

Candidates and agents Briefing

Local government elections

Topics

- who's who
- key dates of the election timetable
- qualifications
- disqualifications
- nominations
- agents
- postal votes
- the poll
- counting of votes
- candidate spending
- contacts

The Electoral Commission

Who's who



- **The Returning Officer** is the person responsible for running the elections. The County Returning Officer for Hampshire is John Coughlan CBE.



- The Deputy Returning Officer for Fareham is **Peter Grimwood**.
- **The Electoral Registration Officer** is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters' lists. The Electoral Registration Officer is Peter Grimwood.



- The Head of Democratic Services for Fareham is **Leigh Usher**.
- The Electoral Services Manager for Fareham is **Jane Hardy**.
- Contact details are provided later.

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Election timetable

Publication of Notice of Election	24 th March
Nominations commence	24 th March
Close of nominations	4 th April, 4pm
Notification of appointment of election agents	4 th April, 4pm
Publication of statement of persons nominated	5 th April, 4pm
Deadline for applications to register to vote (if not already registered)	13 th April
Deadline for new postal vote applications and changes to existing postal or proxy vote applications	18 th April, 5pm
Publication of notice of poll/situation of polling stations	25 th April

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Election timetable (cont'd)

Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	25 th April, 5pm
Appointment of counting and polling agents	26 th April
Polling day	4 th May, 7am-10pm
Deadline to apply to vote by proxy on grounds of medical emergency or if unexpectedly called away because of employment or service	4 th May, 5pm
Replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes ends	4 th May, 5pm
Alterations to register to correct clerical error	4 th May, 9pm
Return of election expenses	9 th June

Qualifications

- Candidates must satisfy criteria on the day they are nominated **and** on polling day:
 - be at least 18 years of age
 - be a British, qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or national of an EU member state.
- Also at least one of the following:
 - Registered local government elector for local authority area
 - Occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises in the local authority area during the whole 12 months preceding nomination
 - Principal or only place of work (including unpaid) during last 12 months in local authority area
 - Lived in the local authority area during the last 12 months

Disqualifications

A person **cannot** be a candidate if they:

- are **employed by the local authority** or hold a paid office under the authority (including joint boards or committees). Candidates may be ‘employed by the local authority’ if they work at certain schools, fire services, police or health services
- are subject of a **Bankruptcy Restrictions Order** (or interim restrictions order) in England or Wales
- have been sentenced to a term of **imprisonment** of three months or more (inc. suspended sentence) without option of a fine, during the 5 years before polling day
- are serving a disqualification due to being found guilty of a **corrupt or illegal practice** by an election court
- hold a **politically restricted post**

Submitting nomination papers

- Two documents must be submitted by all candidates by 4th April (4pm):
 - the nomination form
 - the consent to nomination
- Party candidates will also need to submit, by 4th April (4pm):
 - A certificate authorising the use of a party name/ registered description on the ballot paper
 - A written request to use one of the party's emblems on the ballot paper (optional)

Submitting nomination papers

- Take care when completing your nomination papers, as mistakes may invalidate your nomination
- Complete nomination papers early and arrange for us to provide an informal check
- The nomination form and consent to nomination **must be delivered by hand to the Elections team** and cannot be submitted by post, fax, email or other electronic means (do not leave nomination papers at Reception).

Nomination form

- Include your full name & home address
- Optional: use commonly used name box(es) if commonly known by a name other than actual name and wish to use it instead. But you cannot use your first name as a commonly used name to exclude your middle name.
- Description field – 3 options:
 - leave blank
 - Independent
 - party candidates can use party name or description authorised by a certificate issued by or on behalf of the Nominating Officer

Nomination form

- Subscribers: 10 subscribers are required.
- Must sign & print their names. Check details of subscribers against electoral register.
- Only ask subscribers to sign **after** completing the candidate's name, address and description fields on the form.

Consent to nomination form

- Must include:
 - name and address
 - which area standing in
 - confirmation of qualification(s) that apply (at least 1, but select all that apply)
 - date of birth & signature
 - witness' name, address and signature

Certificate of authorisation

- Party candidates must have written permission to use the party name/description from the Nominating Officer (or a person authorised to act on their behalf)
- The certificate may:
 - allow the use of the party name or a particular description
 - allow candidate to choose whether to use the party name or any of the descriptions registered with the Electoral Commission
- Must be submitted by 4th April (4pm)

Emblem request form

- Party candidates can ask for an emblem to be printed on the ballot paper
- Emblem request form must be submitted by 4th April (4pm)
- Party candidates should supply an electronic version of the emblem to the Returning Officer if required

Joint candidates

- Nominated by **more than one party**
- May use registered joint descriptions
 - must be supported by certificate of authorisation **from each party**
- May use one emblem of one of the parties but there are no joint emblems

Election agent

- Responsible for the proper management of your election campaign; particularly its financial management.
- Notification of appointment must reach the DRO by 4th April (4pm). Form is included in nomination pack.
- You will become your own agent by default if none is appointed.

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 Agents** and **Counting Agents** by 26th April.
 - The appointment of **Postal Voting Agents** attending a particular opening session must be made before the start of the session. Postal vote opening sessions are listed in your pack.

Access to electoral register & absent voting lists

- You are entitled to copy of register once you **officially** become a candidate which happens:
 - On 27th March if you/others have declared yourself a candidate before this date
 - Once you or others have declared yourself a candidate on or after 27th March but before 4th April
 - On the date you submit your nomination papers (between 27th March – 4th April).
- You must make a **written** request to the ERO – forms 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 13th April
- 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
 - 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.
 - Do not obstruct, mislead or intimidate voters

The Electoral Commission

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 10pm is entitled to receive a ballot paper.
- Postal votes – can be handed into polling stations within county division 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.

Counting of votes

- The count will be held in:
Ferneham Hall,
Osborn Road,
Fareham,
Hampshire,
PO16 7DB
- Count centre will open to candidates agents from
9:45pm
- Candidates, election agents, counting agents and one
other person appointed by the candidate are entitled to
attend.
 - limits to counting agents: number of count assistants (69)
divided by number of candidates (to be confirmed after close
of nominations)

Spending issues

Candidate spending

- Defined as certain expenses ‘used for the purposes of the candidate’s election’ during the regulated period (begins when you **officially** become a candidate, ends on 4th May).
- Responsibility of **election agent**
- Limit on expenses:
 - £740 + 6 pence per elector in county division on register in force on 27th March (a notice will be published to all candidates and agents on 27th March confirming elector numbers - by e-mail and published on FBC website)
 - reduced for joint candidates
- Must get and keep receipts (over £20)

Candidates' spending returns

- Returns due 35 calendar days after result of election (9th June)
- 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

Checking of nomination papers

- You are encouraged to bring your nomination papers in well before the deadline of 4pm on 4th April for checking.
- Please contact the Elections team to let us know when you are coming in to ensure someone is available to help you. Allow 20 minutes for the appointment.
- If you do not wish to wait whilst your papers are checked you can leave the nomination papers with us – we will contact you immediately if there are any issues that need resolving.
- Any mistakes or problems identified after the deadline cannot be rectified, which may result in your nomination papers being rejected.
- The onus is on you to ensure you allow enough time for nomination papers checks, corrections and timely submission.

Contacts

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Electoral Commission

General enquiries

Tel 0333 103 1928

infoengland@electoralcommission.org.uk

Campaigning, donations and spending

Tel 020 7271 0616

pef@electoralcommission.org.uk

Questions

Thank you

Please ensure you take your candidate's pack with you