

# Candidate Webinar

Regulatory Support

06 March 2024

**Please note that these slides were prepared for an interactive seminar presented for parties and candidates on 06 March 2024 to assist with preparations for the May 2024 local government and parish polls in England.**

**As such, they only cover the broad rules and for full details of all the considerations and criteria that candidates and agents need to be aware of please read our full suite of guidance which you can access from our [candidates and agents page](#) .**

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# 02 How to use our guidance

# How to use our guidance

## HTML Guidance

### **Guidance for candidates and agents is now in HTML format**

- Accessible
- Up to date
- Easy to read
- Supporting resources
- Guidance on use of the new format
- Print copies

# How to use our guidance

## This is what the guidance looks like:

Guidance for Candidates and Agents  
at local government elections in  
England

HTML Guidance

● [How to use this guidance](#) ▼

● [Contacting us](#)

○ [What you need to know before  
you stand as a candidate](#) ▼

○ [Candidate spending](#) ▼

○ [Candidate donations](#) ▼

# How to use our guidance

HTML Guidance

Printing guidance

## Guidance for Candidates and Agents at local government elections in England



[Print full guidance](#)

[Home](#) › [Guidance for Candidates and Agents at local government elections in England](#) ›

### Nominations

The following sections provide guidance on standing as a candidate at a district, borough, county, or unitary authority election in England.<sup>[1]</sup>

Guidance for Candidates and Agents at local government elections in England

How to use this guidance ▾

# 03 Nominations



# Standing as a candidate

Qualifications to  
stand as a candidate  
in local government  
elections in England

**Candidates must satisfy certain criteria in order to stand for election. Candidates must:**

- be at least 18 years old
- be of a qualifying nationality
- meet one of the qualifying criteria:
  - being a registered local government elector for the authority area
  - having occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises during the whole 12 months preceding nomination
  - their principal or only place of work (including unpaid work) during the last 12 months was in the local authority area
  - having lived in the local authority area during the last 12 months

# Standing as a candidate

Disqualifications from standing as a candidate in local government elections in England

**A person cannot stand for election if they are disqualified from doing so. Disqualifications include:**

- being employed by the local authority
- being the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions or interim restrictions order
- holding a politically restricted post
- having been sentenced to a prison term of three months or more without the option of a fine, including suspended sentences, during the 5 years prior to polling day

# Standing as a candidate

Disqualifications from standing as a candidate in local government elections in England

**A person cannot stand for election if they are disqualified from doing so. Disqualifications include:**

- being subject to the notification requirement of or under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003
- having been convicted of an intimidatory criminal offence motivated by hostility toward a candidate, future candidate, campaigner or holder of a relevant elector office.
- having been found guilty or have been convicted of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court

**This is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list.** It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that they are not disqualified before submitting their nomination papers

# Standing as a candidate

Commonly used  
names

**For polls on 2 May 2024, the rules around commonly used names have changed**

**You now have greater flexibility around the names you can put on your nomination paper.**

If you choose to use them, commonly used names that are different to your full names as you provide on the nomination form will appear on the official notices published after the close of nominations and on the ballot papers.

Returning Officers will disallow commonly used names that are likely to mislead or confuse electors, or are obscene or offensive.

# Standing as a candidate

## Home address form

**Part 1 of the home address form is mandatory. Part 2 is only used if you do not want your home address to be made public**

**Part 1 of the form must include:**

- Your full name and home address, your qualifying address(es) against the select qualifications on your consent to nomination. And the full name and home address of the witness to your consent to nomination

**You should only complete Part 2 of the form if you do not want your address to be made public. It includes:**

- The name of the “relevant area” your home address is situated in, or if you live outside the UK, the country your home address is situated in

# Standing as a candidate

## Home address form

### **Candidates who act as their own election agent**

If you act as your own election agent, unless you provide an office address, your home address (as provided on the home address form) will still be published on the notice of election agents.

This is still the case even where you have chosen to withhold your home address from the statement of persons nominated and ballot paper by completing Part 2 of the home address form.

# Standing as a candidate

Standing as a  
candidate for a  
political party

## Nomination forms must be accompanied by:

- A certificate of authorisation

**Party candidates** must have written permission to use the party name or description from the party Nomination Officer – or an appointed person authorised to act on their behalf.

This certificate must be submitted by the deadline for receipt of nomination papers, as specified on the Notice of Election.

# Standing as a candidate

Standing as a  
candidate for a  
political party

## Party emblems:

**Party candidates** can ask for an emblem to be printed on the ballot paper.

The request must be submitted by the deadline for receipt of nomination papers, as specified on the Notice of Election.

The request **must** come from the candidate, not from the agent or the nominating officer.



# Standing as a candidate

## Joint party candidates

### Candidates may be nominated by more than one political party

**Joint party candidates** may use registered joint descriptions, but these must be supported by a certificate of authorisation from the Nominating Officer (or appointed deputy) from each of the parties.

Joint party candidates may request to use one emblem of one of the parties. There are no registered joint emblems.

# Standing as a candidate

## Duty to maintain secrecy

### Maintaining the secrecy of the ballot

**Candidates** are entitled to attend key electoral events, including the opening of postal votes, the polling stations on polling day, and the verification and count.

Candidates may not:

- attempt keep a tally of how postal ballot papers have been marked
- disclose the name or electoral number of anyone who has or has not voted in a polling station, or ascertain who they have voted for
- communicate any information obtained at the count about any voting intention on any specific ballot paper

# 04 Voter Identification

# Voter Identification

The requirement to show photographic ID

**Voters in the polling station will be required to show photographic ID before they are issued with a ballot paper**

- Voters can use a variety of documents including a passport, driving licence, blue badge, PASS card or a government funded Older Person's Buss Pass
- See **“Who can vote in polling stations?”** in the **“Polling Day”** section of the Commission's guidance for a full list of acceptable photographic ID
- Electors can use expired photographic ID, provided that the photograph is still a good likeness of the elector

## Voter Authority Certificates

### Electors who do not hold valid photographic can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate

- Where an elector does not hold an accepted form of photographic ID they can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate online or from their local elections office
- Deadline for applications for a Voter Authority Certificate for the May polls is **5pm on Wednesday 24 April**

# 05 Postal vote handling

# Postal vote handling

## Postal voting documents

## **Campaigners must never handle an elector's postal voting documents**

Postal voting documents include:

- Postal ballot papers
- Postal voting statements
- Declarations of identity
- Envelopes for returning postal voting documents
- Envelopes containing a postal ballot pack

# Postal vote handling

Who is a  
campaigner?

## A campaigner is defined as:

- candidates standing at an election
- a candidate's election agent, staff and supporters
- political party officers, staff, members and supporters campaigning at an election
- other people and organisations campaigning for or against a candidate, a group of candidates or a party at an election where they are employed or engaged by the candidate or political party



# Postal vote handling

## Handling postal voting documents

### Exemptions

Campaigners are permitted to handle the postal voting documents of:

- a spouse, civil partner, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child or grandchild, someone they are cohabiting with, or someone they provide care for

Campaigners are permitted to handle postal voting documents if that is included in the duties of a job or role they hold, and the handling is consistent with those duties.

# Postal vote handling

## Completing postal votes

### Assisting electors

If you are asked for assistance in completing a ballot paper, you should always refer the voter to the Returning Officer's staff at the elections office, who may be able to arrange a home visit if necessary.

Assistance will also be available for electors at polling stations.

Campaigners must never observe voters completing their ballot paper.

If you are with a voter when they complete their ballot paper, remember they must always complete it in secret.

# Postal vote handling

Returning completed  
postal votes

**There are limits on the number of postal votes that can be returned.**

Individuals can hand in their own postal vote, as well as postal votes for up to five other people.

If the individual confirms that they are a campaigner, they are only allowed to hand in their own postal vote and up to five other postal votes that either belong to a close relative or to someone for whom they, or the organisation which employes or engages them, provides regular care.

# Postal vote handling

## Returning completed postal votes

### Postal vote return form

Where postal votes are being returned by hand to either a polling station or to a relevant council office, a postal vote return form must be completed.

- If the form is not completed correctly, the postal votes must be rejected.
- Returning Officer staff will be trained on the process and will assist with completing the form.
- The postal vote return form cannot be completed in advance and must be completed in sight of an authorised officer.

# Postal vote handling

Returning completed  
postal votes

## Postal vote return form

The postal vote return form will state:

- whether the individual is handing in their own postal vote
- whether the individual is handing in postal votes for any other people (and if so, how many)
- whether the individual is a political campaigner

The individual must complete a declaration stating they have not handed in more than the permitted number of postal votes, and that they are not a political campaigner (or that they are a campaigner and are only handed in their own postal vote and/or that of a close relative or someone for whom they provide regular care).

# Helpful contacts

## Electoral Commission contacts

For more advice and guidance:

English regional teams provide helpful advice and guidance for candidates, agents and elections teams at local councils across England.

**Telephone:** 0333 1031928

**Email:** [infoengland@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:infoengland@electoralcommission.org.uk)

# Any questions?

The  
Electoral  
Commission



# 06 Spending



# What does the election agent do?

Responsible for the management of the candidate's election campaign;  
including

- Incurring and making payments for candidate spending
- Checking permissibility and recording donations
- Providing a spending and donations return and declaration in writing to the returning officer, signed by the candidate and agent

A candidate can act as their own agent.

In parish council elections, you can have an agent, but it is the candidate who is held responsible and completes the return

# The regulated period

We call the time in the run up to the election during which the spending limits and rules apply the 'regulated period'.

- The regulated period starts **the day after** the day the candidate officially becomes a candidate and ends on polling day.
- The earliest possible date you can become a candidate is:  
**Monday 25 March 2024.**
- The latest date you can become a candidate is the close of nominations:  
**4pm on Friday 5 April 2024.**
- Polling day is:  
**Thursday 2 May 2024.**

# The spending limit

Fixed amount + variable amount = spending limit

Election	Fixed amount	Variable amount
Local & Parish elections	£960	8p  per registered elector in the ward you are contesting

Fixed amount x number of council areas + variable amount = spending limit

Election	Fixed amount	Variable amount
Combined Authority Mayoral (CAM) elections	£3,040  multiplied by number of constituent council areas	8p  per registered elector in the local authority area

# The spending limit- Examples

A Parish ward with 1,000 registered electors.

Fixed amount + variable amount = limit

$$£960 + (£0.08 \times 1,000) = £1,040$$

A Combined Authority Mayoral election which combines 4 Council areas and has 100,000 electors.

Fixed amount x number of council areas + variable amount = limit

$$(£3,040 \times 4) + (£0.08 \times 100,000) = £20,160$$



Your local elections team can tell you how many registered electors there are in your area.

# Joint candidates in local elections

If candidates work together, their spending limit is reduced.

They will be working together if they stand in the same ward **and**:

- have the same election agent.
- use the same campaign rooms
- publish joint material



- 2 joint candidates have their limit reduced by 25%
- 3 or more candidates have their limit reduced by 33%.

# What counts as candidate spending?

Spending to promote the candidate or criticise other candidates on items or activities that are used during the regulated period, including:

- ✓ Advertising
- ✓ Unsolicited material sent to voters
- ✓ Transport costs
- ✓ Public events
- ✓ Staff costs
- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ Administrative costs



If you buy something before the regulated period begins and use it during the regulated period, then this counts as candidate spending.

# What doesn't count as candidate spending?

- × Costs that are reasonably attributable to the candidate's disability
- × Anything appearing in a newspaper (except adverts) or on a licenced broadcast channel
- × Volunteer time, including time spent by your staff that you do not pay them for
- × Facilities candidates are entitled to, such as public rooms for meetings
- × Someone's main residence and personal car (or other form of transport)
- × General computer equipment bought for personal use
- × Things you don't use during the regulated period.



New for 2024:

Reasonable security costs including data security costs.

# Personal expenses

## Reasonable travel and living costs of the candidate

Includes, for example, the costs of travel and overnight accommodation.

May be paid by the candidate, rather than the agent.

Does not count towards the spending limit, but must be recorded in your spending return.



# Local campaigning

Organisations or individuals who are not standing as candidates at the elections but are campaigning for or against a candidate in a ward are known as 'local campaigners'.

- They may only spend up to **£50 + 0.5p per elector** in the ward.
- Any amount over that must be authorised by the agent.
- **The agent can now authorise the incurring, and the payment.**
- Once authorised it becomes candidate spending and must appear in the candidate return.

# Notional spending

There are 5 tests which **must all be met**:

- an item is transferred to you or provided for your use or benefit,
- It is provided free or at a non-commercial discount of more than 10%
- the difference in value between the commercial value of the item and what you pay is over £50
- you make use of it in your campaign (or someone does on your behalf) – this requires a positive act
- it would have been election expenses if you had incurred the spending

Be sure up front about the type of spending you are doing

Be sure you have thought about how you are going to record it.

# Changes to who can pay

**Agents can now authorise both the incurring and payment of election expenses.**

**This means that you need to be clear at the beginning:**

- Is this notional-is something being transferred or provided to you?

Or

- Do you need to authorize the incurring and payment?

# 07 Donations

# Parish elections

The control around receipt and reporting of donations **does not apply to parish elections.**

The following slides only apply to candidates at local elections, PCC elections and in combined authority mayoral elections.

# What is a donation?

Money, goods, property, services or facilities received when you are a candidate that

- are given towards candidate spending
- have value of **more than £50**

Common examples of donations include:

- A gift of money or other property
- Free or discounted use of office space



If it has a value of less than £50 it is not a donation.

# Who can I accept donations from?

You can only accept donations from permissible sources.

Some common examples include:

- An individual on a UK electoral register
- A Great Britain registered political party
- Most UK registered companies



See the full list of permissible sources in the guidance on our website.

When you receive a donation, you have 30 days to check that you can accept it. If you can't accept it, you must return it.

# Records you must keep for donations

**You must** report your donations in your return after the election.

Details you must include:

- The donor's name and address
- The registered company number, if applicable
- The amount or value and nature of the donation
- The date on which you received the donation
- The date on which you accepted or returned the donation
- How you returned it, if you did



# 08 Reporting

# After the election (Locals and CAM)

Action	Deadline	Date if result is declared 3 May
Receive all invoices	within 21 days of the result being declared	24 May
Pay all invoices	within 28 days of the result being declared	31 May
Submit spending return and agent declaration	within 35 days of the result being declared	07 June
Submit candidate declaration	7 days after the spending return is submitted  (unless the candidate is abroad, in which case it must be submitted within 14 days of their return)	14 June

# After the election (parish)

Action	Deadline	Date
Receive all invoices	within 14 days of polling day	16 May
Pay all invoices	within 21 days of polling day	23 May
Submit spending return and candidate declaration	within 28 days of polling day	06 June

# Records you must keep for spending

Details you must include:

- ✓ what the spending was for – for example, leaflets or advertising
- ✓ the name and address of the supplier
- ✓ the amount or value
- ✓ details of when it was incurred and paid
- ✓ details of any unpaid or disputed amounts
- ✓ details of any notional spending, and a declaration of its value
- ✓ invoices or receipts for any payment of £20 or over (this is £10 for parish)
- ✓ details of any personal expenses



Local and CAM returns must include details of donations above £50.

# 09 Imprints

# Printed material

- Your printed **candidate election material** must have an imprint
- i.e. if it can be reasonably regarded as intended to promote or procure the election of a candidate at an election
- This includes leaflets, posters and adverts.
- However, we recommend you have an imprint on any material to ensure transparency for voters.

# Imprints

The imprint must include the name and address of:

- The printer of the material (if it is physical material)
- The promoter (usually the agent)
- Who the material is being produced for (the candidate)



The Address can be:

- An office address
- A home address
- A PO Box or other mailbox service

# Physical Imprints - Example

Printed by [printer's name and address].

Promoted by [agent's name] of [agent's address], on behalf of [candidate's name] of [candidate's address].

Printed by Armadillo Printing, 2 Thornfields Avenue, Glasgow, G1 1AA.

Promoted by the John Smith of 110 High Street, Airdrie, ML6 1AA, on behalf of Jane Smith of 112 High Street, Airdrie, ML6 1AA.



Digital imprint rules came into force in November 2023.

- Election material you post for free, or paid for political material **must have a digital imprint.**
- If it is not **reasonably practicable** to put the imprint in the material (in the post/image/video) then it must be one-click away.
- Our guidance has examples of the most common social media platforms.

# Imprints on Digital Material

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A screenshot of a mobile Facebook interface. At the top, the status bar shows 9:41 AM and a battery icon. Below is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon and a back arrow. The main content is a post from 'The Grey Party', marked as 'Sponsored'. The post text reads: 'Promoted by John Smith on behalf of Jane Doe, both of 110 High Street, Englestone, AB12 3CD.' Below the text is a large image featuring a woman in a white coat speaking at a podium, with the word 'VOTE' in large white letters and 'Vote Jane Doe for the Grey Party.' in smaller text. At the bottom of the post, it says 'The Grey Party' and 'Vote for Jane Doe' next to a 'Learn More' button. Engagement metrics show 37 likes, 9 comments, 7 shares, and 143K views. At the very bottom are buttons for 'Like', 'Comment', and 'Share'.

A screenshot of a YouTube video player. The top bar shows the YouTube logo and a search bar. The video player itself shows a video thumbnail with a woman at a podium, similar to the Facebook post, and the text 'Vote Jane Doe for the Grey Party.' The video player controls at the bottom show a play button, a progress bar at 0:00 / 7:51, and icons for volume, closed captions, settings, and full screen. Below the video player, the video title is 'Vote for Jane Doe of the Grey Party', followed by '60 views Jun 22, 2022 Learn all about Jane Doe and what the Grey Party stands for.' Below that is a description: 'Learn all about Jane Doe and what the Grey Party stands for.' and 'Promoted by John Smith on behalf of Jane Doe, both of 110 High Street, Englestone, AB12 3CD'. At the bottom, there is a 'Show less' link and a row of interaction buttons: 'Like' (0), 'Dislike', 'Share', 'Download', 'Save', and a menu icon.

# Digital Imprints - Example

Promoted by [agent's name] of [agent's address], on behalf of [candidate's name] of [candidate's address].

Promoted by the John Smith of 110 High Street, Airdrie, ML6 1AA, on behalf of Jane Smith of 112 High Street, Airdrie, ML6 1AA.



If the digital material is audio material, the imprint must be spoken at an audible volume at a speed which can be understood.

Where can I get further advice?

Visit us at: [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

Email us at: [pef@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:pef@electoralcommission.org.uk)

Call us on 0333 103 1928

# Any questions?

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