

# Candidates and agents Briefing

UK Parliamentary general election and district elections, 7  
May 2015

## Topics

- who's who
- key remaining dates of the election timetable
- agents
- postal votes
- the poll
- counting of votes
- candidates' expenses
- contacts

## Who's who

- The (Acting) Returning Officer is responsible for running the election. The (Acting) Returning Officer is John McCormack.
- The Electoral Registration Officer is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters lists. John McCormack is also the Electoral Registration Officer
- Contact details for the elections team are provided later.

## Key dates

Postal vote issue for overseas and BFPO addresses	16 April 2015
Postal vote issue main run	18 April 2015
Deadline for applications to register to vote	20 April 2015
Deadline for new postal vote applications/ changes to existing postal or proxy vote arrangements	5pm on 21 April
Postal vote issue top up run	23 April 2015

## Key dates

Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	<b>5pm on 28 April</b>
Appointment of polling and counting agents	<b>29 April</b>
<b>Polling day</b>	<b>7 May – 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	<b>5pm on 7 May</b>
Replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes ends	<b>5pm on 7 May</b>
Return of election expenses	+ 35 calendar days from result (if result declared on 8 May, <b>12 June</b> )

## Agents duties

- Key responsibilities relating to the electoral process
  - Ensure the campaign is conducted within the law
  - Monitoring, recording and returning election expenses (for successful and unsuccessful candidates)

### 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 **29 April**. We will provide forms.
  - The appointment of postal voting agents attending a particular opening session must be made before the start of each session. We will give 48 hours' notice of the date, time and location of each opening session.

### Access to electoral register / absent voting lists

- Only use data for permitted purposes
  - to complete the nomination form
  - to help you campaign
  - to check that donations/loans are permissible
- We will provide you with update postal voter lists on request or at the final deadline for receipt of postal voting applications.
- We can provide you with interim notices of alteration which detail electors added to the register on request.

## Registration

- As a candidate you are uniquely placed to encourage people to register to vote.
- You should encourage people to register as soon as possible.
- The deadline for applying for the election is **20 April 2015**.
- Registration has changed from a household to an individual system. Individuals can now also register online at **<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>**. It only takes a few minutes.

## Registration

- When discussing registering to vote with individuals, you will need to make them aware that they will need:
  - 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.

### Absent voting

- If you are encouraging people who don't have a postal (or proxy) vote to apply for one, make sure you explain that they will only qualify for one if they are (or will be) individually registered.
- They will be registered individually if:
  - they applied to register after 10 June 2014, or
  - were transferred onto the new registers as their details could be matched with official records. They would have received confirmation of this transfer in September and October 2014.

### Campaigning dos and don'ts

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

## Code of conduct for campaigners

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

- Electoral registration and absent vote applications:
  - Ensure forms conform fully to the requirements of electoral law
  - Include the ERO's address for the return of forms
  - Ensure unaltered applications are sent to ERO within **two working days**
  - Make sure electors understand implications of applying for an absent vote
  - Do not encourage postal ballot pack redirection
  - Do not encourage electors to appoint a campaigner as proxy.

## Code of conduct for campaigners

- Postal ballot packs:
  - Never touch a postal ballot paper
  - Never observe electors completing their postal vote
  - Never handle or take any completed ballot paper or postal ballot packs from voters.

### Polling day

- Polling stations open from 7am to 10pm.
- Office open 6.15am to 10.00pm for queries or problems relating to the administration of the election
  - for queries relating to election finance issues, contact the Electoral Commission (*contact details shown later*)
- Voters in the polling station or in a queue outside the polling station at 10pm can apply for a ballot paper.
- Postal votes can be handed into polling stations within South Gloucestershire or delivered to the elections office until 10pm.
- A person in a queue at a polling station at 10pm waiting to hand in postal vote can do so after 10pm.

### Counting of votes

- The counts will be held in:
  - FABS – WISE Campus, New Road, Stoke Gifford
  - KWOOD – The Grange School, Tower Road North, Warmley
  - TANDY – Summer Hall, Thornbury Leisure Centre, Alveston Hill, Thornbury.
- Count centre will open to candidates and agents from 9.30pm (unless attending for PVO)
- Candidates, election agents, counting agents and one other person appointed by the candidate are entitled to attend



### Counting of votes

- Parliamentary papers will be verified and counted on Thursday evening. Parliamentary candidates, agents and counting agents will be able to attend the entire count.
- District and Parish papers will be verified on Thursday evening then securely stored overnight and counted on Friday afternoon at Thornbury Leisure Centre. District and Parish candidates, agents and counting agent can attend the verification stage only and will be asked to leave once this is completed.

### Count

- District and Parish counts taking place on Friday 8 May 2015 at Thornbury Leisure Centre.
- District and parish candidates, agents and counting agents and one other person appointed by the candidate are entitled to attend.

Count process

- Announcements
- Break out areas
- Verification (stage 1)
  - Postal vote boxes and then station boxes
  - Opening of postal votes from station
  - Tolerances

All ballot papers will go through stage 1 on Thursday.

- District and Parish papers will be sealed away once this stage is completed.

Count process

- Counting of votes (stage 2)
  - Rolling start
  - Doubtful papers
  - Provisional result and recounts

# Spending issues

## Candidate spending

- Defined as certain expenses 'used for the purposes of the candidate's election' during the regulated period
- Responsibility of **election agent**
- Limit on expenses: See next slide
- Must get and keep receipts (over £20)

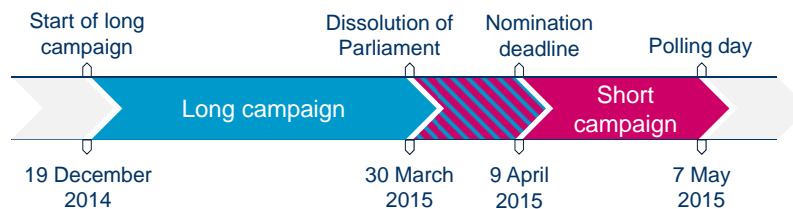
## The spending limit



Regulated period	Fixed amount	Variable amounts (per registered parliamentary elector)
Long campaign	£30,700	6p for a borough or burgh constituency
		9p for a county constituency
Short campaign	£8,700	6p for a borough or burgh constituency
		9p for a county constituency

23

## The regulated period



24

## Candidates' spending returns

- Returns due 35 calendar days after result of election
- Returns 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 – 01454 863030
- Electoral Commission contacts
  - For questions on the Commission's guidance o  
contact
  - For questions on election spending, contact  
020 7271 0616

## Questions

# Thank you

Please ensure you take your candidate's pack for guidance