

Candidates and agents Briefing

Southampton City Council elections, 2 May 2024

Mark Heath (Returning Officer)

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Topics

- who's who
- key dates of the election timetable
- qualifications
- disqualifications
- nominations
- agents
- postal votes
- voter ID
- candidates expenses
- contacts

Who's who

- **The Returning Officer** is the person responsible for running the elections. The 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**.

Election Timetable

Publication of Notice of Election	21st March
Nominations commence	21st March
Close of nominations and Deadline for withdrawals of nomination	4pm on 5th April
Notification of appointment of election agents	4pm on 5th April
Publication of statement of persons nominated	No later than 4pm on 8th April
Deadline for applications to register to vote	16th April
Deadline for new postal vote applications and/or changes to existing postal or proxy vote applications	5pm on 17th April
Publication of notice of poll	Not later than 24th April
Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	5pm on 24th April

Election timetable (cont'd)

Deadline for applications for Voter Authority Certificates	5pm on 24th April
Appointment of 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, if unexpectedly called away because of employment or service, voter authority certificate conditions	5pm on 2nd May
Replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes ends	5pm on 2nd May
Alterations to register to correct clerical error	9pm on 2nd May
Return of election expenses	+35 calendar days from result

Combined elections

- Southampton City Council elections on 2nd May will be combined with the Police & Crime Commissioner election.
- Combined:
 - Poll cards
 - Postal votes
- Polling station changes.

Qualifications

- To stand for election candidates must (on the day they are nominated **and** on the day of the poll) be:
 - at least 18 years of age
 - a British, Irish, a qualifying Commonwealth citizen, or a citizen of an EU member state.
- At least one of the following must also apply:
 - a) registered local government elector for the local authority area;
 - b) occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises in the local authority area during the last 12 months;
 - c) principal or only place of work has been in the local authority area during the last 12 months;
 - d) lived in the local authority area during the last 12 months.

Disqualifications (1)

- 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).
 - hold a **politically restricted post**.
 - are subject of a **bankruptcy restrictions order** (or interim 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 (2)

- have been disqualified under the Representation of the People Act 1983 due to being reported **guilty of a corrupt or illegal electoral practice** by an election court.
- are subject to the **notification requirement of or under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003**, and the ordinary period allowed for making an appeal or application in respect of the order or notification has passed.
- A person may be disqualified from being or becoming a member of certain authorities following a conviction under the Localism Act 2011.

Submitting nomination papers (1)

- All candidates must submit the following by **4pm on 5 April**
 - **nomination paper**
 - **home address form**
 - **consent to nomination.**
- Party candidates will also need to submit by that time:
 - a certificate authorising the use of a party name or a registered description on the ballot paper
 - a written request to use one of the party's emblems on the ballot paper (optional).
- Nomination packs are available from the Electoral Commission's website (link on our website).

Submitting nomination papers (2)

- **Take care when completing nomination papers as mistakes may invalidate the nomination!**
- The nomination form, home address form and consent to nomination form must be delivered **by hand** and cannot be submitted by post, fax or other electronic means.
- Nomination papers must be delivered by **appointment only** to the Returning Officer at the Civic Centre, Southampton.
- Appointments can be arranged from Thursday 21 March by email - mike.hickman@southampton.gov.uk, or by telephone - 023 8083 3954.

Nomination form (1)

- Must include the candidate's full name.
- Optional: complete commonly used name box(es), if known by a name other than their full name and wish to use this instead.
- Description field – 3 options:
 - leave blank
 - Independent
 - party candidates can use the party name or a registered description if authorised by a certificate issued by or on behalf of the Nominating Officer.

Nomination form (2)

- Subscribers: two 'assentors', a **proposer** and **second**, from the relevant ward are required (they must be registered local government electors).
- Both subscribers must sign & print their names. Details are checked against the electoral register that is valid on 1st March 2024. If their names are not included, they cannot subscribe the nomination.
- Only ask the subscribers to sign **after** completing the candidate's name, address and description fields on the form.
- Subscribers can only sign **ONE** nomination form.
- Must be submitted by **4pm on 5 April**.

Home address form

- Must include:
 - candidate's full name
 - candidate's home address in full;
 - confirmation of the qualifying address for each statutory qualification declared, or addresses if more than one;
 - name and address of a 'witness'.
- If the home address is not to be made public and appear on the ballot paper, the statement must provide:
 - the name of the local authority area in which the home address is situated (e.g. Southampton) or;
 - if the candidate lives outside the UK, the name of the country in which they reside.
- Must be submitted by **4pm on 5 April**.

Consent to nomination form

- Must include:
 - candidate's full name
 - which ward and local authority area they are standing in
 - declaration that they are at least 18 years old, an eligible nationality and that they are qualified to stand
 - candidate's date of birth & signature
 - the date on which the consent was made
 - name and signature of a witness.
- Must be submitted by **4pm on 5 April.**

Certificate of authorisation

- Party candidates must have written permission from the Nominating Officer (or a person appointed to act on their behalf) to use the party name/a registered description.
- The certificate may:
 - allow the use of the party name or a particular description
 - allow the candidate to choose whether to use the party name or any of the descriptions registered with the Electoral Commission.
- If used, the authorisation must be submitted with the other nomination papers by **4pm on 5 April**.

Emblem request form

- Party candidates can ask for an emblem to be printed on the ballot paper.
- If required, candidates should be able to supply an electronic version of the emblem to the Returning Officer.
- If used, the emblem request form must be submitted with the other nomination papers by **4pm on 5 April.**

Joint candidates

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

Election agent

- Responsible for the proper management of the election campaign; particularly its financial management.
- Notification of appointment must reach the RO by **4pm on 5 April**.
- A candidate will become their 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 the candidate's behalf:
 - Notice in writing of any **polling** or **counting** agent appointments must be given to the RO by **25 April**.
 - Notification of **postal voting** agent appointments for a particular opening session must be made to the RO before the start of the session.
 - Appointment forms are available from the Electoral Commission's website.

Access to electoral register/absent voting lists

- These are available from the date a person **officially** becomes a candidate:
 - for anyone who has already announced their intention to stand as a candidate, or has been declared as such by others, this is the last date for publication of the Notice of Election (26th March);
 - for anyone who has not announced their candidature by 26th March, they become a candidate on the date they make the announcement, or on the date when they submit their nomination, whichever is the earlier.
- Requests must be made in **writing** to the ERO – forms are available from the Electoral Commission’s website.

Use of electoral register / absent voting lists

- Electoral data may only be used for permitted purposes:
 - to complete the nomination form
 - to help a candidate's campaign
 - to check that donations/loans are permissible.

Registration (1)

- Candidates are uniquely placed to encourage people to register to vote.
- They should encourage people to register as soon as possible.
- The deadline for applying to register for these elections is Midnight on **Tuesday 16th April**.
- The quickest and simplest way to register is online at **www.gov.uk/register-to-vote**. It only takes a few minutes.

Registration (2)

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

Absent voting

- If encouraging people who don't have a postal (or proxy) vote to apply for one online, make sure to explain that they will only qualify for one if they are (or will be) registered to vote.
- The deadlines for applying for an absent vote are:
 - Postal/postal proxy – 5pm on **Wednesday 17th April**
 - Proxy – 5pm on **Wednesday 24th April**
- Applications can be made at www.gov.uk/apply-vote-post. Alternatively, application forms are available from the Electoral Commission's website.

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 (1)

- 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 the 6th working day before poll.

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

Campaigning dos and don'ts

- **Do** use imprints on all printed campaign materials and on digital materials where required.
- **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 (1)

- 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:
 - If not using Electoral Commission forms, ensure they fully conform 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
- Voter Authority Certificate Applications:
 - Campaigners 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 ballot packs:
 - **Do not** touch a voter's postal ballot paper
 - **Do not** observe electors completing their postal vote.
 - **Do not** 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.

Election Spending

Candidate spending

- Election spending is defined as any expenses used for the purposes of the candidate's election during the 'regulated period' (from the **day after** they officially became a candidate until 2 May 2024).
- Completion of the spending return is the responsibility of the **election agent**.
- Current limit on expenses: £806.00 + £0.07 per elector.
- Candidates must stay within this 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 and further advice/guidance relating to candidate spending and donations are available from the Electoral Commission's website.

Contacts

Contacts (1)

- Elections office:

Tel. – 023 8083 3954

Email – mike.hickman@southampton.gov.uk

- Highways department:

Tel. – 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

Thank you

NEXT BRIEFING:

10.00am on 24th April 2024

Arrangements for polling day and the verification / count