

# Candidates and Agents Briefing

Local Government & Community / Town Council Elections on  
5 May 2022

Briefing Date - 7 April 2022

Huw Evans – Head of Democratic Services

# The Electoral Commission

## Who's who

- The Returning Officer is the person responsible for running the elections. The Returning Officer is Phil Roberts.
- The Electoral Registration Officer is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters' lists. The Electoral Registration Officer is Phil Roberts.
- Contact details are provided later

## Who's who

- **Phil Roberts**  
Returning Officer (RO) &  
Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)
- **Huw Evans**  
Head of Democratic Services &  
Deputy Returning Officer (DRO)
- **Alison O'Hara**  
Electoral Services Manager &  
Deputy Returning Officer (DRO)
- **Martin Nicholls**  
Shadowing Returning Officer &
- Interim Chief Executive

# The Electoral Commission

## Election timetable

Deadline for applications to Register to Vote	23.59 - 14/04/2022
Deadline for new Postal Vote Applications / Changes to Existing Postal or Proxy Vote Applications	17.00 - 19/04/2022
Postal Vote Issuing	16–22/04/2022
Publication of Notice of Poll / Situation of Polling Stations	26/04/2022
Deadline for Applications for new Proxy Votes	17.00 - 26/04/2022
Appointment of Counting and Polling Agents	27/04/2022
Polling Day	07.00-22.00 - 05/05/2022

## Election timetable (cont'd)

Deadline to apply to vote by proxy on grounds of medical emergency or if unexpectedly called away because of employment or service	17.00 – 05/05/2022
Replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes ends	17.00 – 05/05/2022
Alterations to register to correct clerical error	21.00 – 05/05/2022
Return of Election Expenses: Community / Town Council Swansea Council Note: If not returned, all decisions will be invalid	<b>6 June 2022</b> <b>10 June 2022</b>

Use slide only if  
relevant

# The Electoral Commission

## Staying safe – Covid considerations

General public health principles that everyone should follow in all aspects of daily life, including participating in elections:

- Keep your distance where possible
- Clean hands regularly
- Avoid touching your face
- Wear a face covering where necessary
- No-one should attend any electoral events if they are unwell, symptomatic with COVID-19, or are legally required to self-isolate

- Other agents • Other agents can be appointed to attend postal vote openings, polling stations and the count on your behalf:
- You must give notice in writing of any people appointed as polling and counting agents by **27 April 2022**.
  - The appointment of postal voting agents attending a particular opening session must be made before the start of the session. We will give 48 hours' notice.

Access to  
electoral  
register/absent  
voting lists

- Access by candidates – once you **officially** become a candidate.
- Make **written** request to the ERO – forms are available from the office / are included in your nomination pack.



Access to  
electoral  
register /  
absent voting  
lists

- Only use data for permitted purposes
  - to complete the nomination form
  - to help you campaign
  - to check that donations/loans are permissible

- Registration
- As a candidate you are uniquely placed to encourage people to register to vote.
  - You should encourage people to register as soon as possible.
  - The deadline for applying for the election is **23.59 - 14/04/2022**.
  - Individuals can apply to register online at **<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>**. It only takes a few minutes.

## Registration

- When discussing registering to vote with individuals, you will need to make them aware that they will need to provide:
  - their National Insurance number
  - date of birth and address
- People who do not have / cannot retrieve their National Insurance number can still register, but they may need to provide further information. If so, they will be contacted by the ERO.

## Absent voting

- If you are encouraging people who don't have a postal (or proxy) vote to apply for one, make sure you explain that they will only qualify for one in time for the elections if they are (or will be) registered in time to vote at the elections.

## Campaigning dos and don'ts

- Do use imprints on all your campaign material, including websites.
- Do comply with planning rules relating to advertising hoardings and large banners.
- Do make sure outdoor posters are removed 2 weeks after the election.
- Do not produce material that looks like a poll card.
- Do not pay people to display your adverts (unless they display adverts as part of their normal business).

## Code of conduct for campaigners

- Campaigners are an essential element of a healthy democracy, but their activities should not bring into question the integrity of the electoral process.
- Electoral registration and absent vote applications:
  - Ensure forms fully conform to the requirements of electoral law – we would prefer to have a list from you so that Electoral Services can send personalised forms
  - Include the ERO's address for the return of forms
  - Ensure unaltered applications are sent to ERO within **two working days**.
  - Make sure electors understand implications of applying for an absent vote.
  - Do not encourage postal ballot pack redirection.
  - Do not encourage electors to appoint a campaigner as proxy.

## Code of conduct for campaigners

- Postal ballot packs:
  - Never touch a postal ballot paper
  - Never observe electors completing their postal vote.
  - Never handle or take any completed ballot paper or postal ballot pack from voters
- Campaigning outside polling stations:
  - You are allowed to put your messages to voters on polling day, including public spaces outside polling places.
  - Keep access to polling places and the pavements around polling places clear to allow voters to enter.
  - [Cover standards of behaviour within the vicinity of the polling place on polling day, particularly in light of coronavirus (for example, keeping your distance where possible).]

Use slide only if  
relevant/adapt  
as necessary

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## Polling day

- We have put arrangements in place to ensure that polling stations are safe places to vote
- Most of the measures that will be in place will be familiar to us all from visiting other public places such as shops and banks, for example floor markings to encourage people to keep their distance and the provision of hand sanitiser on entry and exit
- Voters will be encouraged to bring their own pen or pencil for use in polling stations, but pencils will also be made available for anyone who needs one
- Voters should be encouraged to check their poll card before polling day, to see if their polling station has changed since previous elections.



## Polling day

- Polling stations open from 7am to 10pm
- Office open 7am to 10pm for queries or problems relating to the administration of the election
  - for queries relating to election finance issues, contact the Electoral Commission (*contact details shown later*)
- Voters in the polling station or in a queue outside the polling station at 10 pm can apply for a ballot paper
- Postal votes – can be handed into polling stations within Swansea or delivered to the elections office until 10pm.
- A person in a queue at a polling station at 10pm waiting to hand in a postal vote can do so after 10pm.

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## Counting of votes

- We have also made adaptations to the verification and count in light of the public health situation.
- The anticipated duration of the count is likely to be longer than usual because of the impact of measures to ensure the safety of staff and observers.
- Counts will be in Brangwyn Hall & Guildhall on Friday, 6 May 2022.

## Counting of votes

- The count will be held in:
  - Brangwyn Hall & Guildhall, Swansea
- Count centre will open to candidates agents from 8.30am
- Candidates, election agents, counting agents and one other person appointed by the candidate are entitled to attend.
  - limits to counting agents: 1

# Spending issues

## Candidate spending

- Defined as certain expenses ‘used for the purposes of the candidate’s election’ during the regulated period.
- Responsibility of **election agent**
- Limit on expenses:
  - £806 +7pence per elector in ward/division on register in force on date of Notice of Election 18<sup>th</sup> March, thus register of 1<sup>st</sup> March
  - reduced for joint candidates
- Must get and keep receipts (over £20)

# The Electoral Commission

## Candidates' spending returns

- Returns due 35 calendar days after result of election
- Returns made public by **Returning Officer**
- Sample of returns may be reviewed by the **Electoral Commission**
- Failure to submit a spending return is a criminal offence enforceable by police
- No spending will be reimbursed

## WLGA - Fair Campaign Pledge

- Stems from concerns about the risk of increased abuse and intimidation in the run-up to the local elections.
- The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has concerns that code of conduct complaints about Councillors increase significantly in the run-up to elections.
- Serving councillors seeking re-election remain bound by a statutory Code of Conduct, which sets out high standards including treating others with respect and prohibiting bullying behaviour or harassment. Other Candidates are not bound by it.
- The Pledge seeks to create a “level playing field”.

## WLGA - Fair Campaign Pledge

- Candidates are asked:
- Not to encourage abuse or act in a way that causes, excuses, encourages or makes it more likely for others to abuse or attack Councillors for the difficult job they do, in either their role within the chamber, outside the chamber or on social media.  
Treat everyone with courtesy, kindness and respect and, stand 'shoulder to shoulder' to call for an end to abuse, intimidation and harassment of any kind.
- Civility in Public Life programme - Based on positive campaigning and merit, rather than personal attacks and smears against individuals.
- Publicly 'call out' any such inappropriate behaviour and take a zero-tolerance approach to abuse of any kind, and strongly encourage everyone involved in May 2022 Elections to do the same.



## Contacts

- Elections office – 01792 636 123
- [elections@Swansea.gov.uk](mailto:elections@Swansea.gov.uk)
- Highways department –  
[highways@Swansea.gov.uk](mailto:highways@Swansea.gov.uk)
- Electoral Commission contacts  
– 0333 103 1929

# Questions