



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Candidate and Agent guide

Election verification and count

April 2024

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Introduction

Hello

Welcome to this guide for Candidates and Agents.

On 2 May 2024, we have elections across West Mercia for the Police & Crime Commissioner. We understand that elections can be an exciting time but may also be stressful for some people. Following successful nomination, there are a number of key things that take place in the next few weeks leading up to, and including, Polling Day. We know that many of these activities are important to you, as candidates and agents, and we hope that this Guide will help to keep you informed about what to expect during those activities.

The 'main event' - the count - is a busy time and it is important to us that you feel informed about what to expect during the process.

The aim of this guide is to provide you with some information regarding the Police & Crime Commissioner elections process across the various local authority areas within West Mercia in the period leading up to Polling Day and at the count itself.

The team and I are happy to answer any questions you might have.

David Sidaway

Police Area Returning Officer (PARO)

April 2024

Meet the team at Telford & Wrekin

There are a number of people who you are likely to meet during the election period. They are here to help you and your colleagues, and to answer any questions you might have.



David Sidaway
Police Area Returning Officer (PARO)



Anthea Lowe
Deputy Police Area Returning Officer



Richard Phillips
Deputy Local Returning Officer

Phil Griffiths
Deputy Local Returning Officer



Emily Ogram
Senior Democracy Officer (Elections)



Wendy Buckley
Democracy Officer (Elections)



Chloe Beddows
Democracy Officer (Elections)

Helpful contact details

The following details are reserved for Candidates and Agents only to support you in being able to contact us easily. **We would ask that these details are not passed on to members of the public.**

The PARO Elections Team

Anthea Lowe Director: Policy & Governance	07903 747303	anthea.lowe@telford.gov.uk
Richard Phillips Service Delivery Manager: Legal & Democracy	01952 383241	richard.phillips@telford.gov.uk
Phil Griffiths Elections Team Leader	01952 384280	phil.griffiths@telford.gov.uk
Emily Ogram Senior Democracy Officer (Elections)	01952 381889	emily.ogram@telford.gov.uk
Chloe Beddows Democracy Officer (Elections)	01952 383140	chloe.beddows@telford.gov.uk
Wendy Buckley Democracy Officer (Elections)	01952 383202	wendy.buckley@telford.gov.uk

For Members of the Public

The following details can be passed on to members of the public who have any queries

Office Address	Darby House, Ironmasters Way, Telford TF3 4JA	
Telephone Number	01952 383206	
E-Mail Queries	Electoral Queries	elections@telford.gov.uk
	Registration Queries	registration@telford.gov.uk
Website	www.telford.gov.uk/elections	

Police Area Returning Officer's Office

David Sidaway Chief Executive	01952 380130	david.sidaway@telford.gov.uk
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Other

Electoral Commission	0333 103 1928	General: info@electoralcommission.org.uk Political Finance: pef@electoralcommission.org.uk
West Mercia SPOC		ElectionSpoc@westmercia.police.uk

Local Returning Officer teams

Candidates and agents will be aware that the election of the Police & Crime Commissioner will be conducted across nine voting areas in West Mercia, as follows:

- Bromsgrove District Council
- Herefordshire Council
- Malvern Hills District Council
- Redditch Borough Council
- Shropshire Council
- Telford & Wrekin Council
- Worcester City Council
- Wychavon District Council
- Wyre Forest District Council

The elections will be conducted by Local Returning Officers (LRO) at each of those authorities shown above. Whilst the majority of any queries you might have will be dealt with by the PARO and his team, we have also provided details of each LRO and their teams below. You should contact the relevant LRO in respect of matters relating to the appointment of Postal Voting Agents, Polling Agents and Counting Agents.

Bromsgrove District Council Claire Felton (Head of Legal Democratic and Property Services) Local Returning Officer	07809665536	c.felton@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Melissa Bassett Senior Electoral Services Officer	01527 587014	melissa.bassett@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Darren Whitney Electoral Services Manager	01527 861650	darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Electoral Shared Services, Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH		
Herefordshire Council Paul Walker (Chief Executive), Local Returning Officer	01432 260045	paul.walker@herefordshire.gov.uk
Colette Maund, Electoral Services Manager	01432 260696	colette.maund@herefordshire.gov.uk
Electoral Services Office, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford, HR1 2LX		
Malvern Hills District Council Andy Baldwin (Chief Executive), Local Returning Officer	01684 862200	Andy.baldwin@malvern hills.gov.uk
Katie Vass, Electoral Services Manager	01684 862200	Katie.vass@malvern hills.gov.uk
Malvern Hills District Council, Avenue Road, Malvern WR14 3AF		
Redditch Borough Council Sue Hanley (Chief Executive) Local Returning Officer	01527 534118	s.hanley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Melissa Bassett Senior Electoral Services Officer	01527 587014	melissa.bassett@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Darren Whitney Electoral Services Manager	01527 861650	darren.whitney@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk
Electoral Shared Services, Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square Redditch, B98 8AH		
Shropshire Council Andy Begley (Chief Executive), Local Returning Officer	01743 258675	andy.begley@shropshire.gov.uk

<p>Ann Almond, Democratic Team Leader - Elections</p> <p>Electoral Services, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND</p>	<p>01743 252330</p>	<p>ann.almond@shropshire.gov.uk</p>
<p>Worcester City Council Shane Flynn (Corporate Director Finance and Resources), Local Returning Officer Claire Chaplin, Democratic and Civic Services Manager</p> <p>Guildhall, High Street, Worcester, WR1 2EY</p>	<p>01905 722536 01905 722530</p>	<p>shane.flynn@worcester.gov.uk electoralservices@worcester.gov.uk</p>
<p>Wychavon District Council Vic Allison (Chief Executive), Local Returning Officer</p> <p>Jon Morgan – Electoral Service Manager</p> <p>Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore WR10 1PJ</p>	<p>01386 565437 01386 565232</p>	<p>vic.allison@wychavon.gov.uk Jonathan.morgan@wychavon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Wyre Forest District Council Ian Miller (Chief Executive), Local Returning Officer</p> <p>Jordan Billingham, Electoral Services Manager</p> <p>Wyre Forest House, Finepoint Way, Kidderminster, DY11 7WF</p>	<p>01562 732700 01562 732733</p>	<p>Ian.Miller@wyreforestdc.gov.uk Electoral@wyreforestdc.gov.uk</p>

Other helpful information

There are some documents that you and your colleagues might find useful. Copies are available for collection with this Guide. They can also be accessed using the links set out below.

There are some documents that you and your colleagues might find useful. Copies are available for collection with this Guide. They can also be accessed using the links set out below.

Code of Conduct for Campaigners

Guidance produced by the Electoral Commission, is available [here](#). It sets out the expectations of candidates and their campaigners during the period leading up to the election.

Candidate imprints factsheet

Again, this guidance is published by the Electoral Commission. It can be found [here](#). It provides helpful information on what an imprint is and when it is required, as well as setting out some good practice in respect of imprints.

Tellers' Guidance

Accessible [here](#), provides information on the activity of Tellers in polling stations.

After the election, the Marked Polling Station Register and Marked Absent Voter Lists can be requested and is available to the following parties after the election has taken place:

- The Electoral Commission
- Elected Representatives for electoral purposes only
- Local Constituency Parties
- Registered Political Parties
- Candidates who stood at the election
- Government Departments and Other Bodies
- Police Forces or other Security Agents

Application Forms for the Marked Register will be made available after the declaration of the result.

Useful Websites

[Candidate/Agent section of Electoral Commission website](#)

- [Bromsgrove District Council](#)
- [Herefordshire Council](#)
- [Malvern Hills District Council](#)
- [Redditch Borough Council](#)
- [Shropshire Council](#)
- [Telford & Wrekin Council](#)
- [Worcester City Council](#)
- [Wychavon District Council](#)
- [Wyre Forest District Council](#)

Key dates for candidates and agents

We are required to provide notice to candidates and agents of a few key dates. Please see more information below.

Event	Notice given in accordance with	Time and place	Number of Agents who may attend
Opening of the Postal Votes	The Police & Crime Commissioner Elections Order 2012 – Schedule 2, paragraph 44	No earlier than 15 April 2024 Opening Sessions held at various locations within West Mercia Police Area, with one in each voting area. Details of the locations for each voting area are shown in this guidance.	See details at section 6 of this guidance for further information in respect of each voting area.
Appointment of Polling Agents	The Police & Crime Commissioner Elections Order	25 April 2024	Not more than one polling agent may be admitted at the same time to a polling station

	2012 – Schedule 3, paragraph 31	To the LRO with responsibility for the relevant voting area	on behalf of the same candidate.
Appointment of Sub-agent	The Police & Crime Commissioner Elections Order 2012 – Article 27	25 April 2024 Telford & Wrekin Council Darby House Lawn Central Telford TF4 3JA	Not more than one to be appointed per part of the police area
Appointment of Counting Agents	The Police & Crime Commissioner Elections Order 2012 – Schedule 3, Paragraph 31	25 April 2024 To the LRO with responsibility for the relevant voting area	Numbers to be confirmed as polling day approaches
Verification of the Votes	The Police & Crime Commissioner Elections Order 2012 - Schedule 3, Paragraph 48	Please see section 8 of this guidance for details of the verification process and venues in each of the voting areas.	Counting agents are permitted to attend the verification. More details in respect of each voting area are set out in section 10 of this guidance. Notice of appointment of count agents must be given to the respective Local Returning Officer by no later than 25 April 2024.
Counting of the Votes	The Police & Crime Commissioner Elections Order 2012 - Schedule 3, Paragraph 51	Please see section 8 of this guidance for details of the process and venues in each of the voting areas.	Counting agents are permitted to attend the verification. More details in respect of each voting area are set

			<p>out in section 10 of this guidance.</p> <p>Notice of appointment of count agents must be given to the respective Local Returning Officer by no later than 25 April 2024. When giving notice of appointment, candidates must also notify the LRO which counting agent is authorised to request a recount (only one per candidate in each voting area).</p>
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Postal Vote opening information

There will be postal vote opening sessions held at various locations throughout the West Mercia Police Area. Each Local Returning Officer will be responsible for arranging sessions for their respective voting areas. Details of each postal vote opening venue, and current planned opening sessions are shown below:

Bromsgrove	<p>4th Floor Town Hall Walter Stranz Square Redditch B98 8AH</p> <p>Candidates and Agents must book as there will be limited access to the Town Hall</p>	18 April onwards
Herefordshire Council	<p>Assembly Hall, Town Hall, St Owen Street, Hereford, HR1 2PJ</p>	<p>Tuesday 16 April from 2pm to 4pm</p> <p>Wednesday 17 April to 1 May from 10am to 4pm</p>

		Thursday 2 May from 8pm till finished
Malvern Hills District Council	<p>The Council Chamber, Malvern Hills District Council, Avenue Road, Malvern WR14 3AF</p> <p>Day of Poll – final postal vote opening session in the Pear Tree Room, Bank House Hotel, Worcester WR6 5JD</p>	<p>Daily from 9am Wednesday 17 April 2024 – Wednesday 1 May 2024</p> <p>Day of poll – 7pm Thursday 2 May 2024</p> <p>Dates and times may be subject to change</p>
Redditch Borough Council	<p>4th Floor Town Hall Walter Stranz Square Redditch B98 8AH</p> <p>Candidates and Agents must book as there will be limited access to the Town Hall</p>	18 April onwards
Shropshire Council	Wilfred Owen Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND.	<p>Tuesday 23 April Start 1.00pm Finish 4.00pm Wednesday 24 April; Thursday 25 April; Friday 26 April; Monday 29 April; Tuesday 30 April; Wednesday 1 May; Start 8.30am Finish 4.00pm (unless sessions conclude earlier) Thursday 2 May Start 8.30am Finish 2.00pm</p> <p>Shrewsbury Sports Village, Sundorne Road, Shrewsbury, SY1 4RQ</p>

		<p>Thursday 2 May Start first session 8.00pm Start second session 10.00pm</p>
Telford & Wrekin Council	<p>Telford & Wrekin Council Floor 3 Darby House Lawn Central Telford and Wrekin Council TF4 3JA</p>	<p>Daily from Tuesday 16 April 2024 until Thursday 2 May 2024 commencing at 10am.</p> <p>A final postal vote opening session will take place on Thursday 2 May at</p> <p>Telford Tennis Centre New Road Wrockwardine Wood Telford TF2 7AB</p> <p>This will commence at 9pm.</p> <p>Confirmation of any changes to these sessions will be shared with any candidates and election agents by email.</p>
Worcester City Council	<p>Guildhall, High Street, Worcester, WR1 2EY</p>	<p>12pm-7pm Monday 22 April 10.30am-6pm Wednesday 24 April 10.30am-6pm Friday 26 April 10.30am-6pm Wednesday 1 May 3pm-9pm Thursday 2 May</p> <p>Perdiswell Leisure Centre, Bilford Road, Worcester, WR3 8DX 10pm-midnight Thursday 2 May</p>

Wychavon District Council	Committee Room, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore WR10 1PJ	Thursday 18 th April 10am then daily at 10am up to the election
Wyre Forest District Council	(Stourport and Bewdley Room) Wyre Forest House Finepoint Way Kidderminster DY11 7WF	Thursday 18th April 2024 – 10am Friday 19th April 2024 – 10am Monday 22nd April 2024 – 10am Wednesday 24th April 2024 -10am Friday 26th April 2024 – 10am Tuesday 30th April 2024 – 10am Wednesday 1st May 2024- 10am Thursday 2nd May 2024 – 10am Wyre Forest Leisure Centre Silverwoods Way Stourport Road Kidderminster DY11 7DT Thursday 2nd May 2024 – 10pm

Appointment of Postal Voting Agents

You can appoint postal voting agents to attend any of the sessions listed above by contacting the LRO for the relevant voting area prior to the start of any session that you would like your postal voting agent to attend.

Postal Voting overview

The Local Returning Officers have thorough processes in place for opening postal votes. Any candidates, agents or other observers attending a postal vote opening session will have access to explanatory notes and a flow chart providing details about the process. Postal

Vote Supervisors can also carry out a 'walk-through' for those who may be unfamiliar with the process. The process is summarised below.

Stage 1

- After counting the number of envelope Bs received, the external envelope B's will be opened before being passed to stage 2.

Stage 2

- The postal vote statement and ballot paper envelope As are extracted and placed into two separate piles. The piles will be collated in a manner which keeps the postal vote statement and the envelope As in the same order. The outer envelope B's will be discarded at this stage after checks that all contents have been removed.
- The postal vote statement is checked for the presence of personal identifier information (date of birth and signature). If the date of birth or signature are missing, they are placed in the *provisionally rejected* tray to be dealt with at stage 3.
- A check is made to ensure that the ballot paper number at the top of the postal vote statement matches the number displayed in the window of the A envelope.
- At this stage, any postal voter statements that are received without an envelope A will be set aside so that attempts can be made to match it up with the correct envelope A at a later date should it arrive before the close of poll. They will be stored securely and attempts to match the statement with the envelope A will continue throughout the postal vote opening period.
- Similarly, any envelope As received without an accompanying postal voter statement will also be set aside so that attempts can be made to match it up with the relevant postal voter statement at a later date should it arrive before the close of poll. They will be stored securely and attempts to match the envelope A with its respective postal voting statement will continue throughout the postal vote opening period.
- All postal vote statements (and accompanying ballot papers), other than those that have arrived alone (envelope A without a postal vote statement or vice versa), will be passed to Stage 3.

Stage 3

- Each postal vote statement will be scanned to check that the date of birth and signature completed by the elector correctly match with records held by the Electoral Registration Officer.

- If correct, the postal vote statements are bundled into batches to be stored securely. The accompanying ballot paper envelope A's are passed forward to stage 4.
- If either or both of the personal identifiers on a postal vote statement are found to be incorrect, the corresponding envelope A is removed from the bundle, and they are both kept to one side to be adjudicated later in the day.
- At this stage, the scanners and Postal Vote Supervisors are authorised to reject those postal vote statements that do not carry either a date of birth or signature (except those that benefit from a waiver).

Stage 4

- Ballot paper envelope as are then opened.
- Ballot papers are extracted from the remaining envelope As and are kept FACE DOWN.
- They will be counted into bundles of 25 (or such other number as determined by the LRO) before being secured with a paperclip. They will then proceed to the final stage 5.

Stage 5

- At stage 5, the ballot papers are double counted to ensure they have been accurately bundled into 25s (or such other number as determined by the LRO), collated into 100s (or such other number as determined by the LRO) and then the Postal Vote Supervisor will place them into a ballot box marked with the postal vote opening session details.
- Ballot boxes will be sealed at the end of each session and the seal number recorded.

The final recording process

- A record is kept of all rejected and provisionally rejected ballot papers/statements.
- Those that arrived without either a ballot paper or a postal vote statement are retained for cross-reference purposes, as they may be able to be "matched" before the end of the count.
- The rejected ballot papers (i.e. those which have incorrect or missing personal data on the postal voting statements) are recorded, together with the reason for that rejection, and securely stored.

Candidates and agents can attend the postal vote opening sessions and can also observe the adjudication sessions.

Candidates and their duly-appointed agents are able to object to the rejection of any postal vote statement/ballot paper. In doing so, they may see the personal identifier's record – this will be displayed on a large screen for the benefit of candidates and agents.

Postal Vote handling rules

Due to changes introduced by the Elections Act 2022, there have been a number of changes made in respect of postal vote handling. They are summarised below.

- Candidates, agents, their staff, political party officers and those campaigning at an election are not permitted to handle postal vote documents other than their own and those of a spouse, civil partner, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child, grandchild, someone they are cohabiting with or someone they provide care for. Breach of this rule is a criminal offence punishable by a fine or prison sentence of up to two years. More information is available at [Postal voting documents | Electoral Commission](#)
- Those who choose not to return their postal vote by hand, either to the office of an LRO or to a polling station are now required to complete a postal vote return form confirming some key pieces of information. If any voter delivering their postal vote by hand fails to do this, or does not meet the required criteria when completing the form, their vote will be rejected and will not be taken forward to a postal vote opening session. More information is available at [Managing receipt of postal votes handed in to the Local Returning Officer | Electoral Commission](#)
- Individuals can only hand in 5 postal votes in addition to their own in respect of each election. If they attempt to hand in more than the allowed amount, the LRO's team will only accept their postal vote and reject all others. Any that are rejected will not be taken forward to a postal vote opening session.

Candidates and agents are asked to familiarise themselves with the new postal vote handling rules and help to communicate these changes to any electors that they speak to.

Polling Day

Candidates can appoint polling agents who can observe proceedings in polling stations across the police area. Notice of appointment of polling agents must be given to the relevant LRO by no later than Thursday 25 April 2024.

The maximum number of polling agents allowed in a polling station at any time is four. Only one polling agent per candidate is permitted inside any polling station at the same time.

Each LRO will publish a Notice of Situation of Polling Stations no later than Wednesday 24 April 2024 setting out the location of each polling station within their voting area.

Each LRO will then send the published notice to the PARO for onward circulation to candidates and agents.

Tellers

Tellers are an important part of the democratic process on Polling Day. However, it is important that they comply with the Campaigners' Code of Conduct and the Tellers Dos and Don'ts. These documents are available at [Code of Conduct for Campaigners at UK Parliamentary general elections in Great Britain, local elections in England and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections | Electoral Commission](#) and [Tellers dos and donts generic \(electoralcommission.org.uk\)](#) respectively.

If a Presiding Officer feels that a Teller or Tellers are impeding entry to, and exit from, a polling station, they may ask them to move to a different location. It is expected that Tellers will comply with such a request without delay.

The Verification and Count

The LRO's for each voting area within the West Mercia Police Area have made arrangements for the verification and count of ballots.

Details of the locations and timings for the verification are set out below.

Bromsgrove	Abby Stadium Birmingham Road Redditch B97 6EJ	Verification will commence at 9:15am on Friday 03 May 2024
Herefordshire Council	Hereford Leisure Centre Holmer Road Hereford HR4 9U	Verification will commence at 8:30am on Friday 3 May 2024
Malvern Hills District Council	Bank House Hotel, Bransford, Worcester, WR6 5JD	Verification will commence at 9am on Friday 3 May 2024
Redditch Borough Council	Abbey Stadium Birmingham Road Redditch B97 6EJ	Verification will commence at 10pm on Thursday 2 May 2024.

Shropshire Council	Shrewsbury Sports Village Sundorne Road Sundorne Shrewsbury SY1 4RQ	Verification will commence at 10pm on Thursday 2 May 2024.
Telford & Wrekin Council	Telford Tennis Centre New Road Wrockwardine Wood Telford TF2 7AB	Verification will commence at 10pm on Thursday 2 May 2024.
Worcester City Council	Perdiswell Leisure Centre Bilford Road Worcester WR3 8D	Verification will commence at 9am on Friday 3 May 2024
Wyche District Council	Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore WR10 1PJ	Verification will commence at 9am on Friday 3 May 2024
Wyre Forest District Council	Wyre Forest Leisure Centre Silverwoods way Off Stourport Road Kidderminster DY11 7DT	Verification will commence at 9:30am on Friday 3 May

Verification

The first stage of the count process will be verification. All ballot boxes – those containing postal votes returned through the postal vote opening period and those from polling stations – will be verified from the times set out above. Some LROs also have local elections taking place. Where this is the case, verification of all votes – those for the PCC election and those for local elections – will take place at the same time before moving on to the count.

The purpose of the verification process is to verify that the number of ballot papers received (postal ballot papers and ballot papers from polling stations) matches the number of ballot papers issued in the respective voting area.

Each ballot box will be verified separately. Each one will be emptied onto a count table for assistants to sort the papers and start counting them. They will be counted face up and collated into bundles of a quantity decided by the LRO. The total number of ballots will then

be calculated before being communicated to the PARO. The PARO will then decide whether or not there is a need for any further action to confirm the verification figure from each voting area.

The Local Returning Officer for each voting area will share the verification statement with candidates and agents present at their respective areas and will provide an opportunity for candidates/agents to have a copy of the. This will only take place after the PARO has confirmed that the verification figures for the respective voting area are accepted.

It is anticipated that the PARO will receive the verification figures from all voting areas by no later than 11.30am on Friday 3 May 2024.

Once this exercise has been completed, the ballots will either be stored securely until commencement of the count on the afternoon of Friday 3 May 2024 or taken directly into the count (dependent upon when the verification is taking place in each voting area).

Candidates, agents and permitted guests are entitled to attend the verification events although the LRO for each voting area may limit the number of attendees permitted entrance. It is important that candidates and agents notify the LRO for each respective voting area details of those people who will be in attendance. Details of the numbers of people permitted to attend in each voting area is set out in this guidance.

Count

The count of votes across the Police area is expected to begin at 12.30pm Friday 3 May 2024. However, it should be noted that the count will only commence once the PARO has received, and confirmed, the verification figures for all voting areas.

Bromsgrove	Abby Stadium Birmingham Road Redditch B97 6EJ
Herefordshire Council	Hereford Leisure Centre Holmer Road Hereford HR4 9UD
Malvern Hills District Council	Bank House Hotel, Bransford, Worcester, WR6 5JD
Redditch Borough Council	Abbey Stadium Birmingham Road Redditch B97 6EJ
Shropshire Council	Shrewsbury Sports Village Sundorne Road Sundorne Shrewsbury SY1 4RQ
Telford & Wrekin Council	Telford Tennis Centre New Road Wrockwardine Wood

	Telford TF2 7AB
Worcester City Council	Perdiswell Leisure Centre Bilford Road Worcester WR3 8DX
Wychavon District Council	Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Pershore WR10 1PJ
Wyre Forest District Council	Wyre Forest Leisure Centre Silverwoods way Off Stourport Road Kidderminster DY11 7DT

After the PARO has received the verification figures from each voting area and the verification total has been announced, each LRO will be given instruction to commence the counting of votes. It is anticipated that the count for the entire police area will commence on or shortly after 12.30pm on Friday 3 May 2024.

Before the count begins, LROs will mix the contents of ballot boxes received from polling stations with boxes of postal votes.

Boxes will then be emptied onto tables for counting. The count assistants will, first, sort the ballots into candidates before being counted. The ballot papers will remain face up for this process.

Whilst sorting the ballot papers into candidates, the count assistants will also identify any doubtful ballot papers – those papers that need to be adjudicated by the LRO and their team – and place them to one side for a decision from the LRO.

Once the ballot papers have been sorted into candidates, they will be counted into bundles of a predetermined number decided by the LRO. Any bundles of less than the LRO's predetermined amount will be collated and a note attached to the bundle with the number of ballots in the bundle.

The LRO and their teams will adjudicate doubtful papers throughout the count process. Candidates and agents will be invited to observe this process and, if a ballot paper is rejected, can object to that rejection. More information about doubtful papers is provided at **section 9** of this guidance.

Once all votes have been counted and all doubtful papers have been adjudicated, the LRO will provisionally collate the count totals for their voting area and will notify the PARO of the provisional totals. At this stage, the PARO may ask the LRO to undertake a recount.

Once the PARO has confirmed that the figures are accepted, the LRO will share the provisional results with any candidates and agents present at their local count venue (note

that only one counting agent designated by the candidate and the election agent/sub-agent are entitled to request a recount). It is for the LRO in each voting area to consider a request for a recount and decide whether or not such a request is reasonable. It is for the LRO to decide whether or not a recount will be undertaken. In circumstances where the LRO may decide not to carry out a recount, they may offer a bundle check instead. Any decision to offer a recount or a bundle check is entirely a matter for the LRO in each voting area.

In the event of a recount, the LRO will then notify the PARO again of the provisional local totals.

If no recount is requested, or once the process above (including recounts) has been completed, the LRO will notify the PARO of the final totals before declaring the local result when the PARO has confirmed that they can do so.

During the count process, the PARO will receive count totals from each LRO within the police area. Once final local totals from each voting area are received, the PARO will proceed to calculate the results for the whole police area.

The PARO will receive local totals with the final local totals and the calculation of the police area results will then commence. Once this process has been completed, the provisional results for the whole police area will be shared with agents present at the PARO venue before going on to declare the final results.

Adjudication of doubtful ballot papers

As set out earlier in this guidance, the LROs in each voting area are responsible for adjudicating doubtful papers.

Such adjudications will be guided by the following principles:

- Clarity and consistency in decision-making;
- Taking time to ensure that a considered decision is given in every case;
- Determining whether the intention of the voter is clear on the ballot paper

As part of the adjudication process, the LROs will consider the whole of the ballot paper and also consider whether the way in which a ballot papers has been marked means that a vote for one candidate is clearly apparent.

A ballot paper will be rejected if it:

- Does not bear the official mark;
- Gives votes to more than one candidate;
- Contains writing or other mark by which the voter can be identified; or
- Is unmarked or void for uncertainty.

A ballot paper will not be rejected if it is marked in one of the following ways:

- Elsewhere than in the proper place;

- Otherwise than by means of a cross; or
- By more than one mark (if the voter's intention is clear)

Where a ballot paper is torn or damaged, it is still capable of being accepted as a valid vote if it contains the official mark and the intention of the voter is clear.

When considering doubtful ballot papers, the LROs will have regard to the guidance issued by the Electoral Commission which is available at [Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers - Verification and Count | Electoral Commission](#) (NB This links to guidance for Returning Officers in parliamentary elections but, with regard to doubtful ballot papers, remains applicable in PCC elections). LROs will also refer to the doubtful ballot paper placements available from the Electoral Commission available at [PCC Doubtful ballot paper placemat.pdf \(electoralcommission.org.uk\)](#).

Each ballot paper rejected through the adjudication process will be marked rejected. In the event that an agent objects to a ballot paper being rejected, it will also be marked with the words "rejection objected to".

In the event of any recount, the LRO is entitled to consider, again, any ballot papers that have previously been adjudicated.

Attendance at the verification and count events

The LRO in each voting area is responsible for confirming the number of attendees permitted in the verification and count venues. These have been determined locally as follows:

Voting Area	Agents	Other guests	Arrival time
Bromsgrove	1 x Election Agent or Sub-Agent 5 x Counting Agent	1 Guest of the Candidate	Entry to the verification centre will be granted from 9:00am on Friday 03 May 2024
Herefordshire Council	1 x Election Agent or Sub-Agent 17 x Counting Agents	1 x Spouse / Partner, 1 x other guests Details of all guests (including spouses/partners) must be notified in writing to the Elections Team by no later than 4pm on Monday 29 April 2024. Please email elections@herefordshire.gov.uk to provide these details	Please email to provide these details

Malvern Hills District Council	1 x Election Agent or Sub-Agent 5 x Counting Agents	1 x Spouse / Partner, 1 x other guests Details of all guests (including spouses/partners) must be notified in writing to the Elections team by no later than 4pm on Monday 29 April 2024. Please email elections@malvern hills.gov.uk to provide these details.	9am
Redditch Borough Council	1 x Election Agent or Sub-Agent 3 x Verification Agents 6 x Counting Agents	1 x Guest of the Candidate	Entry to the verification centre will be granted from 9.30pm on Thursday 2 May 2024. Entry to the count centre will be granted from 12.15pm on Friday 3 May 2024.
Shropshire Council	1 x Election Agent or Sub-Agent 27 x Counting Agent	1 x Spouse / Partner 1 x other guests	Entry to the verification centre will be granted from 9.45pm; and access to the verification hall will be granted from 9.55pm on Thursday 2 May 2024 Entry to the count centre will be granted from 12.15pm; and access to the count hall will be granted from 12.25pm on Friday 3 May 2024.
Telford & Wrekin Council	1 x Election Agent or Sub-Agent 24 x Counting Agents	1 x Spouse / Partner 1 x other guests Details of all guests (including spouses/partners) must be notified in writing to the Elections team by no later than 4pm on Monday 29 April 2024. Please email	Entry to the verification centre will be granted from 9.50pm on Thursday 2 May 2024. Entry to the count centre will be granted from 11am on Friday 3 May 2024.

		PARO@telford.gov.uk to provide these details.	
Worcester City Council	1 x Election Agent or Sub-Agent 2 x Counting Agents	Due to capacity at the venue, no additional guests can be accommodated	Entry to the verification & count centre will be granted from 8.45am on Friday 3 May 2024
Wychavon District Council	1 x Election Agent or Sub-Agent 8x Counting Agents	1 x Spouse / Partner, 1 x other guests Details of all guests (including spouses/partners) must be notified in writing to the Elections team by no later than 4pm on Monday 29 April 2024.	Please email to provide these details
Wyre Forest District Council	1 x Election Agent or Sub-Agent 2 x Counting Agents	All guests are included in the Count Agents	Entry will be granted from 9:20am on Friday 3 May 2024

The above attendees are in addition to the candidate.

In addition, the following people are also legally entitled to attend proceedings:

- The PARO and his staff;
- Electoral Commission representatives;
- Accredited observers;
- Any other persons permitted by the LROs to attend.

Everybody in attendance at the verification and count proceedings must ensure that they do not interfere with, or compromise, the secrecy of the vote. The secrecy requirements are available at [Secrecy requirements - the count - standalone Police and Crime Commissioner election \(DOCX\)](#).

In the event that the LRO has any concerns in this regard, they may ask individuals to leave the count venue.

Attendees will not be permitted entry into the relevant count venues if their names have not been provided to the LRO in accordance with the requirements set out above.

Upon arrival at the count venue, attendees will be provided an identifier. This allows staff to verify that all attendees have been given approved admission to the venue.

After the election

There are a number of things that need to take place after the election. It is important that candidates and agents understand what is required so that they are able to comply with the rules.

Declaration of the acceptance of office

The successful candidate must make a declaration of acceptance of office which must be made before one of the following individuals:

- The appropriate officer (in this case, the Chief Executive of Telford & Wrekin Council);
- A justice of the peace or magistrate in the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man; or
- A commissioner appointed to administer oaths in the Senior Courts.

The PARO is the Chief Executive of Telford & Wrekin Council and, if the successful candidate is present at the count venue when the results are announced, will be available to take the declaration of acceptance of office at that point in time. In the event that it is not possible to do this, the declaration **must** be delivered to the Chief Executive of Telford & Wrekin Council by **no later than 2 July 2024**.

The Chief Executive must then send a copy of the declaration to the Minister for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.

In the event that the declaration of acceptance of office is not received by the Chief Executive by the deadline set out above, the office of West Mercia PCC becomes vacant and a further election will need to be held.

Election expenses

All candidates, via their agent, must submit a spending and donations return to the PARO together with accompanying evidence for any payments made in excess of £20 and any donations received over £50. This return must be submitted by no later than **12 July 2024**. This return must be accompanied by a declaration made by the candidate's election agent.

At the same time that the election agent delivers the expenses return, the candidate must also deliver to the PARO a declaration.

If any candidate acts as their own agent, then they are only required to complete a separate form.

Any candidate who fails to submit a return within the timescale specified is guilty of an illegal practice and may be disqualified from being a police and crime commissioner.

Within 10 days after the deadline for submitting an expenses return, the PARO will publish a notice confirming the time and place at which the expenses returns, accompanying documents and declarations can be inspected. A copy of this notice will be shared with each election agent. This notice is also required to set out details of any candidates that have not submitted their return at that point. More details on expenses and the submission of returns is available at [Deadlines | Electoral Commission](#).

Return of Deposits

In order to successfully stand for election, each candidate is required to make payment of a deposit in the sum of £5,000. This deposit will be returned to any candidate that polls **more** than 5% of the total number of **valid** votes cast in the police area.

Any candidate who polls less than, or equal to, 5% of the total number of valid votes cast will lose their deposit.

The PARO is required to return all deposits to the person who made the payment, or their personal representative. This must take place on the next working day after the election result was declared. It is therefore important for all candidates and agents to be available on Tuesday 7 May 2024 to ensure that this can be done. The PARO's team will contact all candidates and agents using the contact details provided during the nomination process to make arrangements for the return of the deposit.

Voter ID

As candidates and agents will be aware, a change in the legislation introduced by the Elections Act 2022 means that electors who wish to vote in person at a polling station will be required to provide proof of identity. The full list of acceptable ID is shown below.

Acceptable forms of photo ID

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 (including an Irish Passport Card)
Photographic driver's licence issued by the UK, Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state (including provisional)
National identity card issued by an EEA state
Biometric immigration document
An identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (PASS card)

Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card)
A Blue Badge
Concessionary travel pass issued in the UK <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older Person's Bus Pass funded by the Government of the United Kingdom • Disabled Person's Bus Pass funded by the Government of the United Kingdom • Oyster 60+ Card funded by the Government of the United Kingdom • Freedom Pass
Concessionary travel pass issued in Scotland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Entitlement Card
Concessionary travel pass issued in Wales <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 and over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card • Disabled Person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
Concessionary travel pass issued in Northern Ireland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior SmartPass • Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's Smartpass • War Disablement Smartpass or War Disabled Smart Pass • 60+ Smartpass • Half Fare SmartPass
Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland

Only original documents are accepted – scanned images, pictures on mobile phones or copies will not be accepted.

Expired photo ID is acceptable if the photo is still a good likeness of the elector.

We would ask all candidates, agents and campaigners to play their part in raising awareness of these requirements and, in the event that any elector does not have appropriate photographic ID, refer them to the Electoral Registration Officer in the relevant voting area to seek a Voter Authority Certificate or proxy/postal vote. The deadlines in respect of each of these is set out in **section 13** of this guidance.

Key dates for registration matters

There are a number of key dates coming up that are important for electors. As candidates and agents, you are in the position of being able to support electors and help ensure that they are aware of these key dates.

The deadlines for postal and proxy applications and voter authority certificates are as follows:

Postal Voting

- Deadline for new applications: 5pm Wednesday 17 April
- Deadline for new postal proxy applications: 5pm Wednesday 17 April
- Deadline for amendments to existing applications: 5pm Wednesday 17 April
- Cancellation of existing applications: 5pm Wednesday 17 April

Proxy Voting

- Deadline for new applications: 5pm Wednesday 24 April
- Deadline for amendments to existing: 5pm Wednesday 24 April
- Cancellation of existing applications: 5pm Wednesday 24 April
- Deadline for emergency medical/work grounds applications: 5pm Thursday 2 May

Voter Authority Certificates

- Deadline for new applications: 5pm Wednesday 24 April

Supporting documents available

The Police & Crime Commissioner Election Order 2012 makes provision for the Electoral Registration Officer for a voting area to supply various documents or data to candidates and their agents in an election to support them in the conduct of their campaign.

Whilst you can request **either** a paper **or** data copy, it should be noted that there are around 135,000 entries on the electoral register across the police area and around 43,000 entries on the absent voters' list – it would be appreciated if you could support each local authority by requesting a data version, where possible.

Obtaining the documents or data

The Register of Electors, Absent Voters List and the Marked Polling Station Register/Marked Absent Voter List for each voting area are available from the Electoral Registration Officer at the respective local authority upon written request. Please make contact directly with them to ask if such a request should be made in any particular format.

“Current” Absent Voters Lists are supplied shortly after receipt of the request, with “Final” Lists produced immediately after the deadline for postal and/or proxy vote applications.

Absent Voters' List

There are three types of absent voter, namely:

- Postal Voters;
- Proxy Voters; and
- Postal Proxy Voters.

In the run up to an election, the absent voters list is constantly changing.

The "**Current List**" is "as it stands at 9.00 am" on the day on which it is supplied.

The "**Final List**" is as it stands after 5.00 pm on 17 April for postal votes and 24 April for proxy votes.

The Absent Voters List can be supplied to the following **upon receipt of a written request**:

▪ A Person Nominated to act for a Constituency Party	▪ A Registered Political Party
▪ A Member of Parliament	▪ An Election Candidate

Applications for the receipt of the Absent Voters List must be made **in writing**, specifying whether the "*Current*" or "*Final*" list is required. There are no restrictions on the number of times that the list can be requested.

Marked registers and lists

After the poll has taken place, copies of the Marked Polling Station Registers and Marked Absent Voter Lists can be requested from each of the relevant Electoral Registration Officers across the police area.

Whilst anyone can make an appointment to view the Marked Register/List, they can only be supplied to the following upon receipt of a written request:

▪ A Person Nominated to act for a Constituency Party	▪ A Registered Political Party
▪ A Member of Parliament	▪ An Election Candidate

Applications for the receipt of the Marked Register/List must be made in writing to the relevant Electoral Registration Officer.