



Candidates and Agents Briefing

County Council Elections – 1 May 2025



Who's Who

- I am Martin Reeves, and I am the Returning Officer and the person responsible for running the elections.
- The Electoral Registration Officers for each Division are responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters' lists.
- In their role as Deputy Returning Officers, they are responsible for delivering the election on behalf of the Returning Officer



Who's Who (County Council)

- Anita Bradley – Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, Deputy Returning Officer
- Julie Prestidge – AEA Elections Consultant
- Jack Ahier – Senior Democratic Services Officer
- Andrea Newman – Senior Democratic Services Officer
- The Deputy Returning Officer's for each District will be introduced later on in the presentation



Topics

- Who's Who
- Key dates of the election timetable
- Polling Day
- Verification
- Count
- Qualifications and disqualifications
- Nominations
- Agents
- Voter ID
- Postal votes
- Counting of votes
- Candidate spending
- Integrity issues
- Contacts



Election Timetable

Timetabled process:	Deadline
Publication of Notice of Election	25 March
Nominations commence	25 March following publication of Notice of Election
Close of nominations	4pm on 2 April
Notification of appointment of election agents	4pm on 2 April
Publication of statement of persons nominated	4pm on 3 April
Deadline for applications to register to vote	Midnight on 11 April
Deadline for new postal vote applications /changes to existing postal proxy vote applications	5pm on 14 April
Publication of notice of poll/situation of polling stations	23 April



Election Timetable (cont'd)

Timetable process:	Deadline:
Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	5pm on 23 April
Deadline for applications for a Voter Authority Certificate or Anonymous Elector's Document	5pm on 23 April
Appointment of counting and polling agents	24 April
Polling day	1 May– 7am to 10pm
Deadline to apply to vote by emergency proxy	5pm – polling day
Replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes ends	5pm – polling day
Alterations to register to correct clerical error	9pm – polling day
Return of election expenses	6 June



Polling Day

- Polling stations open from 7am to 10pm on Thursday 1 May 2025
- Voters in the polling station or in a queue outside the polling station at 10 pm can apply for a ballot paper
- Voters in this election will need to present photographic ID in the polling station
- Voters can request to have their ID checked in private



Verification

- Verification will take place overnight after the polls have closed at each individual District Council. Details of where this will take place can be found below:
- Cherwell – Spiceball Leisure Centre, Cherwell Drive, Banbury, OX16 2BW
- Oxford City – Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford, OX11DE
- South & Vale – White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre, Audlett Drive, Abingdon, OX14 3PJ
- West Oxfordshire – Windrush Leisure Centre, Witan Way, Witney, OX28 4YA



The Count

- Once all of the ballots have been verified, they will be transferred in sealed boxes to the White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre to be secured in preparation for the count and the declaration of results.
- The Count will begin at 11am on Friday, 2 May.
- Divisions will be counted in alphabetical order by each District Council's count teams. There will be signage at the Count indicating which divisions are being counted at any given time.



Qualifications

[Qualifications | Electoral Commission](#)

- Candidates must satisfy criteria on the day they are nominated and on polling day:
 - be at least 18 years of age
 - be a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, a qualifying EU citizen or an EU citizen with retained rights
- 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



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

- are **employed by the local authority** or hold a paid office under the authority (including joint boards or committees). Candidates may be 'employed by the local authority' if they work at certain schools, fire services, police or health services
- are subject of a **Bankruptcy Restrictions Order** (or interim restrictions order)
- have been sentenced to a term of **imprisonment** of three months or more (inc. suspended sentence) without option of a fine, during the 5 years before polling day

Disqualifications (1)

[Disqualifications | Electoral Commission](#)

Continued on next slide



Disqualifications (2)

- 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 (1)

[Nominations | Electoral
Commission](#)

[Forms for nomination | Electoral
Commission](#)

- The documents that must be submitted by all candidates by 4pm on 2 April are -
 - the nomination form
 - their home address form
 - the consent to nomination
- Party candidates will also need to submit, by **4pm on 2 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 (2)

- Take care when completing your nomination papers, as mistakes may invalidate your nomination
- Complete nomination papers early and arrange for an informal check
- 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.



Nomination Form (1)

- Include your full name
- Optional: use commonly used name box(es) if commonly known by a name other than your full name and wish to use it instead.
- 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 (2)

- Subscribers: 2 subscribers are required for elections
- Must sign and print their names.
Check details of subscribers against electoral register
- Only ask subscribers to sign after completing the name, address and description fields on the form
- Data protection requirements – make subscribers aware of what their data will be used for



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



Part 2 of the home address form must be completed if you do not want your address to be made public:

Home Address Form (2)

- The name of the relevant area in which your home address is situated (if your home address is in the UK),
- if you live outside the UK, the name of the country in which your home address is situated.



Consent to Nomination Form

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



Certificate of Authorisation

[The certificate of authorisation | Electoral Commission](#)

- 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 2 April



Emblem Request Form

[Request for a party emblem |
Electoral Commission](#)

- Party candidates can ask for an emblem to be printed on the ballot paper
- Emblem request form must be submitted by 4pm on 2 April
- Party candidates should supply an electronic version of the emblem to the Returning Officer if required



Joint Party Candidates

[Joint party descriptions | Electoral Commission](#)

- Nominated by more than one party
- May use registered joint party 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 party emblems**



Election Agent

[Guidance for Candidates and Agents at local government elections in England | Electoral Commission](#)

- Responsible for the proper management of your election campaign; particularly its financial management.
- Notification of appointment must reach the relevant DRO by 4pm on 2 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 **24 April**.
 - The appointment of postal voting agents attending a particular opening session must be made before the start of the session. We will give at least 48 hours' notice of each session.



Counting Agents

[Counting agents | Electoral Commission](#)

- The number of counting agents 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.
- 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.



Access to electoral register/absent voting lists

- Access by candidates – once you **officially** become a candidate:
 - earliest, on **25 March** if you, or others, have announced yourself as a candidate
 - submitted your nomination papers
- Make written request to the ERO



Access to Electoral Register / Absent Voting Lists

- Only use data for permitted purposes
 - to complete the nomination form
 - to help you campaign
 - to check that donations/loans are permissible



Registration (1)

- 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 to vote at this election is **midnight on 11 April.**
- Individuals can apply to register online at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote> It only takes a few minutes.



Registration (2)

- When discussing registering to vote with individuals, you will need to make them aware that they will need to provide:
 - their National Insurance number
 - date of birth and address
- People who do not have / cannot retrieve their National Insurance number can still register, but they may need to provide further information. If so, they will be contacted by the ERO.



Absent Voting Applications

[Absent voting | Electoral Commission](#)

- Highlight that electors can now apply online at www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote or www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote
- When talking to electors about applying to vote by post or proxy, you should make them aware of the relevant deadlines and advise them to apply early
- You will need to make them aware that they will need to provide their National Insurance number, date of birth, signature and address to register.
- People who do not have / cannot retrieve their National Insurance Number or cannot provide a signature can still apply, but they may need to provide further information. If so, they will be contacted by the ERO.
- If you are encouraging people to apply for a postal (or proxy) vote, make sure you explain that they will only qualify for one if they are (or will be) registered in time to vote at the elections.

Deadline for new postal vote applications / changes to existing postal or postal proxy applications	5pm on 14 April
Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	5pm on 23 April



Absent Voting - Campaigners

- Campaigners cannot handle postal votes for other electors who are not close relatives or someone for whom they provide regular care
- Campaigners may handle postal voting documents if that's a feature of a job they hold (e.g. a postal worker)
- New limits on the number of postal votes that can be handed in by 1 person – a maximum of five plus their own for each poll



Absent Voting – Who is a Campaigner?

A campaigner is:

- a candidate at the election(s)
- an election agent
- employed by the candidate (for the purposes of the candidate's activities at the election)
- a member of a registered political party who is carrying out activity to promote a particular outcome at an election
- someone employed by a registered political party in connection with that party's political activities



Voter Identification

- 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
- 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 Elector's Document to vote in person
- Any applications must be received by the ERO by 5pm on 23 April.



**A full list of accepted forms of
Voter ID can be found at:**

Accepted
forms of
Voter ID

**[Accepted forms of photo ID |
Electoral Commission](#)**

**Those attending the briefing in
person will be given a paper
copy**



Campaigning dos and don'ts

[Campaigning dos and don'ts |
Electoral Commission](#)

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



Code of Conduct for Campaigners (1)

[Code of conduct for campaigners |
Electoral Commission](#)

- Campaigners are an essential element of a healthy democracy, but their activities should not bring into question the integrity of the electoral process.
- **Electoral registration and absent vote applications:**
 - Ensure forms fully conform to the requirements of electoral law
 - Ensure electors are aware they can apply to register or for an absent vote online
 - Include the EROs address for the return of any paper 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
- **Voter Authority Certificate applications:**
 - Should not handle paper based Voter Authority Certificate applications and should encourage electors to send them directly to the ERO



Code of Conduct for Campaigners (2)

- Postal voting documents:
 - Never touch any of an elector's postal voting documents
 - Never observe electors completing their postal vote.
 - Never handle or take any completed ballot paper or postal ballot pack from voters
- Campaigning outside polling stations:
 - You are allowed to put your messages to voters on polling day, including public spaces outside polling places.
 - Keep access to polling places and the pavements around polling places clear to allow voters to enter.



Completed Postal Votes Handed in to Polling Stations

[Who can hand in postal votes? | Electoral Commission](#)

- Postal votes can be handed into polling stations within the voting area
- Anyone returning postal votes by hand must complete a postal vote return form, otherwise the postal votes will be rejected
- Polling station staff may assist anyone wishing to hand in postal votes to complete the relevant form
- An individual may hand in a maximum of 6 electors' postal votes (their own and five others) per poll
- If the individual is a campaigner they may only handle their own postal vote and those that belong to close family members or people for whom they provide care
- Polling station staff will not be able to provide advice about whether someone is a campaigner, but they may reject postal votes if they have reasonable cause to believe an individual is a campaigner
- If postal votes are handed in not in accordance with the rules, then they will be rejected



Completed Postal Votes Handed in to Council Buildings

[Return and receipt of postal votes](#)
[| Electoral Commission](#)

- Restrictions on the numbers of returned postal votes and who may hand in postal votes are the same as for polling stations
- An individual may hand in a maximum of 6 electors' postal votes (their own and five others) per poll
- Postal votes for all contested electoral areas may be returned by hand
- Staff authorised by the Returning Officer may assist anyone wishing to hand in postal votes to complete the relevant form
- Postal votes dropped off to reception or other council office desks or locations or any posted into council letter boxes without completing the postal vote return form will be rejected and will not be counted



Thames Valley Police

Detective Sergeant James Woodcock



Election Offences

Representation of the People's Act 1983

- Regulates the conduct of electoral registration and elections.

Common Offences include:

Imprinting

- Election material – leaflets, posters, adverts. Also includes Digital – social media
- The printer of the document
- The promoter of the material (the person who has caused the material to be published)
- Any person / party / group on behalf of whom the material is being published
- You must use an address where you can be contacted
- You can use a home, office, business or PO Box



Imprinting - Example

- **Example Imprint**
- *'Printed by Armadillo Printing Ltd, 22 Thornfields Avenue, Glasgow.*
- *Promoted by John Smith, 110 High Street, Airdrie on behalf of Jane Smith of 112 High Street Airdrie.'*

- **or where you are using an office address:**
- *'Printed by Armadillo Printing Ltd, 22 Thornfields Avenue, Glasgow.*
- *Promoted by John Smith, on behalf of Jane Smith of 112 High Street Airdrie.'*

Digital Imprint Example



- *'Promoted by the Engleston Grey Party on behalf of Jane Doe, both of 110 High Street, Engleston, AB12 3CD'*



Election Offences (2)

S.62a False information in relation to postal/proxy voting.

- Offence to provide false information for a postal or proxy vote.

S.60 Personation.

- Offence for any person to vote as someone else. Either in person/ postal/ proxy.

S.114 Treating

- Offence if either before, during or after an election they directly or indirectly pay for any food, drink or entertainment **in order to influence any voter.**

S.113 Bribery.

- Offence, directly or indirectly give money/ procure any office for a voter, to vote/ vote another candidate/ refrain from voting.

S.106 false statements.

- Offence make / publish false statements of fact in relation to a candidate's **personal character or conduct**, unless there are reasonable grounds for believing, and the person making the statement did believe, the statement to be true.



Operation Ford

- Security and self-awareness for prospective Councillors
- Run by the Operational lead at TVP.
- Briefings will be provided through April 2025 by Thames Valley Police to confirmed candidates
- There will be several opportunities to come to the briefings
- Election Managers will be notified of these briefings



Making a Complaint and the role of the Police

- As before in other Elections, and at other Councils, it should be for the Election Manager to assess the nature of the complaint.
- If the Election Manager views the complaint as suspected criminality, then they are to escalate this complaint to the Police.



Counting of Votes

- The count will be held in:
- White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre,
- Audlett Drive, Abingdon, OX14 3PJ on
Friday 2 May 2025 from 11am

- Candidates, election agents, counting agents and one other person appointed by the candidate are entitled to attend.



Candidate Spending

[Candidate spending | Electoral](#)

[Commission](#)

- Defined as certain expenses ‘used for the purposes of the candidate’s election’ during the regulated period.
- Responsibility of **election agent**
- Limit on expenses:
 - £960 + 8 pence per elector in division on register in force on **25 March 2025**
 - reduced for joint candidates
- Must get and keep receipts for expenditure over £20



Candidates' Spending Returns

- Returns due 35 calendar days after result of election
- Returns made public by **Returning Officer**
- Sample of returns may be reviewed by the **Electoral Commission**
- Failure to submit a spending return is a criminal offence enforceable by police
- No spending will be reimbursed



Contacts

- County Council –
elections2025@oxfordshire.gov.uk
01865 810806
- Electoral Commission -
www.electoralcommission.org.uk
0333 103 1928



**The Deputy Returning Officers
from across the County will
now advise on any aspect
individual to their District**



Cherwell District Council

- Gordon Stewart – Deputy Returning Officer
(Gordon.Stewart@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)
- Natasha Clark – Deputy Returning Officer
(Natasha.Clark@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)
- elections@cherwell-dc.gov.uk



Cherwell – Electoral Divisions

- Adderbury, Bloxham & Bodicote
- Banbury Calthorpe
- Banbury Easington
- Banbury Grimsbury & Castle
- Banbury Hardwick
- Banbury Ruscote
- Bicester East
- Bicester North
- Bicester South
- Bicester West
- Chesterton & Launton
- Cropredy & Hook Norton
- Deddington
- Kidlington East
- Kidlington North & Otmoor
- Kidlington West



Oxford City Council

- Caroline Green – Deputy Returning Officer
(cgreen@oxford.gov.uk)
- Martin John – Deputy Returning Officer
(mjohn@oxford.gov.uk)
- elections@oxford.gov.uk



Oxford City – Electoral Divisions

- Barton, Sandhills & Risinghurst
- Bartlemas
- Churchill & Lye Valley
- Cowley
- Headington & Quarry
- Isis
- Jericho & Osney
- Leys
- Marston & Northway
- Parks
- Rose Hill & Littlemore
- Summertown & Walton Manor
- Wolvercote & Cutteslowe



South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse District Councils

- Steven Corrigan – Deputy Returning Officer
(Steven.Corrigan@southandvale.gov.uk)
- Susan Baker – Deputy Returning Officer
(Susan.Baker@southandvale.gov.uk)
- elections@southandvale.gov.uk



South Oxfordshire – Electoral Divisions

- Benson & Crowmarsh
- Berinsfield & Garsington
- Chalgrove & Thame West
- Chinnor
- Cholsey & The Hagbournes
- Didcot Ladygrove
- Didcot South
- Didcot West
- Goring & Woodcote
- Henley
- Sonning Common & Henley South
- Thame
- Wallingford
- Watlington & Rotherfield
- Wheatley



Vale of White Horse – Electoral Divisions

- Abingdon East
- Abingdon North
- Abingdon South
- Charlton, Ardington & Hendreds
- Drayton, Sutton Courtenay & Steventon
- Faringdon
- Grove
- Harwell, Western Valley & Blewbury
- Kennington & Radley
- Kingston & Stanford
- Marcham & Cumnor
- North Hinksey
- Shrivenham
- Wantage West



West Oxfordshire District Council

- Giles Hughes – Deputy Returning Officer
(Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk)
- Sharon Ellison – Deputy Returning Officer
(Sharon.Ellison@westoxon.gov.uk), 01993
861525
- elections@westoxon.gov.uk



West Oxfordshire – Electoral Divisions

- Bampton & Carterton South
- Brize Norton & Carterton East
- Burford & Carterton West
- Charlbury & Wychwood
- Chipping Norton
- Eynsham
- Hanborough & Hailey
- Witney North & East
- Witney South & Central
- Witney West & Ducklington
- Woodstock



Candidates and Agents Briefing

The next briefing will be on Wednesday 9 April, from 5pm – 7pm at County Hall, Oxford or on a hybrid basis.

Please email:

elections2025@oxfordshire.gov.uk if you'd like to attend



- Any Questions?