

# MAY 2023 ELECTIONS

**Candidates and agents briefing**  
2 March 2023



# Introductions

- **The Returning Officer** is responsible for running the local elections
- **Mark Stone** is the Returning Officer for the South and Vale district and parish elections
- **The Electoral Registration Officer** is responsible for maintaining the registers of electors and absent voters lists. **Mark Stone** is also the Electoral Registration Officer
- Deputy Returning Officers:
  - Patrick Arran
  - Steven Corrigan
  - Susan Baker

DC Justin Walsh, Economic Crime Unit Thames Valley Police



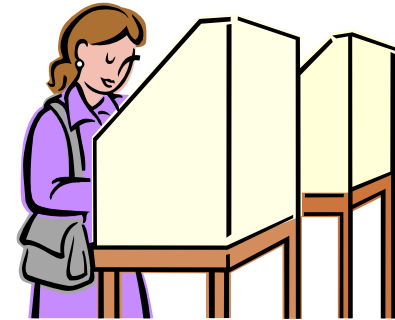
# Aims of this briefing

- To give an overview of the electoral procedures for candidates and agents for the 2023 district and parish elections
- To give information up to and including the counts
- General information regarding the election processes



# Areas to be covered include

- Timetable
- Qualifications and disqualifications
- Nominations
- Agents
- Absent voting (postal/proxy votes)
- Voter ID
- Campaigning
- Registers
- Counts
- Candidates' expenses



# Overview

- All district wards in South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Districts are up for election and are likely to be contested
- All town and parish councils are up for election but we don't expect all to be contested!
- Full details of these elections are available on the relevant council's website
- First election under the Elections Act 2022 that introduced Voter ID at polling stations



# Election timetable

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Publication of notice of election   | Monday 20 March 2023                        |
| Nominations commence  | Monday 20 March 2023                        |
| Close of nominations  | <b>4pm</b> – Tuesday 4 April 2023           |
| Notification of appointment of election agents  | <b>4pm</b> – Tuesday 4 April 2023           |
| Publication of statement of persons nominated   | Not Later than 4pm – Wednesday 5 April 2023 |
| Deadline for applications to register to vote   | <b>Midnight</b> – Monday 17 April 2023      |
| Deadline for <b>new</b> postal vote applications / <b>changes to existing</b> postal or proxy vote applications | <b>5pm</b> – Tuesday 18 April 2023          |
| Publication of notice of poll/situation of polling stations   | Not later than Tuesday 25 April 2023        |

# Election timetable (cont'd)

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Deadline for applications for new proxy votes<br>Deadline to apply for Voter Authority Certificate  | 5pm – Tuesday 25 April 2023                                  |
| Appointment of counting and polling agents  | Wednesday 26 April 2023                                      |
| <b>Polling day</b>  | <b>Thursday 4 May 2023 – 7am to 10pm</b>                     |
| Deadline to apply to vote by proxy on grounds of medical emergency or if unexpectedly called away because of employment or service<br>Deadline for temporary Voter Authority Certificates | <b>5pm</b> – Thursday 4 May 2023                             |
| Replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes ends   | <b>5pm</b> – Thursday 4 May 2023                             |
| Alterations to register to correct clerical error   | <b>9pm</b> – Thursday 4 May 2023                             |
| Return of election expenses   | District – Friday 9 June 2023<br>Parish – Friday 2 June 2023 |

# Information available

- Electoral Commission guidance for candidates and agents including
  - election timetables
  - polling agent, postal voting and counting agents' appointment forms
  - requests for electoral register and absent voters' list
  - code of conduct for campaigners – postal voting, proxy voting and polling stations
  - tellers' guidance and dos and don'ts

**All are available from the Electoral Commission website**

**<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent>**





# Changes to parish and district wards

- Changes requested to be made by Local Government Boundary Commission for England to reflect parish boundary changes
- Changes:
  - Part of Bix and Assendon parish to Henley-on-Thames parish (ceases to be part of Woodcote and Rotherfield district ward and becomes part of Henley-on-Thames district ward)
  - Part of Kennington parish to South Hinksey parish (ceases to be part of the Kennington and Radley district ward and becomes part of the Botley and Sunningwell district ward) (no electors)



# Qualifications

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



# Disqualifications

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

- are **employed by the relevant local authority** or hold a paid office under the authority (including joint boards or committees). Candidates may be 'employed by the local authority' if they work at certain schools, fire services, police or health services
- are subject of a **bankruptcy restrictions order** (or interim restrictions order) in England or Wales
- have been sentenced to a term of **imprisonment** of three months or more (including a suspended sentence) without option of a fine, during the five years before polling day
- are serving a disqualification due to being found guilty of a **corrupt or illegal practice** by an election court
- hold a **politically restricted post**
- are subject to the **notification requirement of or under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003**



# Submitting nomination papers

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



# Submitting nomination papers (cont'd)

- Take care when completing your nomination papers, as mistakes may invalidate your nomination
- The nomination form, home address form and consent to nomination **must be delivered by hand** and cannot be submitted by post, email or other electronic means
- Nominations must be delivered to the Returning Officer at Abbey House
- No appointment system – first come first served



# Nomination form

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



# Nomination form (cont'd)

- Subscribers: 2 subscribers are required. **NEW from 2023** – Just 2 signatures required for District elections
- Must sign and print their names. Check details of subscribers against electoral register **published 1 March 2023, Do not use old registers.**
- If they are not on that register, they can't subscribe the nomination.
- Only ask subscribers to sign **after** completing the name, address and description fields on the form.
- Data protection requirements





# Home address form

- Part 1 of the home address form must state:
  - your full name and home address in full
  - your qualifying address, or, where you have declared on your consent to nomination that you meet more than one qualification, your qualifying addresses
  - which of the qualifications your qualifying address or addresses relate to (a, b, c and/or d)
  - the full name and the home address in full of the witness to your consent to nomination





# Home address form (cont'd)

- Part 2 of the home address form must be completed if you do not want your address to be made public:
  - The name of the relevant area in which your home address is situated (if your home address is in the UK), e.g. **South Oxfordshire** or **Vale of White Horse**
  - if you live outside the UK, the name of the country in which your home address is situated.



# Consent to nomination

- Must include:
  - name
  - which area standing in e.g. Ward or Parish name – confirmation of qualification(s) that apply (at least 1, BUT select all that apply)
  - Your qualifying address
  - date of birth & signature
  - date of consent
  - witness' name, and signature (anyone can witness this)



# Certificate of authorisation

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



Listening Learning Leading

# Emblem request form

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



# Joint candidates

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



# Election agent

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



# Other agents

- Other agents can be appointed to attend postal vote openings, polling stations and the count on your behalf:
  - You must give notice in writing of any people appointed as polling and counting agents by **Wednesday 26 April**.
  - The appointment of postal voting agents attending a particular opening session must be made before the start of the session. We will give 48 hours' notice of all session times.
  - All postal vote opening sessions before polling day will take place at Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon OX14 3JE



# Access to electoral register/absent voters' list

- Available to candidates for each election provided a written request to the electoral registration officer is made
- Registers can only be used for the following permitted purposes:
  - to complete the nomination form
  - to assist candidates in their campaign
  - to check that any donations/loans are permissible

**It is unlawful to use for other than electoral purposes**





# Registration

- As a candidate you are uniquely placed to encourage people to register to vote.
- Remind everyone that they will need suitable photo ID this time to vote in person.
- You should encourage people to register as soon as possible.
- The deadline for applying to register for the election is Monday 17 April (midnight)
- Individuals can apply to register online at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote> It only takes a few minutes. This is the quickest and easiest way.
- When discussing registering to vote with individuals, you will need to make them aware that they will need their National Insurance number, date of birth and address to register.
- People who do not have / cannot retrieve their National Insurance Number can still register, but they may need to provide further information. If so, they will be contacted by the ERO.



# Voter ID

- Voters in this election will need to provide a form of accepted photographic ID if they wish to vote in person at a polling station.
- Voters will be able to present out of date photographic ID so long as the photograph is still a good likeness.
- If a voter fails to present a form of accepted photographic ID they will not be issued with a ballot paper.
- This includes those who act as a proxy for another person.



# Accepted forms of Voter ID

- Voters should be encouraged to check whether they have one of the forms of accepted photographic ID well in advance of the election. A list of acceptable photo ID is available on the Electoral Commission's website.
- If a voter does not have an accepted form of photographic ID, they can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate either online <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate> or using a paper application form.
- Electors who are registered anonymously must have an Anonymous Elector Document to vote in person.
- Any applications must be received by 5pm on Tuesday 25 April 2023.



# Postal votes

- Combined issue for district/parish
- Encourage anyone who needs one to apply as early as possible
- The **first batch** of postal votes will be despatched to Royal Mail on **Wednesday 19 April**
- The **second and final batch** will be despatched to Royal Mail on or about **Monday 24 April**



# Postal vote opening

- All postal vote opening sessions will be at Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon OX14 3JE
- The purpose of agents attending is to oversee the process and **not** to tally votes cast
- Opening sessions are:
  - Monday 24 April – Friday 28 April from 10am
  - Tuesday 2 May to Thursday 4 May from 10am
  - Midnight Thursday 4 May until finish
- Depending on the number of postal votes, some sessions may finish early/late
- Immediately prior to these sessions staff will slit the outer envelopes in preparation for processing



# Campaigning

- Use imprints on all your campaign material, it is advisable to include it on all website and social media material
- Political signs on the highway need county council approval
- Political signs generally need approval of the landowner
- Do not produce material that looks like a poll card or ballot paper
- Do not pay people to display your adverts (unless they display adverts as part of their normal business, e.g. newspapers)



# Electoral Commission code of conduct for campaigners

Campaigners are an essential element of a healthy democracy, but their activities should not bring into question the integrity of the electoral process

- **Absent vote applications:**

- make sure electors understand implications of absent vote
- do not encourage postal ballot pack redirection
- do not encourage electors to appoint a campaigner as a proxy

- **Postal ballot packs:**

- never touch a postal ballot paper or observe electors completing their postal vote
- do not encourage electors to give you their completed postal ballot paper or envelope

- **Polling stations:**

- keep access to polling places and the pavements around polling places clear to allow voters to enter
- please do not park vehicles displaying election material outside or near polling stations





# Campaigning – code of conduct

**Tellers have no legal status**

**Please issue campaigners with a copy of the Electoral Commission Tellers guidance and Tellers Dos and Don'ts**

**There should be no more than one teller at a polling station for each candidate/party at any time**

**Tellers MUST:**

- always remain outside the polling station i.e. room within which voting is taking place

**Tellers MUST NOT:**

- be able to see or hear what is happening in the polling station
- impede, obstruct or intimidate voters
- demand information
- use undue influence

**Tellers MAY:**

- display a coloured rosette or badge displaying the name of the candidate, party and/or emblem or description; the rosette/badge should not bear a slogan and must not be oversized





# Polling day



- Polling stations open from 7am to 10pm
- Staff instructed to show ballot box empty prior to sealing if candidates/agents are present at the opening of the poll
- Separate ballot box for each election
- Voters in a queue at the polling station at 10pm will be allowed to vote
- Voters will not be allowed to join queues after 10pm
- Postal votes – can be handed into polling stations within ward/parish relevant to the vote or delivered to the elections office until 10pm



# Verification and counts – Friday 5 May

- The venue for the district and parish counts will be:  
**White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre, Audlett Drive, Abingdon-on-Thames OX14 3PJ**
- Boxes will arrive at the venue following the close of poll on Thursday 4 May and be securely stored overnight
- Count centre will open at 9.00am on Friday 5 May
- Candidates, election agents, counting agents and one other person appointed by the candidate are entitled to attend
- Agents need to manage arrival time and expectations of candidates of the likely timetable, and **car sharing is advisable**
- The leisure centre café will be open serving hot and cold drinks and light snacks – please ensure any drinks in the count hall are in a lidded container.



# Verification

- Verification will start at 9.30am
- Once the votes are verified the district ballot papers will start to be counted (approx. noon)
- Please manage expectations on timings and explain that at times count staff will be awaiting clearance before going on to the next steps
- At the conclusion of the verification ballot papers will be mixed for each district ward and parish/parish ward



# District counts

- Candidates, election agents, counting agents and one other person appointed by the candidate are entitled to attend
- 12 teams of counters for each district council. Counts likely be undertaken in alphabetical order for single member wards and alphabetical order for multi-member wards for each district – but we reserve the right to vary this to ensure efficient working (e.g. to start a longer count slightly earlier in the process)
- Where possible we will block vote two and three member wards before using “Kangaroo Boards” (as an alternative to sticking ballot papers onto “grass skirts” and in use at South and Vale since 2019)
- Results will be uploaded to the councils’ websites and displayed on screens in the count venue



# Parish counts

- Counts will start at approximately 2pm on Friday 5 May
- Counts will be undertaken in alphabetical order for single member wards and alphabetical order for multi-member wards/parishes – but we reserve the right to vary this to ensure efficient working
- Where possible we will block vote first – likely to be in some town wards
- Most counts will be carried out using the “Kangaroo Boards”
- Results will be provided to the relevant parish councils



# Police and security

- The police will be visiting polling stations throughout polling day
- There may also be a police presence at the count venue
- Please assist with security on the day by not bringing large bags to the count – they may be searched
- Only those authorised to be at the count are guaranteed entry so you must bring the relevant paperwork
- Any incidents should be reported to the police using 101 or 999 as appropriate



# Police – contraventions of electoral law

- Please refer any alleged contraventions of electoral law to the police SPOC

DC Justin Walsh

Economic Crime Unit – Headquarters North

Email: [ECUElectoral@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk](mailto:ECUElectoral@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk)

- Be prepared to give the police a statement and to substantiate any allegations





# Candidate spending

- Defined as certain expenses ‘used for the purposes of the candidate’s election’ during the regulated period.
- Responsibility of **election agent**
- Limit on expenses:
  - £806 + 7 pence per elector in ward on register in force on 1 March register
  - reduced for joint candidates
- Must get and keep receipts (over £20) (£10 for parish)





# Candidates' spending returns

- Returns due 35 calendar days after result of election for district elections (9 June)
- Returns due 28 calendar days after result for parish elections (2 June)
- Returns can be inspected by the public on request
- Sample of returns may be reviewed by the **Electoral Commission**
- Failure to submit a spending return is a criminal offence enforceable by police
- No spending will be reimbursed
- **MUST** submit a return even if it is NIL
- Parish candidates should submit even if elected uncontested



# Candidates' spending

- Candidates' spending is regulated by the Electoral Commission and is laid out in the Candidates and Agents Guidance
- Any enquiries should be referred to the Electoral Commission  
[www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

Contacts at the commission:

Tel: 0333 103 1928

[pef@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:pef@electoralcommission.org.uk)



# Electoral guidance

- Please use the Electoral Commission Guidance for Candidates and Agents. This guidance is comprehensive and covers all aspects of the election process.
- Please download the guidance to party supporters, such as tellers, and issue copies to them.
- Electoral Commission website for candidates and agents

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent>

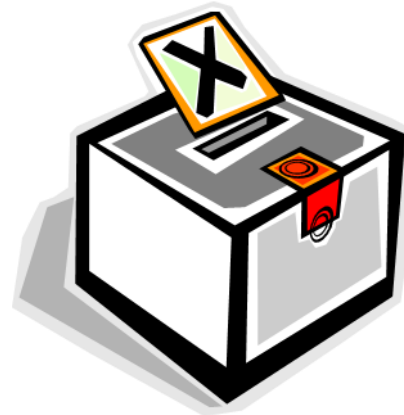


# Contacts

- Elections office – [elections@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:elections@southandvale.gov.uk) or telephone 01235 422528 or visit our websites at [www.southoxon.gov.uk](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk) and [www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk](http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk)
- Electoral Commission contacts - telephone 0333 103 1928 or website [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)



# ANY questions?



# Thank you



Listening Learning Leading