

Role description for Regional Counting Officer (UK Parliamentary Voting Systems referendum)

Designation: Regional Counting Officer (RCO)

Reports to: Chief Counting Officer (CCO)

Any referendum held under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act (PPERA) requires a Chief Counting Officer. It is proposed that the Chief Counting Officer will have the power to appoint Regional Counting Officers and direct them in the discharge of their functions (including requiring them to provide any information that they have or are entitled to have). The Chief Counting Officer is also responsible for certifying the total number of ballot papers counted and the votes cast in favour of each answer. Counting Officers will be appointed by virtue of their role as Returning Officer for their respective local authority.

Overview of the role

The RCO will undertake the following functions and duties, and will be expected to carry these out as agreed with and, where appropriate, as directed by the CCO, and in line with the relevant statutory provisions:

- Exercise the CCO power of direction as instructed by the CCO and comply with the direction of the CCO
- Co-ordinate the planning and administration of the poll at a regional level
- Take all necessary steps to ensure that Counting Officers comply with instructions and directions as specified by the CCO
- Monitor and report on the performance of Counting Officers for each voting area within the RCO's electoral region in conjunction with the CCO
- Participate in UK planning and management structures, including attending national events such as Election and Referendum Steering Group meetings
- Working with Electoral Commission staff, lead in regional planning and management structures, including at all regional events
- Secure the delivery of training and briefing for COs in conjunction with the CCO
- Manage the results collation process including the staffing and management of the event, and collation and preparation of the result at a regional level
- Do whatever things are necessary for conducting the referendum in the manner provided by law

Responsibilities and personal duties:

Planning and co-ordination

- The RCO will prepare a plan to cover all of his/her functions which covers contingency arrangements
- Prepare and maintain a risk register to cover all of the functions of the RCO, identifying risks and actions to be taken to mitigate those risks
- Form and lead a project team to support the delivery of the RCO's functions
- Take all necessary steps to ensure Counting Officers have appropriate plans and processes in place, and monitor COs to ensure that they carry out all activities in their plan
- Upon receipt of notification from COs, oversee the necessary actions to correct and rectify any procedural errors
- In consultation with the CCO, ensure contingency arrangements are in place to cover the role of RCO in the event of any unforeseen circumstances that may prevent the role being carried out by the appointed person
- Establish a regional management structure for the referendum
- Develop and promote regional approaches to stakeholder groups and delivery partners as appropriate
- Contribute to the development of appropriate training programmes via the ERSG and lead on training within their region.
- In conjunction with the Electoral Commission, lead pre-referendum briefings for Counting Officers and their core staff

The count

- Manage the results collation process, including the preparation of a plan with assessment of risks and contingency arrangements at a regional level
- Make arrangements for the results collation event, including booking a suitable venue (and a contingency venue) which meets accessibility and security requirements
- Ensure appropriate arrangements and contracts are in place, including for IT, security and media coverage
- Ensure sufficient trained staff are in place to enable the results collation event to be completed in a timely and efficient manner
- Discharge the RCO's statutory functions in relation to the count as required by the legislation and as directed by the CCO, liaising with the CCO throughout the count process as appropriate.

Post-count

- Work with the CCO to respond to any legal challenges to the referendum
- Provide the Commission with any requested data or information post-referendum to an agreed timescale

- Support the delivery of post-referendum events and contribute to the post-referendum review and lessons-learnt evaluation to be carried out by the Electoral Commission

Communications

- Manage and ensure effective communication between the CCO and COs (and vice versa)
- In consultation with the CCO, develop and deliver a media liaison and operations strategy
- Establish an effective media liaison strategy with COs in the electoral region to communicate referendum information, alongside election information as appropriate, to electors, and encourage regional public awareness initiatives

Fees and charges

- Ensure that the RCO accounts are submitted by the end of December 2011
- Take all necessary steps to ensure that all COs submit accounts on time

General

- Discharge their functions at the referendum in accordance with any direction issued by the CCO
- Comply with any further instructions from the CCO in a timely manner
- Take all necessary steps to ensure that COs carry out the referendum in the manner provided by legislation
- In consultation with the Electoral Commission, prepare and issue appropriate regional guidance/direction to COs to take account of the range of other electoral events that are being combined with this referendum, and take all necessary steps to secure compliance