

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT & REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCILS

Worcestershire County Council (WCC) Elections

1 May 2025

Supplementary Instructions to Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks

To be read with the 'handbook for polling station staff'

1. Introductory

If this is the first time you have worked at a polling station please read and learn the instructions contained in the Electoral Commission handbook and this supplement. If you have worked for us previously, once or many times, re-read the instructions and revise them thoroughly. The unexpected occurrence often seems to arise when you are busiest, and, if you do not know the answer in advance, the slightest unusual case can cause delay and confusion.

The purpose of these Supplementary Instructions is:-

- (i) to supplement information in the Electoral Commission 'handbook for polling station staff' (hereafter known as the handbook)
- (ii) to make variations in the handbook to accord with local circumstances in this Voting Area
- (iii) to emphasise particular points which, by experience in the past, have been found to require special attention.

Therefore, where these Supplementary Instructions differ from the details in the handbook, **it is the Supplementary Instructions that must prevail.**

These instructions are one of the authority's methods of ensuring legal compliance and the safety/welfare of its staff. Acceptance of the roles of Presiding Officer and Poll Clerk is therefore implicit acceptance of the instructions given here.

A copy of this document and other important documents can be found on the Staff Webpage.

For Bromsgrove:

<https://www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/electionstaff>

For Redditch:

<https://www.redditchbc.gov.uk/electionstaff>

Full information on the Presiding Officers part of the MEA app is found within the MEA guide. This can be found on the staff website and a copy is also included in the ballot box.

We are therefore asking you to bring along a smartphone or electronic tablet.

2. Ballot Box Collection

You will need to book an appointment, via MEA, to collect your ballot box from **Oakenshaw Community Centre, Castleditch Lane, Redditch B98 7YB** on **Tuesday 29 April 2025. If you just pull up within your appointed time slot staff will bring out what you require for the poll.** Check the contents carefully at home. If after checking items something is missing call the election office on **Wednesday** so we can get it out to you or have the Polling Station Inspector bring it to you on polling day.

3. Attendance at Polling Station

The Polling Station should be opened by the key holder by **6.30**, or by the Presiding Officer if given that instruction. If it is not, contact the key holder using the number supplied in your staffing letter.

The Poll is from **7.00 to 22.00**. You should be at the Polling Station not later than **6.30** as you can never be sure that some difficulty may not arise and the poll **must** open promptly at **7.00**.

In some areas mobiles may not work so it is important to find out where to get a signal.

When you have arrived at the station and set up ready to go please follow the instructions in the MEA guide on how to set the station to open (pg **5-7** of the guide).

If you cannot get the MEA to work please call the check in number below

Check in & Office Phone number
01527 534166

If any difficulty arises during the day, telephone your Polling Station Inspector on their number first. If you cannot get through call the office on the number above or 01527 881421 without delay.

You should call the office first if the query is about the register.

If there is an error on the register the office will be able to send you correct information via the MEA.

If you need to contact the Police for any reason **999** for an emergency and **101** for a non emergency call. Police will have had a full list of our polling stations.

You **must not** leave the premises until you close the poll, although you can go outside for fresh air. Therefore you must make arrangements to take your meals on the premises and ensure you are able to arrange sufficient cover with your Poll Clerk or Presiding Officer, to take comfort breaks and one break away from your duties (not the premises) within polling hours.

4. Action on Arrival at Polling Station

(1) Open the Ballot Box and remove all contents. At **7.00 precisely not before**, show any electors or candidates/agents who may have arrived that the box is empty and seal it in their presence. Use two numbered ties and two blank ties to seal the box.

(2) Presiding Officers should brief their poll clerks on duties required of them during

the day.

(3) The Ballot Box must be placed near to the Presiding Officer so that they can see at all times and control what is put into it. The voter must be instructed to come back to the Presiding Officer to put his ballot paper in the box.

(4) Use the MEA to let us know the station is open.

4. Posters

Post up the following:-

Outside the Station

- (1) "Polling Station" at the street entrance and at the entrance of the room.
- (2) 'How to vote at this Election' A2 size.
- (3) Notice to Tellers.
- (4) 'Accepted forms of photographic identification' A2 Corex sign (there are cable ties supplied in your ballot box, packet A – do not use the security ties)

Inside the Station

- (1) 'How to vote at this Election'
- (2) Large print ballot paper.
- (3) Photo ID notice quick reference
- (4) Photo ID notice full list
- (5) Non acceptance of abuse notice
- (6) ID Verification notices (3 different sorts)
- (7) No Photography Notice
- (8) No mobile phone use

On your desk you should have the sample ballot paper.

Outside and/or Inside Station

Pin up "Way In" and "Way Out" notices in appropriate places.

Inside the voting Compartments

Notice 'Instructions for Voters'

Where there are two or more stations in one building, put a notice outside the entrance to each station showing the range of electoral numbers allocated to each station. See that posters, direction signs, etc., are used to the best advantage so as to make it easy for voters to find their way to the right station. **Presiding Officers should use Poll**

Clerks to help direct voters to their correct polling station.

Please check periodically throughout the day that no unofficial posters have appeared on or outside the Polling Station. If they have - **remove them**.

5. Admission to Polling Station – pages 11-13 of the handbook

Besides the voters themselves, and the "companion" (if any) accompanying a disabled voter, the only persons allowed inside the Polling Station are:-

- (1) Election Agents.
- (2) The Polling Agents (if any) who produce copies of their official appointments.
- (3) Police Officers or CSOs on duty.
- (4) The Returning Officer and their assistants and officials allowed by the Returning Officer (these will include officials from the Electoral Commission and the Department of Constitutional Affairs).
- (5) Accredited Observers

All other persons must be excluded except when actually voting.

There may be representatives of the Candidates who take the numbers of persons coming to vote. Such persons are generally known as "tellers" but **MUST NOT be allowed** in the station unless they claim to be polling agents and produce their official appointment (see (2) above). **There should be no more than one teller per candidate at any entrance and they should be carefully watched they are maintaining a proper distance from electors.** They can, of course, vote at the station if they are on the Register.

In past years in the event of inclement weather we have allowed into some part of the building so long as they cannot see or hear what is going on in the station itself.

Tellers must not obstruct the entrance or exit to the station, but it has been agreed that they may wear their party colours and the name of the campaign, individual candidate or political party in the form of rosettes. They must not have slogans 'directing' on their rosettes, such as "Vote for Smith". It is the responsibility of Presiding Officers to ensure that the tellers do not cause an obstruction to voters entering or leaving the Polling Station, or cause a diversion.

It has also been agreed that the tellers' cars, if parked **within the curtilage** of the Polling Station should have any party stickers removed. You have, however, no jurisdiction over cars **on the public highway**.

When you get a visitor to the station you should log this through the MEA (MEA guide pg 13-14).

6. Persons entitled to Vote

Special attention should be paid to your handbook page 17 and the quick guide provided with your ballot box.

Those with no letters next to their name.

Those with the letters B and L can vote.

Those marked with a letter 'N' under 'other electors' need to bring a poll card and an Electors Document sent by the Returning Officer confirming their number. These are anonymous electors.

Electors against whose names the date of their eighteenth birthday appears are only entitled to vote if their 18th birthday falls before (or on) 1 May 2025. If the date set against their name is 2 May 2025 or later, they are **NOT** entitled to vote.

Those marked with a letter 'F' cannot vote.

Electors whose names appear on the Postal Voters' list **cannot** be issued with a ballot paper at a Polling Station (see section 10 below). These are marked with an **"A"**.

Very few electors will be marked **"AP"** in the Register and the Postal Voters List. These are cases where the Proxy is entitled to vote by post, and in these cases you must not issue a ballot paper to either the Proxy or the elector himself. They are just the same from your point of view as an ordinary postal voter.

Some entries on the register will have the words ELECTOR REMOVED. This means that the elector is no longer registered at that address and will need to vote where they are currently registered. If they say they should be on the register there, please contact the elections office.

Other important points to remember are:-

- (1) An elector or proxy does not need to produce an official poll card (unless they are a registered anonymous voter).
- (2) There is no obligation on a proxy to produce his proxy appointment.
- (3) Electors and proxies need to produce valid photographic ID (see below).

If there is an error on the register record this on the form provided and also via the MEA (MEA guide pg17).

7. Ballot Papers

The **white** ballot papers are the ordinary ballot papers for the WCC Election.

The **pink** papers are the tendered ballot papers (these will be in an envelope when given to you). **You must contact the Elections Office before issuing.**

Under no circumstances must TENDERED Ballot Papers be placed in the ballot box (see pg57 Appendix 5b of the handbook)

8. Issue of Ballot Papers

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO READ THIS SECTION AND PAGES 15 - 22 OF THE HANDBOOK.

There is a help sheet on the ballot paper process and a flowchart which should be read before polling day and used at the station.

Ballot papers are numbered and the papers should match those on the corresponding number lists (CNL).

Before checking an electors photo ID the poll clerk should check the elector is on the register but **NOT** mark the register.

If the elector is eligible to vote the photo ID needs to be checked:

- It must be on accepted list of photographic ID.
- It appears to be genuine and not forged.
- The photograph is a good likeness of the elector/proxy.
- The name on the ID matches the name on the register.

If the check fails on any of the above the Poll Clerk should pass to the Presiding Officer to make a decision. Once the decision is made, if necessary, the relevant paperwork should be completed (see the help sheet for further information on the process).

If accepted the Poll Clerk or Presiding Officer should note the elector's number next to the ballot paper number on the CNL and hand the paper, folded once and unfolded, to the elector.

Please check that the number on the Ballot Paper and CNL agree, and that no number is duplicated or omitted. In the case of any discrepancy, do not issue the Ballot Paper in question but remember to include it in the total of unused Ballot Papers on the Ballot Paper Account. **Be sure to issue the Ballot Papers in consecutive order. When you have finished a book of ballot papers ensure that you start on the next correct book.**

Marking the register:

- (straight line) between the name and number for all ballots handed out

The Presiding Officer must check that the voter returns from the polling booth with a valid paper. You must permit nothing but Official Ballot Papers to be put into the Ballot Box. Please watch this, and also that no-one takes a Ballot Paper out of the Station.

During the day you should record the number of ballot papers issued each hour, we are asking you to complete the paper form and also the MEA form (MEA guide pgs 8 -12).

9. Voting by Proxy marked P on the register

Attention should be paid to Appendix 3b (pg 45) of the handbook.

A voter, who is not marked 'A' in the Register as having applied to vote by post, may vote in person even though he had appointed a proxy to vote for him but he can only do so before the proxy has voted for him.

The proxy may subsequently apply to vote after the voter has already voted in person. In this event, if the proxy insists on voting, he must be given a tendered ballot paper.

Both the voter or the proxy voter must have valid photographic ID to be able to be given a ballot paper.

Proxies can now be challenged in the same way that ordinary voters are. The relevant

prescribed questions must be asked (see appendix 5a of the handbook). **It is important to familiarise yourself with these.**

10. Postal Votes marked A on the register

Attention should be paid to appendix 3a (pg 39- 44) of the handbook.

A voter who has chosen to vote by post will have an 'A' next to their elector number so they cannot vote in the polling station.

There is now a set procedure for handing in postal vote packs at the polling station:

Stage 1 – Check that the Pack(s) can be handed in at the station ie correct Ward and advise the person they will need to complete a form to hand packs in. Give them the reverse side of the form to read.

Stage 2 - Complete the first section of the form.

Stage 3 – Ask the person to complete section 2 of the form.

Stage 4 – Complete section 3. If you are satisfied tick the box in A. If not you can tell the person you will need to reject the postal votes and give them the reason. You can tell that they might want to try a different delivery method. They can then take the votes away with them. **Note: They can decide to take the votes away at any point throughout the process.**

Stage 5 – Thank the person and confirm that the voting packs have been accepted/rejected.

Stage 6 – Complete paperwork. If accepted the postal vote packs go into the green accepted postal vote wallet and the form goes into the accepted Postal Vote Return Forms envelope. If rejected the form is stapled to the postal vote pack and put in the red rejected postal vote wallet.

If a person just drops of postal votes and leaves without completing a form. You must complete a form and reject them.

Polling station inspectors will be collecting postal vote packs as they usually do. They will only collect accepted postal vote packs and not the accepted forms or rejected packs/forms (these will be handed in at close of poll). As previously, they will sign for any packs collected.

Before 5pm on polling day a postal voter can be issued with a replacement ballot pack but this has to be done via the elections office. After 17.00 the postal voter is allowed a tendered vote as set out in appendix 5b of the handbook. **Make sure you ring the elections office before issuing a tendered ballot paper.**

11. Close of Poll

Polling closes at 22.00 but any eligible electors in the polling station or queuing outside **must** be allowed to vote. Please see the procedures starting on page 25 of the handbook.

Once all those entitled to vote the Polling Station should then be cleared of everyone present except those entitled to be there (See Paragraph 5 above).

Please take great care to ensure that the correct figures are entered in the

ballot paper account as mistakes frequently cause delay at the Count. Check your calculations by reference to the CNL and the unused papers. There are almost always two or three ballot paper accounts which are "one out" because the Presiding Officer incorrectly filled in the ballot paper account.

Presiding Officers should ask their Poll Clerks to check their arithmetic on the ballot paper account as a double check.

The Presiding Officer needs to make sure information from the VIDEF notes sheet is transferred to VIDEF. It should be noted that the VIDEF has been simplified from last year.

Please also close the station on the MEA and send the ballot paper account (MEA guide pg 19-21).

You should end up with:-

- (a) Sealed ballot box.
- (b) Ballot Paper Account in separate envelope (packet 6), attached to the ballot box.
- (c) Sealed Postal Vote Wallets (Red and Green).
- (d) Sealed Clear Wallet containing packets Nos. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 – Check list needs to be completed.
- (e) Labelled Brown Sack containing the unused ballot papers and, if any, spoilt ballot papers (packet 2).
- (f) Blue plastic sack containing the sundries envelope **(re-packed with reusable items: pencils, tape etc.)**, reusable polling station posters and poll cards left behind. This should **not** be used for general rubbish.

A Close of Poll Instructions sheet is provided to help you with this task.

THE ABOVE ARE THE ONLY ITEMS YOU SHOULD DELIVER TO THE BALLOT BOX RETURN POINT. IF YOU DO NOT DELIVER THESE ITEMS EXACTLY AS DESCRIBED, YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO STAY BEHIND TO SORT OUT YOUR STATIONERY UNTIL IT IS CORRECT. Your particular co-operation is asked in delivering all these items as soon as possible to your ballot box return point.

For Bromsgrove: The location of your return point will have been sent to you prior to polling day via your MEA account. If you are unsure, your polling station inspector will be able to tell you where your return point is located. There will be a team of Polling Station Inspectors at the venue ensuring all materials are received.

For Redditch: Front of the abbey stadium, Birmingham Road, Redditch, B97 6EJ.

12. Electoral Commission Survey

The Electoral Commission is collecting feedback from polling staff and this can be accessed via a QR code or link found on pg79 of the handbook. The survey will be open from 2pm on polling day.

13. Cases of Difficulty

In cases of any difficulty arising on polling day please contact your Polling Station

Inspector or the Elections Office between 06.30 to 22.00. - Telephone number 01527 534166.

DARREN WHITNEY
Deputy Returning Officer
April 2025