

# Candidates and agents Briefing

UK Parliamentary General Election, 4 July 2024

Mark Heath

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# Topics

- who's who
- key dates
- other agents
- voter ID
- code of conduct for campaigners
- polling day
- verification and the count
- candidates' expenses
- contacts

## Who's who

- The (Acting) Returning Officer is responsible for running the election. The (Acting) Returning Officer is **Mark Heath**.
- The Electoral Registration Officer is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters lists. The Electoral Registration Officer is **Mark Heath**.

## Key dates

Appointment of counting agents	<b>27 June</b>
<b>Polling day</b>	<b>4 July – 7am to 10pm</b>
Deadline to apply to vote by proxy on grounds of medical emergency, if unexpectedly called away because of employment or service, or voter authority certificate conditions	<b>5pm on 4 July</b>
Replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes ends	<b>5pm on 4 July</b>
Return of election expenses	+ 35 calendar days from result (if result declared on 5 July, <b>9 August 2024</b> )

## Other agents

- Other agents can be appointed to attend postal vote openings and the count on the candidate's behalf:
  - Notice in writing of any appointed counting agents must be given to the Returning Officer by **27 July**.
  - Notice in writing of any postal voting agent appointments must be made before the start of the relevant session.

## Voter Identification

- Voters at this election will need to provide a form of accepted photographic ID if they wish to vote in person at a polling station.
- 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 (2)

### **International travel**

- Passport (issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, an EEA state or a Commonwealth country)
- Irish Passport Card

### **Driving & Parking**

- Driving licence (issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state)
- A Blue Badge

## Accepted forms of Voter ID (3)

### **Local travel**

- Older Person's bus pass
- Disabled Person's bus pass
- Oyster 60+ Card
- Freedom pass
- Scottish National Entitlement card
- 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- Disabled person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- Senior SmartPass issued in NI
- Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass issued in NI
- War Disablement SmartPass issued in NI
- 60+ SmartPass issued in NI
- Half Fare SmartPass issued in NI



## Accepted forms of Voter ID (4)

### **Proof of age**

- Identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card)

### **Other Government issued documents**

- Biometric immigration document
- Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identify Card)
- Nationality identity card issued by an EEA state
- Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland
- Voter Authority Certificate
- Anonymous Elector's Document

## Code of conduct for campaigners (1)

- Campaigners are an essential element of a healthy democracy, but their activities should not bring into question the integrity of the electoral process.
- The (Acting) Returning Officer asks all candidates and agents to agree to abide by the Electoral Commissions 'Code of Conduct for Campaigners'.
- This code of conduct covers all aspects of the electoral process: registration, Voter Authority Certificates, postal voting, proxy voting and polling stations

## Code of conduct for campaigners (2)

- Campaigning outside polling stations:
  - campaigners are allowed to put their messages to voters on polling day by making use of public spaces outside polling places, as long as they are not impeding access;
  - access to polling stations and the pavements around polling places must be kept clear to allow voters access to enter.
  - tellers should remain outside the polling station and must not be able to see or hear what is happening inside;
  - ensure that ‘tellers’ comply with the Electoral Commission’s guidance;

Polling day

# Polling day

- Polling stations open from 7am to 10pm.
- Office open 6.30 am to 10.00 pm for queries or problems relating to the administration of the election
  - for queries relating to election finance issues, contact the Electoral Commission.
- Postal votes should be delivered to the elections office before 10pm.
- Any postal votes taken to polling stations must be handed in to a station within the relevant constituency.
- NB: new requirements for anyone handing in postal votes - Representation of the People (Postal Vote Handling and Secrecy) (Amendment) Regulations 2023

# Polling Day

- Voters in the polling station or in a queue outside the polling station at 10pm can apply for a ballot paper.
- A person in a queue at a polling station at 10pm waiting to hand in postal vote can do so after 10pm.

## Temporary Voter Authority Certificates

- The Electoral Registration Officer is permitted to print a Temporary VAC if they are satisfied that:
  - the elector applied for their substantive Voter Authority Certificate before the deadline (5pm on 26 June); **and**
  - the substantive VAC was printed by the supplier after 5pm on 26 June, but before 5pm on polling day; **and**
  - there is reason to believe the substantive Voter Authority Certificate may not or has not been delivered in time for the elector to use at the poll.

# Verification and the count



## Verification and counting of the votes

- The verification and counting of the votes will take place on **Thursday 4 July**, after the polls close.
- This will take place at:
  - The O2 Guildhall, West Marlands Road, Southampton.
- The verification stage will start at 10.00pm, and the venue will be open to candidates and agents from 9.30pm. Access is via the main entrance to the Civic Centre.
- Candidates, election agents and counting agents are entitled to attend the verification.
  - Allocation of counting agents:
    - Southampton, Itchen – 7 per candidate
    - Southampton, Test – 7 per candidate.
- Tickets for entry to the verification and count must be shown.
- Acceptable behaviour at the count.

## Verification

- 8 verification/count teams.
- Verification stage:
  - the total number of returned and validated postal ballot papers is checked;
  - the issued ballot papers for each polling station are counted into bundles of 20 and the number checked against the ballot paper accounts;
  - the unused and spoilt ballot papers for each of the polling stations are also be checked against the ballot paper accounts.

## Counting of the votes

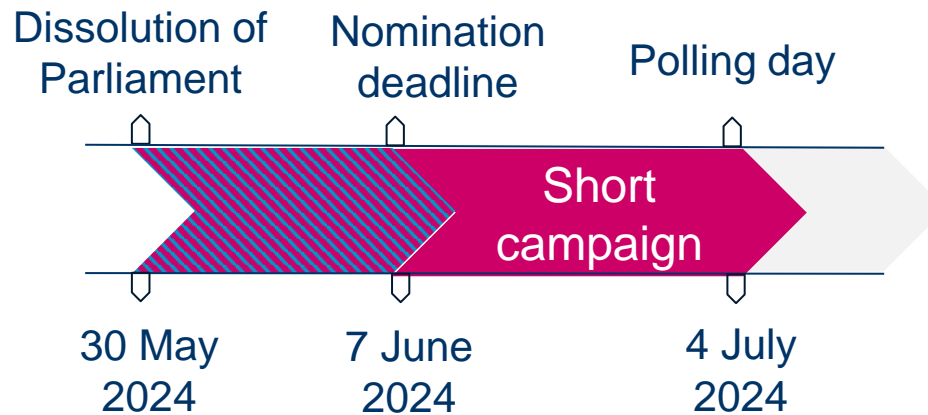
- The counting of the votes for each constituency will commence once the verification stage is complete.
- Counting the votes:
  - the ballot papers are sorted for each candidate and counted into bundles of 20;
  - doubtful papers are dealt with as they arise and any decision by the (Acting) Returning Officer or his Deputies to reject a ballot paper will be communicated to candidates and agents;
  - the (Acting) Returning Officer communicates the provisional result for each constituency with the relevant candidates and agents.

# Election expenses

## Candidate spending

- Election spending is defined as certain expenses used for the purposes of the candidate's election during the 'regulated period' (from the **day after** they officially became candidate until 4 July 2024).
- Completion of the spending return is the responsibility of the **election agent**.
- Candidates must stay within the spending limit during the regulated period and record spending on items and services and any donations received.
- Keep receipts/invoices for any expenditure over £20.
- Forms relating to the return of candidate spending and donations are available from the Electoral Commission's website.

## The regulated period



# The spending limit



Regulated period	Fixed amount	Variable amounts (per registered parliamentary elector)
Short campaign	£11,390	8p for a borough or burgh constituency
		12p for a county constituency

Southampton Itchen – Borough – electorate 66,965

Southampton Test – Borough – electorate 64,079

## Candidates' spending returns

- Returns due 35 calendar days after result of election (**9 August 2024** for results declared on Friday 5 July).
- Returns are made public by **(Acting) Returning Officer**.
- Sample of returns may be reviewed by the **Electoral Commission**.
- Failure to submit an expenses return is a criminal offence enforceable by the police.
- No spending will be reimbursed.



# Contacts

# Contacts

- Elections office – 023 8083 3954
- Highways department – 023 8083 2628

## Please note:

It is the duty of the (Acting) Returning Officer and his staff to conduct elections strictly in accordance with the appropriate laws, rules and regulations. It is their responsibility to comply with these at all times and this may occasionally restrict the level of assistance that can be offered.

# Contacts

- Electoral Commission:

- For enquiries about political parties, candidates or agents, contact:

Tel: 0333 103 1928

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

Website: [www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

# Questions