



Electoral Registration and Returning Officer

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To: Town & Parish Council election
candidates

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Ref: Aylesbury Parishes

Dear Candidate

Parish Council Elections in Aylesbury Vale – Thursday 6 May 2021

This year Parish elections will be combined with the Buckinghamshire Council and Police and Crime Commissioner election. There will also be two Neighbourhood Planning Referendums. One for Ickford and another for Great and Little Kimble-cum-Marsh.

The Electoral Commission (EC) has published a series of booklets entitled "Guidance for candidates and agents" which aim to provide practical advice for anyone who wants to stand as a candidate at Parish elections. Links to additional documents are highlighted in the booklets and both may be downloaded from the Commission's website www.electoralcommission.org.uk. Please be sure that you select the version for Parish elections.

The booklets are:

1. Can you stand for election?
2. Standing as an independent or party candidate (as appropriate)
3. Candidate spending
4. The campaign
5. Your right to attend key electoral events
6. After the declaration of the results

Further information on the arrangements made for the Parish Council elections is given below.

Standing as a candidate

A set of nomination papers (nomination form; home address form; and your consent to nomination) is attached for your use. Additionally, a certificate of authorisation; request for a party emblem; notice of withdrawal; and the respective forms for appointing counting agents, polling agents and postal voting agents are also attached for use (to be completed only if required). Also included is a candidate expense form which must be returned within 28 days after the election. The EC 'Standing as a Candidate' booklet provides essential information regarding being nominated which I would ask you to read carefully.

Questions of eligibility or disqualification are matters for the candidate only and the Returning Officer is unable to provide advice. If you have any concerns having read the EC guidance you should seek your own legal advice.

The nomination papers must be hand delivered to Electoral Services, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF by 4pm on Thursday 8 April. If you visit this office, we can check the forms on an informal basis and draw attention to any amendments that need to be made before they are formally submitted. Otherwise any incorrect papers will have to be rejected.

On visiting The Gateway, you must register and sign out with Reception for track and trace purposes. You must also wear a facemask at all times.

Your nomination papers must be submitted in person and cannot be submitted by post, fax, e-mail or other electronic means. Any nomination papers submitted other than by hand will be rejected. Parish clerks may hand deliver nomination papers to the relevant Deputy Returning Officer, on behalf of a candidate, but where you do so please allow sufficient time for any potential queries to be resolved before the deadline. Please note, due to the volume of nominations we expect to receive, you may experience a waiting time during submission.

You must include with your consent to nomination the pages of legal references in the pack, which are specifically referred to in the declaration you sign.

The Notice of Election will be displayed on Monday 22 March and completed nomination papers can only formally be submitted on or after that date up to 4pm on Thursday 8 April. They can only be delivered between 10am-4pm on working days.

Register of Electors

As a candidate you are entitled to a free copy of the electoral register for the parish area or parish ward where you are standing for election. The earliest you can officially become a candidate, and request a copy of the electoral register, for this election is 22 March. You should use the Register of Electors to ensure that your nomination form is properly subscribed.

To request a copy of the electoral register please contact the Deputy Returning Officer by email to elections@buckinghamshire.gov.uk, specifying if you wish to receive it in paper or electronic format. You must ensure that you keep the electoral register secure and, once you have finished with it, ensure that it is securely destroyed.

If you wish to check elector numbers for subscribers before 22 March it is recommended that you contact the Parish Clerk.

Spending and donations

Please note that the spending limit is £806.00 plus 7p per elector in the Parish or Parish Ward being contested. If you need further help or clarification on the rules surrounding election expenses, please contact the EC direct. Their contact details are on the final page of the booklet "Spending & Donations".

The elector number candidates will need is the total number of qualified electors on the local government register as at 22 March.

After the election you will be required to submit a return of your election spending and donations received. Actual expenses are not reimbursed. The return must be submitted to the Deputy Returning Officer by Thursday 3 June and a set of forms for this purpose is attached. **Please note 'nil' returns are required.**

The campaign

May I particularly draw your attention to the following in the EC booklet:

- That campaign materials, including websites, posters and literature distributed during the election must bear an imprint. If in any doubt, please refer to the EC for guidance.
- The need to comply with planning rules relating to advertising hoardings, posters and large banners. You should not erect any election materials on the highway i.e. all verges and opens spaces up to legal property boundaries. Your co-operation in this respect will be much appreciated to avoid unnecessary problems and potential public expense in having to remove the items.
- Tellers. It would be helpful if you could read the EC "do's and don't's". If you do have any tellers working for you please ensure they are aware. A copy will be on display in the entrance areas of polling places.
- Postal votes. The EC has agreed a code of conduct with the larger political parties on the handling of postal vote applications and postal ballot papers. This code represents an agreed standard of acceptable behaviour that all candidates, agents and party workers are expected to follow in this election, without exception.

Attendance at key electoral events

This EC booklet provides helpful guidance to candidates on three key stages in the electoral process.

Postal votes

The candidate, and his/her postal vote agent are entitled to attend the opening of returned postal votes. Additionally, one agent may be appointed to attend the opening(s) on your behalf, using the form attached. Please note that due to the need to be COVID secure candidates and agents are required to inform the Deputy Local Returning Officer before attending a postal vote opening session.

The opening of postal ballot papers received will take place daily from 9.00am on 22 April until 6 May, at The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF. A final opening will take place on Thursday 6 May after the close of poll commencing at approx. 10.15pm hours at the same location and/or at the count venue.

Please note that during postal vote openings the ballot papers will be handled face down.

Polling Stations

You are entitled to observe proceedings inside polling stations. Additionally, you may appoint polling agents to attend polling stations on your behalf and the role of such individuals is described in the EC booklet.

- A form for the appointment of polling agents is enclosed. Please note that the deadline for the appointment of polling agents is Wednesday 28 April.

The verification and count.

The verification and count processes will be confirmed in due course.

As a candidate in the Parish/Town Council elections you will be entitled to attend the verification and, of course, the actual count. However, you will not be able to be present at the Buckinghamshire Council or Police and Crime Commissioner election counts unless you have been appointed as a counting agent by those who have an interest in the proceedings.

Candidates will be advised later of the number of counting agents that they may appoint to observe the count and draw attention to anything which concerns them. Please note that due to limited space available and the need to ensure COVID secure arrangements attendance will be strictly limited. Admission details to the count will be issued later.

Please note that my staff actually count the votes. The deadline for the appointment of counting agents is Wednesday 28 April.

After the declaration of the result

The final booklet in the EC series describes some of the essential post-election activity. In summary:

- If elected, your appointment as councillor will become effective on the fourth day after the election (Monday 10 May). However, you may not act as councillor (this includes attending and voting at meetings) until you have signed the declaration of acceptance of office. The Parish Clerk will make arrangements with successful candidates for declarations to be given.
- Within 28 calendar days of polling day you will need to prepare and submit to the Returning Officer an election spending return. In addition, you will need to sign a declaration stating that the return is complete and correct. Your election spending return is due to be submitted by Thursday 3 June 2021.
- Successful candidates will be required to complete a Register of Interests and return this to the Parish Clerk within 28 days of being elected.

If there are any points of clarification please contact me.