

# Considerations for Local Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers: European Parliamentary elections

## Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this document is to assist you, as Local Returning Officer (LRO) and/or Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), by setting out some key considerations relating to the coordination and planning of a European Parliamentary election in your area. This is not intended to be a comprehensive breakdown of all elements of planning for the election, but instead provides an overview of some areas that require urgent consideration to help you prioritise your preparations.



[Detailed guidance](#) for LROs on administering a European Parliamentary election can be found on our website. We have also produced an [election timetable](#) setting out the key deadlines, based on the assumption that the poll will be held on 23 May 2019. [Part B](#) of our guidance for LROs provides detailed information on specific planning considerations for the areas covered below.

- 1.2 There are particular considerations for LROs who also have scheduled polls taking place in their area on 2 May 2019, and these are referenced throughout the document.

## Have you...?

### Staffing

- Established a project team to support you in carrying out your functions?
- Identified staffing requirements, including necessary recruitment arrangements? You should ensure that you:
  - Identify and appoint Deputies (particularly in case you are unable to act)
  - Contact staff on your database of polling station and count staff used at previous electoral events
  - Recruit polling station staff, bearing in mind the recommended ratios
  - Identify and appoint staff for other key election processes, such as postal vote opening staff
- Identified and addressed the training needs for the staff below in respect of the forthcoming election?

- Electoral services team – permanent and temporary
- Presiding officers, poll clerks and polling station inspectors
- Postal vote issue and opening staff
- Verification and count staff

### **Polling station, count, and other venues**

- Identified and booked the venues for your polling stations?
- Identified and booked venues for verification and the count, taking into account any guidance or direction from your RRO on timing?
- Considered alternative locations should your usual venues be unavailable at short notice or for any other reason – for example, schools may have exams at the end of May?
- Established a contingency plan if venues are lost during the election period or on polling day? What processes do you need to follow if a change of polling place is required?
- Considered how will you ensure that all venues are accessible to all voters or attendees, and that the security of ballot papers can be maintained at all times?
- Identified and booked venues for the issue (where appropriate) and the opening of postal votes?

### **Supplier considerations**

- Considered what actions you need to take to ensure your suppliers can deliver the aspects of the poll they are responsible for? For example, have you:
  - Contacted your suppliers or relevant in-house teams to establish their capacity to deliver what is required?
  - Ensured contracts are in place with suppliers for sharing personal data?
  - Agreed dates for exchanging any necessary data and for provision of services more generally?
  - Established and agreed proof checking mechanisms for voter materials?

### **Planning**

- Established a plan which captures the actions that need to be carried out, the risks to the delivery of the poll and mitigations for these, and the resources required?
- Established an estimated budget?
  - Cabinet Office will confirm the maximum recoverable amounts (MRAs) for each local authority area.
- Considered any lessons learned from recent electoral events, with particular focus on previous instances of polls being held in close proximity (such as in 2016 and 2017)?

- Considered the specific context of a European Parliamentary election on 23 May 2019? For example:
  - A potentially high turnout – interest in the elections is likely to be higher than at previous European Parliamentary elections
  - Heightened interest and scrutiny – for example, from the media, taking into account factors such as the 24 hour news culture and the prominence of social media
  - Security issues in the current climate
  - Timing of the count – for example, ensuring the security of the ballot papers between polling day, the verification and the count
  
- Established effective communication plans? For example:
  - Communication with RRO, including how you will receive notices and ballot paper proofs and how you will send verification and count totals
  - Communication with voters: for example, seek advice from relevant staff at your local authority, such as the communications department, to identify appropriate methods to communicate key information
  - Communication with political parties, individual candidates and agents, including how you will provide them with information on the local arrangements for the poll, such as plans for the verification and counting of votes
  - Communication with the media: for example, make arrangements for their attendance at the count and for how you will deal with media enquiries
  
- Agreed arrangements for publication of the notice of election, in liaison with the RRO?
  
- Agreed plans for poll card despatch?
  - Where you also have polls on 2 May 2019, consider how to manage potential voter confusion and an increase in the number of applications for absent votes as a result of poll cards for the European Parliamentary election being received before polling day for the local elections.
  
- Agreed plans and timings for postal vote despatch (including how to prioritise the despatch of overseas votes)?

### **General considerations for Electoral Registration Officers**

- Considered how you will prepare and issue UC1 forms to EU citizens who are already on the register as local government electors, including any public awareness messaging?
  
- Considered how you will prepare for an increase in the volume of applications in the run-up to the registration deadline, including applications from EU citizens?

- Considered the timing of publication of your interim election notices of alteration?
  - For those with elections on 2 May, establish the capability of your election management software to run two elections in parallel and how you will manage the interaction between the notices of alteration for both elections.
- Considered how you will prepare for any increase in the volume of absent vote applications in the run-up to the deadline?
- Discussed with other departmental managers within your local authority to see whether they can offer additional support to the electoral registration team? Or in Scotland, if part of a Valuation Joint Board, have you discussed this with the constituent councils of your area?
- Considered what arrangements you will need to put in place to deal with any documentary evidence, particularly close to the registration deadline?
- Considered whether queries will be dealt with by the local authority call centre (if there is one) or directly by the electoral registration team, and how more complex queries will be escalated? We have developed [FAQ's for frontline staff](#) which can be used to help staff respond to common queries.
- Considered what contingency arrangements you will need to put in place to deal with any IT failures?

### Integrity

- Considered specific risks relating to your local authority area and how these can be mitigated?
- Engaged with your SPOC and identified specific steps to deal with any potential electoral fraud?
- Agreed how you will deal with any problems that arise relating to the integrity of the poll?
- Agreed how you will communicate your approach to maintaining electoral integrity?



Further information about maintaining the integrity of the poll to ensure that the election is free from fraud and the results that you declare are a true and accurate reflection of the will of the electorate is set out in [Chapter 6 of Part B of our guidance for \(Local\) Returning Officer](#). For Regional Returning Officers this information is set out in [Chapter 3 of our guidance for Regional Returning Officers](#).