

Briefing for Candidates and Agents

Local Government Elections

4th May, 2017

Topics

- Election timetable
- Campaign spending
- Qualifications
- Nominations
- Postal votes
- Polling Arrangements (incl. Single Transferable Vote)
- Counting of votes
- Contacts

Election Timetable

Publication of Notice of Election	Monday, 13 th March, 2017
Close of nominations / last time to withdraw	4pm on Wednesday, 29 th March, 2017
Notification of appointment of election agents	4pm on Wednesday, 29 th March, 2017
Publication of Notice of Poll/Situation of Polling Stations	Soon after 4pm on Wednesday, 29 th March, 2017
Deadline for applications to register to vote	Monday, 17 th April, 2017
Deadline for new postal votes/changes to existing postal or proxy votes	Tuesday, 18 th April, 2017

Election timetable (cont'd)

Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	Tuesday, 25 th April, 2017
Appointment of counting and polling agents	Wednesday, 26 th April, 2017
Polling day	Thursday, 4 th May, 2017 – 7am to 10pm
Deadline to apply for new applications to vote by proxy on grounds of medical emergency	5pm on polling day
Return of candidate spending return	Friday, 9 th June, 2017

Candidate Spending

Candidates' spending

- Defined as certain expenditure 'used for the purposes of the candidate's election' after the date they become a candidate (i.e. not before 22nd March) up until polling day
- Responsibility of the **election agent**
- Spending limits:
 - £740 plus 6p per registered elector in ward on the last date for publication of the Notice of Election
- Must get and keep receipts for expenditure (of over £20)
- Expenses forms can be found at http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/218658/Spending-return-local-elections-Scotland.pdf

Campaign spending returns

- Returns due 35 days after result of election (by 9th June, 2017)
- Returns are made public by the **Returning Officer**
- Failure to submit a campaign spending return is an offence
- A successful candidate who fails to submit a return may not sit on or vote in the Council

Qualifications and Disqualifications

Qualifications

- Candidates must satisfy criteria on day they are nominated:
 - At least 18 years of age
 - British, qualifying Commonwealth (with indefinite leave to remain), EU member state citizen
- Also at least one of the following:
 - Registered local government elector for local authority area (i.e. Aberdeenshire)
 - Occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises in the Aberdeenshire Council area during the whole 12 months preceding nomination
 - Principal or only place of work (including unpaid) during last 12 months in Aberdeenshire
 - Lived in Aberdeenshire area during the last 12 months.

Disqualifications

- A person **cannot** be a candidate if they:
 - hold a politically restricted post
 - have had their estate sequestrated by a court in Scotland, been adjudged bankrupt by a court elsewhere, or are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or undertaking (unless recalled, reduced or discharged)
 - have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (incl. a suspended sentence) without option of a fine, during the 5 years before polling day
 - have been disqualified by a decision of the Accounts Commission or the Standards Commission
 - are serving a disqualification due to being found guilty of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court

Getting nominated

Submitting nomination papers

- Nomination packs can be obtained from local Aberdeenshire election offices in Banff, Inverurie or Stonehaven, at Woodhill House or at www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/elections but completed forms **must** be submitted by all candidates no later than 4pm on Wednesday, 29th March
- Candidates representing a political party will also need to submit, by 4pm on 29th March:
 - A certificate authorising the use of a party name/ registered description on the ballot paper
 - A written request to use one of the party's emblems on the ballot paper (optional)

Submitting nomination papers

- ! Make sure the nomination papers are filled in correctly, as mistakes may invalidate your nomination.
- To arrange an informal check, contact the elections office at which you obtained your nomination pack – make an appointment with the Returning Officer's staff, who will check the details before formal submission of the completed nomination
- It is strongly advised that this is not left until the deadline day!

The nomination form

- Include your full names & home address
- Optional: use commonly used name box(es) if usually known by a name other than your full name and wish to use it instead
- Description – 3 options:
 - leave blank
 - Independent
 - party candidates can use party name or registered description if authorised by a certificate issued by, or on behalf of, the party's Nominating Officer

The nomination form (contd.)

- Must also include:
 - which ward you are standing in
 - confirmation of qualification(s) that apply (at least one, but complete all those which apply)
 - candidate's signature
 - witness' name, address and signature
- Nomination packs contain a host of other documents and information which will assist you in your candidacy, including the election timetable, forms to request the electoral register and absent voters' lists, forms for appointing agents to attend polling stations, the count and postal vote opening etc

Emblem request form

- Party candidates (not the election agent) may ask for an emblem to be printed on the ballot paper
- Emblem request form must be submitted by 4pm on Wednesday, 29th March, 2017
- Party candidates should supply an electronic version of the emblem to the Returning Officer, if requested

Agents

Election agent

- Responsible for the proper management of your election campaign; particularly its financial management.
- You became your own agent by default if none was appointed by 29th March.

Other agents

- Other agents can be appointed on your behalf to attend postal vote openings, polling stations and the count:
 - The RO requires notice in writing of any people appointed as polling and counting agents by no later than Wednesday, 26th April (although it is recommended names are submitted as early as possible so authorising passes can be issued in return).
 - The appointment of postal voting agents attending a particular opening session must be made before the start of the session.
 - Forms for appointing all these agents have been provided by the RO.

Postal votes and polling day

Postal votes

- At present, postal voters number between 1,702 in Ward 10 and 2,770 in Ward 3 and therefore make up a significant part of the voting electorate for all contests
- Code of conduct – no candidate or supporter should put themselves in a position where their honesty or integrity, or that of the candidate or party, can be questioned
- For security reasons, absent voters are required to provide their signature and date of birth on applications
 - these are stored electronically and checked against the postal voting statement returned with the postal vote
- It is important that application forms are returned to the electoral registration office or postal votes to the elections office as soon as possible, to ensure adequate time for processing
- If you are considering printing your own application forms, they must contain all the legislative requirements

Postal votes (cont.)

- Postal ballot packs will initially be issued by the Council's provider on or around Thursday, 13th April, with two subsequent issues
- Postal vote opening will take place daily from Monday, 24th April in the County Hall in Banff, the Bunker at Gordon House in Inverurie and Viewmount in Stonehaven, until polling day (inclusive)
- Each candidate may appoint one agent to observe the opening of postal votes on any given occasion
- Notification of the appointment of postal vote agents **must** be delivered before the particular opening session is due to begin

Polling day

- Polling stations open from 7am to 10pm
- 213 polling stations at 147 polling places in 19 Wards across Aberdeenshire. 70 members will be returned.
- The election office at Woodhill House is open during the same period for queries or problems relating to the administration of the election, as well as the local constituency office helplines
 - For any queries relating to election spending issues, contact the Electoral Commission
- Tellers
- Postal votes – can be handed into polling stations within the Council area or delivered to the local election office until 10pm on polling day.

Single Transferable Vote (STV)

- Voters will rank candidates in their order of preference, using numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, etc)
- Voters can rank as many or as few candidates as they wish.
- The same number cannot be used twice and there should not be a break in the sequence.
- More information on how STV works can be found on the website of the Electoral Reform Society at
www.electoral-reform.org.uk/single-transferable-vote

Ballot papers

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL - ANYTOWN & DISTRICT WARD

Three of the candidates listed below will be elected.
You can make as many or as few choices as you wish.

Put the number **1** in the voting box next to your **first** choice.
Put the number **2** in the voting box next to your **second** choice.
Put the number **3** in the voting box next to your **third** choice. **And so on.**

ANDERSON Hans
57 Easter Road, Anytown
Rowan Party



CRANSTON Helen
912 Main Street, Anytown
Beech Party



FLEMING Douglas Martin
112 South Street, Anytown
Independent

HAMILTON Flora
45 Hill Place, Anytown
Willow Party



KUMAR Kuldeep
3 Castle Wynd, Anytown
Elm Party



Voting and counting

Count Timing

- Ballot boxes will be delivered to the AECC at the close of poll from all polling venues.
- Postal ballot papers handed in to polling stations will be collected from larger venues during polling day. The remaining postal ballot papers received before 10pm will be delivered to the AECC and processed there before being secured in sealed postal ballot boxes for each ward.
- The count will take place at the AECC on Friday, 5th May, from 9.15am (the day after the poll)
- Count centre will open to candidates, agents and observers from 8.45am.
- Candidates, election agents, two counting agents each and one other guest identified by the candidate may attend.

E-Counting Objectives

- Candidates, agents, the public and the media have confidence in the count and the results
- Assist in the understanding of what is involved at an e-count
- Ensure the count process is transparent
- Provide clear information both before and during the count
- Reduce the number of queries and complaints arising

Key E-Counting Messages

- That counting will be done electronically
- The process which will apply
- How doubtful ballot papers will be adjudicated
- Opportunities will be offered to candidates and agents to enhance their understanding of procedures via a briefing
- Recount protocols

Count Process etc

- Overview of the e-count process: pre-registration, registration, scanning, verification and adjudication
- It is intended that a demonstration of the system will be provided by the supplier at the AECC on Wednesday, 3rd May (late pm)
- Information will be provided at the count venue in the form of a flowchart and doubtful ballot paper adjudication placemats

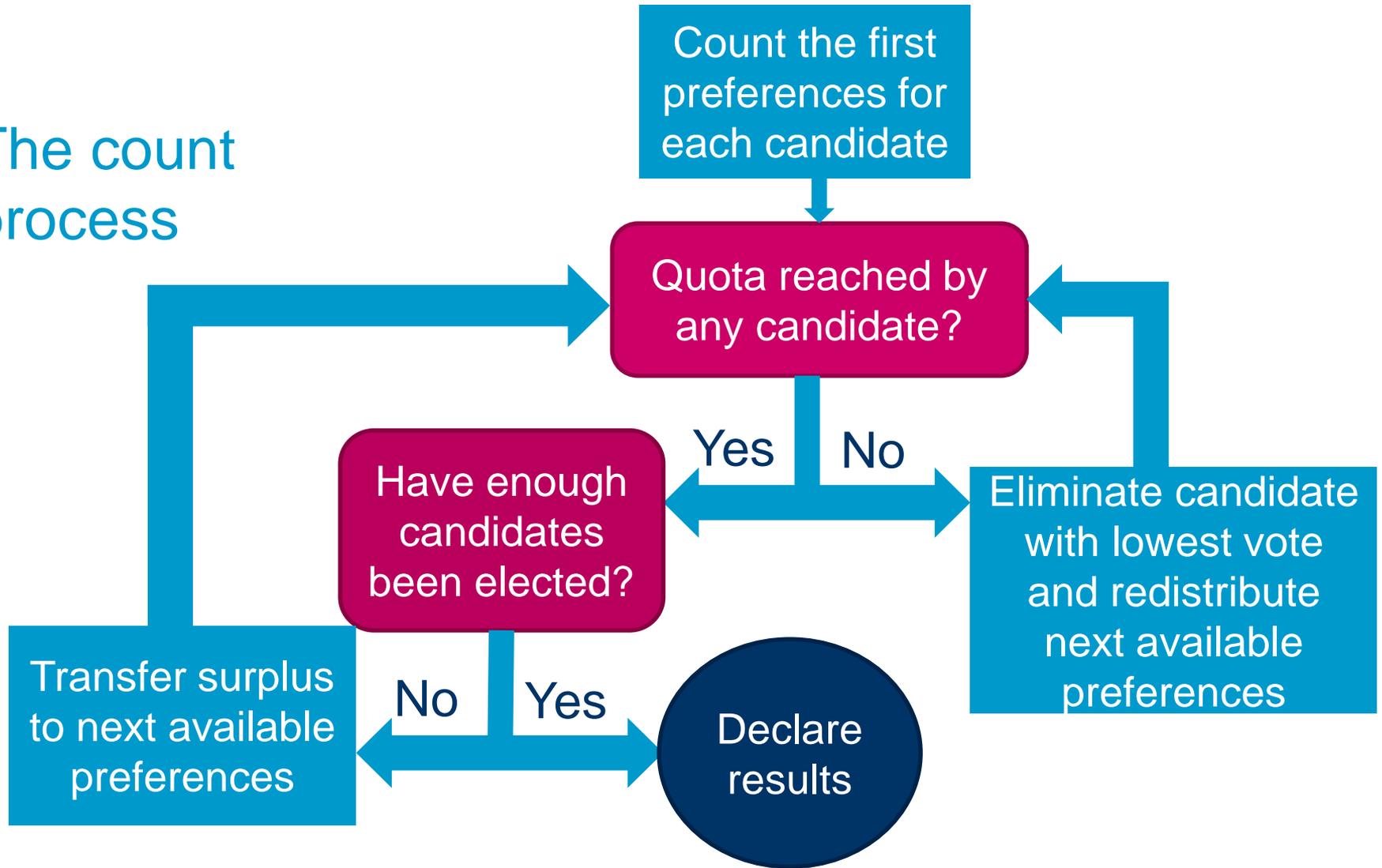
- Weighted Inclusive Gregory method of counting
- The quota
- First preferences
- Transfer values (votes transferred from excluded candidates usually have a value of 1)
- Exclusion of candidates

Counting the Single Transferable Vote (STV)

- Candidates are elected if they reach the quota
- $$= \frac{\textit{Total number of valid votes}}{\textit{(number of candidates to be elected + 1)}} + 1$$
- Fractions are ignored

- 5,020 valid votes
- 3 candidates to be elected
- $= (5,021 / (3 + 1))$, ignore remainder then +1
- =1,256

The count process



Transferring the votes

- STV does its best to use **every** vote - by transferring votes, when necessary
- If a voter's first choice of candidate does not “need” the vote, then the vote transfers to the voter's second preference, and so on
- This can happen because the first preference candidate already has enough votes to be elected or because s/he has so few votes that it is not possible to get elected

Doubtful Ballot Papers

- Adjudication staff will not be able to reject any ballot papers. Any that appear to require to be rejected will be referred to the Returning Officer for determination. However, the adjudication team will approve any doubtful ballot paper where they consider the voter's intention is clear
- Adjudication will be carried out on screen and candidates and agents will be able to view this process.
- There will be no numerals presented in isolation – all images will be of complete ballot papers so the marks can be seen in context.

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Campaigning

Campaigning

- Use imprints on **all** your campaign material, including websites.
- Posting of material is NOT permitted at all on Council property or land
- Comply with planning rules relating to advertising hoardings and large banners.
- Make sure outdoor posters (on private land) are removed as quickly as possible 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).
- Sitting councillors must not use Council resources for any campaigning or electoral purposes (including their Council e-mail account)

Access to electoral register/absent voting lists

- Access by candidates – once you **officially** become a candidate.
- Make written request to the ERO – forms will be included in your nomination pack.
- Only use the data for permitted purposes i.e. to help you campaign for election

Contacts

Contact Info.

(1)

- **Returning Officer**
 - Jim Savege
- **Depute Returning Officers**
 - Allan Bell
 - Ritchie Johnson
 - Maria Walker
 - Karen Wiles
- **Local Constituency Officers**
 - Jim Buchan (Wards 1-6), St Leonard's, Banff
 - Edwin Duncan (Wards 7-13), Gordon House, Inverurie/ Woodhill House
 - Vicky Morris (Wards 14-19), Viewmount, Stonehaven/Woodhill House
- **Election Support Officers**
 - Kasia Balina (Woodhill House)
 - Jo Gibson (Woodhill House)
 - Pauline Miller (St Leonard's)

Contact Info.
(2)

- **Electoral Registration Officer**
 - Ian Milton (ERO), Woodhill House
(01224 – 664848 or e-mail
ero@grampian-ero.gov.uk)

- **Electoral Commission (Scotland Office)**
 - Edinburgh - 0131 225 0208
 - Website at
www.electoralcommission.org.uk

Contact Info.
(3)

- **Aberdeenshire Election Unit**
- **Tel: 01224 – 664176**
- **E-mail**
elections@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
- **Website**
- **[www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ elections](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/elections)**

Questions

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Thank you