

Part A – (Acting) Returning Officer role and responsibilities

UK Parliamentary general election and
local government elections in England:
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

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1 Introduction to this guidance

Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this guidance is to assist (Acting) Returning Officers ((A)ROs) in England with the practice and procedure of running the poll at a UK Parliamentary election where the poll is combined with the poll at a local government election.

1.2 At a UK Parliamentary election in England and Wales the administration of the election is the responsibility of the (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO), who is normally a senior officer of the local authority.¹ For further details about the role and responsibilities of the RO and (A)RO, see **Roles and responsibilities**.

1.3 As (A)RO you are responsible not only for the delivery of the UK Parliamentary election but also for the combined elements of the poll. This guidance therefore covers all aspects of planning for and administering a UK Parliamentary election and local government election in England.

1.4 Given the potential for these polls to be combined with the poll at a further election or a referendum, we have also included within this guidance content relevant to planning for, and administering, parish council elections, mayoral referendums and mayoral elections, including combined authority mayoral elections. Differences will be highlighted in break-out boxes throughout, along with specific considerations relating to combinationⁱ. References in this guidance to a local government election should therefore be read to include parish and mayoral elections unless otherwise stated, and references to a mayoral election should be read to include combined authority mayoral elections unless otherwise stated.

1.5 This guidance does not cover the administration of council tax referendums. It also does not cover the administration of residential neighbourhood planning referendums, other than to highlight the impact on (A)ROs where the poll at such a referendum is combined with a UK Parliamentary election and local government election. The content related to neighbourhood planning referendums only covers referendums that do not cross local authority boundaries. Where a neighbourhood planning referendum crosses local authority boundaries the legislation relating to combination is complex and we therefore advise you to contact your [local Commission team](#) as soon as possible after becoming aware that such a referendum will be taking place in your area.

ⁱ This guidance does not cover combination with any other election than those listed.

Combined authority mayoral election

If you are a local RO at a combined authority mayoral election you should read this guidance in conjunction with any additional guidance or directions issued by the Combined Authority Returning Officer (CARO) as part of their role in co-ordinating the delivery of the combined authority mayoral election in their area. The CARO has the power to give general or specific directions to local ROs relating to the discharge of their functions at the combined authority mayoral election, and so when acting as local RO you must comply with any such directions. However, the power to give directions does not extend to any other election or the combined elements of the poll. In any case, you should liaise closely with the CARO and take into account any guidance issued by them in preparing for and delivering the polls as a whole. We have produced separate [planning guidance for CAROs](#) which is available for download from our website.

1.6 This guidance has been produced based on, and should be read in accordance with, the requirements set out in the following legislation (as amended):

- Local Government Act 1972
- Representation of the People Acts 1983, 1985 and 2000
- Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000
- Local Government 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
- Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006
- Local Elections (Parish and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2006
- Local Authorities (Mayoral Elections) (England and Wales) Regulations 2007
- Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order 2007
- Political Parties and Elections Act 2009
- Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009
- Dissolution and Calling of Parliament Act 2022
- Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) Regulations 2012
- Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012
- Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013
- The Combined Authorities (Mayoral Elections) Order 2017

1.7 The list above includes only the legislation that makes provision in areas that this guidance relates to and that is currently in force.

1.8 Revised data protection legislation applied from 25 May 2018 and applies to the processing of all personal data. You are personally responsible for ensuring that they comply with the requirements of data protection legislation. In addition to the updates made to this guidance, the Commission

published a [resource](#) in February 2018 to support you in meeting your obligations under the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, as they relate to your electoral administration responsibilities.

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

How to use this guidance

1.10 The guidance is divided into six areas:

- Part A – Returning Officer role and responsibilities
- Part B – Planning and organisation
- Part C – Administering the poll
- Part D – Absent voting
- Part E – Verifying and counting the votes
- Part F – After the declaration of results

1.11 Each of these parts covers:

- 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

1.12 This guidance is supplemented by resources which can be accessed through links contained throughout the guidance.

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

Terminology

1.14 In this guidance the term 'ward' should be read as 'electoral division' in elections for unitary, county and county borough councils. The term 'electoral area' should be read as 'constituency' for the purposes of the UK Parliamentary election.



Parish council elections

In the case of a parish that is unwarded, 'ward' should be read as 'parish'.

Local authority mayoral elections and mayoral referendums

At a local authority mayoral election or referendum the electoral area is the whole of the local authority area.

Combined authority mayoral election

The legislation defines the electoral area at a combined authority mayoral election as the whole of the combined authority area. However, combined authority mayoral elections are administered locally on a district council basis².

Neighbourhood planning referendums

At a neighbourhood planning referendum, the electoral area is the referendum area³. As a minimum this will be the Neighbourhood Area, but can be extended to include other areas with an interest in the outcome of the referendum. At these referendums, references in this guidance to 'electoral area' should therefore be read as 'referendum area'.

2 Context of the elections

2.1 A UK Parliamentary election is a significant event which brings with it its own particular challenges. Your work to deliver well-run polls will come under considerable scrutiny – from voters, candidates and political parties, and the media.

2.2 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 for the polls.

Scale

2.3 Many aspects of planning for the elections will need to reflect assumptions as to the likely turnout for the poll. Establishing such assumptions at an early stage in the planning is of key importance as the scope for adjusting plans is limited at a later stage in the process.

2.4 The level of interest in the UK Parliamentary election is likely to be significant. You should plan for the possibility of high turnout, and as a minimum you should assume that the turnout will be not less than the turnout at the last equivalent polls.

2.5 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 both within your constituency and more broadly 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 once again televised Leaders' debates, these could conceivably result in a late surge of registration and absent voting applications, as well as having an impact on turnout and are likely to alter the traditional pattern of when completed postal votes are returned.

2.6 It is vital that appropriate provision of polling stations is made, with the numbers of stations and the numbers of staff within them sufficient to deal with the number of electors allocated to them. Although any voters in a queue at their polling station at 10pm are able to vote, the need to ensure that voters do not face undue delays in voting and can receive a high-quality service remains.

2.7 The possible extent and level of combination of polls means that some (A)ROs may face a combination of three or more different polls. This level of combination will have impacts throughout the planning for, and delivery of, the polls.

2.8 For example, in the case where the poll is combined with the poll at a mayoral election with more than two candidates, there would be two different electoral systems in use, incorporating two methods of voting, with two

different ballot papers. Clear and tailored information for voters on how to cast their vote will, in that case, be essential to minimise confusion. At a combined authority mayoral election, where the electoral area will include a number of local authority areas, to minimise voter confusion and to ensure that voters receive a consistently high quality of service irrespective of where they live, you will need to work closely with the CARO and other local ROs.

2.9 It is likely that the media will focus on the verification and count 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 declaration times.

2.10 You should also keep in mind the legal requirement to take reasonable steps to start the counting, not just the verification, of the votes at UK Parliamentary elections by 2am. There will be a focus from candidates, political parties, commentators and broadcasters on the speed of the results. The challenge for you, as (A)RO, will be to be able to explain the steps you are taking in order to ensure the delivery of timely – and, fundamentally, accurate – results.

Nature of the contests

2.11 The polls will likely be hard-fought, with many close contests in constituencies and wards across England. 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.

2.12 There may be a significant number of new or less experienced political parties, 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.

2.13 Particularly given the likelihood of close and hard-fought contests, you should be prepared for the integrity of these 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 election 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.

Registration of electors

2.14 The focus on the numbers of those registered and not registered is as high profile as it's ever been, and this is set to continue.

2.15 The potential for a high number of registration applications close to the deadline for the election should be anticipated and built into your plans, reflecting lessons learnt from the experience of recent polls. The impact of such applications and related questions from residents will also have implications for the administration of the poll and your plans should ensure you are able to respond effectively.

2.16 Online registration in particular brings greater opportunities for you to engage local residents in the democratic process, and to boost the levels of registration amongst under-registered groups, with a UK Parliamentary election providing a strong hook for your local public engagement activity. And you do not need to do this on your own – opportunities for working with local partners who can reach out to voters in under-registered groups in your area could be a valuable part of your engagement work locally and should be sought out and seized.

3 Roles and responsibilities

The Returning Officer and (Acting) Returning Officer for UK Parliamentary elections

3.1 At a UK Parliamentary election in England, the Returning Officer (RO) is a largely ceremonial position. Most duties of the RO are discharged by the (Acting) Returning Officer, who is normally a senior officer of the local authority.

Appointment of the RO

3.2 In a borough constituency contained in a district, the mayor or chairman of the local authority is the RO. In a county constituency, the RO is the Sheriff of the County. In areas where the constituency overlaps county or district borders, the RO is designated by the Secretary of State.⁴ See paragraph 3.8 below for an explanation of the two types of constituencies.

Duties of the RO

3.3 It is for the RO to receive the writ. However, a RO can appoint a deputy for the purposes of receiving the writ.⁵

3.4 The RO may also reserve for themselves the duties in connection with endorsing and returning the writ, as well as declaring and giving public notice of the result. In that case, they must give written notice to you, as the (A)RO. The notice must be given in writing by the day after the receipt of the writ and needs to specify which duties the Returning Officer wishes to reserve for themselves.⁶ The notice is not prescribed.

3.5 You should contact the RO at an early stage in your planning to ensure they are aware of their duties in connection with the role and to discuss whether or not these duties will be delegated.

Appointment of (Acting) Returning Officer

3.6 In a constituency for which the chairman of a district council or the mayor of a London borough is the RO, the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) appointed by that council is the (A)RO.

3.7 In the case of any other constituency, the ERO for one of the local authorities covered by the constituency will be designated as (A)RO by an order made by the Secretary of State.⁷

Boundaries and constituencies

3.8 There are two types of constituency: county and borough. Typically, borough constituencies are mainly urban while county constituencies are mainly rural. The legislation for England⁸ and Wales⁹ sets out whether a constituency is a county or borough constituency.

3.9 UK Parliamentary general elections are run on UK Parliamentary constituency boundaries. Constituencies can be coterminous with the areas of local authorities but many comprise only part of the area, while others cross one or more local authority boundaries.

3.10 While you are responsible for delivering the UK Parliamentary election as a whole, in practice, if any part of the constituency falls outside your local authority, you will need to consider what impact this will have on your processes and whether you will need to delegate some of your functions to a senior officer at the other local authority. You should liaise closely with the ERO and election staff at the relevant local authority/authorities in order to identify any possible issues and how these will be addressed. You should seek their advice and assistance, where necessary, as they will be more familiar with those areas.

Returning Officer for local government elections

3.11 Every county, district, unitary and metropolitan council is required to appoint an officer of the council to be the RO for the election of councillors to their local authority¹⁰. The RO at an election of London borough councillors is the proper officer of the borough¹¹.

3.12 In Wales, every county or county borough council is required to appoint an officer of the council to be the RO for the election of councillors to their local authority.¹²



Parish and community council elections

Every district council in England and every county and county borough council in Wales must appoint an officer of the council to be the RO for any elections of councillors of parishes or communities within the district or county/county borough¹³. This may be the same person as the RO for principal area elections, but does not need to be.

Local authority mayoral election

The person appointed as the RO for principal area elections will be the RO for any mayoral elections in the local authority (i.e. the person appointed as the RO for the election of principal area councillors is also the RO for election of a mayor)¹⁴.

Combined authority mayoral election

At a combined authority mayoral election, each constituent council must appoint an officer of the council to be the local RO for the combined authority mayoral election. Where both a district council and a county council are constituent councils for the same area of the combined authority, the requirement to appoint an officer of the council to be the local RO only applies to the district council¹⁵.

The combined authority must also appoint one of its officers, or one of the officers of a constituent council, to be the Combined Authority Returning Officer (CARO) for the election¹⁶. The CARO is responsible for the overall conduct of the combined authority mayoral election, and for liaising with and co-ordinating the work of ROs within the combined authority. The CARO will also have specific responsibilities for the election, including administering the nomination process and calculating and declaring the result. We have developed separate guidance to support CAROs:

- [CARO planning guidance](#)
- [CARO guidance – delivery of key processes](#)

Mayoral referendums

At a mayoral referendum in England the referendum is the responsibility of the Counting Officer (CO) who is the RO for principal area elections (i.e. the person appointed as the RO for the election of principal area councillors is also the CO for mayoral referendums)¹⁷.

Neighbourhood planning referendums

At a neighbourhood planning referendum in England the referendum is the responsibility of the CO who is the RO for principal area elections for that authority (i.e. the person appointed as the RO for the election of principal area councillors is also the CO for the referendum)¹⁸. This is not the case for the City of London, however, where the referendum is the responsibility of the CO appointed for that purpose by the Common Council¹⁹.

Where a neighbourhood planning referendum crosses local authority boundaries, the CO for each of the authorities included in the referendum area is responsible for the part of the referendum area that falls within their local authority area²⁰.

In this case, there will also be a Chief Counting Officer (CCO) with a power of direction over COs. The CCO will be²¹:

- a person appointed by the local authority whose portion contains the greatest number of registered local government electors in the referendum area, or

- a person appointed by one of the other local authorities as both or all the authorities agree

Your role and responsibilities

3.13 You play a central role in the democratic process. Your role is to ensure that the elections are administered effectively and that, as a result, the experience of voters and those standing for election is a positive one. You should set out at an early stage what you want to achieve and what success would look like for you.

3.14 Your duties as (A)RO are separate from your duties as a local government officer. As (A)RO you are not responsible to the local authority but are directly accountable to the courts as an independent statutory office holder.

3.15 As the poll at the UK Parliamentary election is combined with the poll at the local government elections, most of the functions of each election will fall to you as (A)RO. It is, however, important to note that it is the polls which are combined, and not every aspect of the elections.

3.16 As (A)RO, you are responsible for the following at a combined poll²²:

- the notice of the situation of polling stations
- the provision of polling stations
- the appointment of Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks
- the equipment of polling stations
- giving the notification of the requirement of secrecy 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
- where it has been decided to combine the issue of postal ballot papers:
 - the corresponding number list
 - the issue of postal votes, including creating a copy of the postal voters list and postal proxy voters list and marking it on issue
 - the opening of postal votes, including the marking of returned postal vote statements on the lists and the verification of the personal identifiers on the returned postal voting statements
- the separation and verification of ballot papers

Cross-boundary constituencies

Where the constituency crosses local authority boundaries, to deliver these functions effectively, there will need to be a close working relationship between you and the respective ROs and their staff. While the responsibility for the provision of polling stations and polling station staff for the polls rests with you, as (A)RO, you should seek advice and assistance, as necessary,

from the local government RO and their staff for the other local authority area who will be more familiar with that particular area.

3.17 As local government RO you are personally responsible for:

- nominations
- the printing of the local government ballot papers
- the counting of votes cast in the local government election
- declaration of the result

Combined authority mayoral election

As local RO for the combined authority mayoral election you are personally responsible for administering the election in your local authority area, including:

- complying with any directions issued by the CARO
- the provision of polling stations
- appointing Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks
- publishing the notice of poll and notice of situation of polling stations
- printing the ballot papers (unless the CARO has directed that they will take on responsibility for this)
- managing the postal voting process
- verifying the ballot papers and providing the CARO with information contained within the verification statement
- counting the votes for your local authority area
- transmitting the local totals to the CARO
- declaring the local totals for your area once the CARO has given permission for you to do so

The CARO is personally responsible for:

- publishing the notice of election
- administering the nomination process
- publishing the statement of persons nominated
- ensuring that candidates and their agents comply with the requirements relating to the content of their election addresses
- producing and distributing a booklet to every voter containing the candidates' election addresses
- collating the number of votes given for each candidate and calculating the result
- declaring the result

The CARO may also take on responsibility for the printing of the combined authority mayoral ballot papers by issuing a direction to this effect.²³

The CARO has the power to give general or specific directions to local ROs relating to the discharge of their functions at the combined authority election, including directions requiring ROs to take specified preparatory steps or to

provide any information that they have or are entitled to have and directions that the counting of votes shall be conducted at a central location²⁴. You are required to comply with any direction you have given²⁵.

Where polls are combined, this power to give directions does not extend to the other election(s) or the combined elements of the poll. In any case, you should liaise closely with other ROs in the combined authority area, as well as the CARO, and take into account any guidance issued by the CARO in preparing for and delivering the polls as a whole.

We have produced separate [planning guidance for CAROs](#).

Combined authority mayoral election

Where the poll at a combined authority mayoral election is combined with the poll at another local government election, the RO for the local government election will take on the functions of the local RO at the combined authority mayoral election for the part of the electoral area that falls within the local authority area²⁶.

Neighbourhood planning referendums

Where the poll at a neighbourhood planning referendum is combined with the poll at a local government election, the RO for the local government election will take on the functions of the CO at the referendum for the part of the referendum area that falls within the local authority area²⁷.

Mayoral referendums

Where the poll at a mayoral referendum is combined with the poll at a local government election, the RO for the local government election will take on the functions of the CO at the referendum²⁸.

3.18 While you can appoint one or more persons to discharge any or all of your functions as (A)RO or local government RO, you cannot delegate your personal responsibility for delivering the elections²⁹. Further information on the appointment of deputies can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

Your skills and knowledge

3.19 You should have a working knowledge of the relevant legislation governing the conduct of the elections. 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 elections, so that you can review, question where necessary, and quality-assure the whole process in your constituency.

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

- command the required staff and resources to deliver well-run polls
- draw in the necessary support, skills and expertise from across your own local authority
- oversee the planning, project management and risk management of the elections for which you are responsible and incorporate any lessons learnt from previous polls
- identify and oversee any actions necessary to mitigate any issues arising
- ensure that staff are appropriately trained to deliver the roles required of them
- support the staff administering the election and provide appropriate oversight of their work
- provide direction to staff, monitor progress and receive regular feedback on activities
- in the case of cross-boundary constituencies, seek advice and assistance from the RO and staff at the other local authorities
- if you are not also the ERO, maintain an effective working relationship with them
- maintain an effective working relationship with your police Single Point of Contact (SPOC)
- ensure that election accounts are completed in a timely manner

Combined authority mayoral election

If you are not also the CARO, you will need to maintain an effective working relationship with them.

Breach of official duty and power to correct procedural errors

3.21 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 fine³⁰.

3.22 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 rules³¹.

3.23 This power allows you to correct procedural errors that you, as (A)RO or local government RO, an ERO, a Presiding Officer or a person providing goods or services to you (or any deputies of any of these) make³².

3.24 Where you remedy an act or omission in full by using your power to correct a procedural error, you will not be guilty of an offence of breach of official duty³³. You should remember that the power to correct procedural

errors does not enable you to recount the votes once the result has been declared³⁴.

3.25 As you are personally liable for the conduct of the election you should ensure that you have insurance cover and that it is up-to-date. 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 the insurance policy. The team at your council dealing with insurance may be able to help determine what existing cover is in place and available, and to provide advice as to whether it should be extended.

4 Performance standards

4.1 The Electoral Commission sets standards and monitors and reports on the performance of ROs³⁵. The performance standards for ROs can be found at [Appendix A – Performance standards for Returning Officers](#).

4.2 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 ROs 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

4.3 Parts B to F of this guidance include what we expect ROs 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.

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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |

| | | |
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| | <p>voters have the maximum amount of time to act on the information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on the poll easily accessed through the local authority website |
| <p>Voters receive a high-quality service</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |

| | | |
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| <p>Voters have confidence that their vote will be counted in the way they intended</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |
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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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that those entitled to attend postal vote opening sessions are able to follow what 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Layout plan of postal vote opening sessions • Information provided to attendees at postal vote opening sessions • Layout plan of the count • Information provided to attendees at the count |

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| | <p>attend, with information provided to attendees on the processes to be followed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 |
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- ¹ Section 28 Representation of the People Act 1983 (“RPA 1983”)
- ² Article 2, Combined Authorities (Mayoral Elections) Order 2017 (“Combined Authorities Mayoral Rules 2017”)
- ³ Regulation 2, Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (“Neighbourhood Regs 2012”)
- ⁴ Section 24 RPA 1983
- ⁵ Section 23 and 28 RPA 1983
- ⁶ Section 28(3) RPA 1983
- ⁷ Section 28(1) RPA 1983
- ⁸ Article (1)(b) and the schedule Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order 2007/1681
- ⁹ Article 2(c) and Schedule 1 Parliamentary Constituencies and Assembly Electoral Regions (Wales) Order 2006/1041
- ¹⁰ Section 35(1) RPA 1983
- ¹¹ Section 35(3) RPA 1983
- ¹² Section 35(1A) RPA 1983
- ¹³ Section 35(1) and (1A) RPA 1983
- ¹⁴ Regulation 2 The Local Authorities (Mayoral Elections) (England and Wales) Regulations 2007 (“Mayoral rules 2007”)
- ¹⁵ Article 2 and 5, Combined Authorities Mayoral Rules 2017
- ¹⁶ Article 6, Combined Authorities Mayoral Rules 2017
- ¹⁷ Regulation 9, Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums)(England) Regulations 2012 (“LA Referendums Regs 2012”)
- ¹⁸ Regulation 9(1) Neighbourhood Regs 2012
- ¹⁹ Regulation 9(2) Neighbourhood Regs 2012
- ²⁰ Regulation 9 Neighbourhood Regs 2012
- ²¹ Regulation 10(4) Neighbourhood Regs 2012
- ²² Combined Election rules - Schedule 3 Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rule 2006 (“Principal Areas Rules 2006”); Schedule 2 Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 (“Parishes and Communities Rules 2006”); Schedule 3 Mayoral Rules 2007; Schedule 3 Combined Authorities Mayoral Rules 2017; Schedule 3 Neighbourhood Regs 2012
- ²³ Article 6(2), Combined Authorities Mayoral Rules 2017
- ²⁴ Article 6(2), Combined Authorities Mayoral Rules 2017
- ²⁵ Article 6(3), Combined Authorities Mayoral Rules 2017
- ²⁶ Rule 2 Schedule 3 (applying article 2) Combined Authorities Mayoral Rules 2017 and section 35 (2D) RPA 1983 (as amended by Sch 2 Combined Authorities Mayoral Rules 2017)
- ²⁷ Regulation 9 Neighbourhood Regs 2012
- ²⁸ Rule 2, Schedule 5, LA Referendums Regs 2012
- ²⁹ Section 35(4), 63(1) and (3)(b) RPA 1983
- ³⁰ Section 63(1) and (3)(b) RPA 1983

³¹ Section 63(4) RPA 1983; Section 46 Electoral Administration Act 2006 (“EAA 2006”)

³² Section 46 EAA 2006

³³ Section 63(4) RPA 1983

³⁴ Section 46(2) EAA 2006

³⁵ Section 9A Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (“PPERA 2000”)