

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL ELECTIONS TEAM

ARRANGEMENTS IN FORCE AT THE POLL

These arrangements complement the Electoral Commission's Guidance and Resources for Candidates and their Agents as they apply to electoral events within the remit of the Returning Officer for the Aberdeenshire Council Area. They set out standards of best practice that the Returning Officer expects all candidates and their agents, staff and supporters to follow throughout the polling process. Any questions regarding the conduct of the poll may be referred to the Returning Officer, or such depute as he may appoint for this purpose.

1. Voters must be able to cast their votes in secret. Candidates must ensure that their agents, staff and supporters:
 - a. have been notified of the statutory requirement of secrecy applicable to the present electoral event,
 - b. are aware that failure to comply with the requirement of secrecy is a criminal offence, punishable by a fine or imprisonment, and
 - c. at all times uphold the secrecy of the voting process.
2. A "polling place" includes not only the building in which polling takes place, but also ancillary buildings, the playground or other grounds around the building, and also includes all walls, railings, fences etc, around the boundary of the building. A "polling station" is the room or space within the polling place where actual voting takes place.
3. Voters must be able to cast their vote quietly, privately and free of any intimidation or obstruction. The Returning Officer recognises that candidates and their supporters are entitled to put their message to voters on polling day, including in public spaces outside polling places. However, candidates must ensure that their supporters do not impede voters in any way. Entrances to polling places, and the spaces around them, must be kept clear.
4. Where tellers are to be deployed, the candidate must ensure that the tellers are familiar with their responsibilities and have been provided with the relevant Electoral Commission guidance. Tellers must remain outside the polling place. They may ask a voter his/her name or electoral number provided that:
 - a. such enquiries are made after the voter leaves the polling station,
 - b. a voter may refuse to give such information, and
 - c. on no account must the voter be asked the way he/she has cast their vote.

5. The Presiding Officer may permit polling agents to stand within the grounds of a polling place, provided that there is no inconvenience or obstruction to voters. This is not an absolute right and polling agents must comply with the Presiding Officer's instructions.
6. Candidates and their supporters are strictly prohibited from campaigning, canvassing, leafleting or otherwise influencing voters inside the polling place.
7. Candidates, election agents and polling agents will be allowed into a polling station for the purposes prescribed by law. They must carry the photographic ID and show this on demand, failing which entry to the polling station will not be permitted. No more than one polling agent will be admitted at the same time to a polling station on behalf of the same candidate or political party.
8. Where a candidate deploys a polling agent in a polling station for the statutory function of detecting personation, local arrangements should be discussed with the Presiding Officer. Suitable facilities will be made for the polling agent to attend the allotted polling station for the duration of polling. The polling agent will be able to see the voter and hear the voter's name and address and require the statutory questions to be put, but must not in any way attempt to see the serial number of the issued ballot paper or to ascertain how the vote was cast. If the polling agent leaves the polling station during the hours of polling, they must leave their marked copy Register of Electors in the polling station to ensure that secrecy requirements are not breached.
9. Other than this statutory function, any visit by a candidate or polling agent will be expected to be of reasonably short duration (as to which the Presiding Officer will be the sole arbiter).
10. It will be permissible for polling staff to indicate to polling agents how many votes have been cast at any point during polling hours but never to reveal whether an individual voter has cast their vote.
11. Rosettes:
 - a. Candidates or election agents may wear rosettes, lapel stickers or badges within a polling place.
 - b. Polling agents making a brief visit to a polling station are permitted to wear rosettes, lapel stickers, badges or similar items.
 - c. Polling agents deployed at a polling station for the purposes of detecting personation are not permitted to display any means of identifying the party or candidate which they represent.

- d. Polling agents may wear their rosettes, etc., while they are situated within the grounds of a polling place (if they have been so permitted by the Presiding Officer), but not inside the polling place itself.
 - e. Tellers should wear a coloured rosette of a reasonable size or similar lapel item. This makes it clear to voters that they are party workers and not electoral officials. Tellers must not, apart from the rosette, wear, carry or display any headwear, footwear or apparel that carries any writing, picture or sign relating to any candidate or political party.
12. The fixing of posters, bills or other materials to or against any part of the polling place is NOT allowed under any circumstances. Candidates should make themselves aware of any local authority policies on displaying materials on roads, pavements or any other property in its ownership, and also any wider statutory restrictions on “flyposting”.
13. Vehicles are not normally allowed within the polling place gates, nor immediately outside the entrance, unless for reasons of safety or distance from the street. If admitted for these reasons, vehicles displaying a candidate or party’s campaign material must not remain within the polling place any longer than necessary to allow its occupants to vote (with the exception of cars occupied by a candidate or election agent for the duration of his/her visit to that polling place for electoral purposes).
14. The taking of photographs within a polling place is prohibited.
15. The Presiding Officer will seek to resolve any dispute relating to these Arrangements. The Returning Officer expects candidates and their supporters to accept the decision of the Presiding Officer on any relevant matter arising.

Jim Savege

Returning Office