

# Part C - Administering the poll

UK Parliamentary general election in  
Great Britain on 7 May 2015: guidance  
for (Acting) 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 recommended 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](mailto:publications@electoralcommission.org.uk)

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>The issue and receipt of the writ .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Engaging with political parties, candidates and agents .....</b>	<b>2</b>
	Briefings.....	2
	Providing information on the election process .....	3
	Providing information on election spending .....	5
	Providing information on accessing the electoral register(s).....	5
	Access needs for candidates.....	6
<b>3</b>	<b>The nomination process .....</b>	<b>7</b>
	Forms for nomination.....	7
	Informal checks.....	7
	Delivery of nomination papers .....	8
	Time of delivery .....	8
	Place of delivery .....	8
	Who can deliver nomination papers?.....	9
	How must nomination papers be submitted?.....	9
	Delivering multiple nomination forms.....	10
	Requirements of nomination.....	12
	Nomination form .....	12
	Home address form .....	18
	Candidate's consent to nomination.....	19
	Deposit .....	20
	Determining nominations.....	21
	Errors in elector numbers .....	22
	Errors of spelling in details of candidates .....	22
	Errors in a home address .....	22
	Timetable for objections.....	23
	Decisions on objections.....	23
	Objections on the grounds that a candidate is imprisoned for a year or more .....	24
	After the close of nominations .....	25
	Return of deposit .....	25
	Uncontested elections .....	25
	Death of a candidate.....	25

Death of an independent candidate .....	25
Death of a party candidate.....	26
Death of the Speaker of the House of Commons .....	26
New election .....	27
<b>4 Agents at the election .....</b>	<b>28</b>
Sub-agents .....	29
The opening of postal votes.....	30
The poll.....	30
The count.....	31
<b>5 Production of notices, poll cards and ballot papers .....</b>	<b>32</b>
Production and publication of notices .....	32
Translation and formats of notices.....	32
Notice of poll.....	34
Notice of the situation of polling stations.....	35
Production of poll cards .....	35
Poll card delivery .....	37
Production of ballot papers .....	38
Ballot paper colour.....	39
The 'official mark' .....	39
Ballot paper numbers and the unique identifying mark.....	39
Candidate details .....	40
Form of the reverse of the ballot paper.....	41
Printing of ballot papers .....	41
Ballot paper security .....	43
<b>6 Polling station voting .....</b>	<b>44</b>
Close of poll.....	44
Setting up polling stations.....	45
Polling station equipment and materials .....	46
Allocation of ballot papers.....	47
Polling station registers and absent voting lists .....	48
Corresponding number lists.....	49
Packets for postal ballot papers delivered to polling stations.....	49
Polling station log.....	50
Polling station notices .....	51

# 1 The issue and receipt of the writ

1.1 A writ requiring the UK Parliamentary election to be run in your constituency will be issued after the dissolution of the UK Parliament.

1.2 The writ will be delivered to the RO unless the RO has appointed you (the (A)RO) or someone else as their deputy. The writ will be sent to the RO by title, rather than by name.

1.3 The Clerk of the Crown maintains a list of ROs to whom the writ will be sent. If you, as (A)RO, have been appointed by the RO to receive the writ, the RO must give notice to the Clerk of the Crown on a [prescribed form](#).

1.4 The writ will usually be delivered by Royal Mail and once it has been issued, your local Royal Mail contact will usually contact the RO or (A)RO to make an appointment for the delivery. It is essential that any changes to the address of the person who will receive the writ are notified to the Clerk of the Crown and the Royal Mail immediately.

1.5 Regardless of who receives the writ, a receipt provided by Royal Mail must be completed. This gives the date on which it is received and the name of the officer accepting it. Copies should be taken of the writ and the original kept secure.

1.6 The date of the receipt of writ affects the UK Parliamentary election timetable. The notice of election in that particular constituency must be published no later than 4pm on the second day following the receipt of the writ (i.e. by the 22<sup>nd</sup> working day before the poll), and the period for delivery of nomination papers will begin from the day after the publication of notice of election.

1.7 We have produced a [timetable](#) with all of the relevant deadlines for the UK Parliamentary election on 7 May 2015.



Information about endorsing and returning the writ after the declaration of the result can be found in [Part F - After the declaration of result](#).

## 2 Engaging with political parties, candidates and agents

2.1 As (Acting) Returning Officer you are responsible for all aspects of the nomination process at the UK Parliamentary election on 7 May 2015.

2.2 You will need to engage with political parties, candidates and agents and your project plan should include details on how you will engage with them and how you will deliver the nominations process.

2.3 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 run for election and they can have confidence that the nominations process is well-managed.

2.4 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 you.



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.

### Briefings

2.5 You should ensure that candidates and election agents 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.

2.6 All briefing sessions should highlight the importance of following the election rules. In particular, you should provide a briefing on the nomination process including deadlines, submission rules, the use of commonly used

names, the completion of nomination papers, the use of party names, descriptions and emblems, and the methods for paying the deposit.

2.7 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 list of candidates standing for election has been confirmed after the close of nominations.

2.8 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.

2.9 A [template presentation for candidates and agents](#) that you could use is available for download from the Commission's website.



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 process

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

2.11 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 – and it will be for the (A)RO in each case to ensure that candidates can easily access the information they need and to do whatever is necessary to facilitate this.

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

2.13 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

2.14 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.

2.15 One set of documents all candidates will need is a nomination pack. You should prepare a nomination pack for any person who expresses an interest in standing for election.

2.16 The nomination pack for candidates should contain:

- a nomination form
- a home address form
- a consent to nomination form
- a form for candidates to give notice of appointment of an election agent
- forms for candidates 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 the candidate of a political party to request the use of an emblem
- details of how the deposit should be paid, including information on acceptable methods of payment
- 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, forms to make such requests with information on where to send these request forms to.
- the relevant electorate figures as set out in paragraph **2.20** below
- any other relevant information



The Commission's guidance for candidates and agents at a UK Parliamentary general election can be found on our website at: [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/uk-parliamentary-general-election-great-britain](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/uk-parliamentary-general-election-great-britain)

2.17 We have also produced a [set of nomination papers](#) that you can include in your nomination packs, which contains the required nomination papers as well as a certificate of authorisation, an emblem request form and an election agent appointment notification form.



## Providing information on election spending

2.18 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.

2.19 You should ensure that candidates and election agents are issued with information on calculating the spending limit (including the electorate figure), spending returns and declarations in order to enable them to meet reporting requirements.

2.20 If you are not also the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) or your constituency crosses local authority boundaries, you should liaise with the relevant ERO(s) so that you are able to provide candidates with an accurate electorate figure that will allow them to calculate their spending limits. It is important that candidates are provided with the correct electorate figures so that they know how much they can spend. This is particularly relevant as recent legislative changes mean that Parliamentary candidates will not be able to spend as much per day in the run-up to the poll (i.e. during the short campaign) as they could in 2010.

2.21 Candidates will need the total number of electors on the UK Parliamentary register(s) for the constituency on the last day for the publication of the notice of election (i.e. on the 22nd working day before the poll), excluding any attainers who will not be 18 years old on or before polling day. For the 7 May 2015 UK Parliamentary election, the figures are those based on the register(s) published on 1 April 2015.

2.22 The Commission has produced guidance for candidates and agents on [spending and donations](#), 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.

## Providing information on accessing the electoral register(s)

2.23 The ERO is required to supply you with such copies of the electoral register as are required for the different aspects of the election.

2.24 If you are not also the ERO or your constituency crosses local authority boundaries, you should liaise with the relevant Electoral Registration Officer(s) so that you obtain any updates to the electoral register(s) in a timely manner.

2.25 The register that will be required by candidates for obtaining the elector numbers of subscribers on nomination forms is the register that is in force on

the last day for the publication of the notice of election. This means that the relevant register will be the register in force on the 22<sup>nd</sup> working day before the poll (i.e. the one published on 1 April 2015).

2.26 If you are not also the ERO you should receive copies from them soon after the publication of that register. You will also receive any further amendments that may be made to that register, including through the election notices of alteration published by the ERO.

2.27 While the legal responsibility for receiving and supplying registers to candidates rests with the ERO for each local authority area, if you are the (A)RO of a constituency which crosses local authority boundaries, you should have in place plans for managing or coordinating requests and supplying copies of the registers to candidates to ensure that all candidates can be supplied with registers in such a way that they have timely and easy access to them.

2.28 For example, you may consider supplying the registers to UK Parliamentary candidates centrally on behalf of all the EROs, and include a request form in the nomination pack that covers all local authority areas that are part of the constituency. The benefit of this approach is that it could operate so that candidates or election agents only need to complete one request form covering all local authority areas and receive their registers from a single place, instead of having to approach each ERO separately with individual requests. You would need to also consider, however, the practicalities of collating the registers and in particular the updates to the register, and discuss and agree with the EROs how the various registers and updates to them could be brought together for subsequent timely supply, including how this would work for both printed and data copies. The registers must be supplied in data form unless a printed copy has been specifically requested.



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.

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

## Access needs for candidates

2.30 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 (or, in Wales, in a language other than English or Welsh).

# 3 The nomination process

3.1 This chapter provides comprehensive guidance on the administration of the nominations process. However, 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](#) in the first instance. Should they have any further concerns, they should be advised to seek their own legal advice.

## Forms for nomination

3.2 A candidate is deemed to be validly nominated only if you have, by 4pm on the 19<sup>th</sup> working day before the poll (by 4pm on 9 April 2015), received a deposit of £500 and the following completed forms:

- the nomination form (as prescribed)
- a home address form
- a consent to nomination

3.3 To stand on behalf of a registered political party, a candidate will also need:

- a certificate of authorisation, authorising the use of the party name or a registered description on the ballot paper
- a written request to use one of the party's emblems

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

3.5 Nomination papers can only be produced in English or, in Wales, in English and/or Welsh, and not in any alternative languages or formats. However, you are required by law to prepare nomination papers for signature if someone requests. This means providing all of the documents required for nomination and completing them with all of the information given to you so that only the required signatures need to be added.

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

## Informal checks

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

3.8 All candidates and agents 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.

3.9 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 their formal submission.

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

## Delivery of nomination papers

### Time of delivery

3.10 Nomination papers can be delivered to you between the hours of 10am and 4pm from the day after publication of notice of election.

3.11 The close of nominations is 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll (4pm on 9 April 2015). This deadline cannot be moved or extended for any reason.

3.12 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.

3.13 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 during the very short period for UK Parliamentary nominations. This could include offering appointments for informal checks and the formal delivery of the nomination papers.

3.14 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 and the deposit have not been delivered by that time, the nomination has not been made which means that you cannot rule the nomination valid or invalid.

### Place of delivery

3.15 The law requires that nomination papers must be delivered to the location specified by you on the notice of election. The location you choose must be:

- in the constituency, or
- in the registration area which includes the constituency, or
- in the case of a county constituency – in a district or a Welsh county or county borough adjoining the constituency or registration area

3.16 The registration area is defined as the area of two or more constituencies which have the same registration officer.

3.17 In Scotland the place must be

- In the constituency, or
- In the local government area (or, if more than one, any of the local government areas) in which the constituency is situated, or
- In any local government area adjoining the local government area (or local government areas) in which the constituency is situated.

3.18 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.

3.19 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.

3.20 You or an appointed deputy must 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?

3.21 Only a limited number of persons may deliver the nomination form and home address form. The nomination and home address form may only be delivered by:

- the candidate
- the proposer or seconder as shown on the nomination form
- the candidate's election agent, provided you have received notification of their appointment. The notice of appointment of the election agent may be delivered at the same time as the nomination and home address form.

3.22 There are no restrictions on who can deliver the consent to nomination, certificate of authorisation and emblem request form.

## How must nomination papers be submitted?

3.23 The nomination form, home address form and consent to nomination must be delivered by hand and cannot be submitted by post, fax, email or

other electronic means. The only exception to this is where a candidate is overseas, in which case their consent to nomination may be sent electronically.

3.24 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 means. 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.

3.25 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.

3.26 Once a nomination paper has been formally delivered, no changes can be subsequently made to it (subject to your power to correct minor errors). 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, the only way this can be done is by withdrawing their candidature and then submitting new nomination papers within the statutory timeframe. Similarly, there is no provision to allow a subscriber to withdraw their signature from a nomination paper once it has been delivered.

## Delivering multiple nomination forms

3.27 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.

3.28 The candidate may, however, request that the proposers, seconders and other subscribers for up to two more valid nomination forms be added to the statement of persons nominated. The statement should therefore have space to enable the names of up to 30 subscribers to be added where requested.

3.29 If more than one nomination form is delivered and one of the nomination papers is invalid, that form is excluded from those 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.

3.30 When an elector subscribes any delivered nomination form, even if it is not the selected nomination form, they are prevented from signing another nomination form and any later delivered nomination bearing their signature as a subscriber is invalid.

## Attendance at the delivery of nomination papers

3.31 Only certain people are entitled to attend the delivery of nomination papers and to inspect and make any objections to the validity of a nomination form or home address form. See paragraph **3.118** below for further information on dealing with objections.

3.32 After a candidate has delivered their nomination papers and deposit and they stand validly nominated, they are entitled to attend the delivery of other candidates' nomination papers and make objections. In addition to the candidate, the following persons will also be able to attend and make objections:

- their election agent
- their proposer or seconder, as stated on the nomination form

3.33 If a candidate is their own election agent, they can appoint one other person to attend the delivery of nomination papers and make objections. If a candidate has submitted more than one nomination form, only the proposer and seconder from the nomination form they have selected will be entitled to attend. If none has been selected, it will be the proposer and seconder of the first submitted nomination form who will have that entitlement.

3.34 Nomination papers cannot be inspected by anybody else at any time.

3.35 Electoral Commission representatives and one other person chosen by a validly nominated candidate can also be present at the delivery of nomination papers, but they are not allowed to inspect or make any objections to nomination papers.

3.36 You should make it clear to persons inspecting a home address form which asks for the candidate's home address not to be published that the information on the form should only be used by the person inspecting to:

- object to the nomination
- lodge an election petition
- make a complaint to the police that a person has made a false statement

and that any other use may be in breach of the Data Protection Act 1998 and so could make a person using the information for any other purpose liable to criminal prosecution.



3.37 You must keep the nomination papers securely and allow inspection of the nomination and home address forms by the persons permitted to inspect these until the deadline for making objections to the nomination papers. Once the deadline for making objections has passed, you should store the nomination papers securely for one year after the election, except for the home address form, which must be destroyed after 21 days.

## Requirements of nomination

3.38 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.

3.39 You should remind any person delivering the nomination papers that it is a criminal offence to knowingly make 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 either a fine, currently set at a maximum of £5,000 (£10,000 in Scotland), or unlimited upon indictment, and/or up to one year's imprisonment.

## Nomination form

### Candidate's names

3.40 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 full.

3.41 The nomination form contains no space for prefixes or suffixes and candidates should be advised not to use prefixes such as Mr, Mrs, Dr or Cllr as part of their full name. The same applies to suffixes. 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 or the ballot paper, but that their nomination as a candidate has not been affected.

3.42 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

3.43 Where a candidate commonly uses a different surname or forename, they may include the commonly used name on the nomination form in addition to their full name.



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

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

3.45 It is not for you as (A)RO to decide whether the given commonly used name is a 'name' as such or to embark on any enquiries. It is the candidate's responsibility to complete the nomination form and to be satisfied that the given commonly used name is a name that they genuinely commonly use. 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.

3.46 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	Name to go on ballot papers
Elector	Ann	Elsie	Voter	Voter, Elsie	<b>VOTER, Elsie</b>
Elector	Ann	[Blank]	Voter	Voter, Ann	<b>VOTER, Ann</b>
Elector	Ann	Elsie	[Blank]	Elector, Elsie	<b>ELECTOR, Elsie</b>

3.47 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 and on the ballot paper.

3.48 You should advise the candidate that the use of commonly used names applies only to the statement of persons nominated 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.

3.49 If you refuse the use of a commonly used name, the validity of the paper remains unaffected. Instead, the effect is that the candidate's full name will appear on the statement of persons nominated and the ballot paper. 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 name.

## Subscribers

3.50 Nomination forms must include an indication of support for the candidate from 10 electors registered on the UK Parliamentary register in the constituency. These are known as subscribers - the first two are the proposer and seconder, while eight other electors are the assenters to the nomination.

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

3.52 There is no requirement for a subscriber to print their name on a UK Parliamentary nomination form.

3.53 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 Parliamentary electoral register that is in force on the 22nd working day before the poll (i.e. they must be on the Parliamentary register published on 1 April 2015).

3.54 An elector must not subscribe more than one nomination form at the Parliamentary election. If they do, their signature will only be valid on the first paper to be delivered to you, even if this was not the first paper that they signed.

3.55 You should have a robust system in place to ensure that no elector subscribes more than one nomination form. 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 than one form, with the hard copy of the register physically marked when nominations are formally submitted.

3.56 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 one form that the subscriber may subscribe.

3.57 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.

3.58 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 day.

3.59 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.

3.60 Only the first 10 subscribers on any nomination form 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 nomination form, the nomination must be held invalid.

3.61 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 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.

3.62 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.

### **Candidate's description**

3.63 The legislation is precise about candidates' descriptions. If a candidate wishes to have a description other than 'Independent', and/or 'Annibynnol' in Wales, that description must be authorised by a registered political party. A description may be either the registered party name or one of the descriptions the party has registered with the Commission.

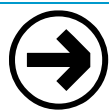
3.64 You should firstly check that the description or the party name as given on the nomination form is registered on the Commission's register of political parties, which can be found on our website at <https://pefonline.electoralcommission.org.uk/search/searchintro.aspx>, and matches it exactly. If 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 Commission.

3.65 Registered political parties may register up to 12 descriptions with the Commission. Where a registered political party has chosen not to register any descriptions, only the exact party name as registered with the Commission can be used.

3.66 In Wales, a candidate may use either the English version, Welsh version or both versions of either the party name or a description as long as they are registered with the Commission. Translations of party names are listed on the website under 'other name' and translations of descriptions are listed to the right of the description under 'translation(s)'. If the party has not registered a translation, a translation of any party name or description cannot be used.

3.67 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.



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

<https://pefonline.electoralcommission.org.uk/search/searchintro.aspx>

If you have any queries, you should contact your local Commission office.

3.68 By law, 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 election.

3.69 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.

3.70 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, at any time until the close of nominations.

### **Descriptions not yet registered**

3.71 Where a 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.

3.72 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 Commission. 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.

### **The certificate of authorisation**

3.73 If the description used on the nomination form matches one contained on our register of political parties or is a registered party name, you should check that the candidate has submitted a certificate authorising the use of the

description or party name ('the certificate of authorisation'), signed by or on behalf of the party's Nominating Officer, before the close of nominations.

3.74 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 signed the certificate claims that they have been authorised to do so by the registered Nominating Officer, the certificate should be taken at face value.

3.75 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 sign a certificate of authorisation may also be a candidate and sign a certificate for their own nomination.

3.76 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

3.77 If a candidate stands as representing two or more parties, e.g. the Square Party and the Circle Party, an authorising certificate setting out the joint description is required from the Nominating Officer (or someone authorised to act on their behalf) of each of the parties. In this example, the Nominating Officer (or someone authorised to act on their behalf) of both the Square Party and the Circle Party is legally required to issue certificates that authorise the use of a joint description, and that joint description must be registered with the Commission.

3.78 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.

The current Speaker of the House of Commons may use the description 'The Speaker seeking re-election' (and/or the equivalent in Welsh). The use of this description in these circumstances does not need to be supported by a certificate of authorisation or any documentary evidence. Any such candidate cannot request a party emblem, and so no emblem of any kind can be printed on the ballot paper beside their name. While the current Speaker of the House of Commons may use the description 'The Speaker seeking re-election', there is no requirement for them to do so, in which case the preceding paragraphs on candidate's description and the certificate of authorisation would apply to them as to any other candidate.

## Request for a party emblem

3.79 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 used a party name or description other than 'Independent', or 'Annibynol' in Wales.

3.80 Candidates standing on behalf of more than one 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.

3.81 The candidate, not the election agent or the Nominating Officer, must make the request in writing to you not later than the deadline for delivery of nominations. If the party has more than one registered emblem, the candidate should specify which one they want to use. If the candidate does not specify one, or the registered party changes the emblem 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.

3.82 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 should ensure that whatever copy is used is in the same form as the registered emblem.

3.83 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 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.

## Home address form

3.84 Candidates are also required to complete a home address form, which must be delivered by hand by the persons who can deliver the nomination form and by the close of nominations. The form is not prescribed but the information that needs to be provided is set out in law.

3.85 On the home address form the candidate must state their name and home address. The address does not need to be in the constituency in which the candidate intends to stand.

3.86 The home address:

- must be completed in full
- must not contain abbreviations
- must be your current home address

- must not be a business address (unless the candidate runs a business from their home)

3.87 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 (see also paragraph **3.117 below**).

3.88 A candidate may, if they choose, sign a statement on the home address form stating that they require their home address not to be published on the statement of persons nominated or the ballot paper.

3.89 In this case the home address form will contain, as well as the full name and home address:

- a statement, signed by the candidate, which states that they require their home address not to be made public
- the UK Parliamentary constituency or, if they live outside the UK, the country in which their home address is situated

3.90 If the candidate chooses not to have their home address appear on the statement of persons nominated and the ballot paper, the constituency in which the candidate's home address is situated or, if they live outside the UK, the country in which they live must be printed instead.

3.91 The Commission has produced a home address form as part of its [set of nomination papers](#) that you can use to provide to candidates and agents.

3.92 The home address form is available for inspection by those people entitled to attend at the delivery of nomination papers (as set out in paragraph 3.32) along with the nomination form.

3.93 If by the close of nominations more than one validly nominated candidate has asked for their home address not to be published, you must consider if two or more of them have the same or so similar a name that they are likely to cause confusion. If you consider that this is the case, you may add such details from their home address or nomination form as you consider appropriate to reduce the likelihood of confusion.

3.94 Before you make a decision on which details should be included, you must consult the candidate(s) affected, if it is practicable to do so. You must then give notice in writing to the affected candidate(s) informing them of the additional information that will be published.

## Candidate's consent to nomination

3.95 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 not prescribed, but the required content is set out in law.

3.96 The form must contain:

- the candidate's date of birth



- a statement that they are aware of the provisions of the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975
- a statement that to the best of their knowledge they are not disqualified from being a Member of the House of Commons
- a statement that they are not a candidate at an election for any other UK Parliamentary constituency with the same polling day

3.97 Candidates are not allowed to sign their consent form earlier than one calendar month before the deadline for submitting their nomination papers (i.e. not earlier than 9 March 2015).

3.98 The consent must be witnessed by another person, but there are no restrictions on who can be a witness to the consent to nomination.

3.99 There is an exception to the requirement for the consent to be delivered in writing and by hand. If you are satisfied that, due to the absence of the candidate from the UK, it is not reasonably practicable for the candidate to provide their consent in writing, you can treat a candidate's consent given by telegram or other similar means of communication such as email, fax or scanned document sent electronically as written consent. The consent is deemed as having been given on the date it is sent, and does not need to be attested.

## Deposit

3.100 In order to be validly nominated, a candidate or someone acting on the candidate's behalf must deposit the sum of £500 with you. This sum must be paid by the close of nominations.

3.101 If the deposit is given to you by someone acting on behalf of the candidate, the person delivering the deposit must give you their name and address, unless they have already provided this information as part of their notification of appointment as an election agent.

3.102 You have some discretion over how you will accept payment of the deposit. Payment must be accepted where it is made by legal tender (cash in British pounds only) or a UK banker's draft. 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.

3.103 You can choose to accept funds by means of a building society cheque, a debit or credit card or the electronic transfer of funds if facilities are available to you, although you are not required to. You should accept building society cheques 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. If you decide to accept any of these methods you should list them on the notice of election and make any requirements you have clear in the nomination pack.



3.104 If there is a fee attached to the form of payment, you can pass this on to the candidate. If so, you should make this clear on the notice of election and the nomination pack.

## Determining nominations

3.105 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 paper is correct on its face. As (A)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.<sup>1</sup>

3.106 You should determine a nomination as soon as is practicable after the necessary documents and deposit have been formally submitted. The sooner you carry out the formal determination, the greater the chances of any candidates who have made a mistake and whose nomination has been rejected being able to submit new papers before the close of nominations.

3.107 By law, the only grounds you have for determining that a nomination is invalid are:

- that the particulars of the candidate or the persons subscribing the nomination form are not as required by law, or
- that the paper is not subscribed as required, or
- that the person is disqualified under the Representation of the People Act 1981

3.108 The description given on the nomination form is part of 'the particulars of the candidate'. Therefore, if the description used is not authorised by a certificate signed by, or on behalf of, the party's Nominating Officer or is not registered with the Commission, a nomination must be held invalid.

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

3.110 Once you have made a decision that a nomination paper is valid, it cannot be challenged during the election, although it may be challenged after the election through an election petition.

3.111 If you have not received the required £500 deposit or any of the required nomination papers by the deadline for the submission of nomination

---

<sup>1</sup> 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'.

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.

### **What to do if a nomination is determined invalid**

3.112 If a nomination paper is determined to be invalid, you must state that fact on the nomination form, write the reasons for rejection and sign it. 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.

## **Correction of minor errors**

3.113 You are permitted to correct minor errors made on nomination and home address forms 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.

3.114 You must have regard to the Commission's guidance on the correction of minor errors.

### **Errors in elector numbers**

3.115 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**

3.116 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**

3.117 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.

## **Objections to nominations**

3.118 Certain people may object to the validity of a nomination form or home address form (see paragraphs **3.32**). Objections can be made on the 19<sup>th</sup>

working day before the poll (on 9 April 2015). In one exceptional circumstance, where the objection is on the grounds that a candidate is disqualified because they are serving a prison sentence of a year or more, objections can be made on the 18<sup>th</sup> working day before the poll (on 10 April 2015).

## Timetable for objections

3.119 The time within which an ordinary objection can be made depends on when the nomination papers are delivered.

### **Nominations delivered up to 4pm on 8 April 2015**

3.120 Objections to any nomination or home address form delivered up to and including 4pm on 8 April must be made between 10 am and 12 noon on 9 April 2015.

### **Nominations delivered after 4pm on 8 April 2015**

3.121 Objections to any nomination form delivered after 4pm on 8 April 2015 must be made between 10am and 5pm on 9 April 2015. Any objection must be made at or immediately after the time of the delivery of the nomination.

### **Objections on the grounds that a candidate is imprisoned for a year or more**

3.122 Should you consider that a candidate may be disqualified because they are imprisoned and serving a sentence of a year or more, you must publish a notice inviting objections on those grounds (see paragraphs **3.127-3.128** below). Any such objection may be made between 10am and 4pm on 10 April 2015.

## Decisions on objections

3.123 You are only entitled to hold a nomination invalid only on the following grounds:

- that the particulars of the candidate or subscribers are not as required by law
- that the form is not subscribed as required
- that the candidate is disqualified on the grounds that they are imprisoned and serving a sentence of a year or more

3.124 You should consider any objection that you receive during the allowed time for objections to be made. You should not undertake any investigation or hear any representations in support of or challenging any fact or statement given on the nomination or home address form. You must decide any objection as soon as practicable after it is made and in any event within 24 hours after the close of nominations.

3.125 You should limit the objection process to the nomination and home address forms. Where, as a result of an objection, you decide that a

nomination you have already determined should have been ruled invalid, you must show on the statement of persons nominated any candidate who is no longer validly nominated together with the reason why they no longer stand nominated, and you should inform the candidate as appropriate.

3.126 Your decision that a nomination is valid is final and cannot be challenged during the election. The decision can only be challenged after an election through an election petition.

## Objections on the grounds that a candidate is imprisoned for a year or more

3.127 If it appears to you that a candidate might be disqualified from standing for election by the Representation of the People Act 1981 (i.e. because they are imprisoned and serving a sentence of a year or more), you must as soon as practicable after the close of nominations publish a draft of the part of the statement of persons nominated that shows persons who have been and stand nominated. An additional objection period is allowed in respect of those candidates, from 10am to 4pm on the 18<sup>th</sup> working day before the poll (i.e. between 10am and 4pm on 10 April 2015).

3.128 The draft statement must be headed 'draft statement of individual candidates nominated' and must contain a notice stating that any person who wishes to object to the nomination of a candidate on the ground that they are disqualified from standing for election by the Representation of the People Act 1981 may do so between 10am and 4pm at the place specified by you in the notice. The notice must also specify the date on which such objections can be made.

## Withdrawal of a candidate

3.129 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 9 April 2015). The notice must be delivered by hand. 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.

3.130 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. 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.

3.131 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.

## After the close of nominations

3.132 After the close of nominations you are required to publish a statement of persons nominated and a notice of poll. For details on what these notices should contain, see **Chapter 5 - Production of notices, poll cards and ballot papers**.

### Return of deposit

3.133 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.



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

### Uncontested elections

3.134 If only one valid nomination is received, or all valid nominations are properly withdrawn by the deadline except one, the election is uncontested. If the election is uncontested, you must, as soon as practicable, publish the statement of persons nominated. This must include a statement declaring the one validly nominated candidate elected.

3.135 The writ should then be returned with the details of the successful candidate. No poll is necessary.

## Death of a candidate

3.136 The impact of the death of a candidate before the result is declared depends on whether or not the deceased candidate was standing on behalf of a registered political party. Also, it is the time at which you receive proof of the candidate's death that is the relevant factor, not the actual time of death.

### Death of an independent candidate

3.137 If an independent candidate dies, the election continues as normal. If the deceased candidate receives the most votes, they are not elected and the election is re-run. No new nominations are required: all of the existing candidates remain nominated for the new election and retention or return of

the deposit is determined by the re-run election result. No new nominations are allowed for the re-run election, although candidates may withdraw.

3.138 If the independent candidate who died did not receive the most votes at the original poll, the candidate who did is declared elected and the election is not affected. If the candidate who died came joint first with the same number of votes as any other candidate, the other candidate is declared elected.

3.139 If only two persons are standing nominated and an independent candidate dies, the election is treated as an uncontested election and the other candidate is declared elected.

3.140 In all circumstances, the deposit of the deceased candidate must be returned to the person who made it. If the deceased candidate made the deposit, the deposit must be returned to their personal representative.

## Death of a party candidate

3.141 If you receive proof and are satisfied before the declaration of result that a candidate standing on behalf of a political party (or as a joint candidate standing on behalf of two or more parties) has died, the election is stopped immediately. If the death occurs before polls open, the poll will be countermanded. If the poll is under way or the count is being undertaken, that process stops. There will be a new election.

3.142 No new nominations are required: all the existing candidates remain nominated for the new election and retention or return of the deposit is determined by the election result at the new election. No new nominations are allowed for the new election, except that a new candidate can be nominated to stand on behalf of the same party (or parties) of the candidate who died. Any existing candidates may withdraw by the deadline for withdrawals for the new election. The nomination papers for the candidate standing for the party (or parties) whose candidate died must be submitted by the close of nominations based on the new timetable.

## Death of the Speaker of the House of Commons

3.143 If you receive proof and are satisfied before the declaration of result that a candidate who was the Speaker of the House of Commons seeking re-election has died, the election is stopped immediately. If polls have not opened, the poll is countermanded. If polling is under way or the count is being undertaken, that process stops. There will be a new election.

3.144 In the case of the death of the Speaker new nominations are allowed for the new election, and these must be submitted in the usual way and by the deadline for nominations based on the new timetable.

## New election

3.145 The timetable for any new election will be prepared as if the writ was received seven working days after you received proof of the death. The new polling day must be between 21 and 27 working days after the day on which the writ is taken to have been received.

# 4 Agents at the election

## Election agents

4.1 Each candidate must have an election agent, and notice of the appointment must be delivered to you by the latest time for the delivery of notices of withdrawals by 4pm on the 19<sup>th</sup> working day before the poll (by 4pm on 9 April 2015). We have produced an election agent notification form as part of the [set of nomination papers](#).

4.2 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 agent.

4.3 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.

4.4 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 changes.

4.5 The election agent must have an office, and the notice of appointment must set out the office address to which all claims, notices and 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.

4.6 The location of the office must be either:

- within the parliamentary constituency where the candidate is standing, or
- within a constituency which adjoins the constituency where the candidate is standing, or
- within Wales, within a Welsh county or county borough which is part of, or adjoins, the constituency where the candidate is standing, or
- within London, within a London borough which is part of, or adjoins, the constituency where the candidate is standing

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

4.8 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 given on the statement of persons nominated, i.e. the one provided on the home address 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 person named in the statement of persons nominated as proposer.

4.9 If a candidate has requested on the home address form to not make their home address details public, but becomes their own election agent as a result of not having appointed anybody else, you must publish their home address on the notice of election agents, even though, as a candidate, they have requested to keep it private. The only exception to this is if the candidate's address falls outside the relevant qualifying area as defined in the bullet points above, when the office address is deemed to be the address of the person named in the statement of persons nominated as proposer.

4.10 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.

4.11 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 the agent dies, and the new agent's details published on the revised version.

## Sub-agents

4.12 An election agent in a county constituency may appoint sub-agents to act on their behalf. No sub-agents can be appointed in a borough (or burgh) constituency.

4.13 Election agents at a county constituency may appoint sub-agents for particular parts of the constituency, as long as those parts do not overlap. The agent can determine the parts into which they wish to sub-divide the constituency.

4.14 The office of the sub-agent must be in the area within they are appointed to act.

4.15 A sub-agent can do anything that the election agent is entitled to do within the area to which they are appointed.

4.16 The election agent must declare to you in writing the name, address and office address of each sub-agent they have appointed and the area in which they may act by the second working day before the day of the poll (i.e. by 5 May 2015). You should include a form for the notification of appointment of sub-agents in your nomination packs. We have produced a form for the notification of appointment of sub-agents as part of our [set of nomination papers](#) which you could use for this purpose.

4.17 The election agent can revoke the appointment of a sub-agent at any time. If a sub-agent dies or has their appointment revoked the election agent may appoint a new-sub agent by declaring in writing the name, address, office

address and area of appointment of the new sub-agent to you. Once the name, address, office address and area of appointment of a sub-agent have been declared to you, you must give public notice of these details.

## Other agents

4.18 Candidates 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.

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

## The opening of postal votes

4.20 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](#).

4.21 You are required to 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 opening.

## The poll

4.22 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 29 April 2015) 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](#).

4.23 There is no limit on the number of polling agents that may be appointed at a UK Parliamentary election.

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

by law only one polling agent may be admitted at the same time to a polling station on behalf of the same candidate.

## The count

4.25 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 (29 April 2015) 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](#). You are legally required to give counting agents who have been appointed notice in writing of the time and place at which the verification and count will begin.

4.26 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.

4.27 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.



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

# 5 Production of notices, poll cards and ballot papers

## Production and publication of notices

5.1 You are legally required to 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.

5.2 You should ensure that you are referring to the correct version of any prescribed forms as contained in the most recent versions of the relevant legislation. For details of the relevant legislation see [Part A of our guidance for \(A\)ROs](#).

5.3 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 poll, including the notice of election and notice 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 poll, 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 poll can be easily accessed through the local authority website.



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

## Translation and formats of notices

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

- in Braille
- in languages other than English (or in Wales, English and Welsh)
- using graphical representations
- in audio format
- using any other means of making information accessible

5.5 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 paper, and these words may be translated into languages other than English.

## Notice of 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).

5.6 You must publish the notice of election for the constituency by not later than 4pm on the 22<sup>nd</sup> working day before the poll (by 4pm on 2 April 2015). The notice of election may be published on the same day that the writ is received and should be published as soon as practicable to allow the maximum time for nominations.

5.7 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
- where you have decided to accept electronic payments, the arrangements for electronic payment of deposits
- the date by which applications for absent votes (including emergency proxies) must reach the ERO in order to be effective for the election

5.8 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.

5.9 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.

5.10 The Commission has developed a [template notice of election](#) that you can use.

## Statement of persons nominated

5.11 If there are no objections to nomination papers, you must publish a statement of persons nominated for the constituency by no later than 5pm on the 19<sup>th</sup> working day before the poll (by 5pm on 9 April 2015). If there are objections, it must be published by 4pm on the day after the last day for nominations (by 4pm on 10 April 2015).

5.12 The statement of persons nominated must show for all candidates who are validly nominated, as well as for those who have withdrawn or whose nomination you have rejected:

- their name
- their home address (or, if they have requested not to make their home address public, the constituency name or country as appropriate)
- their chosen description (if any)
- the subscribers' names (up to 30, taken from the 'selected nomination form' and up to two others if multiple nomination forms have been delivered)
- in the case of those who no longer stand nominated, the reason why they no longer stand nominated

5.13 The statement of persons nominated must also include the notice of poll if the election is contested (see paragraph **5.18** below).

5.14 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.

5.15 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.

5.16 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.

5.17 You should have robust proof-checking processes in place to ensure that there are no errors on the statement of persons nominated.

## Notice of poll

5.18 If there are two or more candidates and there is to be a contest, you must publish a notice of poll for the constituency, which must be included with the statement of persons nominated, stating the day and hours fixed for the poll.

5.19 You should give a copy of the statement of persons nominated with the notice of poll to all candidates and election agents as soon as practicable after its publication.

## Notice of the situation of polling stations

5.20 The publication of the notice of situation of polling stations is for you, as (A)RO, to publish. You must give public notice of:

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

5.21 The notice may be combined with the statement of persons nominated and, therefore, also the notice of poll. It must be given no later than the time of the publication of the statement of persons nominated/notice of poll (by 5pm on 9 April 2015, if no objections to nominations; by 4pm on 10 April 2015, if objections have been lodged).

### Cross-boundary constituencies

You should liaise with the local government ROs within your area to ensure you have all of the relevant information regarding elections and by-elections in other local authorities and the location of polling stations to enable you to produce the notice of situation of polling stations.

5.22 You should have robust proof-checking processes in place to ensure that there are no errors on the notice of situation of polling stations.

5.23 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, 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.

## Production of poll cards

5.24 Poll cards must follow the prescribed form. You must ensure that on each 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 Representation of the People Regulations 2001 (as amended).

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

5.26 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.

5.27 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.



5.28 You should also liaise with your Royal Mail contact at an early stage to ensure that you have appropriate licences in place and that the poll card meets specific delivery requirements.

5.29 In order to ensure that voters receive the information they need you should have in place a process for proof-checking poll cards, 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.



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.

5.30 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 (29 April 2015). These notices support the prompt dispatch of poll cards to those electors who have applied to register close to the registration deadline.

5.31 The first interim notice of alteration must be published on the day of the deadline for nominations, which is 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll (4pm on 9 April 2015). The second interim notice must be published between the 18<sup>th</sup> and sixth working day before the poll (between 10 April 2015 and 28 April 2015).

5.32 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.

### **Cross-boundary constituencies**

If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries, you will need to work with other local authorities to ensure you are able to provide the data from the other authority/authorities to the printers. You should also liaise with them to obtain the information on new electors as soon as possible after the publication of the interim notices of alteration and the final election notice of alteration.



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

5.33 You should also consider whether there are any savings you could make by including the required confirmation of registration with the poll card for those registering during the election period.



## Cross-boundary constituencies

If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries, you should liaise with the other ERO(s) regarding the potential for sharing distribution costs by including the required confirmation of registration with the poll card.



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

5.34 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 election, 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

5.35 You are required by law to send out poll cards as soon as practicable after the publication of the notice of election.

5.36 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. This could, for example, include publishing the notice of election as soon as the writ is received. Once the notice of election has been published, the poll cards can be issued.

5.37 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.

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

## **Delivery by hand**

5.39 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.

5.40 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 constituency 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**

5.41 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.

5.42 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 constituency 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.

5.43 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.

5.44 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.

5.45 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.

## **Production of ballot papers**

5.46 The form of the ballot papers is prescribed in legislation and you have a legal duty to follow this precisely. By law, ballot papers for postal voters and for polling station use must be the same in form, except that the official mark may be different if desired.

5.47 Although the final content of the ballot paper cannot be confirmed until nominations have closed, you will need to make decisions about the following elements of the ballot paper at an early stage:

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

## Ballot paper colour

5.48 The colour of ballot papers is not prescribed and is for you to determine. Tendered ballot papers are required by law to be a different colour from the ordinary ballot papers.

### Cross-boundary constituencies

You should decide at an early stage in the planning process and in consultation with the local government RO(s) in your constituency, what colour the UK Parliamentary ballot paper will be in your constituency. In deciding on the ballot paper colour 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'

5.49 An appropriate security mark – the 'official mark' – is required by law to 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.

5.50 By law, the official mark:

- 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 cannot be re-used for seven years at a UK Parliamentary election to the same constituency.

## Ballot paper numbers and the unique identifying mark

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

5.52 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.

5.53 The unique identifying mark:

- 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

5.54 Candidates must appear on the ballot paper as listed as in the statement of persons nominated and their details appear according to the directions for printing.

5.55 The surname, or commonly used surname where supplied and allowed, of each candidate must be printed in bold type in capital letters, followed by the candidate's other names, which must be printed in bold type in lower case with initial capitals. The address must be printed in the line below the name in lower case with initial capitals. The format for the printing of candidates' details does not change even where there are two or more candidates with the same surname. The description must be printed in bold and in the same type as the candidate's other details. In addition, the party description must be printed as it appears on the register of the Commission's register of political parties.

5.56 At the close of nominations you will have considered if the names of two or more candidates are the same or so similar that they are likely to cause confusion. If candidates have the same name or you consider the names too similar, and at least one of them had requested to keep their home address private, you must add to the statement of persons nominated such details from their home address or nomination form as you consider appropriate to reduce the likelihood of confusion (see also paragraph **3.93** above).

5.57 The address details of the candidate, as shown on the statement of persons nominated, must be printed below their name. Where a candidate has requested to keep their home address details private, the details of the constituency, or country if not in the UK, where the candidate resides must be printed in the following format:

- for a candidate living in the UK: (address in the [insert constituency name] Constituency)
- for a candidate living outside the UK: (address in [insert name of country])

5.58 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.

5.59 If a candidate standing on behalf of a political party has requested it, the requested emblem of the party they represent must be included next to their

name. There is no provision for joint emblems to be registered with the Commission but a joint candidate may pick a single emblem of any of the parties that have registered the joint description and who have authorised the candidate.

5.60 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 should ensure that whatever copy is used is in the same form as the registered emblem.

5.61 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

5.62 The form of the reverse of the ballot paper is prescribed as set out below. There is no provision to put any hatching or other marks on the back of the ballot paper.

5.63 In addition to the unique identifying mark, the following information is required by law to be included on the ballot paper reverse in the following format:

Number

*[Other unique identifying mark]*

United Kingdom Parliamentary election in the constituency of *[insert name of constituency]*

on.....20....

## Printing of ballot papers

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

5.65 You should commence the printing of ballot papers as soon as possible after the nomination process has been completed, the deadline for withdrawals has passed, and final proofs have been signed off. 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.

5.66 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

5.67 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](#).

5.68 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 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.

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

5.70 As part of your risk assessment you should consider:

- the particular context of this poll
- any particular local circumstances
- projected turnout – as a minimum you should assume that the turnout will be not less than the turnout at the last equivalent poll

- 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

5.71 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.

5.72 Guidance on the allocation of ballot papers to polling stations can be found in paragraph **6.21** below.

## Ballot paper security

5.73 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.



# 6 Polling station voting

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

6.2 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

6.3 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 a ballot paper.

6.4 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](#).

6.5 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

6.6 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.

6.7 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](#).

6.8 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.

6.9 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.

6.10 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.

6.11 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](#).

6.12 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

6.13 You must provide polling stations with certain materials:

- ballot box(es)
- ballot papers (including tendered ballot papers)
- materials to enable voters to mark their ballot papers (in practice, pencils - you may wish to provide a string to attach pencils 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 paper
- enlarged hand-held sample copy of the ballot paper
- voting device 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 notice
- 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 close of poll

6.14 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

6.15 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 bearing in mind the particular context of this election.

6.16 You will need to consider providing additional ballot 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.

6.17 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.

6.18 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.

6.19 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.

6.20 You must provide a copy of the relevant [secrecy requirements](#) to all polling station staff.

## Allocation of ballot papers

6.21 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.

6.22 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, but given the particular context of this election, the turnout is likely to be higher.

6.23 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.

6.24 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. Further guidance on the printing of ballot papers is provided in **Production of notices, poll cards and ballot papers** above.

6.25 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.

6.26 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

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

6.28 Polling station registers can be printed once the final election notice of alteration has been published, five working days before polling day (29 April 2015).

6.29 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.

6.30 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.

### **Cross-boundary constituencies**

You should liaise and agree with the other ERO(s) in your constituency a method for communicating to Presiding Officers changes to the register as a result of a clerical error, court decisions or the granting of an emergency proxy.

6.31 Where a clerical error has been rectified and the relevant elector arrives at the polling station and applies for a ballot paper, the Presiding Officer must issue a ballot paper in the usual manner. The Presiding Officer must also make a written record of the elector to whom a ballot paper has been issued following an alteration to the register due to a clerical error. 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.

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

6.33 Where a person makes a complaint to polling station staff that suggests that they should be on the electoral register, the Presiding Officer must 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**

6.34 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.

6.35 You must prepare and provide a corresponding number list for each polling station. The corresponding number list is a prescribed document that can be found in the appendix to the election rules.

## **Packets for postal ballot papers delivered to polling stations**

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

6.37 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](#).

6.38 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, but you should keep in mind the particular context of this poll and the fact that turnout, and therefore potentially the number of people returning their postal vote to polling stations, could be higher – particularly if postal voters wait to return their postal votes until after the televised Leaders' debates.

6.39 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.

6.40 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.

6.41 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

6.42 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 account 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 account together when delivering the ballot papers to the count.

# Polling station notices

6.43 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.

6.44 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.