

Part C - Administering the poll

Local government elections and Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England on 5 May 2016: guidance for 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 good 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

Updates to this document

Updated	Description of change	Paragraph number
February 2016	Added chapter 5	N/A
23 February 2016	Added chapters 3 and 4	N/A
March 2016	Added chapter 2	N/A
March 2016	Re-published to include legal references	N/A

Contents

1	Engaging with political parties, candidates and agents	1
	Briefings	2
	Providing information on the election processes	3
	Nomination packs	4
	Local government elections	4
	PCC election	5
	Guidance on spending limits	5
	Providing information on accessing the electoral register	6
	Access needs for candidates	7
2	The nominations process	8
	Forms for nomination	8
	Informal checks	9
	Delivery of nomination papers	10
	Time of delivery	10
	Place of delivery	10
	Who can deliver nomination papers?	11
	How must nomination papers be submitted?	11
	What to do if nomination papers are received by post	12
	Delivering multiple nomination forms	12
	Requirements of nomination	13
	Nomination form	13
	Candidate's names	13
	Commonly used names	14
	Home address	15
	Subscribers	16
	Use of party names, party descriptions and party emblems	18
	Additions, alterations, removals and changes to party names, party descriptions and party emblems on the register of political parties	18
	What descriptions may be used at the local government election?	20
	Requests for a party emblem	21
	Candidate's consent to nomination	22
	Determining nomination forms	25
	What to do after your formal determination	27
	Correction of minor errors	27
	Errors in elector numbers	27

Errors of spelling in details of candidates	27
Errors in a home address	27
Inspection of nomination papers.....	28
Withdrawal of a candidate	28
After the close of nominations	29
Nomination in more than one electoral area	29
Uncontested elections	29
Death of a candidate at a local government election.....	29
Proof of death received before the withdrawal deadline	30
Proof of death received after the withdrawal deadline and before polls open.....	30
Proof of death received after polls have opened and before the declaration of result	31
New election	31
Death of a PCC candidate.....	31
Proof of death received before polls open	31
Proof of death received after polls have opened and before the declaration of result	32
New election	32
3 Agents at the election	33
Agents at the local government election.....	33
The election agent	33
Other agents.....	34
The opening of postal votes.....	36
The poll.....	36
The count.....	37
Agents at the Police and Crime Commissioner election.....	38
The election agent	38
Sub-agents	38
Other agents.....	39
The opening of postal votes	39
The poll	39
The count	40
4 Production of notices, poll cards and ballot papers	42
Production and publication of notices.....	42
Translation and formats of notices.....	42
Notices of election	43
Local government election	43

PCC election.....	44
Statement of persons nominated.....	44
Local government election.....	44
PCC election.....	45
Notices of poll.....	45
Local government election.....	45
PCC election.....	46
Notice of the situation of polling stations.....	46
Production of poll cards.....	47
Poll card delivery.....	49
Delivery by hand.....	50
Delivery by post.....	50
Production of ballot papers.....	51
Ballot paper colour.....	51
The ‘official mark’.....	52
Ballot paper numbers and the unique identifying mark.....	52
Candidate details.....	53
Form of the reverse of the ballot paper.....	53
Printing of ballot papers.....	53
Ballot paper security.....	55
5 Polling station voting.....	56
Close of poll.....	56
‘Selfies’ in polling stations.....	56
Setting up polling stations.....	57
Polling station equipment and materials.....	58
Allocation of ballot papers.....	60
Polling station registers and absent voting lists.....	61
Corresponding number lists.....	61
Packets for postal ballot papers delivered to polling stations.....	62
Polling station log.....	63
Polling station notices.....	63

1 Engaging with political parties, candidates and agents

1.1 As local government Returning Officer (local government RO) you are responsible for all aspects of the nominations process at the local government elections in your area.

1.2 You are also responsible for the conduct of the poll for both the local government elections and that part of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) election that falls within your local authority area¹.

1.3 The Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) is responsible for the nominations process at the PCC election².



More detailed information on the roles and responsibilities of the local government RO, Local Returning Officer (LRO) and the PARO is contained in [Part A – Roles and responsibilities](#).

1.4 Your project plan should include details on how you will engage with political parties, candidates and agents and how you will manage the nomination process that you are responsible for.

1.5 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 standing for election and who will need your support to be able to participate effectively. It is therefore important that you engage parties, candidates and agents as much as possible so that they receive all the information they need in order to stand for election and they can have confidence that the processes are well-managed.

1.6 For example, it is vital that all candidates know what they need to do in order to stand for election, what the spending limits are, how they can obtain the electoral register and what the restrictions are on the use of the register. One difficulty faced by Returning Officers is that those intending to stand for election do not always make contact with the elections staff before submitting their nomination papers. You will therefore need to consider how you are going to raise awareness and promote the availability of information and briefings to all candidates and agents before they complete and submit their nomination papers.



To be able to meet the outcome set out in [performance standard 2](#) you should ensure that information on the election process and spending is easily available for candidates and agents, including through ensuring they are issued with written guidance.

To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place written guidance to be issued to candidates.

1.7 You should also liaise with the PARO to determine what information on local processes they will require for sharing with candidates and agents at the PCC election and to agree how this information should be disseminated.

Briefings

1.8 You should ensure that parties, candidates and election agents at the local elections are offered a briefing session on the processes specific to the election they are standing in, including local arrangements. The briefings should allow for the fact that there may be people who have little or no knowledge of election rules and procedures or who have not involved themselves in elections for some time.

1.9 All briefing sessions should highlight the importance of following the election rules.

1.10 In relation to the local elections, you should provide a briefing on the nomination process including deadlines, submission rules, the use of commonly used names, the completion of nomination papers, and the use of party names, descriptions and emblems.

1.11 While you should invite all potential candidates to a briefing session ahead of or at the start of the nominations period, you may choose to hold an additional briefing session after the lists of candidates standing for election have been confirmed after the close of nominations.

1.12 For the PCC election you should liaise with the PARO to agree what, if any, local briefings should be provided and what any such briefings should cover, which may include information on your local arrangements, such as postal vote issue and openings, polling and the verification and count.

1.13 Your briefing session(s) should also highlight any security arrangements that have been put in place in consultation with the police. You may wish to invite your police single point of contact (SPOC) to attend any briefing sessions, or to provide written material that you can provide to candidates and agents.

1.14 A [template presentation for candidates and agents at local elections](#) that you can use is available for download from the Commission's website. We have also produced a [template presentation for candidates and agents at a PCC election](#) which is designed for use by PAROs.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 2](#) you will need to ensure that information on the election process and election spending is easily available for candidates and agents.

To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to arrange briefing sessions and produce briefing resources.

Providing information on the election processes

1.15 You should ensure that all local election candidates and election agents are issued with written guidance on the relevant election processes, including local arrangements. The information should be provided in good time to enable candidates and agents to act on it.

1.16 For the PCC election, you should liaise with the PARO to ensure that candidates at the PCC election have access to information on processes that you will be carrying out locally, such as the opening of postal votes and the count.

1.17 The purpose of providing written guidance is so that parties, candidates and agents have access to authoritative and comprehensive guidance for reference at any time to ensure that they have all the information they need to take part in an election. It need not always be the case that such written guidance must be produced in hard copy – in some instances it may be appropriate to provide candidates and agents with a link to where they can find the relevant information online – but it is important in each case to ensure that candidates can easily access the information they need and to do whatever is necessary to facilitate this.

1.18 As part of your plans for engaging with candidates and agents and supporting their participation in the elections, you will need to determine how information about local arrangements will be provided to parties, candidates and agents.

1.19 Local arrangements will include information on the dates, times and venues for the key election processes, including:

- postal vote issue and openings
- polling
- the verification and count

1.20 Whatever method you will be using for disseminating the information, you should ensure that candidates and agents can easily access all the information they need in order to be able to participate in the election.

Nomination packs

Local government elections

1.21 You should prepare a nomination pack for any person who expresses an interest in standing at a local government election.



We have produced a set of [nomination papers for local government elections](#) that contains all the forms needed for nomination. The forms can be found on our website.

1.22 The nomination pack for candidates should contain:

- a nomination form
- a consent to nomination form
- a form for the candidate (or someone on their behalf) to give notice of appointment of an election agent
- forms for the candidate or the election agent to give notice of appointment of polling agents, postal voting agents and counting agents
- a certificate of authorisation to allow a candidate to stand on behalf of a registered political party
- a form for a candidate standing on behalf of a registered party to request the use of an emblem
- written guidance for candidates and agents covering key aspects of the electoral process, including the qualifications and disqualifications for election, the nominations process, campaigning dos and don'ts, accessing electoral proceedings and what happens after the declaration of the result
- details of any local arrangements, such as the arrangements for the opening of postal votes, the poll and the count
- details of how to obtain a copy of the electoral register and the absent voters' lists, and forms to make such requests with information on where to send these requests to
- information on the spending limit for candidates at the election and [guidance for candidates and agents on spending and donations](#)
- any other relevant information



The Commission's guidance for candidates and agents at a local government election can be found on our website at: www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/local-elections-england-and-wales.

Mayoral election

In addition to the content set out above, the nomination pack should also include a full explanation of how the required £500 deposit may be paid³. If you have decided to allow candidates to pay the deposit by card or electronic transfer of funds, you should also include information for making such payments.

You should also provide an explanation of the mayoral booklet and how candidates may get their election address included in this booklet sent to all electors. This should include detail of:

- what the election address booklet is
- what the requirements, restrictions and deadlines are
- the costs of having an address included in the booklet and how these may be paid.

Guidance and nomination papers for candidates at mayoral elections can be found on our website at: www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/mayoral-elections-in-england



Guidance and nomination papers for candidates at parish council elections can be found on our website at:

www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/parish-and-community-council-elections-in-england-and-wales.

PCC election

1.23 The PARO is responsible for administering the nomination process at the PCC election, and will provide nomination packs to any person who expresses an interest in standing.



Guidance for PAROs on the nomination process at a PCC election can be found on our [website](#).

Guidance on spending limits

1.24 Candidates are required by law to follow certain rules regarding how much they can spend, who they can accept donations from, and what they must report after the election.

1.25 You should ensure that candidates and election agents have access to information on calculating the spending limit⁴ (including the electorate figure), spending returns and declarations in order to enable them to meet reporting requirements.

1.26 If you are not also the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) you should liaise with the relevant ERO so that you are able to provide candidates at the local government election with an accurate electorate figure that will allow them to calculate their spending limits. It is important that candidates are provided with the correct figures so they know how much they can spend. The figure candidates need is the total number of electors on the local government register for the relevant electoral area on the last day for the publication of the notice of election (i.e. on the twenty-fifth working day before the poll, which is 30 March 2016)⁵, excluding any attainers who will not be 18 years of age on or before polling day. For any local government elections held on 5 May 2016, the figures are those based on the register published on 1 March 2016⁶.

1.27 The Commission has produced guidance for candidates and agents on [spending and donations at a local government election](#), which you can use to provide candidates and agents with information on spending returns and declarations in order to enable them to meet their reporting requirements.

1.28 The PARO should provide information on election spending to candidates and agents at the PCC election.

Providing information on accessing the electoral register

1.29 The ERO is required to supply Returning Officers with such copies of the electoral register as are required for the different aspects of the elections.

1.30 You should receive copies soon after the publication of that register. You should also receive any further amendments that may be made to the register including through the election notices of alteration published by the ERO⁷.

1.31 The ERO for each local authority area is responsible for receiving requests and supplying a copy of the register and absent voters list to candidates.



Detailed information on access and supply of the full electoral register and absent voters lists to candidates, registered political parties (who can request a copy at any time) and others can be found in [Part 4: Maintaining the register throughout the year of](#) our guidance for EROs.

1.32 The Commission has produced [template electoral register](#) and [absent voter list](#) request forms that candidates can use.

Access needs for candidates

1.33 You should bear in mind that candidates and agents may have specific access needs, and so may need any information or guidance produced in a large-print or other format, such as Braille or audio, or in a language other than English.

2 The nominations process

2.1 This chapter provides guidance on the administration of the nominations process at the local government elections. It does not cover the nominations process at the PCC election, as this is the responsibility of the PARO.



Guidance for PAROs on the nominations process at the PCC election can be found in chapter 3 of our [Guidance for Police Area Returning Officers on the delivery of key processes](#).

2.2 Questions of eligibility or disqualification are for the candidate only and you should not give advice on such matters. The candidate should be directed to the [Commission's guidance for candidates and agents at a local government election in England](#) in the first instance. Should they have any further concerns, they should be advised to seek their own legal advice.

Forms for nomination

2.3 A candidate is deemed to be validly nominated only if you have, by 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll (i.e. by 4pm on 7 April 2016), received the following completed forms⁸:

- the nomination form⁹
- a consent to nomination form¹⁰

2.4 To stand on behalf of a registered political party, the party must be registered on the Commission's register of political parties at <http://search.electoralcommission.org.uk> and be listed as allowed to field candidates in England, and the candidate will also need to submit:

- a certificate of authorisation, authorising the use of the party name or a registered description on the ballot paper¹¹
- a written request to use one of the party's emblems¹² (if desired)

2.5 Candidates do not have to use the nomination form that you have produced and supplied, as long as their nomination form is as prescribed.

2.6 The consent to nomination form can be a form to 'like effect', but must include all of the signatures and information required by law – including a copy of Sections 80 and 81 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), Section 78A of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended), and Section 34 of the Localism Act 2011 (as amended).

Mayoral election

The same requirements apply at mayoral elections. The consent must include a copy of Sections 80 and 81 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), Section 78A of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended) and Sections 34 of the Localism Act 2011.¹³

2.7 Under Section 199B(4) of the Representation of the People Act 1983, nomination papers can only be produced in English and not in any alternative languages or formats. However, you must prepare nomination papers for signature if someone requests¹⁴.

2.8 The Commission has produced [a set of nomination papers](#), which includes all of these forms that you can provide to candidates.



A separate [set of nomination papers](#) has been produced for parish council candidates.

Mayoral election

A separate [set of nomination papers](#) has been produced for mayoral election candidates.

Informal checks

2.9 You should ensure that candidates have the opportunity to have their nomination papers informally checked prior to their formal submission.

2.10 All candidates should be given an equal opportunity to access an informal check. Informal checks are designed to assist candidates and agents with participating effectively in the electoral process so that, if possible, any errors made by them in completing the paperwork do not deny electors the opportunity to vote for that candidate. You should consider how you are going to manage this process, for example by putting in place an appointment system.

2.11 When conducting an informal check it should be made clear that the nomination papers are being looked at informally. At the conclusion of the informal check, you should offer to return the nomination papers if an issue has been identified. If no issues have been identified, you should offer to accept them formally.



To meet the outcome set out in [performance standard 2](#) you will need to ensure that candidates have the opportunity to have their nomination papers informally checked prior to submission.

To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place arrangements for candidates to have their nomination papers informally checked prior to formal submission.

Delivery of nomination papers

Time of delivery

2.12 It is your decision as local government RO as to when to accept nominations for the local government election following the publication of the notice of election. You must state on the notice of election the times at which you will allow nominations to be delivered¹⁵. You can start to accept nominations on the same day that the notice of election is published, allowing candidates more time to submit their nomination papers, or you can start accepting nominations on the day following the publication of the notice.

2.13 The deadline for nominations is 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll (i.e. 4pm on 7 April 2016). This deadline cannot be moved or extended for any reason¹⁶. Delivery is determined as being when the nomination papers are delivered, by hand where this is required, at the place specified in the notice of election.

2.14 No appointment is required to deliver nomination papers. However, you should consider how you are going to manage the potential volume of nominations that you will receive. This could include offering appointments for informal checks and the formal delivery of the nomination papers. It is the responsibility of the candidate to ensure that their nomination papers are delivered in the correct manner and by the required deadline. If a completed set of nomination papers have not been delivered by that time, the nomination has not been made which means that you cannot rule the nomination valid or invalid.

Mayoral election

The deadline for a Mayoral election taking place is also 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll (i.e. 4pm on 7 April 2016)¹⁷. The £500 deposit must also have been paid as required by the deadline for nominations for a mayoral candidate's nomination to be made¹⁸.

Place of delivery

2.15 Nomination papers must be delivered to the location specified by you on the notice of election¹⁹. The location you choose must be at the relevant council offices²⁰.

2.16 The address given for the delivery of nomination papers should be exact, and include any room name or number. This will avoid any doubt should nominations be delivered close to the deadline.



For parish and community council elections the location to which nomination papers must be delivered is not prescribed and is for you to determine.

Mayoral election

For Mayoral elections the location to which nomination papers must be delivered must be at the relevant council offices²¹.

2.17 You should provide clear signage from the entrance of the building to the room set aside for delivery. This route, or an appropriately signposted alternative, should be fully accessible.

2.18 You or an appointed deputy should be present throughout the period for nominations and only you and your staff should deal with nominations. You should give details to other local authority staff, such as reception staff, of what to do if a person tries to deliver a nomination paper to them, making it clear that they should not handle nomination papers and should not offer to deliver them but should instead direct them to you.

Who can deliver nomination papers?

2.19 There are no restrictions on who can deliver nomination papers²². However, you should advise candidates that they, their agent, or someone they trust delivers them, so they can be sure they are delivered to you in time.

How must nomination papers be submitted?

2.20 The nomination form and consent to nomination must be delivered by hand²³ and cannot be submitted by post, fax, email or other electronic means. Where a document is required to be delivered by hand, this can include delivery by a courier.

2.21 Certificates of authorisation and emblem request forms may be delivered by hand or by post, but cannot be submitted by fax, email or other electronic means²⁴. The **original version** of each completed document must be submitted. A certificate of authorisation, for example, which has been sent as an attachment to an e-mail to be printed out would be a 'copy document' and not the original document. A certificate requires a method of authentication to make it a certificate. This will, in practice in most cases, take the form of a signature to attest the truth of the facts stated. It could, however, also take the form of a seal. Whatever method of authentication is used, the document you receive must be the original document and not a copy document.²⁵

2.22 You should take steps to communicate the requirements relating to delivery of nomination papers to all prospective candidates and agents, and ensure that these requirements are highlighted in any local briefings or guidance you produce.



At parish council elections you could consider liaising with the parish clerk who may be able to help communicate the requirements for the delivery of nominations to prospective candidates and to provide assistance with the delivery of nomination papers, if needed.

2.23 Once a nomination paper has been formally delivered, no changes can be subsequently made to it (subject to your power to correct minor errors²⁶). At the point of formal submission you should therefore endorse the paper with the date and time of delivery, so that you have a record of when each paper was formally submitted. If a candidate later decides that they want to make changes, for example to the description, they should withdraw their candidature and then submit new nomination papers within the statutory timeframe. There is no provision to allow a subscriber to withdraw their signature from a nomination paper once it has been delivered.

What to do if nomination papers are received by post

2.24 Any nomination papers received by post have not been 'delivered' in accordance with the rules. The candidate is therefore not deemed to stand nominated and no decision can be taken as to whether the papers are valid.

2.25 You should have processes in place for monitoring postal deliveries to the place designated for the delivery of nomination papers so that any papers received can be identified quickly and action taken to try to contact the candidate.

2.26 You should try to contact the candidate using the details on the nomination form and advise them that nomination papers cannot be accepted by post and that they (or someone on their behalf) needs to attend the place designated for the receipt of nomination papers, within the times specified on the notice of election, to 'deliver' the nomination paper by hand in accordance with the rules. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that this is done by the deadline for the receipt of nominations. The Returning Officer and their staff are not permitted to deliver the papers for the candidate.

2.27 The candidate does not need to produce 'new' nomination papers or obtain new subscribers and you should retain any nomination papers you receive by post to enable them to be collected and delivered to you by hand.

Delivering multiple nomination forms

2.28 There is no limit to the number of nomination forms that may be delivered for the same candidate. If a candidate is validly nominated by more than one form, the candidate should choose which one of the valid nomination

forms (the 'selected' nomination form) should be used for the details to be added to the statement of persons nominated and the ballot paper. If the candidate cannot or does not do this, then you must choose which one of the forms will be used.²⁷

2.29 If more than one nomination form is delivered and one of the nomination forms is invalid, that paper is excluded from the forms that can be chosen by the candidate or yourself. As long as at least one nomination form is valid, the candidate can be validly nominated.

2.30 When an elector subscribes any delivered nomination form, even if it is not the selected nomination form, it will count towards the maximum number of nomination forms they may subscribe²⁸.

Requirements of nomination

2.31 This section contains an explanation on what must be included on the nomination papers submitted by or on behalf of the candidate. It is designed to assist you in reviewing and ultimately determining the validity of nomination papers.

2.32 Unlike mayoral elections, no deposits are required to be paid at principal area and parish elections.

2.33 You should remind any person delivering the nomination papers that it is a criminal offence to provide a false statement on nomination papers. If the nomination form includes a commonly used name, you should highlight that the offence also applies if a candidate has given a commonly used name that they do not actually commonly use. You may warn candidates that the penalty for a false statement is an unlimited fine and/or up to one year's imprisonment²⁹.

Nomination form

Candidate's names

2.34 The candidate's full names must be listed on the nomination form, with their surname given first followed by all of their other names in full³⁰.

2.35 The prescribed nomination form contains no space for prefixes or suffixes.

2.36 Candidates should be advised not to use prefixes such as Mr, Mrs, Dr or Cllr, or suffixes in the field of the nomination form asking for their full name. If a prefix or suffix is included as part of the actual name the nomination form would not be invalid as a result, but the prefix or suffix should not be transferred to the statement of persons nominated. If a candidate has submitted a nomination form with a prefix or suffix as part of their actual name, you should inform the candidate and their agent that it will not appear on the statement of persons nominated, the notice of poll or the ballot paper, but that their nomination as a candidate has not been affected³¹.

2.37 However, if a candidate has a title, they can use this as their full name. For example, if the candidate's actual name is Joseph Smith, but their hereditary title is Joseph Avon, they can use the name Joseph Avon as their full name.

Commonly used names

2.38 Where a candidate commonly uses a different name from their actual name, they can ask for their commonly used name(s) to be used instead of their actual name³².

2.39 A candidate can request to use a commonly used forename, surname or both. For example, they may be known by their abbreviated name 'Andy', rather than their full first name 'Andrew'. In that case, they can write 'Andy' into the commonly used forename box on the nomination form if they would rather that name appear on the ballot paper.

2.40 A candidate may also use initials as part of their commonly used name if they are commonly known by them.

2.41 However, a candidate cannot use their first name as a commonly used name so that only their first name and surname appear on a ballot paper, thus excluding their middle name. The legislation makes it clear that a commonly used name is one which is different from any other forename or surname³³. This means that a forename in its original format cannot be used as a commonly used name. If a candidate wishes to use a commonly used forename and/or surname then these must be different from their full name as it appears on the nomination form. For example, in the case of Andrew John Smith, he could not use Andrew Smith as his commonly used name, although he would be able to use Andy Smith (if Andy was the name by which he is commonly known).

2.42 It is not for you to decide whether the commonly used name is a 'name' or whether it meets the legal requirement to be different from any other name they may have. The law requires you to take whatever a candidate has entered in the commonly used name box at face value and to accept it as the candidate's commonly used name.

2.43 The only grounds you have in law for rejecting a commonly used name is that you consider that³⁴:

- its use may be likely to mislead or confuse electors, or
- it is obscene or offensive

2.44 If at an informal check stage, you are presented with a nomination form that has been completed in such a way that it appears to you that the commonly used name given is not different from any other forename or surname that the candidate has, you should draw the candidate's attention to the legal definition of a commonly used name and highlight that it is an offence to knowingly make a false statement on the nomination form. You should also point out that if a nomination form is not completed in accordance with the law, the candidate will run the risk of challenge if they are elected³⁵.

2.45 It is the candidate’s responsibility to ensure that they have completed their nomination in accordance with the law and to be satisfied that the given commonly used name is a name that they genuinely commonly use.

2.46 In the course of providing informal advice, you may wish to draw the candidate’s attention to our [guidance for candidates and agents](#) on commonly used names. The table below contains a number of worked examples of various combinations of commonly used names and how this would affect the appearance of the candidate’s name on the statement of persons nominated, the notice of poll and the ballot paper:

Candidate’s actual surname	Candidate’s other names in full	Commonly used forenames	Commonly used surname	Name to go on statement of persons nominated and notice of poll	Name to go on ballot papers
Elector	Ann	Elsie	Voter	Voter, Elsie	VOTER, Elsie
Elector	Ann	[Blank]	Voter	Voter, Ann	VOTER, Ann
Elector	Ann	Elsie	[Blank]	Elector, Elsie	ELECTOR, Elsie

2.47 If either the commonly used forenames or commonly used surname box is left blank, then the candidate’s actual forenames or surname, depending on which commonly used name box has been left blank, will go on the statement of persons nominated, the notice of poll and on the ballot paper.

2.48 You should advise the candidate that the use of commonly used names applies only to the statement of persons nominated, the notice of poll and the ballot paper. The candidate’s actual name should appear on any documents that are required to show the candidate’s name, such as the imprint and candidate’s spending returns.

2.49 If you refuse the use of a commonly used name, the validity of the nomination form remains unaffected³⁶. Instead, the effect is that the candidate’s full name will appear on the statement of persons nominated, the notice of poll and the ballot paper³⁷. This should be made clear to candidates and agents and you must write to the candidate setting out the reasons for refusing to allow the use of the commonly used name³⁸.

Home address

2.50 Candidates must provide their home address, which:

- must be completed in full
- must not contain abbreviations
- must be their current home address
- must not be a business address (unless the candidate runs a business from their home)³⁹

2.51 If any detail of the home address is wrong or omitted, the nomination is not automatically invalid if the description of the place is such as to be commonly understood.

Subscribers

2.52 Nomination forms must include an indication of support for the candidate from 10 electors registered on the local government register in the ward. These are known as subscribers – the first two are the proposer and seconder, while eight other electors are the assenters to the nomination⁴⁰.



At parish elections, only two such electors are required to subscribe the nomination form⁴¹.

Mayoral elections

At mayoral elections, 30 registered electors from the local authority area (i.e. the relevant county, district or borough) are required to subscribe the nomination paper⁴².

2.53 Each subscriber is required by law to sign the nomination form in the appropriate place. Their name must be printed and their elector number must be included in the spaces provided alongside their signature, along with the polling district's identifying letters.

2.54 You must reject a nomination if the nomination form is not subscribed as required. It is essential that the correct version of the register is used for checking that the subscribers are valid. Subscribers must appear on the local government register that is in force on the last day for publication of notice of election (i.e. the local government register published on 1 March 2016)⁴³.

2.55 An elector may not subscribe more nomination forms than there are vacancies in the ward. However, a subscriber may subscribe a nomination form for an additional candidate if the candidate whose nomination form they originally signed has died or withdrawn before the nomination form for the second candidate is delivered.⁴⁴

2.56 Also, during the election period, subscribers may not subscribe additional nomination forms for candidates standing in an election in any other ward in the same principal area⁴⁵.

2.57 If subscribers sign more nominations than there are vacancies or more nomination forms for other elections in any other ward in the same principal area, their signature will only be valid on the first papers delivered to you (up to the permitted number)⁴⁶ – subject to the exception set out in paragraph **2.65**.

2.58 Where multiple nominations have been delivered by a candidate, if an elector subscribes any delivered nomination paper, even if it is not the

selected nomination paper, it will count towards the maximum number that they may subscribe.



At parish council elections an elector may not subscribe more nominations than there are vacancies in the parish (if it is unwarded) or the ward (if the parish is warded)⁴⁷. An elector may subscribe both a parish and a principal area nomination paper.

Mayoral election

There is no restriction on the number of nominations that an elector can subscribe: an elector can subscribe to any number of nomination papers for any number of candidates. The first 30 subscribers on a nomination paper must, however, be 30 different electors⁴⁸.

2.59 You should have a robust system in place to ensure that no elector subscribes more nomination forms than they are entitled to. Both a hard copy of the register and the electoral management system should be used in order to minimise the risk of missing a subscriber who has subscribed more forms than they are allowed, with the hard copy of the register physically marked when nominations are formally submitted.

2.60 Once a nomination form has been formally submitted, even if it is later deemed invalid, the signatures of the subscribers will still count towards the maximum number of forms that the subscriber may sign.⁴⁹

2.61 If an elector is later removed from the register or dies before the election (or indeed even before the nomination is delivered), their signature remains valid and the nomination is not affected.

2.62 A person who is shown on the register as being under 18 years old at the time of nomination can only subscribe a nomination paper if they will be 18 years old on or before polling day⁵⁰.

2.63 As you must accept the nomination form at face value, you must accept that the signature made on the nomination form is that of the person listed on the register under the relevant elector number, even if the signature suggests another name. You may draw the attention of the person delivering the paper to the issue if you are concerned, but you must take the elector number and the signature at face value.

2.64 At a principal area election, only the first 10 subscribers on any nomination paper can be considered. If more subscribers are included, any subsequent names must not be considered at all. If one of the first 10 subscribers is invalid, irrespective of whether more subscribers have been added to the ballot paper, the nomination form must be held invalid⁵¹.



At a parish council election, only the first two subscribers can be considered⁵²

Mayoral election

At a mayoral election, only the first 30 subscribers can be considered⁵³.

2.65 Occasionally a mistake is made with the subscribers on a nomination form, and one or more of the names may be crossed out on the form. If the signature, printed name and elector number for a subscriber are clearly crossed out, you should ignore it and treat it as if that row did not appear at all. If asked, you should advise that any crossings out should be clear and, ideally, initialled. You should not cross out any entry. If the entry that has been crossed out was that of a proposer or seconder, then the new proposer or seconder must be indicated. Where an entry has been crossed out, the first ten subscribers excluding that entry must still be valid for the nomination to be valid.

2.66 Signatures on nomination forms, once given, cannot be withdrawn by subscribers. If a subscriber contacts you to say that they wish to withdraw their subscription, you should inform that that this is not permitted by law and that the subscription remains valid.

Use of party names, party descriptions and party emblems

2.67 In all cases, to be able to use a party's identifiers (i.e.name, description and emblem) the party must be registered on the [Commission's register of political parties](#) and be listed as allowed to field candidates in England⁵⁴.

2.68 Political parties can register up to 12 descriptions.⁵⁵

2.69 You must check that the party name or description as given on the nomination form is registered on the [Commission's register of political parties](#) and matches it exactly. If it does not, you must reject that nomination. Even if a registered party is well known, it is vital to check the register of political parties for the exact details of the party as registered with the Commission⁵⁶.

2.70 For the purposes of maintaining a clear audit trail and in case of any future challenges, you should print a copy of the relevant part of the [Commission's register of political parties](#) showing the descriptions and party name at the time of your determination.

2.71 Political parties can also register up to 3 emblems⁵⁷.

2.72 A Zip file of emblem images will be available on our website. However while the Zip file is a tool that can be used by your printer to prepare ballot papers, it is the information on the [Commission's register of political parties](#) that should be used for confirming which emblem to print on the ballot papers.

Additions, alterations, removals and changes to party names, party descriptions and party emblems on the register of political parties

2.73 The legislation provides that the removal or substitution of any registered descriptions may take effect up to and including the day before the actual date of publication of the notice of election for any particular election (note that this

is not the last day for publication of the notice of election but the actual day of publication). After that point, any changes or deletions to any party descriptions do not apply for that election⁵⁸.

2.74 For example, if you decide to publish your notice of election before the last day that the notice must be published by law, it is possible that a nomination may be submitted which bears a registered party description that no longer appears on the register of political parties. If the deletion of the description has taken effect after you have published your notice of election but before the last day for publication of notice of election, the deletion does not apply to your election and the 'old' description is still valid. In any such circumstances you can check with your [local Commission office](#) whether or not the submitted party description applies for your election.

2.75 You should also note that political parties may change their registered party name and emblems, and add any new description if they previously had registered fewer than 12 descriptions, at any time until the close of nominations⁵⁹.

2.76 Where candidate attempts to submit a nomination paper bearing a description that has yet to be registered, you should advise the candidate not to formally submit the paper, but to take it back and submit it once the description has been successfully registered.

2.77 If a candidate formally submits their nomination form with a description that is not yet registered, you must determine the nomination invalid on the basis that, when the determination is made, the description provided does not match any registered with the Commission⁶⁰. You may wish to contact the Commission for confirmation that a description is not yet registered before making your determination. You can do this by contacting your [local Commission office](#).

2.78 For the May 2016 polls, we are setting an administrative deadline of the 22 February 2016 for applications:

- to change party identifiers (name, descriptions and emblems), and
- to register new parties and identifiers (name, descriptions and emblems)

2.79 Any applications received after that date may not be processed in time to take effect for the May 2016 elections.

2.80 While the Commission is aiming to make all updates to the online register of political parties by 21 March 2016ⁱ, there remains the potential that the register could be updated after that date. Should any changes be made to any party identifiers after that date but in time to take effect for the May 2016

ⁱ 21 March 2016 has been chosen as it is the earliest 'last date for publication of the notice of election' of those elections scheduled for 5 May 2016. 21 March is the last date for publication of the notice of election at the Greater London Authority elections.

elections, the Commission will notify Returning Officers and their staff of these through an EA Bulletin.



For up-to-date information about political parties, registered descriptions and registered emblems, you should check the register of political parties on the Commission's website at <http://search.electoralcommission.org.uk>. If you have any queries, you should contact your [local Commission office](#).

What descriptions may be used at the local government election?

2.81 The legislation is precise about the use of descriptions. A candidate may only use one of the following descriptions⁶¹:

- the word 'Independent'
- the registered party name of a registered political party
- one of the descriptions the party has registered with the Commission



For parish council elections, any candidate can choose to use a description. Any description used must not exceed six words in length. Descriptions used at parish council elections do not have to be registered with the Commission. However, any description must not lead electors to associate it with a registered political party unless the description has been registered by that party and its use has been duly authorised.

Candidates may use acronyms or abbreviations as part of their description. It is for you as Returning Officer to determine how you will count these⁶².

2.82 If a candidate wishes to use a party name or description, this must be authorised by the party's Nominating Officer (or a person authorised to act on their behalf). If the description on the nomination form matches one contained on our register of political parties or is a registered party name, a certificate of authorisation, signed by or on behalf of the party's Nominating Officer, must be submitted by the deadline for the delivery of nomination papers⁶³.

2.83 Candidates standing on behalf of more than one registered party may use a joint description which is registered with the Commission⁶⁴. If a candidate is standing on behalf of more than one political party the candidate must submit a certificate of authorisation from each of the parties' Nominating Officers (or persons authorised to act on their behalf) by the deadline for the delivery of nomination papers.

2.84 Joint descriptions are listed on the [Commission's register of political parties](#) on the registration page for the relevant parties within the descriptions section, and in each case the description will be followed by the words '(Joint Description with the xx party)'. An example would be 'The Square and Circle Party Candidate (Joint Description with the Circle Party)', which would be listed on the Square Party page. Please note that the words in brackets are for explanatory purposes only and do not form part of the description.

2.85 You can check who the Nominating Officer for a particular party is by referring to the [Commission's register of political parties](#). However, as long as

the person who has issued the certificate claims that they have been authorised to do so by the registered Nominating Officer, the certificate should be taken at face value.

2.86 A Nominating Officer may stand as a candidate. If this happens, the candidate, as Nominating Officer, may authorise their own description. A person authorised by the Nominating Officer to issue a certificate of authorisation may also be a candidate and issue a certificate for their own nomination.

2.87 A certificate of authorisation can allow the candidate to:

- use a specific description or the party name, or
- choose either the party name or one of the party's registered descriptions

Requests for a party emblem

2.88 If requested, the candidate of a registered party can choose to have a registered emblem of the party they are representing displayed on the ballot paper. To qualify, a candidate must have been authorised to use a party name or description other than 'Independent'.⁶⁵

2.89 Candidates standing on behalf of more than one registered party who use a joint description may choose to use a registered emblem of one of the parties that have authorised the use of the description. There is no provision for joint emblems to be registered with the Commission.

2.90 The candidate (or someone of their behalf), not the election agent or the Nominating Officer (unless they are acting on behalf of the candidate), must make the request in writing to you not later than the deadline for delivery of nominations⁶⁶.

2.91 If the party has more than one registered emblem, the candidate should specify which one they want to use⁶⁷. If the candidate does not specify one, or the registered party changes or removes the emblem from the register of political parties after the nomination papers have been submitted but before the close of nominations, you should try to contact the candidate and ask them to select one. You should also tell them that if they do not select a particular emblem before the close of nominations, you will not be able to print an emblem against their name on the ballot paper.

2.92 The candidate may provide a high-resolution copy of the emblem for use in the printing of ballot papers, or may request that you download the emblem from the Commission's website. You must ensure that whatever copy is used is in the same form as the registered emblem.

2.93 The maximum size of an emblem on the ballot paper is set by the directions for printing. When adding a party emblem to a ballot paper, the shape of the emblem should not be altered. You must ensure that the emblem is in the same form as the registered emblem – for example, do not stretch

emblems into square shapes if they are not registered as square images on our website, as this would have the effect of altering their appearance.

Candidate's consent to nomination

2.94 Candidates must also formally consent to their nomination and deliver their consent by the deadline for delivery of nomination papers. The consent to nomination form is prescribed and must contain the required legal references as described in paragraph 2.6 above. It must be delivered by hand and cannot be submitted by post, fax, email or other electronic means.

2.95 The candidate's consent must include⁶⁸ a statement that they are not disqualified from election and that they meet one or more of the qualifications for standing.

2.96 The consent form must be signed and dated by the candidate and the date must be on or within one month before the last day for the delivery of nomination papers (i.e. not earlier than 7 March 2016).⁶⁹

2.97 The consent must also be witnessed by another person. There are no restrictions on who can be a witness to the consent to nomination. The witness must provide their name and address on the consent form.

Mayoral election

Deposit⁷⁰

In order for a mayoral election nomination to be valid, candidates must also deposit the sum of £500 with the Returning Officer at the place and within the time for delivery of nomination papers. The deposit can be made using:

- legal tender
- a banker's draft
- with your consent, in any other manner

You may refuse to accept a banker's draft if you do not know whether the drawer carries on business as a banker in the United Kingdom.

You should accept building society cheques and banker's payments if they carry out business in the United Kingdom. You should also accept banker's payments which are orders issued by a bank, guaranteeing payment to the recipient.

You may accept a deposit made by a debit or credit card or an electronic funds transfer. However, you may refuse to do so. Any arrangements for the payment of the deposit by electronic means must be included on the notice of election.

Any person may make the deposit for a candidate but if the person making the deposit is not the candidate they must give you their name and address, unless the person is the candidate's agent and their name and address have previously been declared to you.

Deposits must be returned to the person who made the deposit or, if they have died, their personal representative, in the following circumstances⁷¹:

- the candidate withdraws before the deadline for withdrawals
- you reject a candidate's nomination and they are not shown as validly nominated on the statement of persons nominated
- the candidate dies and proof of death has been given to you before you conclude the first count

After the election, the deposit must be returned to the person who made it if the candidate receives more than 5% of the valid first preference votes.

The election address booklet

At a mayoral election, you are required by law to produce a booklet that includes election addresses from candidates at the election and to cause it to be delivered to each person entitled to vote at the mayoral election⁷².

You must only include an election address in the booklet if it is a statement prepared on behalf of a candidate by their election agent that complies with certain legal requirements.

An election address must:

- only contain matter relating to the election
- contain a statement to the effect that the address has been prepared by the candidate's election agent, and give the name and address of the candidate and election agent
- be printed on no more than two sides of A5 paper
- if the address exceeds one side of A5, be accompanied by a second version of the address that must not exceed one side of A5 paper
- comply with any typographical layout, margin and colour use requirements that you determine
- comply with any other requirements with a view to facilitate the reproduction of the address as a page or pages of the election booklet as you determine
- if the address is to contain a photograph of the candidate, be accompanied by two identical copies of that photograph of which one must be signed on the back by the candidate
- if the address is to contain anything else as part of that address, as many copies of it as you may reasonably require in connection with the reproduction of the address
- be delivered to you by the last time allowed to submit nomination papers for the election

An election address must not:

- contain any advertising material other than material promoting the candidate as a candidate at the election
- contain any other material appearing to be included with a view to commercial gain

- contain any material referring to any other candidate
- contain a representation of an emblem of a registered political party registered with the Commission unless the address was prepared on behalf of that party's authorised candidate (the candidate's nomination was accompanied by the nomination deadline by a valid certificate of authorisation)
- contain a party description or joint description registered with the Commission unless the candidate's address was prepared on behalf of that party or those parties jointly (the candidate's nomination was accompanied by the nomination deadline by a valid certificate of authorisation or certificates of authorisation for joint candidates)

An election address may (as long as it meets the above requirements):

- be formatted as the candidate wishes including using any combination of words, pictures and artwork
- include a picture of the candidate

If the total number of candidates from whom election addresses have been accepted by you by the last time for delivery of nomination papers for the election exceeds 15, the version of the address that is contained on one side of A5 must be used for all candidates.

You must consider whether all of the above requirements have been complied with. If any requirement has not been complied with you must not include that election address in the booklet.

You must produce a booklet with the election addresses of all candidates who have submitted a valid election address to you by the last time for the delivery of nomination papers. The order of the addresses in the booklet must, by law, be decided by you by drawing lots. Lots must be drawn as soon as reasonably practicable after the last time for the delivery of nomination papers.

You may require candidates to contribute to the printing of the booklet. The amount of the payment that you require is to be decided by you and you should be clear how that payment is to be made. The amount must be:

- reasonable
- the same for each candidate
- based on a contribution made by candidates towards the expenses incurred in printing the booklet (and not include any amount relating to the postage or delivery of the booklet)

You should decline to include any candidate's election address where the payment has not been made as you require.

You may include in the booklet, along with the candidate's election addresses, your own statement.

Your statement may include:

- an explanation of the purpose of the booklet
- an alphabetical list of all candidates at the election (whether or not they are in the booklet)
- the date of the election and the deadlines for registration and absent voting applications
- any other information that you determine

You must include a statement stating that it is published by you and giving your name and address and that of your printer.

You must notify every election agent of a candidate who has provided an election address and where you have accepted it for inclusion in the booklet of the time and place where they may check the election addresses in the booklet and submit typographical corrections to the proof of the booklet before it is printed.

You may, if any candidate and their agent do not review the proof, make your own correction of typographical errors in an election address if you think it is appropriate. You should attempt to contact the candidate or agent to clarify your corrections but it is not a legal requirement to do so.

You must print the booklet and place each copy in an envelope. You must then cause one copy to be delivered to each elector on the electoral register who is eligible to vote at the election. The postage or delivery costs must be paid by the local authority (either directly or by reclaim/invoice).

You must keep a record of the costs of printing the booklet separately from all other costs. If the payments made by the candidates exceed the total cost of printing, the balance must be divided equally between the candidates and returned to them.

Candidates who withdraw before the deadline for withdrawals must have all of the payment they have made returned to them and should not be included in the booklet.

Determining nomination forms

2.98 A candidate who delivers completed nomination papers by the required deadline will be deemed nominated unless you decide that the nomination form is invalid (or the candidate dies or withdraws).

2.99 There is case law which makes clear that Returning Officers must not undertake any investigation or research into any candidate and that their duty does not go beyond seeing that a nomination form is correct on its face. As RO, you should not, for example, investigate whether a name given on a nomination form is genuine. You will also need to disregard any personal

knowledge you may already have of the candidate. Any determinations need to be made on the basis of the form itself.ⁱⁱ

2.100 You must determine the validity of a nomination form as soon as is practicable after formal delivery. The sooner you carry out the formal determination, the greater the chance of those candidates who have made a mistake and whose nomination has been rejected being able to submit new papers before the close of nominations.⁷³

2.101 By law, the only grounds you have for determining that a nomination form is invalid are⁷⁴:

- that the particulars of the candidate or the persons subscribing the nomination form are not as required by law, or
- that the form is not subscribed as required

2.102 The description given on the nomination form is part of 'the particulars of the candidate'. Therefore, if the party does not appear on the Commission's register of political parties who can contest elections in England, or the use of the party name or description has not been authorised by the delivery of a certificate of authorisation signed by or on behalf of the party's Nominating Officer, the nomination form must be held invalid.

2.103 If, in your opinion, the nomination form does not comply with the description rules, you must give a decision to that effect as soon as practicable after the delivery of the nomination form and in any event within 24 hours after the deadline for the delivery of nominations (i.e. no later than 4pm on 8 April 2016).⁷⁵

2.104 We have produced a [nominations checklist](#) for Returning Officers which sets out what you will need to consider and specific things to look out for when determining a nomination.

Mayoral election

If the required £500 deposit has not been received by you by the deadline to submit nomination papers, the candidate has not been validly nominated. There is then no need to make a formal determination, and their name should not appear on the statement of persons nominated.⁷⁶

ⁱⁱ In very limited circumstances, there is an exception, also based on case law, to the principle of accepting nomination papers at face value. You may come across a situation where the candidate's nomination is clearly a sham and the nomination is not actually a nomination and does not need to be determined - for example, if a form is submitted for 'Mickey Mouse of Disney Land'.

What to do after your formal determination

2.105 Once you have made a decision that a nomination form is valid, it cannot be challenged during the election, although it may be challenged after the election by way of an election petition.⁷⁷

2.106 If a nomination form is determined to be invalid, you must state that fact on the nomination form, write the reasons for rejection and sign it⁷⁸. If a nomination form is ruled invalid, it is important to take steps to contact the candidate and agent as soon as possible so that they may have the opportunity wherever possible to submit another set of nomination papers before the close of nominations.

2.107 You must send notice of your decision that a nomination form is **valid or invalid** to the candidate at their home address as given on the nomination form⁷⁹. This should be done as soon as practicable after your decision has been made.

Correction of minor errors

2.108 You are permitted by law to correct minor errors made on a nomination form at any time before you publish the statement of persons nominated. This includes the correction of errors in relation to a person's elector number and obvious errors of spelling of a candidate's details. You should attempt to contact the candidate or agent before making any minor error amendment.⁸⁰

2.109 You must have regard to the Commission's guidance on the correction of minor errors⁸¹.

Errors in elector numbers

2.110 Where an elector number has been entered incorrectly, you may amend it if you are satisfied that an error has been made. However, where the elector number has been omitted altogether, this does not amount to an error, and the nomination form should be rejected on the basis that the number has not been supplied and so the particulars are not as required.

Errors of spelling in details of candidates

2.111 Dealing with the 'obvious' errors of spelling may be more difficult, as what is obvious to one person may not be so to another. Care should be taken in exercising this power.

Errors in a home address

2.112 Where a home address is not absolutely correct there may not be a need to make a correction. By law, errors in a home address do not affect the full operation of a nomination form, as long as the address can be commonly understood.

Inspection of nomination papers

2.113 You should keep the nomination papers secure. By law, you must allow public inspection during office hours on any working day from the close of nominations up to and including the day before polling day⁸².

2.114 After that point, the nomination papers are not open to public inspection, but you should securely store them for one year after the election.

2.115 There is no right of objection to a nomination at a local government election.

Withdrawal of a candidate

2.116 It is possible for a validly nominated candidate to withdraw their candidature. For this to be effective, the candidate must deliver to you a signed notice, attested by one witness, by 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll (i.e. by 4pm on 7 April 2016)⁸³.

2.117 The notice must be delivered by hand to the place for the delivery of nomination papers. There are no restrictions on who can deliver a notice of withdrawal.

2.118 The withdrawal notice is not prescribed in legislation. We have produced a [template withdrawal notice](#) that you could give to any candidate who requests one.

2.119 If the candidate is not in the UK, a withdrawal will be effective if a notice of withdrawal, signed by the proposer and accompanied by a written declaration that the candidate is abroad (also signed by the proposer), is delivered to you by the deadline for withdrawals (i.e. by 4pm on 7 April 2016). If the candidate was nominated by more than one nomination form, each proposer must sign the notice and declaration. If any of the proposers are outside the UK they do not need to sign the notice, but the notice must, by law, include a statement that they are also outside the UK.

2.120 The details of any candidates who by the close of withdrawals remain validly nominated must be printed on the ballot papers. If a candidate has not withdrawn by the deadline, their name must go forward to the ballot paper.

Mayoral election

We have produced a [template withdrawal notice](#) for mayoral elections.

You must return the deposit of any candidate who has withdrawn their candidature or whose nomination you have rejected. The deposit must be returned to the person who made it and as soon as practicable after the statement of persons nominated has been published.⁸⁴

For guidance on returning deposits to validly nominated mayoral candidates after an election, see [Part F – After the declaration of results](#).

After the close of nominations

2.121 After the close of nominations you must publish a statement of persons nominated and a notice of poll. For details on what these notices should contain see Chapter 4.

Nomination in more than one electoral area

2.122 A candidate may submit nomination papers for more than one ward of the same local government area. However, by the deadline for withdrawals, they must have withdrawn from all those wards except one⁸⁵.



A candidate may stand and be elected to both a parish council and a principal area council for the same or a different area.

Mayoral election

A candidate may stand in and be elected as mayor for any number of different local authorities.

Uncontested elections

2.123 If the local government election in any electoral area is uncontested, you must, as soon as practicable after the latest time for the delivery of notices of withdrawals of candidature, declare the remaining validly nominated candidate(s) elected. You must give their names to the Proper Officer of the council for which the election is held, and give public notice of the name of each elected person. No poll is necessary⁸⁶.



At a parish council election, you are required to give notice of the name of each person elected to the proper officer of the parish council and also to the proper officer of the council of the district in which the parish is situated⁸⁷.

Death of a candidate at a local government election

2.124 In the event of a candidate dying during the election period, the procedure to be followed at local government elections depends on the time when you receive proof of the death of the candidate. It is the time when you receive proof of the candidate's death that is the relevant factor, not the actual time of death.

Proof of death received before the withdrawal deadline

2.125 Should you receive proof of a candidate's death after accepting their nomination as valid, but before the deadline for the withdrawal of nominations, you should wait until that deadline has passed. In this case, the candidate is deemed not to be standing for election⁸⁸. If the number of validly nominated candidates, excluding the deceased, is more than the number of people to be elected, the poll must be countermanded and a new election must be held. If the number of validly nominated candidates, excluding the deceased, is the same as or fewer than the number of people to be elected, then all are deemed elected and you must order a new election for any remaining vacancies⁸⁹.



Parish council elections

Where there are not enough validly nominated candidates at the ordinary election of a parish council, those candidates who are validly nominated are elected.⁹⁰

If the parish council is quorate, i.e. at least three and at least one-third of the total seats on the council are filled, the elected councillors may co-opt councillors to fill the remaining seats.⁹¹

If, however, after a period of 35 working days from the date that would have been the polling day if the election had been contested, the council has not filled all the vacancies by co-option, the relevant principal area council (i.e. a district or unitary council in England or a county or county borough council in Wales) may:⁹²

- by order make direct appointments of people as parish councillors
- do anything necessary or expedient for the proper holding of the parish council meeting and properly constituting the council
- direct that a new election is held to fill the remaining vacancies, and fix the date of that election

The principal area council must not exercise this power within 35 working days of the ordinary date of election and may allow a parish council a period longer than 35 working days to fill vacancies by co-option if it wishes.

Proof of death received after the withdrawal deadline and before polls open

2.126 If proof of the death of a validly nominated candidate at a contested election is received before the opening of the poll, the notice of poll is countermanded and the poll does not take place. A new election must be held.⁹³

Proof of death received after polls have opened and before the declaration of result

2.127 If proof of the death of a validly nominated candidate at a contested election is received after the opening of the poll but before the declaration of result, the poll is abandoned and a new election must be held. However, in this case, because the poll will have started, the documentation (i.e. issued and un-issued ballot papers, etc.) must be returned to you and sealed up in the normal way.

2.128 Any postal votes received back must also be sealed in packets and any envelopes not opened at the time of the notification of the death must be sealed in packets unopened⁹⁴.

Mayoral election

If a candidate dies before the conclusion of the first count, the deposit must also be returned to the person who made it as soon as practicable.⁹⁵

New election

2.129 Where a new election is required after the countermanding or abandonment of a poll due to a candidate's death, you must select a new day for the poll, and this must fall within 35 working days of the day fixed for the first poll. New nominations can be made, but candidates already validly nominated at the original poll do not have to be nominated a second time. Candidates validly nominated prior to the countermanding or abandonment of the poll may not withdraw as their period for withdrawals has expired⁹⁶.

Death of a PCC candidate⁹⁷

2.130 In the event of the death of a candidate during the election period, the procedure to be followed at a PCC election depends on the time when the PARO receives proof of the death of the candidate. It is the time when the PARO receives proof of the candidate's death that is the relevant factor, not the actual time of death.

Proof of death received before polls open

2.131 If proof of the death of a validly nominated candidate at a contested election is received before the opening of the poll, the notice of poll is countermanded and the poll does not take place. The PARO must hold a new election.

Proof of death received after polls have opened and before the declaration of result

2.132 If proof of the death of a validly nominated candidate at a contested election is received after the opening of the poll but before the declaration of result, the poll is abandoned and a new election must be held. However, in this case, because the poll will have started, the documentation (i.e. issued and un-issued ballot papers, etc.) must be returned to you and sealed up in the normal way.

2.133 Any postal votes received back must also be sealed in packets and any envelopes not opened at the time of the notification of the death must be sealed in packets unopened.

New election

2.134 The PARO will set the date of the new election.

3 Agents at the election

Agents at the local government election

The election agent

3.1 Each candidate must have an election agent, and notice of the appointment must be delivered to you by the latest time for delivery of notices of withdrawal, which is 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll (i.e. by 4pm 7 April 2016)⁹⁸. We have produced a form for the notification of the appointment of election agents as part of the [set of nomination papers for use at a local government election](#).

3.2 A candidate may appoint themselves as their election agent. Also, if no agent is appointed by the above time, the candidate is deemed to be their own election agent⁹⁹.

3.3 A candidate is also deemed to be their own agent if they revoke their agent's appointment, or the agent dies, and a replacement is not appointed on the day of the death or on the following day.

3.4 If a candidate is acting as their own election agent, irrespective of whether they became an agent as a result of not appointing one or because they had given you written notice of their own appointment, they can also revoke their own appointment and appoint a new agent. They must notify you in writing of any such changes¹⁰⁰.



Election agents are not required at parish council elections.¹⁰¹

3.5 The election agent must have an office, and the notice of appointment must set out the office address to which all claims, notice legal process and other documents may be sent. The office address must be an address to which any legal notices can be delivered and therefore must be a physical address – PO boxes or similar mailboxes cannot be used.

3.6 The location of the office must be¹⁰²:

- within the local government area, or
- in the parliamentary constituency or one of the constituencies of which the area is comprised, or
- in an adjoining Welsh county or county borough, or
- in an adjoining London borough, or
- in an adjoining district

3.7 The election agent's office address will often be the same as their home address, but it might be that of the local political party office or an office especially set up for the election.

3.8 Where a candidate acts as their own election agent as a result of not having appointed anybody else, the office address is deemed to be the address on the statement of persons nominated, i.e. the address provided on the nomination form. If that address is outside the relevant qualifying area as defined in the bullet points above, the office address is deemed to be the address of the proposer given on the statement of persons nominated¹⁰³.

3.9 If the candidate gives you written notification of their appointment as their own election agent, they must give an office address within the qualifying area as defined in the bullet points above.¹⁰⁴

3.10 Upon notification of an election agent's name and address, you must publish a notice setting out those details and the name of the candidate as soon as possible. The notice must be updated if any agent's appointment is revoked, or an agent dies, with the new agent's details published on the revised version.¹⁰⁵

Other agents

3.11 Candidates at a local government election can appoint agents to observe the opening of postal votes, the poll and the verification and count. You are responsible for receiving the notifications of appointment of these agents.



For further details on the role of these agents, see [Part 5: 'Your right to attend key electoral events'](#) of our guidance for candidates and agents at local government elections.

Mayoral referendums

All references to candidates and agents in this section ('Other agents') should be read as petition organisers and counting and polling observers appointed for the purposes of the referendum. In addition to the count, counting observers at a mayoral referendum may also attend the opening of postal votes.

At a mayoral referendum, as Counting Officer you may appoint polling observers and you are under a legal duty to appoint counting observers. To assist you in our duty to appoint counting observers, the petition organiser may nominate observers for you to appoint and you must not reject such nominations without good cause.

Polling and counting observers must be nominated in writing by the fifth working day before the poll. The written notice must contain the name and address of each nominee.¹⁰⁶

Neighbourhood planning referendums

All references to candidates and agents in this section ('Other agents') should be read as counting and polling observers appointed for the purposes of the referendum. In addition to the count, counting observers at a neighbourhood planning referendum may also attend the opening of postal votes.

At a neighbourhood planning referendum, as Counting Officer you are under a legal duty to appoint counting observers and must give them written notice of the time and place of the count. There is no specified minimum number that you must appoint. You may also appoint polling observers for the purpose of detecting personation. There are no restrictions on how many polling observers can be allocated to a polling station.¹⁰⁷

It is your decision as to who to appoint as polling and counting observers, but to help you make these appointments, you could attempt to make contact with relevant campaign organisers from both sides (if known) and ask them to put forward observers. This will help to ensure that campaigners are present at key proceedings and can satisfy themselves that the referendum has been transparent and well run. You should aim to ensure an equal balance in the number of polling and counting observers appointed from each side of the campaign.

You should appoint polling and counting observers in writing, and include in the written appointment the following information as a minimum:

- the name of the referendum area
- the name and address (including postcode) of the observer
- the campaign or organisation the observer is associated with (if applicable)

Combination

Where the Counting Officer does not take on the combined functions at combined polls, the Counting Officer must give written notice of the appointment of any polling observers to the relevant Returning Officer by the fifth working day before the poll. The notice must state the names and addresses of the persons appointed. The Counting Officer must also give written notice of the appointment of counting observers to the relevant Returning Officer as soon as practicable after they have been appointed.¹⁰⁸

3.12 You must ensure that all appointed agents are given a copy of the relevant secrecy requirements for local government elections for the [opening of postal votes](#), [the poll](#) and [the count](#) which we have published on our website.¹⁰⁹

The opening of postal votes

3.13 Postal voting agents are permitted by law to observe the opening of the postal voters' ballot box, the opening of returned postal votes and the checking of signatures and dates of birth provided on returned postal voting statements. You must be given written notice of the name and address of any postal voting agents before the start of any particular session that the agents are seeking to attend. The Commission has developed a [form for the notification of appointment of a postal voting agent](#) for use at the local government election¹¹⁰.

3.14 You must give candidates at least 48 hours' notice of the time and place of any postal vote opening session and the number of agents a candidate may appoint to attend each opening¹¹¹.

Mayoral referendum/Neighbourhood planning referendum

At a mayoral or neighbourhood planning referendum, you should also give counting observers appointed for the purpose of observing postal vote openings at least 48 hours' notice of the time and place of any postal vote opening session.

The poll

3.15 Polling agents are entitled by law to access polling stations for the purpose of detecting personation. They can also observe the procedures to be followed inside a polling station. You must be notified in writing of any polling agents that have been appointed by not later than five working days before the poll (i.e. by 27 April 2016) for their appointment to be in force for the poll¹¹². The Commission has developed a [form for the notification of appointment of a polling agent](#) for use at the local government election.

3.16 A polling agent can be appointed to a particular polling station or stations, or to all polling stations within the relevant electoral area. The same polling agents may be appointed to attend more than one polling station.

3.17 The total number that may attend at any particular polling station is four or such greater number that you decide to allow. The limit applies to each individual polling station, even where there are multiple polling stations in the same building or room. If you decide to allow more than four polling agents to attend a polling station, you must give notice of that higher number¹¹³. This notice should be published on your website and a copy provided to the candidates and their election agents.

3.18 You can decide to fix different maximum numbers for different polling stations and, if you decide to do so, you should make this clear on the notice you publish.

3.19 If all the candidates together appoint more than the maximum number of polling agents who can attend any polling station you must decide which

polling agents may attend by drawing lots for each polling station. Those who are not selected by the lot are not appointed as polling agents for that particular polling station.¹¹⁴

3.20 Only one polling agent for each candidate may be admitted to a polling station at any particular time¹¹⁵.

Neighbourhood planning referendum

At a stand-alone neighbourhood planning referendum there are no limits in law to the number of polling observers that may be appointed to attend any particular polling station. However, where the poll at a neighbourhood planning referendum has been combined with the poll at another election or referendum, the total number of polling observers or polling agents that are permitted to attend at any particular polling station is limited to four, or such greater number as the relevant Returning Officer or Counting Officer may determine. If the number of such polling observers or agents is greater than that number, the relevant Returning Officer or Counting Officer must, by law, determine which observers/agents are entitled to attend by drawing lots.¹¹⁶

The count

3.21 Counting agents can be appointed to observe the verification and counting processes. You must be notified in writing of the appointment of counting agents by not later than five working days before the poll (i.e. by 27 April 2016) for their appointment to be in force for the verification and count. The Commission has developed a [form for the notification of appointment of a counting agent](#) for use at a local government election¹¹⁷.

3.22 You must give counting agents who have been appointed notice in writing of the time and place at which the verification and count will begin¹¹⁸.

Mayoral election

You are also legally required to give counting agents who have been appointed notice of the time and place at which the count of the second preference votes will begin if required¹¹⁹.

3.23 You are permitted by law to limit the number of counting agents. The number that may be appointed by each candidate must be the same and, unless there are special circumstances, must not be less than the number obtained by dividing the number of counting assistants (i.e. those staff counting the ballot papers) by the number of candidates¹²⁰.

3.24 When determining the maximum number of counting agents, each candidate should, as far as possible, be permitted to appoint sufficient numbers of counting agents to enable full and proper scrutiny of the verification and count processes. You should, however, consider any health and safety implications, including fire regulations for the verification and count venue, when deciding on maximum numbers of counting agents.

3.25 When determining the maximum number of counting agents you should also bear in mind that the counting agents for all polls being verified are entitled to attend the verification part of the count.



For details on who can attend the verification and count, see [Part E: Verifying and counting the votes](#).

Agents at the Police and Crime Commissioner election

The election agent

3.26 Each candidate must have an election agent and the notice of the appointment must be delivered to the PARO by the latest time for delivery of notices of withdrawals, which is 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll (i.e. 4pm on 7 April 2016).¹²¹

3.27 Upon notification of an election agent's name and address, the PARO must publish a notice setting out those details and the name of the candidate as soon as possible. The PARO will provide you, as LRO, with a copy of the notice and you must publish that within your voting area. The PARO must update the notice if any agent's appointment is revoked, or an agent dies, with the new agent's details published on a revised version. The PARO must provide you, as LRO, with a copy of any updated notice, which you must publish in your voting area.

Sub-agents

3.28 Election agents may appoint sub-agents to act for them in any part of the police area. Notification of any sub-agent appointment must be made to the PARO by the 5th working day before the poll (i.e. by 27 April 2016).¹²²

3.29 Upon notification of a sub-agent's name and address, the PARO must publish a notice setting out those details, the name of the candidate, and the part of the police area within which the sub-agent is appointed to act, as soon as possible. The PARO will provide you, as LRO, with a copy of the notice and you must publish that within your voting area. The PARO must update the notice if any sub-agent's appointment is revoked, or a sub-agent dies, with the new agent's details published on a revised version. The PARO must provide you, as LRO, with a copy of any updated notice, which you must publish in your voting area.¹²³

Other agents

3.30 Candidates at a PCC election can appoint agents to observe the opening of postal votes, the poll and the verification and count. You are responsible for receiving the notifications of appointment of these agents.¹²⁴



For further details on the role of these agents, see [Part 5: Your right to attend key electoral events](#) of our guidance for candidates and agents at Police and Crime Commissioner elections

3.31 You must ensure that all appointed agents are given a copy of the relevant secrecy requirements for PCC elections for the [opening of postal votes](#), [the poll](#) and [the count](#) which we have published on our website.¹²⁵

The opening of postal votes

3.32 Postal voting agents are permitted by law to observe the opening of the postal voters' ballot box, the opening of returned postal votes and the checking of signatures and dates of birth provided on returned postal voting statements. You must be given written notice of the name and address of any postal voting agents before the start of any particular session that the agents are seeking to attend. The Commission has developed [a form for the notification of appointment of a postal voting agent](#) for use at the PCC election.

3.33 You must give candidates at least 48 hours' notice of the time and place of any postal vote opening session and the number of agents that may be appointed to attend each opening¹²⁶.

The poll

3.34 Polling agents are entitled by law to access polling stations for the purpose of detecting personation. They can also observe the procedures to be followed inside a polling station.¹²⁷

3.35 Notification must be given to you in writing of any polling agents that have been appointed by not later than 5 working days before the poll (i.e. by 27 April 2016) for their appointment to be in force for the poll. The Commission has developed a [form for the notification of appointment of a polling agent](#) for use at a [PCC election](#).

3.36 A polling agent can be appointed to a particular polling station or stations, or to all polling stations within the voting area. The same polling agents may be appointed to attend more than one polling station.

3.37 At the PCC election, the total number of polling agents that may attend at any particular polling station is four or such greater number that you decide to allow. The limit applies to each individual polling station, even where there are multiple polling stations in the same building or room. If you decide to allow more than four polling agents to attend a polling station, you must give notice of that higher number¹²⁸. This notice should be published on your

website and a copy provided to the candidates and their election agents. A copy of the notice should also be given to the PARO. You can decide to fix different maximum numbers for different polling stations and, if you do so, you should make this clear on the notice you publish.

3.38 If all the candidates together appoint more than the maximum number of polling agents who can attend any polling station you must decide which polling agents may attend by drawing lots for each polling station. Those who are not selected by the lot are not appointed as polling agents for that particular polling station.¹²⁹

3.39 Only one polling agent for each candidate may be admitted to a polling station at any particular time.

The count

3.40 Counting agents can be appointed to observe the verification and counting processes relating to the PCC election.

3.41 You must be notified in writing of the appointment of counting agents by not later than 5 working days before the poll (i.e. by 27 April 2016) for their appointment to be in force for the verification and count. The Commission has developed a [form for the notification of appointment of a counting agent](#) for use at a PCC election.¹³⁰

3.42 You must give counting agents who have been appointed notice in writing of the time and place at which the verification and count will begin.¹³¹ You must also give counting agents who have been appointed notice of the time and place at which the count of the second preference votes will begin if required¹³². This notice must state the start time of the second count, which may be as soon as practicable after the first count rather than any fixed time or could be a fixed later time.

3.43 You are permitted by law to limit the number of counting agents. The number that may be appointed by each candidate must be the same and, unless there are special circumstances, must not be less than the number obtained by dividing the number of counting assistants (i.e. those staff counting the ballot papers) by the number of candidates.¹³³

3.44 When determining the maximum number of counting agents, each candidate should, as far as possible, be permitted to appoint sufficient numbers of counting agents to enable full and proper scrutiny of the verification and count processes. You should, however, consider any health and safety implications, including fire regulations for the verification and count venue, when deciding on maximum numbers of counting agents.

3.45 When determining the maximum number of counting agents you should also bear in mind that the counting agents for all polls being verified are entitled to attend the verification part of the count.



For details on who can attend the verification and count, see [Part E: Verifying and counting the votes](#).

3.46 Only one of the counting agents for each candidate can be designated to be able to request a recount at the conclusion of the count or any recount. Such designations must be made at the time that the counting agent appointment is notified to you.¹³⁴ The Commission's form for the notification of the appointment of counting agents makes provision for any such designation to be indicated on the form.

4 Production of notices, poll cards and ballot papers

Production and publication of notices

4.1 You must publish notices by posting them in a conspicuous place within the electoral area. This should include local authority offices, noticeboards, libraries and other public buildings. The notice may also be given in such other manner as you think fit.¹³⁵

4.2 In order to ensure that voters can receive the information they need, in an accessible format and within time for them to cast their vote, you should ensure that information on the polls, including the notices of election and notices of poll, are easily accessible to voters, such as through the local authority website.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure that information on the polls, including the notice of election and notice of poll, is easily accessible to voters, such as through the local authority website. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to ensure that information on the polls can be easily accessed through the local authority website.



See [Part B – ‘Planning and organisation’](#) for more general guidance on communicating information to electors.

4.3 You should have robust proof-checking processes in place to ensure that there are no errors on the notices you are required to publish.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure that you have robust processes in place for ensuring that there are no errors on the notice(s) of election. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place processes for the proof-checking of the notice(s).

Translation and formats of notices

4.4 You must, where you consider it appropriate to do so, ensure that notices are translated or provided in another format.¹³⁶ You may produce them:

- in Braille

- in languages other than English
- using graphical representations
- in audio format
- using any other means of making information accessible

4.5 The ballot papers cannot be produced in any other language or format. However, the enlarged copy of the ballot papers to be displayed in polling stations must have the instructions for voters printed at the top of the papers, and these words may be translated into languages other than English.

Notices of election

Local government election

4.6 You must publish the notice of election by not later than 25 working days before the poll (i.e. by 4pm on 30 March 2016).¹³⁷ A separate notice can be produced for each ward, or a combined notice can be produced including all of the wards in the local authority area with elections.

4.7 The notice of election must include the following:

- the place and times at which nomination papers can be delivered, and at which nomination papers may be obtained
- the date of the poll if the election is contested
- the date by which applications for absent votes (including emergency proxies) must reach the ERO in order to be effective for the election¹³⁸

4.8 The notice of election should also include the date by which applications for registration must reach the ERO in order to be effective for the election.

4.9 The notice of election should also include the date by which applications for registration must reach the ERO in order to be effective for the election.

4.10 The address given for the delivery of nomination papers should be exact, and include any room number. This will avoid any doubt should nominations be delivered close to the deadline. All reception staff at offices of the building and other connected buildings should be informed that they should not take receipt of nomination papers.

4.11 The Commission has developed a template notice of election which you can use for the [local government election](#).



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure that you have robust processes in place for ensuring that there are no errors on the notice(s) of election. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place processes for the proof-checking of the notice(s).

Mayoral election

The notice must also state any arrangements which apply for the payment of the deposit by electronic means.¹³⁹

Mayoral referendums

The Commission has produced a template notice of referendum for mayoral referendums. The notice must, by law, state:

- the date of the poll
- the date by which applications to vote by post or proxy (including emergency proxies) must reach the ERO in order to be effective for the referendum

The notice should also include the date by which applications for registration must reach the ERO in order to be effective for the referendum.¹⁴⁰

Neighbourhood planning referendums

At a neighbourhood planning referendum, the notice of referendum must be published not later than the twenty-fifth working day before the poll (i.e. 30 March 2016).¹⁴¹

The notice must, by law, state:

- the date of the poll
- the date by which applications to vote by post or proxy (including emergency proxies) must reach the ERO in order to be effective for the referendum¹⁴²

The notice should also include the date by which applications for registration must reach the ERO in order to be effective for the referendum.

PCC election

4.12 The PARO must publish the notice of election for the PCC election by no later than twenty-five working days before the poll (i.e. by 30 March 2016).¹⁴³ The PARO must prepare and send to you a copy of the notice of election, which you must publish locally in the voting area.

Statement of persons nominated

Local government election

4.13 You must publish a statement of persons nominated for each ward by no later than 4pm, eighteen working days before the poll (i.e. by 4pm on 8 April 2016).

4.14 The statement of persons nominated must include the name, address and description (if any) of all candidates who have been validly nominated and those who no longer stand nominated (i.e. invalid and withdrawn candidates, if any), including the reason why they no longer stand nominated.¹⁴⁴

4.15 The names of the candidates on the statement must be listed in alphabetical order of their surname; this is also how they will appear on the ballot paper. Where there are two or more candidates with the same surname, the alphabetical order of the other names will decide which candidate is listed first.

4.16 If a person has requested the use of a commonly used name on their nomination paper, the commonly used name must be shown on the statement instead of the actual name. Where a candidate has requested the use of a commonly used surname, the candidate's alphabetical position on the statement of persons nominated and on the ballot paper must be made by reference to their commonly used surname.

4.17 If, however, you have rejected the use of any commonly used name as you think it is likely to mislead or confuse electors, or is obscene or offensive, the actual name must, by law, be published on the statement of persons nominated instead of the commonly used name.

PCC election

4.18 The PARO must publish the statement of persons nominated for the police area by 4pm, eighteen working days before the poll (i.e. by 4pm on 8 April 2016).¹⁴⁵ The PARO must prepare and send to you a copy of the statement of persons nominated as soon as it has been published, which you must publish in the voting area as soon as practicable after receiving it.

Notices of poll

Local government election

4.19 If at the local government election there are more candidates than there are vacancies and there is to be a contest, you must publish a notice of poll for each ward by not later than the sixth working day before polling day (i.e. by 26 April 2016). The notice of poll must state:¹⁴⁶

- the date and hours of the poll
- the number of councillors to be elected in the ward
- the particulars of the candidates standing validly nominated
- the names of the subscribers

4.20 You should give a copy of the notice of poll to all candidates and election agents as soon as practicable after its publication.

Mayoral referendums

At a mayoral referendum, the notice of poll must include:¹⁴⁷

- the date and hours of the poll
- the question to be asked in the referendum

If any campaigners have contacted you or are known to you, you should supply them with a copy of the notice of poll and situation of polling stations for their reference. You should also supply these to any polling observers who have been appointed.

Neighbourhood planning referendums

At a neighbourhood planning referendum the notice of poll must include:¹⁴⁸

- the date and hours of the poll
- the question to be asked in the referendum

If any campaigners have contacted you or are known to you, you should supply them with a copy of the notice of poll and situation of polling stations for their reference. You should also supply these to any polling observers who have been appointed.

PCC election

4.21 If the PCC election is contested, the PARO is required to publish a notice of poll for the police area by no later than the sixth working day before poll (i.e. by 26 April 2016).¹⁴⁹ The PARO should provide you with a copy of the notice which you can then publish locally in your voting area. You should also either provide a link from your website to the PARO's website where the notice is published or provide a copy directly on your website so that electors in the voting area can easily access it.

Notice of the situation of polling stations

4.22 You must prepare and publish a notice setting out:¹⁵⁰

- the situation of each polling station in the area
- the description of voters entitled to vote there

4.23 The notice must also state that the poll at the local government elections will be combined with the poll at the PCC election, and must specify the relevant police area. Where the combination only extends to part of the local government area, it must specify that part.

4.24 The notice must be published by no later than the sixth working day before poll (i.e. by 26 April 2016).

Mayoral elections, mayoral referendums and neighbourhood planning referendums

The notice of situation of polling stations must also state that the poll is to be taken together with the poll at the election/referendum. It must also specify the relevant local authority or voting area, as appropriate, for which the election/referendum is held. Where a referendum is taking place and the polls are to be taken together in part of the local counting area only, the notice must specify that part.¹⁵¹

4.25 You must give a copy of the relevant notice of situation of polling stations and descriptions of voters entitled to vote there to all election agents as soon as practicable after giving the notice,¹⁵² and you should also give a copy of the relevant notice to all candidates. You should also be prepared to make these notices available to any accredited observers on request.

4.26 In relation to the PCC election, you should liaise with the PARO on how the provision of the notice of situation of polling stations to agents should be managed in practice, including whether the notices for all voting areas in the police area will be disseminated centrally by the PARO.

4.27 The Commission has developed a [template notice of poll and situation of polling stations for the local government elections](#) and a [template notice of poll and situation of polling stations for the Police and Crime Commissioner election](#) which you can use.

Production of poll cards

4.28 As local government RO you are responsible for sending electors and their proxies an official poll card for the local government election and as LRO you have the same responsibility for the PCC election. You can combine the poll cards for the local government elections and the PCC election. Poll cards must follow the prescribed form, but you can make any necessary adaptations when combining them.¹⁵³

4.29 You must ensure that on each poll card or on the combined poll card all of the elements specified in the relevant election rules and shown on the front and the back of the poll cards in the appendix to the election rules are included.

Mayoral elections, mayoral referendums and neighbourhood planning referendums

If you and the Returning or Counting Officer for the other relevant election or referendum agree, you can issue combined poll cards for all polls.

Where combined poll cards are issued, information about all relevant electoral events should be provided. If there are only some wards in your area with a particular combination of polls, you should make arrangements to ensure that

electors are sent poll cards containing the information about the particular combination of polls in their ward.¹⁵⁴

4.30 You will need to dispatch your poll card data to your printers.

4.31 If you are outsourcing the production of poll cards, you should ensure that your software is able to produce a data file that your printers can use to produce the materials to the specification required. At an early stage in discussions with suppliers you should address in what format you will supply the data and in what format they will send you any proofs, and this should be included in your specification and contract.

4.32 You should also conduct a test-run by submitting sample data to the printers in advance of 'live' data being submitted. This will also enable pre-proofs to be developed, so that it is clear which part of the data should go where on the poll card.

4.33 You should also liaise with your Royal Mail contact (or other commercial delivery firm) at an early stage to ensure that you have appropriate licences in place and that the poll card meets specific delivery requirements.

4.34 Regardless of whether you have outsourced the production of poll cards you remain responsible for ensuring that they are produced in accordance with the legislation. You should therefore ensure that you have arrangements in place which enable you to quality-assure the whole process.

4.35 In order to ensure that voters receive the information they need you should have in place a process for checking live proofs of poll cards, including those for absent voters, as well as arrangements to check the actual stationery being produced, which will highlight if any of the signed-off proofs have been inadvertently altered. Random spot checks within polling districts could also be carried out so that a representative cross-section can be checked.

4.36 We have produced a [proof checking factsheet](#) which you can use to help you quality assure the whole process.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure you have robust processes in place for ensuring that there are no errors on poll cards. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place processes for the proof-checking of poll cards.

4.37 EROs must publish two interim election notices of alteration before publishing the final election notice of alteration on the fifth working day before the poll (i.e. 27 April 2016). These notices support the prompt dispatch of poll cards to those electors who have applied to register close to the registration deadline.¹⁵⁵

4.38 The first interim notice of alteration must be published on the day of the deadline for nominations, which is the nineteenth working day before the poll

(i.e. 7 April 2016). The second interim notice must be published between the eighteenth and sixth working day before the poll (i.e. between 8 April 2016 and 26 April 2016 (inclusive)).

4.39 An update of the registration data resulting from each of the notices of alteration should be sent to your printers as soon as practicable to enable the production of poll cards for new electors.



Further information on interim notices is included in [Part 4 – Maintaining the register throughout the year](#) of the Commission’s guidance for EROs.



Further details on the management of contractors and suppliers can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

4.40 Electoral registration data held by contractors should be destroyed as soon as possible after polling day. If not already included in the contract, a written undertaking should be produced for contractors to sign confirming this. It should state that the contractor understands that information from the full electoral register cannot be disclosed at any time, confirming that they will not disclose data to any unauthorised party and that, after the elections, they will return any discs and paper records provided to them and securely destroy any other electronic or paper copies of the data.

Poll card delivery

4.41 You must send out poll cards as soon as practicable after the publication of the notice of election.¹⁵⁶ Where poll cards are combined, they can only be issued once the notice of election for all elections has been published.



This does not apply to parish council elections. The parish council can, however, request that you issue poll cards. Any such request must, by law, be made not later than 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll.¹⁵⁷ You should liaise with the parish clerk at an early stage to obtain early confirmation of the parish council’s decision on the issue of poll cards to allow you to finalise the design of any combined poll cards you may be issuing and issue these soon after the publication of notice of election.

It is not unusual for a parish council election to be uncontested. While not printing poll cards where you might expect certain seats to be uncontested and candidates elected unopposed is a potential means of saving costs, poll cards tell people about the elections and may encourage their involvement and can often prompt them to update their registration details. If the parish election is likely to be uncontested you could, for example, include a line on the poll card that alerts the elector to a parish election in their area should the election be contested.

It is important in all cases to get poll cards to electors as early as possible and it is therefore for you as Returning Officer to make an assessment of the optimum distribution date for poll cards in each electoral area. In any cases where this does not take place until after nominations have closed, you should consider how you will mitigate the risk of poll cards only being received by electors close to, or potentially after, the registration deadline.

4.42 In order to ensure that voters receive the information they need and within time for them to cast their vote you should ensure that poll cards can be received by voters as soon as possible, so that they have the maximum amount of time to change their registration details or apply for an absent vote.

4.43 You will need to make an assessment of the optimum distribution date for poll cards and should focus on when poll cards can be expected to be received by electors.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure that poll cards can be received by voters as soon as possible so that they have the maximum amount of time to act on the information. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered, you will need to set out information on the method for delivery of poll cards, including an estimation of when poll cards will be delivered.

4.44 Poll cards may be delivered by hand, by post, or by some other method determined by you as the most appropriate.¹⁵⁸

Delivery by hand

4.45 If you decide to deliver poll cards by hand you should plan for how this will work in practice. You should appoint sufficient staff to ensure that poll cards can be received by voters as soon as possible to maximise the time they have to change their registration details or apply for an absent vote. You should clearly set out in your instructions the last day by which you would expect all poll cards to have been delivered.

4.46 You should also have in place a mechanism for monitoring delivery, with a view to ensuring that poll cards have been delivered across the whole of the local authority area and to agreed timeframes. This may include requiring delivery staff to fill in log sheets and having supervisors carry out spot-checks.

Delivery by post

4.47 You may use Royal Mail or any other commercial delivery firm for the delivery of poll cards. If you are delivering poll cards by post, you should liaise with your postal services provider to agree timescales for delivery and obtain any proof of postage that the firm provides.

4.48 You should also have in place a mechanism for monitoring the delivery of poll cards, with a view to ensuring that they have been delivered across the whole of the local authority area and to agreed timeframes. If possible, you should have arrangements in place to track deliveries in order to assist with responding to any enquiries from electors.

4.49 Your contingency planning should address how you would issue any poll cards in the event that Royal Mail or the commercial delivery firm you have contracted are unable to deliver the poll cards, for example, due to industrial action.

4.50 A poll card must be sent to the elector's qualifying address or, in the case of a proxy, to the proxy's address as shown in the list of proxies.

4.51 An anonymous elector's poll card must be sent in a covering envelope to the elector's qualifying address or, where a different address has been specified on their registration application, the poll card must be sent to that other address.¹⁵⁹

Production of ballot papers

4.52 As local government Returning Officer, you are responsible for printing ballot papers for the local government elections.

4.53 As LRO, you are responsible for printing the PCC ballot papers for your voting area unless the PARO gives you notice that they will take on this responsibility.¹⁶⁰ You should liaise with the PARO on the production of the PCC election ballot papers at an early stage.

4.54 The form of the ballot papers is prescribed in the relevant election rules and you must follow this precisely. Ballot papers for postal voters and for polling station use for each election must be the same in form, except that the official mark may be different if desired.

4.55 Although the final content of the ballot papers cannot be confirmed until nominations have closed, you will need to have clarity about the following elements of the ballot papers at an early stage:

- colour of the ballot papers
- the 'official mark'
- ballot paper numbers
- unique identifying mark

Ballot paper colour

4.56 The colour of the ballot papers is not prescribed, but the PARO may direct you to use a particular colour for the PCC election ballot paper. The colour of the ballot papers at the local government elections must be different to the colour of the ballot paper at the PCC election.

4.57 Tendered ballot papers must be a different colour to the ordinary ballot papers.¹⁶¹

4.58 In deciding on the ballot paper colours you should take into account accessibility issues relating to colour and contrast. Section 6 of the

Commission's [Making your mark](#) good practice design guidance contains advice on choosing ballot paper colours.

The 'official mark'

4.59 An appropriate security mark – the 'official mark' – must be added to the ballot paper. The mark should be distinctive and does not have to be a perforation added at the time of issue of the ballot paper, although stamping instruments may still be used to create a perforating official mark. It could be a printed emblem or mark or a special printing device such as a watermark. It should be capable of being seen on the front of the ballot paper so that it can be seen without having to turn the ballot paper over.

4.60 In relation to the PCC ballot papers, the PARO may advise or direct you to use a particular official mark, or require that it contain specific features.

4.61 The official mark¹⁶² can be the same for all ballot papers at an election or different official marks can be used for different purposes at the same election. For example one for postal votes and another for polling station ballot papers. The official mark used on the ballot papers for the local elections cannot be re-used for five years at a local government election to the same local government area. The official mark used for the PCC ballot papers cannot be re-used for five years for elections to the same police area.

Neighbourhood planning referendums

Ballot papers at a neighbourhood planning referendum must also include an official mark, but there are no restrictions in law on re-using the same official mark at subsequent referendums.¹⁶³

Ballot paper numbers and the unique identifying mark

4.62 Ballot paper numbers should run consecutively, but do not have to start at '1'.

4.63 The unique identifying mark can be letters and numbers and could be a repeat of the ballot paper number with the addition of a prefix or a suffix. Also, a unique identifying mark can be, but does not have to be, a barcode. It is not the same as the official mark.

4.64 In relation to the PCC ballot papers the PARO may advise or direct you on the form of the unique identifying mark.

4.65 The unique identifying mark:¹⁶⁴

- should be unique for each ballot paper
- can be re-used at the next poll
- must be printed on the back of the ballot paper

Candidate details

4.66 For each election, candidates must appear on the ballot paper in the order that they are listed on the statement of persons nominated and their names and relevant details must be printed in accordance with the relevant directions for printing¹⁶⁵. The PARO will be able to confirm the candidate details which are to appear on the ballot paper for the PCC election after the close of nominations.

4.67 In all cases, you should use the maximum possible sizes of font. To ensure consistency, the same font size should be used for each candidate for each equivalent line.

4.68 You may be provided with a high-resolution copy of the emblem for use in the printing of ballot papers, or you may need to download the emblem from the Commission's website. You should ensure that whatever copy is used is in the same form as the registered emblem.

4.69 The maximum size of an emblem on the ballot paper is two centimetres square. When adding a party emblem to a ballot paper, the shape of the emblem should not be altered. You should ensure that the emblem is in the same form as the registered emblem – for example, do not stretch emblems into square shapes if they are not registered as square images on our website, as this would have the effect of altering their appearance

Form of the reverse of the ballot paper

4.70 The form of the reverse of the ballot paper is prescribed and you must ensure that the required information is included on the ballot paper reverse in the specified format. There is no provision to put any hatching or other marks on the back of the ballot paper.¹⁶⁶

Printing of ballot papers

4.71 The ballot papers must, by law, be printed in accordance with the directions for printing in the appendix to the relevant election rules.¹⁶⁷ You should ensure that you check with your print supplier at an early stage to establish the maximum size of ballot papers that they can print and, if necessary, have contingency arrangements in place in the event that larger ballot papers are required.

Mayoral election

At a mayoral election, you must ensure the ballot paper is in the form in the appendix of the mayoral election rules. Different rules apply for the ballot paper design for polls with two candidates and polls with three or more candidates.¹⁶⁸

4.72 The printing of ballot papers should commence as soon as possible after the deadline for withdrawals has passed and final proofs have been signed off

and, in relation to the PCC election, be carried out in accordance with any advice or direction issued by the PARO.

4.73 You should have robust proof-checking processes in place, as well as arrangements to check the ballot papers whilst being printed, which will highlight if any of the signed-off proofs have been inadvertently altered.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure you have robust processes in place for ensuring that there are no errors on the ballot papers. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered, you will need to have in place a process for proof-checking ballot papers, as well as arrangements to check the ballot papers whilst being printed, which will highlight if any of the signed-off proofs have been inadvertently altered.

4.74 When proof-checking ballot papers, you should check that:

- every candidate is included on the ballot paper
- every detail on the ballot paper is spelt correctly
- every emblem that has been validly requested has been included beside the correct candidate and matches the party's entry in the Commission's register
- all candidate descriptions have been printed in the line for the correct candidate
- the voting instructions at the top of the ballot paper match the legislative requirements
- the ballot papers have been cut to the correct size

4.75 Once you have received the printed ballot papers, you should carry out a final check before any ballot papers are issued either at a postal vote issuing session or supplied to a polling station. This should be done by checking at least the first and last ballot paper in every book and by checking that the ballot paper numbers in each book or packet run sequentially.



General guidance on the management of contractors and suppliers and on monitoring their work can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

4.76 Careful consideration needs to be given to the number of ballot papers that will need to be printed to allow you to allocate a sufficient number of ballot papers to polling stations and issue postal ballot packs. You should, as a minimum, base your print-run on 100% turnout of eligible electors. There are significant risks attached to printing ballot papers based on lower turnout levels. For example, if you start running out of ballot papers on polling day it will be more difficult at that stage to print additional ballot papers and send these to the affected polling stations in a timely manner.

4.77 If you decide for any reason not to print, as a minimum, ballot papers based on 100% turnout of eligible electorate, you should carefully assess the risks.

4.78 As part of your risk assessment you should consider:

- the particular context of these polls
- any particular local circumstances
- projected turnout – taking into account the potential for late engagement and interest in the elections. As a minimum you should assume that the turnout will be not less than the turnout at the last equivalent polls
- any local or national issues which may affect turnout
- whether having a stock of additional ballot papers ready for rapid delivery to polling stations is preferable, in terms of your ability to respond to additional demand, and more cost effective than printing ballot papers on polling day

4.79 You should also take steps to ensure that additional ballot papers can be printed at short notice if required and decide how polling station staff would be briefed should this situation occur. Guidance on the allocation of ballot papers to polling stations can be found in Chapter 5.

Ballot paper security

4.80 Once the official mark is printed on your ballot papers, they are effectively 'live'. Regardless of whether you have outsourced your printing or are printing in-house, in order to ensure that voters can have confidence in the process, you should ensure the security of ballot papers during production and storage. Your security arrangements should prevent unauthorised access to or use of the ballot papers during all stages of the production process and storage between printing and the poll.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in performance standard 1, you will need to maintain the secure storage of ballot papers at all times. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered, you will need to have in place arrangements for securely storing ballot papers that prevent unauthorised access to or use of the ballot papers during all stages of the production process and storage between printing and the poll.

5 Polling station voting

5.1 We have produced a [polling station handbook](#) which covers in detail the voting procedures and what to expect on polling day.

5.2 The guidance contained in the polling station handbook has not been reproduced here. Instead, this part of our guidance focuses on the preparations you will need to make in advance of polling day.

Close of poll

5.3 Voters who at 10pm are in their polling station, or in a queue outside their polling station, for the purpose of voting, may apply for ballot papers.¹⁶⁹

5.4 Good planning and flexible staffing should minimise the risk of there being queues at polling stations. As part of your planning you should consider where queues may arise and ensure that you have arrangements in place to be able to respond in the event of queues developing. You should ensure that polling station staff are monitoring turnout throughout the day and providing progress reports to polling station inspectors, and that you are kept informed if there is any intelligence that indicates a risk of there being a queue at close of poll at any polling station. However, you still need to be prepared to deal with any queues should they arise. You should also consider involving your police SPOC in planning arrangements to deal with possible queues at the close of poll, so they can assist you with queue management if necessary.



Further guidance on staffing arrangements at polling stations and relevant training of staff so they can carry out each other's roles in as far as the law permits can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

5.5 The Commission's polling station handbook will set out in detail the processes to be followed at the close of poll, including how to deal with voters held in a queue at 10pm.

'Selfies' in polling stations

5.6 The law relating to obtaining information in polling stations and disclosing such information is complex. Given the risk that someone taking a photo inside a polling station may be in breach of the law, whether intentionally or not, our advice is that you should not allow photos to be taken inside polling stations.

5.7 You should ensure that all polling station staff are aware of this guidance. You might also want to consider displaying a notice inside polling stations to make clear that photography of any kind (including photos taken on mobile phones) is not permitted. You may also want to consider whether you

will allow the use of mobile phones at polling stations and whether to have signs explicitly prohibiting the use of mobile phones inside polling stations.

Setting up polling stations



Guidance on the identification of suitable polling stations can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

5.8 You should take all necessary steps to ensure that polling stations are laid out with the voter in mind. In particular, the needs of voters with a range of disabilities should be taken into account. The positioning of all of the required furniture and equipment, as well as where all of the notices should be displayed, should also be considered, along with the placement of signage within the polling station and external signage.

5.9 You should develop plans for the layout of each of your polling stations which can be used to assist those setting up the polling stations. You should consider voter throughput and flow, including how the voter will move through the voting process from entering to exiting the polling station.

5.10 Whoever is in charge of setting up polling stations should be instructed on how to do so and what the layout should be capable of achieving.

5.11 If polling station staff are not expected to set up polling stations, they should be instructed to check that the polling station has been set up properly, and should have reference to any layout plans you have produced and the polling station set-up checklist in the Commission's polling station handbook when doing so. The polling station handbook also covers the positioning of equipment and display of notices, and provides examples of layouts for both a room where there is one polling station and a room where there is more than one polling station.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure access needs are taken into account when planning for and setting up polling stations and that polling station staff are trained to set-up polling stations in such a way that takes account of voter needs. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered, you will need to have made an assessment regarding access needs, identifying any problems and actions taken to remedy these, and provide guidance/training to polling station staff.



Further guidance on training polling station staff can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

5.12 Polling station inspector visits can be used to check polling station set-up and to ensure that all notices remain properly displayed throughout polling day.



Further details on the role of polling station inspectors can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

Polling station equipment and materials

5.13 You must provide polling stations with certain materials:¹⁷⁰

- ballot box(es)
- ballot papers (including tendered ballot papers)
- materials to enable voters to mark their ballot papers (in practice, pencils or pens - you may wish to provide a string to attach pencils/pens to the polling booths)
- relevant part of the register
- absent voters lists – postal voters', proxy voters' and postal proxies lists
- form to record the details of electors who have been issued ballot papers after the correction of a clerical error (which may be appended to the polling station register)
- corresponding number list
- large-print version of the ballot papers
- enlarged hand-held sample copy of the ballot papers
- voting devices for use by blind or partially sighted voters
- ballot paper accounts
- declaration by companions of voters with disabilities
- list of tendered votes
- list of votes marked by the Presiding Officer
- statement of number of votes marked by the Presiding Officer
- list of voters with disabilities assisted by companions
- Guidance for voters ('How to vote at these elections') notice (for display both inside and outside the polling station)
- Instructions for voters notice (to be displayed inside the polling booth)
- polling screens
- packets, with seals, in which to place the items to be returned to you, such as postal ballot papers returned to the polling station, and for packaging the election documentation at the close of poll

5.14 In addition, you should provide:

- a copy of the requirements as to secrecy
- envelopes, with seals, in which to place any ballot papers that have been issued but which the elector has not placed in the ballot box

- form or list to record electors marked as postal voters but who claim not to have applied for one
- notepaper for use by polling station staff
- stationery items as required, e.g. paper clips, drawing pins, adhesive tack, adhesive tape
- plastic sacks for returning stationery and equipment to the verification venue
- envelopes for making up assorted packets

5.15 You should check that all polling station equipment is fit for purpose and that you have a sufficient quantity, particularly in the event of a high turnout.

5.16 For example, you will need to consider whether to use a single ballot box for the combined polls or separate ballot boxes for each poll. If using a single ballot box for the combined polls you will need to consider providing additional boxes to Presiding Officers as one box may not be sufficient should there be a high turnout. All ballot boxes provided for use in polling stations must be sealed by polling station staff at the start of the poll.



For further guidance on the use of a single ballot box or separate ballot boxes at combined polls, see our [verification and count resource](#).

5.17 You should have prepared your polling station equipment and materials in good time before polling day, for either delivery to polling stations or collection by Presiding Officers.

5.18 As part of your evaluation of the suitability of your polling stations you will already have considered accessibility issues both inside and outside of each of your polling stations. You should ensure that any additional equipment you have identified as required to make the polling station accessible is delivered and set up in good time for the opening of the poll.

5.19 Where a polling station has an induction loop installed, it should be used wherever possible to support the accessibility of the electoral process to voters with hearing loss. Polling station staff would need to be trained on how to use these at the briefing session.

5.20 You must provide a copy of the [secretary requirements](#) for polling station staff.¹⁷¹

Mayoral referendums

We have also published polling station [secretary requirements for mayoral referendums](#).

Allocation of ballot papers

5.21 You must provide each polling station with such number of ballot papers as, in your opinion, may be necessary. If you are not allocating ballot papers for 100% of electors entitled to vote in person at the polling stations careful consideration needs to be given to the number that will be required in each case.¹⁷²

5.22 As part of your consideration, you should consider expected turnout levels. You should assume that the turnout will be not less than the turnout at the last equivalent poll, and you should take into account the potential for late engagement and interest in the election, and any local or national issues which may affect turnout.

5.23 If you decide for any reason not to allocate ballot papers to polling stations based on 100% turnout of eligible electorate, you should have plans in place to ensure that additional ballot papers can be provided to any polling station that may require them in a timely manner and give clear advice to Presiding Officers about how to complete the ballot paper accounts to take account of the additional allocation.

5.24 When allocating ballot papers to polling stations, ensure that the numbers on the ballot papers allocated to each polling station run consecutively in order to avoid any problems with completing the corresponding number list or ballot paper account.

5.25 Tendered ballot papers must also be supplied to Presiding Officers. Tendered ballot papers should be supplied to polling stations in a sealed envelope with instructions stating that the envelope should be opened and the ballot papers within it issued only in prescribed circumstances, and a brief description of those circumstances should also be provided. This can help to avoid tendered ballot papers being issued in error.

5.26 You should take all necessary steps to ensure that all polling station staff understand that there are limited circumstances in which tendered ballot papers can be issued, and are made aware of what these circumstances are and what processes they will be required to follow for issuing them. The circumstances under which tendered ballot papers can be issued and the processes for doing so are covered in the [Commission's polling station handbook](#).



Further guidance on training polling station staff can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

Polling station registers and absent voting lists

5.27 You must provide each Presiding Officer with the appropriate part of the register for their polling station and appropriate absent voting lists.¹⁷³ Polling station staff should have been trained on the various franchise markers that will appear on the register.

5.28 Polling station registers can be printed once the final election notice of alteration has been published, five working days before polling day (27 April 2016).

5.29 Procedures should be put in place to deal with any necessary amendments to polling station registers and proxy lists after that time resulting from alterations as a result of correcting clerical errors or court decisions on registration appeals and the granting of emergency proxy applications.

5.30 Whether such determinations are made before polling day or on polling day itself, you should have in place a method for communicating the relevant information to Presiding Officers, which may be done orally or in writing.

5.31 Where a clerical error has been rectified and the relevant elector arrives at the polling station and applies for ballot papers, the Presiding Officer must issue ballot papers in the usual manner. The Presiding Officer must also make a written record of the elector to whom ballot papers have been issued following an alteration to the register due to a clerical error.¹⁷⁴ This record should include the elector's name and elector number. To assist Presiding Officers, you should attach an additional sheet to the polling station registers to allow them to record any such amendments.

5.32 Similar processes should also be developed to communicate additions to the proxy voters' list as a result of emergency proxy applications.

5.33 Where a person makes a complaint to polling station staff that suggests that they should be on the electoral register, the Presiding Officer should communicate that representation to the ERO as soon as is practicable. For this to work effectively there will need to be suitable communication systems in place between Presiding Officers and the ERO.

Corresponding number lists

5.34 There are two types of corresponding number list: one list, which is the list to be used at postal vote issuing sessions, contains the number and unique identifying mark of every ballot paper produced, as well as the elector numbers of postal voters; and another list, which is the one to be used in polling stations, contains the ballot paper numbers and a column to add the elector numbers of voters to whom those ballot papers are issued.

5.35 You must prepare and provide a combined corresponding number list for each polling station.¹⁷⁵

5.36 If the issue of postal votes has been combined, a combined corresponding number list must also be used at the issue of postal votes.¹⁷⁶



Further details on the issue of postal votes can be found in [Part D: Absent Voting](#).

5.37 The corresponding number lists are prescribed in the appendix to the election rules.¹⁷⁷

5.38 However, forms ‘to like effect’ can be used. You will need to give consideration as to how you will produce the combined corresponding number lists for use at combined polls in practice. One possible solution could be to use a separate sheet of paper for each poll, but which are then joined together in some way (for example, by staple) at the end of the process.

Packets for postal ballot papers delivered to polling stations

5.39 Postal voters can return their postal vote by hand to any polling station in their electoral area.¹⁷⁸

5.40 Where the issue of postal ballot papers has been combined, postal votes may only be returned to that part of the electoral area that is common to all of the combined polls in respect of which postal ballot papers have been issued.

5.41 Polling station staff should be appropriately briefed to identify which postal votes can be returned to their polling station.



Further details on the training of polling station staff can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

5.42 You should provide polling stations with packets for received postal votes. The number and style of packets should, as a minimum, be based on returns at the last equivalent polls, taking into account the potential for late engagement and interest in the election, and any local or national issues which may affect turnout. Records of all such packets should be kept so that each one can be accounted for. The packets should be clearly labelled as containing postal votes. The labels should include the name of the polling station and polling station identifier. You should ensure that the packets are capable of being securely sealed. Polling agents are entitled to attach their seal to sealed packets before they are removed from the polling station and must therefore be permitted to do so.

5.43 You should emphasise to Presiding Officers the importance of maintaining the security of postal votes returned to polling stations by instructing them to immediately place any returned postal votes in the packets provided and to ensure that the packets are stored securely throughout the day.

5.44 You should arrange for postal votes to be collected from polling stations throughout the day as this will help to reduce the number that will have to be dealt with after the close of poll. Polling station inspectors can perform this duty. You should ensure that processes are in place to maintain a clear audit trail and to ensure the security of collected postal vote packets while in transit.

Polling station log

5.45 You should prepare a polling station log for polling station staff to use to record any problems or anomalies. In particular, polling station staff should be advised to use this log to record anything that may help to explain any apparent issues with the ballot paper accounts at the verification – for example, if a voter has been seen leaving the polling station with a ballot paper. You should consider instructing Presiding Officers to keep the log and ballot paper accounts together when delivering the ballot papers to the count.

Polling station notices

5.46 You are required to produce the ‘Guidance for voters’ notice and the ‘Instructions for voters’ notice. The contents and display of the ‘Guidance for voters’ notice and the ‘Instructions for voters’ notice are prescribed in legislation. You will need to ensure that the notices you provide for each polling station include the relevant instructions for all polls that electors at that polling station are voting in.

5.47 The ‘Guidance for voters’ notice is required by law to be printed in conspicuous characters and exhibited inside and outside of the polling station. The ‘Instructions for voters’ notice is required by law to be exhibited in every polling booth.¹⁷⁹

¹ Representation of the People (Combination of Polls)(England and Wales) Regulations 2004 (SI 2004/294) Reg 4

² Police and Crime Commissioner Elections Order 2012 (SI 2012/1917) Sch 3 Rule 4

³ Local Authorities (Mayoral Elections)(England and Wales) Regulations 2007 Sch 1 Rule 10 (SI 2007/1024)

⁴ Representation of the People Act 1983 s 76(2)(b) (RPA 1983) and Art 35 SI 2012/1917

⁵ RPA 1983 s76

⁶ RPA 1983 s76

⁷ RPA 1983 s13AB

⁸ Local Elections (Principal Areas)(England and Wales) Rules 2006 (SI 2006/3304) Sch 3 Rules 4 and 7

-
- ⁹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 4(1)
¹⁰ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 7(b)
¹¹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 5(1)
¹² SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 16(3)
¹³ SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 9
¹⁴ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 6(4)(b)
¹⁵ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 3(1)
¹⁶ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 1
¹⁷ SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 3
¹⁸ SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 10
¹⁹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 3(1)
²⁰ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 4(1)
²¹ SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 6(2)
²² SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 4(1)
²³ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 4(1)
²⁴ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rules 5 and 16
²⁵ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 5(1)
²⁶ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 10
²⁷ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 9(7)
²⁸ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 6(5)
²⁹ RPA 1983 s65A and s168 and Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 s85
³⁰ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 4(2)
³¹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 8 and 9
³² SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 4(3) and Rule 9
³³ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 4(3)
³⁴ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 9(4)
³⁵ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 8(8)
³⁶ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 8(2)
³⁷ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 9,16 and 21
³⁸ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 9(5)
³⁹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 4(2)
⁴⁰ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 6(1)
⁴¹ SI 2006/3305 Sch 3 Rule 6
⁴² SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 8(1)
⁴³ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 6(7)
⁴⁴ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 6(5)
⁴⁵ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 6(5)
⁴⁶ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 6(6)
⁴⁷ SI 2006/3305 Sch 3 Rule 6(5)
⁴⁸ SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 8
⁴⁹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 6(5) and (6)
⁵⁰ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 6(7)
⁵¹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 6(2) and 8(2)
⁵² SI 2006/3305 Sch 3 Rule 6(2)
⁵³ SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 8(2)
⁵⁴ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 5
⁵⁵ PPERA s28A
⁵⁶ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 5(2)
⁵⁷ PPERA s29
⁵⁸ PPERA 2000 s30(6A)
⁵⁹ PPERA 2000 s30 and SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 5
⁶⁰ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 8(4)
⁶¹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 2 4(4) and 5(2)
⁶² SI 2006/3305 Sch 3 Rules 4 and 5
⁶³ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 5
⁶⁴ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 5(3)

-
- 65 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 16(3)
66 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 16
67 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 16(3)
68 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 7
69 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 7(a)
70 SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 10
71 SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 55
72 SI 2007/1024 Art 6 and Sch 4
73 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 8(3)
74 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 8(2)
75 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 8(4)
76 SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 10
77 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 8(8)
78 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 8(5)
79 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 8(6)
80 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 10(1)
81 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 10(4)
82 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 11
83 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 13(1)
84 SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 55
85 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 12
86 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 50(2)
87 SI 2006/3305 Sch 3 Rule 50
88 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 8
89 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rules 14 and 55
90 SI 2006/3305 Sch 3 Rule 14(2)
91 RPA 1985 s21
92 RPA 1985 s21(2) and RPA 1983 s39
93 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 55
94 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 55
95 SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 55
96 RPA 1983 s39(1) and (5)
97 SI 2012/1917, Sch 3, Rule 69
98 RPA 1983 s67(1)
99 RPA 1983 s70
100 RPA 1983 s67 and s70
101 RPA 1983 s71
102 RPA 1983 s69
103 RPA 1983 s70(4)
104 RPA 1983 s69
105 RPA 1983 s67
106 SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 29
107 SI 2012/2031 Sch 5 Rules 19 and 36
108 SI 2012/2031 Sch 5 Rule 19 and SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 29
109 RPA 1983 s66
110 SI 2001/341 Art 68 and 69
111 SI 2012/1917 Sch 2 Rule 44 and SI 2001/341 Art 80
112 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 27(5)
113 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 27(3)
114 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 27(3)
115 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 30(3)
116 SI 2012/2031 Sch 5 Rule 19
117 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 27(5)
118 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 44; SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 51
119 SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 51(3)(b)
120 SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 27(4)
121 SI 2012/1917 Art 26

-
- ¹²² SI 2012/1917 Art. 27
¹²³ SI 2012/1917 Art. 27(5)
¹²⁴ SI 2012/1917 Sch 2 Rule 33 and Sch 3 Rule 31
¹²⁵ SI 2012/1917 Sch 2 Rule 34 and Sch 3 Rule 32
¹²⁶ SI 2012/1917 Sch 2 Rule 44
¹²⁷ SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 31
¹²⁸ SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 31(4)
¹²⁹ SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 31(5)
¹³⁰ SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 31(7)
¹³¹ SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 51
¹³² SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 60
¹³³ SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 31(6)
¹³⁴ SI 2012/1917 Sch.3 para 31.
¹³⁵ RPA 1983 s200(1A)
¹³⁶ RPA 1983 s199B(2)
¹³⁷ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 1
¹³⁸ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 3
¹³⁹ SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 5
¹⁴⁰ SI 2012/323 Sch 5 Rule 3
¹⁴¹ SI 2012/2031 Sch 5 Rule 3
¹⁴² SI 2012/2031 Sch 5 Rule 5
¹⁴³ SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rules 1 and 4
¹⁴⁴ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 9
¹⁴⁵ SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 1
¹⁴⁶ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 1 and Rule 21
¹⁴⁷ SI 2012/323 Sch 5 Rule 12
¹⁴⁸ SI 2012/2031 Sch 5 Rule 13
¹⁴⁹ SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 1
¹⁵⁰ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 21(3) and (4)
¹⁵¹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 21(4); SI 2012/2031 Sch 5 Rule 13; 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 23
¹⁵² SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 21(3)
¹⁵³ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 25
¹⁵⁴ SI 2012/323 Sch 5 Rule 16(6); SI 2012/2031 Sch 5 Rule 17(6); SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 27(6)
¹⁵⁵ RPA 1983 s13AB and s13B
¹⁵⁶ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 25(1)
¹⁵⁷ SI 2006/3305 Sch 3 Rule 25(1)
¹⁵⁸ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 25
¹⁵⁹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 25(4)
¹⁶⁰ SI 2012/1918 Art 3(4)
¹⁶¹ SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 43
¹⁶² SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 18; SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 21
¹⁶³ SI 2012/323 Sch 5 Rule 9
¹⁶⁴ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 16(2)(c); SI 2012/1917; Sch 3 Rule 19(3)(c)
¹⁶⁵ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 16; SI 2012/1917; Sch 3 Rule 19
¹⁶⁶ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 16(2); SI 2012/1917; Sch 3 Rule 19(1)
¹⁶⁷ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 16(2); SI 2012/1917; Sch 3 Rule 19(1)
¹⁶⁸ SI 2007/1024 Sch 3 Rule 18(3)
¹⁶⁹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 35(7); SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 39(7)
¹⁷⁰ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 26
¹⁷¹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 28
¹⁷² SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 26(1)
¹⁷³ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 26(4); SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 29(3)
¹⁷⁴ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 35(3); SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 39(4)
¹⁷⁵ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 17; SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 20
¹⁷⁶ SI 2001/341 Art 65; SI 2012/1917 Sch 2 Rule 29
¹⁷⁷ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 17; SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 20

¹⁷⁸ SI 2001/341 Art 79

¹⁷⁹ SI 2006/3304 Sch 3 Rule 26; SI 2012/1917 Sch 3 Rule 29