition	Pages in local government election handbook
Local government elections	Addition: Local authority mayoral elections	2
Stage three – voting	Addition of two headings: What if the elector refuses a particular ballot paper before it has been handed over? What if a ballot paper has already been handed over and the elector decides they do not want it?	15
The prescribed questions		Appendix 5a (pp 30-32)

Local authority mayoral elections (Addition page 2)

At a local authority mayoral election where there are more than two candidates, the supplementary vote electoral system is used.

Under this system voters can vote for a first and second choice candidate they want to elect. The ballot paper will list all the candidates standing in the local authority area and voters will vote for their first choice candidate by marking an 'X' in the first choice column and for their second choice by marking an 'X' in the second choice column.

As long as they put an 'X' in the first choice column, their vote will be counted. Voters can choose not to mark a second choice. If they only mark a second choice, their vote won't be counted.

If, however, there are only two candidates standing, the combined authority mayor will be elected under the first-past-the-post electoral system. In this case, voters will be asked to place an 'X' in the box next to the candidate of their choice on the ballot paper.

What if the elector refuses a particular ballot paper before it has been handed over? (Addition page 15)

If an elector refuses one of the ballot papers before it has been handed over, the Presiding Officer should issue the requested ballot paper and mark the register of electors accordingly, indicating which ballot paper has been issued. The elector's number should then be entered onto the corresponding number list(s).

The voter may return to the polling station later on polling day to request the vote previously refused, and so following this procedure is important. If the elector does return to the polling station later in the day, the corresponding number list should be marked but only the ballot paper that was previously refused should be handed over to the voter. The Presiding Officer should mark the register of electors to show that both ballot papers have now been issued to that elector.

What if a ballot paper has already been handed over and the elector decides they do not want it? (Addition page 15)

Once a ballot paper has been handed over to the elector it cannot be cancelled (unless it has been spoiled). The Presiding Officer should therefore try to convince the elector to place the unmarked ballot paper in the appropriate ballot box.

If the voter refuses to do this, the Presiding Officer should take the ballot paper and keep it securely away from the other ballot papers and make a note on the appropriate ballot paper account that the paper was issued but not used. The Presiding Officer should not re-issue this ballot paper; however, they may give this ballot paper to the elector to whom it was originally issued if they return later and request it.

The prescribed questions (Replacement; Appendix 5a, pp 30-32)

1. The prescribed questions to be asked of a person applying to vote as an elector

For both elections (read out twice – once in respect of each contest):

‘Are you the person registered in the register of local government electors for this election as follows? (you must then read out loud the whole entry from the register)?’

If the answer is ‘no’, do not issue ballot papers.

If the answer is ‘yes’, then ask:

For the local election:

‘Have you already voted, here or elsewhere at this election for this *(district), *(county), *(London borough), *(county borough) otherwise than as proxy for some other person?’ (*read out whichever is applicable, adding, in the case of an election for several electoral areas ‘in this or any other electoral area’)

AND

For the local authority mayoral election:

‘Have you already voted here or elsewhere at this election, otherwise than as proxy for some other person?’

If the answer is ‘yes’ to these questions, do not issue ballot papers.

If the person has answered ‘yes’ to the first questions and ‘no’ to the second questions, ordinary or tendered ballot papers must be issued as appropriate.

2. The prescribed questions to be asked of a person applying to vote as a proxy (but not on behalf of an elector with an anonymous entry)

The prescribed questions for proxies have a different wording:

For both elections (read out twice – once in respect of each contest):

‘Are you the person whose name appears as (read out the name that appears in the list of proxies) in the list of proxies for this election as entitled to vote as proxy on behalf of (the name of the elector on the register of electors)?’

If the answer is ‘no’, do not issue ballot papers.

If the answer is ‘yes’, then ask:

For the local election:

‘Have you already voted here or elsewhere at this election for this *(district), *(county), *(London borough), *(county borough) (*read out whichever is applicable, adding, in the case of an election for several electoral areas ‘in this or any other electoral area’), as proxy on behalf of (read out the name of the elector on the register)?’

AND

For the local authority mayoral election:

‘Have you already voted here or elsewhere at this election, as proxy on behalf of (the name of the elector on the register)?’

If the answer is ‘yes’, ballot papers must not be issued.

If the answer is ‘no’, then ask:

‘Are you the spouse, civil partner, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child or grandchild of (the name of the elector on the register)?’

If the answer to this question is ‘yes’ (and the questions above have been answered satisfactorily), ordinary or tendered ballot papers must be issued as appropriate.

If, however, the answer is ‘no’, then ask:

For the local election:

‘Have you already voted at this election for this *(district), *(county), *(London borough), *(county borough), on behalf of two persons of whom you are not the spouse, civil partner, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child or grandchild?’ (*read out whichever is applicable, adding, in the case of an election for several areas ‘in this or any other electoral area’)

AND

For the local authority mayoral election:

‘Have you already voted at this election on behalf of two persons of whom you are not the spouse, civil partner, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child or grandchild?’

If the answer is ‘yes’, do not issue ballot papers.

If the answer is ‘no’ (and the questions above have been answered satisfactorily), ordinary or tendered ballot papers must be issued, as appropriate.

3. The prescribed questions to be asked of a person applying to vote as a proxy for an elector with an anonymous entry

For both elections (read out twice – once in respect of each contest):

‘Are you the person entitled to vote as proxy on behalf of the elector whose number on the register of electors is (read out the number from the register)?’

If the answer is ‘no’, do not issue ballot papers.

If the answer is ‘yes’, then ask:

For both elections (read out twice – once in respect of each contest):

‘Have you already voted here or elsewhere as proxy on behalf of the elector whose number on the register of electors is (read out the number of the elector on the register)?’

If the answer is ‘yes’, ballot papers must not be issued.

If the answer is ‘no’, you must also ask:

‘Are you the spouse, civil partner, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child or grandchild of the person whose number on the register of electors is (read out the number of the elector on the register)?’

If the answer to this question is ‘yes’ (and the questions above have been answered satisfactorily), an ordinary or tendered ballot paper must be issued as appropriate.

If, however, the answer is ‘no’, then ask:

For the local election:

‘Have you already voted at this election for this *(district), *(county), *(London borough), *(county borough), on behalf of two persons of whom you are not the spouse, civil partner, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child or grandchild?’ (*read out whichever is applicable, adding, in the case of an election for several areas ‘in this or any other electoral area’)

AND

For the local authority mayoral election:

‘Have you already voted at this election on behalf of two persons of whom you are not the spouse, civil partner, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child or grandchild?’

If the answer to this question is ‘yes’, do not issue ballot papers.

If the answer to these questions is 'no' (and all of the above questions have been answered satisfactorily), then an ordinary or tendered ballot paper must be issued as appropriate.

4. The prescribed questions to be asked of a person applying to vote in person when they are shown on the register as a postal voter.

The following prescribed questions are for electors shown on the register as postal voters, but who:

- claim either to have not applied to vote by post or
- present themselves at the polling station after 5pm and claim to have lost or not received their postal ballot paper

'Did you apply to vote by post?' (read out twice – once in respect of each contest)

If the answer is 'no', tendered ballot papers must be issued.

If the answer to this question is 'yes', then ask:

'Why have you not voted by post?' (read out twice – once in respect of each contest)

If the question is answered satisfactorily, the Presiding Officer should record the reason and issue tendered ballot papers. If, however, the elector says that they have not voted by post because they have lost or not received (all or any part of) their postal ballot pack, tendered ballot papers can only be issued after 5pm.

5. The prescribed questions to be asked of a person applying to vote as a proxy when they are shown as having been issued with postal proxy ballot papers.

The prescribed questions for proxies named on the postal proxy list but who claim either to have not applied to vote by post or who present themselves at the polling station after 5pm and claim to have lost or not received their postal ballot paper are as follows:

'Did you apply to vote by post as proxy?' (read out twice – once in respect of each contest)

If the answer is 'no', tendered ballot papers must be issued.

If the answer to this question is 'yes', then ask:

'Why have you not voted by post as proxy?' (read out twice – once in respect of each contest)

If the question is answered satisfactorily, the Presiding Officer should record the reason and issue tendered ballot papers. If, however, the proxy says that they have not voted by post because they have lost or not received (all or any part of) their postal ballot pack, tendered ballot papers can only be issued after 5pm.