

Local Elections 2026 Agents Briefing

25 February 2026

Sam Mowbray & Matt Box
Electoral Services



Topics

- Who's who
- Key dates
- Qualifications
- Nominations
- Agents
- Voter ID
- Postal votes
- Polling day
- Counting of votes
- Candidate spending
- Integrity issues
- Contacts

Who's who

- The Returning Officer (RO) is responsible for running the elections
- The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voter lists
- Sam Mowbray is the RO and ERO
- Matt Box is the Deputy RO and Head of Elections
- Contact details are provided later

Election Timetable (1/4)

| Timetabled Process | Date |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Publication of Notice of Election | Monday 23 March |
| Nominations Commence | As above, 10am-4pm each working day |
| Close of Nominations | 4pm, Thursday 9 April |
| Notification of appointment of election agents | As above |
| Publication of Statement of Persons Nominated | By 4pm, Friday 10 April |

Election Timetable (2/4)

| Timetabled Process | Date |
|---|---------------------------|
| Deadline for applications to register to vote | Midnight, Monday 20 April |
| Deadline for new postal vote applications or changes to existing postal or proxy applications | 5pm, Tuesday 21 April |
| Publication of Notice of Poll / Situation of Polling Stations | By Tuesday 28 April |
| Deadline for applications for new proxy votes | 5pm, Tuesday 28 April |

Election Timetable (3/4)

| Timetabled Process | Date |
|---|------------------------------|
| Deadline for applications for a Voter Authority Certificate or Anonymous Elector's Document | 5pm, Tuesday 28 April |
| Appointment of Counting and Polling Agents | Midnight, Wednesday 29 April |
| Polling day | 7am-10pm, Thursday 7 May |
| Deadline for applications to vote by emergency proxy | 5pm, polling day |

Election Timetable (4/4)

| Timetabled Process | Date |
|--|---------------------------|
| Deadline for applications for a replacement for a lost or spoilt postal vote | 5pm, polling day |
| Deadline for alterations to the register to correct a clerical error | 9pm, polling day |
| Return of election expenses (parish) | Midnight, Saturday 6 June |
| Return of election expenses (borough) | Midnight, Friday 12 June |

Qualifications 1/2

- 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

Qualifications 2/2

- 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 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

Disqualifications 1/2

- 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)
 - are the subject of a **Bankruptcy Restrictions Order** (or interim restrictions order)
 - have been sentenced to a **term of imprisonment** of three months or more without option of a fine, during the five years before polling day (including suspended sentences)

Disqualifications 2/2

- 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 1/2

- The documents that must be submitted by all candidates by 4pm on 9 April are:
 - the nomination form
 - their home address form
 - the consent to nomination
- Party candidates will also need to submit:
 - a certificate authorising the use of a party name or registered description
 - a request to use a registered party emblem

Submitting Nomination Papers 2/2

- Take care when completing the forms as mistakes may invalidate the nomination
- Complete nomination papers early and arrange for us provide an [informal check](#) via our online booking system
- The nomination form, home address form, and consent to nomination must be delivered by hand and cannot be submitted by post / email

Nomination paper (Form 1a) 1/2

- Ward name, council, and date of election
- Include full forename(s) and surname of candidate
- Use commonly used name box(es) if commonly known by a name other than full name
- Description – options are:
 - leave blank or use Independent
 - party name or registered description authorised by party Nominating Officer

Nomination paper (Form 1a) 2/2

- Proposer and seconder:
 - Two registered electors from the ward the candidate is contesting
 - Must sign and print after their name. Check details against the electoral register (must be registered in the register in force from 2 March)
 - Only ever ask them to sign after completing the candidate fields on the form
 - Ensure they are aware their names will be published

Home address
form (Form 1b,
part 1)

- Part 1 of the home address form must state:
 - candidate's full name and full home address
 - qualifying address, or, where more than one qualification have been declared in the consent to nomination, qualifying addresses
 - which of the qualifications the qualifying address(es) relate to (a, b, c, and/or d)
 - the full name and home address of the witness to the consent to nomination

Home address
form (Form 1b,
part 2)

- Part 2 of the home address form must be completed if the candidate does **not** want their home address to be made public:
 - The name of the relevant area (the council name) in which the home address is situated (e.g. **Swindon** if within the borough)
 - If the address is outside the UK, then the name of the country in which the home address is situated

Candidate's
consent to
nomination (Form
1c)

- Must include:
 - Date of election
 - Full Name of candidate
 - Ward/Council area being contested
 - Cross through any qualification(s) that do not apply (must cross-reference with Form 1b)
 - Date of birth and signature
 - Date of consent (**no earlier than 9 March**)
 - Witness name and signature (from Form 1b)

Certificate of authorisation (Form 2)

- Party candidates must have written permission to use the party name/description from the party Nominating Officer
- **This must match the description on Form 1a**
- The certificate may:
 - allow the use of the party name or a particular description registered with the Electoral Commission
 - allow the candidate to choose the party name or any of the registered descriptions

Request for a party emblem (Form 3)

- Party candidates can ask for an emblem to be printed on the ballot paper
- Please use the description of the emblem as registered with the Electoral Commission
- Joint party candidates:
 - may use joint party description that must be supported by a certificate from each party
 - may use one emblem of one of the parties (there are no joint party emblems)

Notification of an election agent (Form 4)

- Responsible for the proper management of the election campaign for the candidate (particularly the financial management)
 - Agent's office address must be a physical address (cannot be a PO Box) within the borough or the parliamentary constituency of East Wiltshire
- Candidate becomes own agent by default if no agent appointed by 4pm on Thursday 9 April

Candidate contact information form

- Collection of email address and telephone number for each candidate and their agent
 - Only used by the Returning Officer for election notifications (e.g. confirmation of candidacy, appointing count and poll agents, and sending count tickets); and
 - Wiltshire Police for invitation to a security briefing; and
 - Sharing winning candidate contact information with relevant council / parish clerk.

Other agents

- Other agents can be appointed to attend postal vote openings, polling stations, and the count on a candidate's behalf
 - Candidate must give notice in writing of any people appointed as counting or polling agents by 29 April
 - The appointment of postal voting agents attending a particular opening session must be made before the start of the session

Access to electoral register/absent vote lists

- Access by candidates once they officially become a candidate:
 - earliest date is 30th March if they have declared as a candidate; or once they declare themselves a candidate or submit their nomination papers
- Only to be used for nomination, campaign, and checking donations/loans are permissible
- A **written** request to the ERO is required via elecereg@swindon.gov.uk

Electoral registration

- You should encourage people to register ASAP; deadline is 20 April and can be made online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote
- When registering, people need to provide:
 - their National Insurance number (NINO)
 - their date of birth and address
- People who do not have their NINO can still apply, but may need to provide further evidence before they are registered

Absent voting applications

- Registered electors can apply online at www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote or www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote
- When talking to electors, advise them to apply early and that they will need their NINO, DoB, signature and address
- Electors registered for a postal vote by 31 March will have it dispatched on 17th April
- The remainder will not be dispatched until 27 April

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 28 April**

Accepted forms of Voter ID 1/3

| International Travel | Driving and Parking |
|--|--|
| Passport issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or a British Overseas Territory | Driving licence (issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state) |
| Passport (or passport card) issued by an EEA state or a country whose citizens are Commonwealth citizens | A Blue Badge |

Accepted forms of Voter ID 2/3

| Local Travel | Proof of Age |
|--|--|
| Older Person's bus pass funded by the UK government | Identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card) |
| Disabled Person's bus pass funded by the UK government | |
| Oyster 60+ Card funded by the UK Government | |
| Freedom pass | |

Accepted forms of Voter ID 3/3

| Other Government issued documents | |
|---|--|
| Biometric Immigration document | Voter Authority Certificate |
| Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card) | Anonymous Elector's Document |
| Ministry of Defence Form 100 (HM Armed Forces Veteran Card) | Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland |
| Nationality identity card issued by an EEA state | |

Campaigning 1/3

- **Do** use imprints on all campaign material, including websites
- **Do** report any instances of intimidation to the Force Elected Officials Advisor at Wiltshire Police FEOA@wiltshire.police.uk
- **Do** ensure outdoor posters are removed 2 weeks after election
- **Do not** produce material that looks like a poll card
- **Do not** pay to display adverts (unless their normal business)
- **Do not** handle any postal voting documents you are not entitled to

Campaigning 2/3

- 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 redirection or electors to appoint a campaigner as proxy
- Voter Authority Certificate applications:
 - Not handle paper VAC applications and should encourage electors to send directly to ERO

Campaigning 3/3

- 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

Candidate spending 1/2

- 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 ward on register in force on **30 March**
 - reduced for joint candidates
- Must get and keep receipts (over £20)

Candidate spending 2/2

- You are a joint candidate if you stand in the same election in the same ward and one of the following conditions applies:
 - you have the same election agent
 - you use the same campaign rooms
 - you publish joint material
- Two joint candidates = reduce spending by 25% per candidate
- Three joint candidates = reduce spending by 33% per candidate

Candidate spending returns

- Returns due by **12 June** and made public by the Returning Officer
 - parish candidate spending returns due by **6 June**
- Sample of returns reviewed by the Electoral Commission
- Failure to submit a spending return is a criminal offence
- No spending will be reimbursed

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 – a maximum of five plus their own for each poll

Absent voting – who is a campaigner?

- 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

Postal votes handed in to civic offices

- 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
- 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 any other council building, or any posted into council letter boxes without completing the postal vote return form, will be rejected and will not be counted

Polling Day

- Polling stations open from 7am to 10pm
- Office open 7am to 9pm for queries or problems relating to the administration of the election
- Tellers must adhere to Electoral Commission guidance
- No supporters within the polling place (e.g. if the polling station is a room within a school, the polling place is the school grounds)

Postal votes handed in to polling stations

- Anyone returning postal votes by hand must complete a postal vote return form, otherwise the postal votes will be rejected
- An individual may hand in a maximum of 6 electors' postal votes (their own and five others)
- 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

Verification and counting of votes

- Held at STEAM
- Verification from 10pm on 7th May
- Borough counts 8th May
- Parish counts 9th May
- Details to follow after close of nominations



Contacts

- **Electoral registration**
 - elecereg@swindon.gov.uk
- **Election queries**
 - mbox@swindon.gov.uk
- **Electoral Commission**
 - 0333 103 1928

Thank you

www.swindon.gov.uk

