

FAQs for Candidate Briefing

Questions from Briefing

FAQS

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Timeline Questions

When is polling day?

Polling day will take place on **Thursday 6th May 2021** and polling stations will be open from 7am until 10pm.

Where can I find the timetable of key dates?

You can access a list of all key dates at: <https://www.futurenorthantswest.org/elections-2/>

What is the earliest date that I can start delivering leaflets, and when do I have to stop putting campaigning messages on social media?

For full details on campaigning, including key dates, please refer to the Election Commission website.

Electoral Registration Questions

Is it possible for a candidate to check the electoral register?

Candidates will be granted access to the electoral register once they officially become a candidate. You can request to view the electoral register by sending an email to the relevant Elections office – it is recommended that you request this in data format. You will need to state that you will be standing as a candidate, and which area you will be standing in. Please refer to part 4 of the Commission’s guidance for further details.

Is it possible to request to see the electoral register before I officially become a candidate?

Please email the relevant Elections office to request the register for the area in which you are standing. You will need to state that you will only use the data for this purpose.

When getting people to sign the nomination papers, how can I get their register details?

Please email your Elections office to request the register for the area in which you are standing or, if you are standing for a parish election, please speak to your Clerk who should have the register.

At what stage does an individual officially become a candidate?

An individual officially becomes a candidate when we have received a valid nomination paper.

Who is the Electoral Registration Officer and what is their role?

The Electoral Registration Officer for all areas is the same as the Returning Officer and for West Northamptonshire it is Anna Earnshaw. They are responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters lists.

What is the deadline for applying to register to vote?

The deadline for applying to register to vote in the election is 19th April 2021 at midnight.

We would request candidates to encourage people to register to vote where possible, and individuals will need their National Insurance number, Date of Birth and address to register.

Individuals who do not have/have misplaced their National Insurance number can still register but will be contacted by ERO to provide further information.

Nomination Form Questions**Are there any restrictions on who can put themselves forwards as a candidate?**

Yes, candidates must satisfy certain criteria both on the day that they are nominated, and on polling day.

Candidates must be at least 18 years of age and be a British qualifying Commonwealth citizen (someone who has indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK), or a national of an EU member state. Candidates must also satisfy at least one of the following criteria:

- Registered local government elector for the local authority
- Occupied as owner or tenant of land or premises in the local authority area during the whole 12 months preceding the nomination
- Principal or only place of work (including unpaid) during the last 12 months in the local authority area
- Lived in the local authority area during the last 12 months
- For PARISH ONLY – lived in the parish/community area or within 3 miles of it during the whole 12 months before the day of your nomination

An individual 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). Candidates may be 'employed by the local authority' if they work at certain schools, fire services, police or health services
- are subject of a Bankruptcy Restrictions Order (or interim order) in England or Wales
- have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment of three months or more (including suspended sentences), without option of a fine, during the 5 years before polling day
- have been disqualified under Audit Commission Act 1998
- are serving disqualification due to being found guilty of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court
- hold a politically restricted post

Where can I find the nomination forms for the Unitary Election?

Nomination forms for the Unitary Election can be found here

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/local-elections-england>

Under part 2a or 2b resources.

Where can I find the nomination forms for the Parish Elections?

The Parish Elections forms can be found here <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/parish-council-elections-england>

Under part 2a or 2b resources.

When can I submit my nomination papers?

Appointments to submit nomination papers will be available from Friday 26th March 2021 at 10:00. Please note that appointments will not be available over the Easter bank holiday weekend, so we would encourage candidates to book appointments early. You can book an appointment by contacting the Elections office for your area.

How do I submit my nomination papers?

Nomination forms must be delivered by hand. They CANNOT be submitted by post, fax or by other electronic means.

There is a special exception made if a candidate is overseas, in which case they can submit their consent to nomination electronically, and Certificates of Authorisation and emblem request forms can be accepted by post.

Forms should be delivered to the relevant Council building for processing i.e. Northampton, Daventry or Towcester and you will need to book an appointment to do this.

What is the deadline for submitting nomination papers?

All candidates must submit their nomination form, their consent to nomination and their home address form by **4pm on Thursday 8th April 2021**.

Party candidates will also need to submit a certificate authorising the use of a party name/registered description on ballot paper and a written request to use one of the party's emblems on the ballot paper (if desired).

What happens if I make a mistake on my form?

It's important that you take care when completing your nomination papers, as any mistakes could invalidate your nomination. Before submitting your papers, it's a good idea to arrange for an informal check.

What is an informal check and how to I arrange for one?

Before submitting your nomination papers, you will be able to scan or send a photograph of your documents to the respective council email address to check that they have been completed correctly. Informal checks will be available from 9th March 2021. Please contact your Elections office to arrange this.

Can a proposer and seconder be from your household, or from another household in the parish? And if it is permitted to be from another household, how do we approach this in a Covid-secure way?

Proposer and seconders can be from your household, or other households in the parish. The Electoral Commission have provided guidance on Covid and collecting signatures in a Covid-secure manner – you can find more information on this on the Electoral Commission’s website.

Are there any changes to the nomination forms for the 2021 elections?

Yes, the Home Address form has been added and the number of people subscribing the District papers has been reduced from 10 to 2.

What sort of thing should I write in the six-word description section of the nomination form?

The description section of the nomination form can be anything that the candidate would like. It is often used for giving any key pieces of information about yourself that you want others to know, i.e. Retired School Teacher. This section can be left blank.

What is a Subscriber?

A subscriber is a person who supports you standing as a candidate as a proposer and is on the Electoral Register for the area you submitting a nomination paper for.

Before submitting nomination papers for an informal check, should the Subscribers have already signed the documents?

Yes, the document should be completed and essentially ready for final submission before you submit for your informal check

Can I reuse my forms from the previous election?

No, unfortunately not. Please submit new nomination forms.

There isn’t a ‘unitary’ option on the nomination form, what should I do?

Please select the ‘district’ option on the form.

Can a neighbour be a seconder?

Yes, a neighbour can be a seconder as long as they are on the electoral register.

How do I obtain a Certificate of Authorisation?

The Certificate of Authorisation form can be found in the nomination pack. You can also obtain a Certificate of Authorisation by contacting your Nominating Officer.

Will candidates receive a pack, or do they need to download one themselves?

Candidates can download the document packs from the Electoral Commission website.

If you would like a hardcopy of the documents, please email the relevant Elections office for your area and they can arrange to send you the documents in the post.

Are there any restrictions on who can witness your consent to nomination?

No, anyone can witness your consent to nomination.

What should I do if the link to the nomination forms isn’t working?

If you have any problems accessing the nomination forms, please contact the relevant Elections office who will be able to provide you with the documents.

Covid 19 Questions

Does the Director of Public Health (Lucy Wightman) have a role in this election with regards to Covid-19 safety?

Lucy Wightman and her team have been engaged with the elections team throughout this process and have consistently been sharing the latest guidance with the Elections office. Public Health will be doing an inspection of the sites before the elections take place and ensuring that they are Covid-secure.

Is there any information on the coronavirus restrictions with regards to delivering leaflets and canvassing?

Guidance on Covid-secure campaigning will be available on the Electoral Commission website shortly. You can also find information about this on the official government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-governments-approach-to-elections-and-referendums-during-covid-19>.

Expenses Questions

Will there be reductions in spends if multiple candidates are fielded in one area?

Spending limits for joint candidates You are a joint candidate if you stand in the same ward and:

- have the same election agent or
- use the same campaign rooms or
- publish joint material

Joint candidates have lower spending limits, as they are sharing some of the costs. You should calculate your spending limit as explained above, and then reduce it by:

Number of Joint Candidates	Reduction
Two	25%- a quarter
Three or more	33% - a third

When is my candidate spending return due?

Spending returns are due 35 calendar days for the Unitary Election and within 28 calendar days after the result of the election. Please note that no spending will be reimbursed, but it is a legal requirement to complete the spending return.

What is the process for spending returns for the Parish Elections?

Spending returns for the Parish Elections follows the same procedure as for Unitary candidates except that the Parish ones need to be submitted sooner.

Verification and Count Questions

When will the count end on the Friday?

This will depend upon what Covid restrictions are in place on the day of the count, as this will dictate how many people are permitted in the building to count. We are hoping for late afternoon, but we do have a contingency day in place for the Sunday if needed.

I intend to stand at both the Unitary Election and the Parish Elections – will the Parish counts be on a different date to the Unitary one so that I can attend both?

The Unitary count will take place on Friday 7th May 2021 (with a contingency day in place for Sunday 9th May). The Parish count will take place on Saturday 8th May 2021, so it will be possible to attend both.

Will there be a restriction on candidates attending the count due to Covid-19?

We anticipate that there will be need to be some restrictions in place in order for us to conduct the count in a Covid-secure manner. Please note that you will be required to wear a face covering, sanitise your hands prior to entering the premises, and maintain social distancing. We will keep candidates informed of the restrictions, in line with government guidance.

Where are the counts taking place?

The counts will be taking place at Silverstone Wing, Silverstone Circuit.

Observers Questions

Will I be able to observe the postal vote opening?

Due to social distancing measures, there will be restrictions on numbers permitted to attend. If you would like to attend, please contact the Elections office to book an inspection slot.

Campaign Questions

Can promotional posters and stake boards be placed on public highways, or only on private property?

In Northamptonshire, we follow the guidance from public highways which states that promotional items cannot be used in public places. This is only permitted on private land.

Where can I access the Code of Conduct for campaigners?

The Code of Conduct can be found on the Commission's website at:

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/electoral-fraud/electoral-fraud-responsibilities>.

Election Staff Question

Who are the Returning Officers, and what is their role?

The Returning Officer & Counting Officer for the West Unitary and Parish Elections, and Deputy PARO is Anna Earnshaw (Chief Executive of West Northants Council). The Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) for the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC) Elections is Rob Bridge (Chief Executive at North Northants Council). The Returning Officer is responsible for the overall conduct of the election.

Who are the Returning Officers deputies, and what is their role?

The deputies are appointed by the Returning Officers and are able to carry out duties on their behalf. For the Unitary and Parish Elections, Anna Earnshaw's deputies (DRO) are Rebecca Peck (Assistant Chief Executive West Northants), Catherine Whitehead (Monitoring Officer & Director of Legal and Democratic West Northants), Paul Hanson (Interim Democratic Services Manager West Northants), Jane Lyons (Interim Elections Manager West Northants), Mark West (Elections Manager West Northants), Louise Aston (Elections Manager West Northants).