

Candidates and agents Briefing

Police and Crime Commissioner election, 2 May 2024

Mark Heath

Mike Hickman

Topics

- who's who
- key dates
- other agents
- code of conduct for campaigners
- polling day
- verification/counting of votes
- candidates' expenses
- contacts

Who's who

- The **Police Area Returning Officer (PARO)** is the person responsible for the overall conduct of the election. The PARO for the Hampshire police area is **Mark Heath**.
- The PARO is also responsible for liaising and co-ordinating the work of the **Local Returning Officers (LROs)** in the police area. The LRO for the Southampton area is also **Mark Heath**.
- The **Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)** is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters' lists. The Electoral Registration Officer is **Mark Heath**.

Key dates

| | |
|--|---|
| Deadline for applications for new proxy votes | 24th April |
| Deadline for applications for Voter Authority Certificates | 5pm on 25th April |
| Appointment of sub-agents, counting and polling agents | 25th April |
| Polling day | 2nd May – 7am to 10pm |
| Deadline to apply to vote by proxy on grounds of medical emergency or if unexpectedly called away because of employment or service | 5pm on 2nd May |
| Replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes ends | 5pm on 2nd May |
| Return of election expenses | +70 calendar days from result |

Sub-agents

- The election agent can appoint 'sub-agents' to act on their behalf. Sub-agents can do everything that the election agent is entitled to do within the area they have been appointed.
- Sub-agents must be aware of the election rules, as anything they do will be regarded as if it has been done by the election agent.
- Notice in writing of any **sub-agent** appointments must be given to the **PARO** by **25 April**.

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 **polling** and **counting** agent appointments must be given to the **Local Returning Officer** for the relevant voting area by **25 April**.
 - Notification of **postal voting** agent appointments for a particular opening session must be made to the **Local Returning Officer** for the relevant voting area before the start of each session.
 - Appointment forms can be downloaded from the Electoral Commission's website.

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 Police Area 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:
 - candidates are allowed to put their messages to voters on polling day, including in public spaces outside polling places;
 - tellers should remain outside the polling station and must not be able to see or hear what is happening inside;
 - keep access to polling places and the pavements around polling places clear to allow voters unimpeded access to enter;
 - ensure that ‘tellers’ comply with the Electoral Commission’s guidance;
 - access to polling stations and the pavements around polling places must be kept clear to allow voters unimpeded access to enter.

Polling day

Polling day (1)

- Polling stations open from 7am to 10pm.
- PARO Elections Office open 6.30am 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.
- Postal votes should be delivered to the relevant elections office before 10pm.
- Due to the combination of polls on 2 May, any postal votes taken to polling stations must be handed in to a station within the relevant electoral area.
- NB: new requirements for anyone handing in postal votes Representation of the People (Postal Vote Handling and Secrecy) (Amendment) Regulations 2023

Polling Day (2)

- 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

- Electoral Registration Officers are permitted to print Temporary VACs if they are satisfied that:
 - the elector applied for their substantive Voter Authority Certificate before the deadline (5pm on 24 April); **and**
 - the substantive VAC was printed by the supplier after 5pm on 24 April, 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 of the ballot papers

- The verification of the Police & Crime Commissioner ballot papers for the 14 voting areas in Hampshire will be undertaken by the Local Returning Officers.
- For the Southampton voting area, this will be combined with verification of the ballot papers for the city council elections, and will take place at The O2 Guildhall, West Marlands Road, Southampton, from 10.00pm on Thursday 2 May.
- The venue will be open from 9.30pm. Access is via the main entrance to Civic Centre.
- Candidates, election agents (or sub-agents for the Southampton voting area), and appointed counting agents are entitled to attend the verification.

Counting of the votes

- The counting of the votes for the 14 voting areas in Hampshire will be undertaken by the Local Returning Officers on **Friday 3 May**.
- For the Southampton voting area this will take place at The O2 Guildhall, Civic Centre, Southampton.
- The process of counting the votes will start at 10.00am, and the venue will be open from 9.30am. Access is via the main entrance to Civic Centre.
- Candidates, election agents (or sub-agents for the Southampton voting area), and appointed counting agents are entitled to attend.

Result collation and declaration of result

- The Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) is responsible for collating the local count totals from across the police area and declaring the result:
 - the results collation hub will be located in Committee Rooms 1 and 2 at the Civic Centre, Southampton;
 - the venue will be open to candidates and agents from 9.30am on **Friday** morning. Access is via the main entrance to the Civic Centre. Candidates, and election agents are entitled to attend (no guests or counting agents are permitted).
- When the count totals from all 14 local authority areas have been collated, the declaration of result will take place in the Council Chamber at the Civic Centre, Southampton.

Election expenses

Candidate spending (1)

- Election spending is defined as certain expenses ‘used for the purposes of the candidate’s election during the regulated period’.
- Regulated period starts from the **day after** a person officially becomes a candidate and ends on polling day (2 May 2024).
- Responsibility of the **election agent**. Limit on expenses for Hampshire Police Area is £356,810.
- Agents must stay within this limit during the regulated period and keep a record of spending on items and services (receipts required for expenditure over £20).
- A record of any donations received must be kept.

Candidate spending (2)

- Forms relating to the return of candidate spending and donations are available from the Electoral Commission's website.
- Returns are due 70 calendar days after the result of the election has been declared (Friday 12 July 2024).
- All returns are made available for public inspection by PARO.
- A sample of the returns may be reviewed by the Electoral Commission.
- Failure to submit an expenses return is a criminal offence.

Contacts

Contacts (1)

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

Please note:

The Returning Officer and his staff have a duty to conduct elections strictly in accordance with the appropriate laws, rules and regulations.

They are required to comply with these at all times and this may occasionally restrict the level of assistance that can be offered.

Contacts (2)

- Electoral Commission:

- For enquiries about guidance or standing for election:

Tel: 0333 103 1928

Email: pef@electoralcommission.org.uk

Website: www.electoralcommission.org.uk

Questions