

Briefing for candidates and party agents

Elections for West Mercia Police & Crime
Commissioner, Worcestershire County Council &
Kidderminster Town Council
Bewdley Town Council By-election
Thursday 6 May 2021

Today's meeting is being recorded and streamed live on our website.

A recording of the meeting, along with a copy of the slides, will be placed on our website shortly after this meeting.

Topics

- who's who
- key dates of the election timetable
- qualifications
- disqualifications
- nominations
- agents
- postal votes
- the poll
- counting of votes
- Candidates' expenses
- contacts

Who's who

- The Police Area Returning Officer for Police and Crime Commissioner elections is Claire Porter (Shropshire Council)
- The Returning Officer for the Worcestershire County Council elections is Abraham Ezekiel (WCC)

Who's who

- The Returning Officer for Kidderminster Town Council elections & Bewdley Town Council by-election is the person responsible for running the elections. The Returning Officer is **Ian Miller**, who is also the Local Returning Officer for the Wyre Forest area for the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner election and Deputy Returning Officer for the Worcestershire County Council elections.

The Electoral Commission

Who's who

- The Electoral Registration Officer is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters' lists. The Electoral Registration Officer is Ian Miller.
- Contact details are provided later.

Who's who

The other Deputy Returning Officers/Deputy Local Returning Officers appointed are:

- Mike Saunders (Full Deputy)
- Caroline Newlands (Full Deputy)
- Beverley Hands (Nominations for town councils & Postal votes only)
- Louisa Bright (Postal votes only)
- Sian Burford (Postal votes only)

Today's session will only cover Nominations for
Worcestershire County Council, Kidderminster Town
Council & Bewdley Town Council only

- Police and Crime Commissioner elections – 6 May 2021
- For information on the nomination process for the Police and Crime Commissioner elections please contact Shropshire Council on:
- <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/elections-and-electoral-registration/>
- 0345 678 9015
- elections@Shropshire.gov.uk

Election Timetable

The Electoral Commission

Publication of Notice of Election	Monday 22 March 2021
Close of nominations	4pm – Thursday 8 April 2021
Publication of statement of persons nominated	4pm – Thursday 8 April 2021
Deadline for applications to register to vote	Midnight – Monday 19 April 2021
Deadline for new postal vote applications /changes to existing postal or proxy vote applications	5pm – Tuesday 20 April 2021
Publication of notice of poll/situation of polling stations	Tuesday 27 April 2021
Appointment of counting and polling agents	Wednesday 28 April 2021

Election timetable (cont'd)

The Electoral Commission

Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	5pm Thursday 29 April 2021
Polling day	Thursday 6 May 2021 – 7am to 10pm
Deadline to apply to vote by proxy on grounds of medical emergency or if unexpectedly called away because of employment or service	5pm – polling day 6 May 2021
Replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes ends	5pm – polling day 6 May 2021
Alterations to register to correct clerical error	9pm – polling day 6 May 2021
Verification (all elections) & Count (WCC, KTC, BTC)	Friday 7 May 2021
Return of election expenses (WCC)	Friday 11 June 2021
Return of election expenses (KTC & BTC)	Thursday 3 June 2021

The Electoral Commission

Qualifications

- Candidates must satisfy criteria on the day they are nominated **and** on polling day:
 - at least 18 years of age
 - British, qualifying Commonwealth citizen (with indefinite leave to remain), national of an EU member state.
- Also at least one of the following:
 - Registered local government elector for the local authority area
 - Occupied as owner or tenant of any land or premises in the local authority area during the whole 12 months preceding nomination
 - Principal or only place of work during last 12 months in the local authority area
 - Resided in parish area or within 4.8 kilometres of it during the last 12 months (**parish elections only**)

Disqualifications

- A person **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 (inc. suspended sentence) without option of a fine, during the 5 years before polling day
 - are serving a disqualification due to being found guilty of a **corrupt or illegal practice** by an election court
 - hold a **politically restricted post**
 - **This is not a comprehensive list and candidates should read the Electoral Commission guidance available on their website.**

Submitting nomination papers

- All candidates must submit by 4pm – **Thursday 8 April 2021:**
 - the nomination form
 - the home address form
 - the consent to nomination
- Party candidates will also need to submit, by 4pm – **Thursday 8 April 2021:**
 - 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

- Take care when completing your nomination papers, as mistakes may invalidate your nomination. Complete nomination papers early and arrange for us to provide an informal check. An appointment must be made for us to check your nomination form. Appointments are available from **10.00am on Monday 22 March 2021 until 3:30pm on Thursday 8 April 2021** (close of receipt of nominations). Please telephone 01562 732733 to book an appointment.
- Nomination papers must be delivered in person.
- Only one person to attend WFH

Submitting nomination papers

- If submitting multiple nomination forms i.e. for a party, there will be a form to complete and sign which will also be counter signed by the RO or DRO to confirm how many and which nominations were submitted at the time.

Nomination form

- Include your full name
- Optional: use commonly used name box(es) if commonly known by a name other than full name and wish to use it instead.
- Description field – 4 options:
 - leave blank
 - Independent
 - party candidates can use party name or description authorised by a certificate issued by or on behalf of the Nominating Officer
 - Maximum of up to 6 words (**parish elections only**)

Nomination form

- **Subscribers: 2 subscribers are required (both County and Parish elections)**
- Must sign & print their names. Check details of subscribers against electoral register.
- **Only ask subscribers to sign **after** completing the name and description fields on the form.**
- Each elector may not subscribe more nomination forms than there are vacancies. For example, if there is three vacancies, an elector may subscribe three candidates' nomination forms in that ward. You should always enquire, before asking a subscriber to sign the form, if they have already signed someone else's.
- Data protection requirements

Home address form

- **Part 1 of the home address form must state:**
 - your full name and home address in full
 - your qualifying address, or, where you have declared on your consent to nomination that you meet more than one qualification, your qualification addresses
 - which of the qualifications your qualifying address or addresses relate to (a, b, c and/or d)
 - the full name and the home address in full of the person attesting the home address form (which must be the same person who signs your consent to nomination)

Home address form (cont.)

- Part 2 of the home address form must be completed if you do not want your address to be made public:
 - the name of the relevant area in which your home address is situated (if your home address is in the UK) (Wyre Forest)
 - If you live outside the UK, the name of the country in which your home address is situated.

Consent to nomination form

- Must include:
 - name
 - which area standing in
 - confirmation of qualification(s) that apply (at least 1, but select all that apply)
 - date of birth & signature
 - date of consent
 - witness' name and signature

Certificate of authorisation

- Party candidates must have written permission to use the party name/description from the Nominating Officer (or a person appointed to act on their behalf)
- The certificate may:
 - allow the use of the party name or a particular description
 - allow candidate to choose whether to use the party name or any of the descriptions registered with the Electoral Commission
- Must be submitted by 4pm on **Thursday 8 April 2021**.

Emblem request form

- Party candidates can ask for an emblem to be printed on the ballot paper
- Emblem request form must be submitted by 4pm **on Thursday 8 April 2021**
- Party candidates should supply an electronic version of the emblem to the Returning Officer if required

Joint candidates

- Nominated by **more than one party**
- May use **registered** joint descriptions
 - must be supported by certificate of authorisation **from each party**
- May use one emblem of one of the parties but there are no joint emblems
- There are currently only two registered joint descriptions

Other agents

- Agents can be appointed to attend postal vote openings, polling stations and the count on your behalf:
 - You must give notice in writing of any people appointed as polling and counting agents by **Wednesday 28 April 2021**.
 - - Expected position: unlikely to be room to admit count agents; also limitation on number of people in polling stations
 - The appointment of postal voting agents attending a particular opening session must be made before the start of the session.

Access to electoral register/absent voting lists

- Access by candidates – once you **officially** become a candidate:
 - earliest, on **Monday 29 March 2021**, if you or others declared yourself a candidate
 - once you or others have declared you a candidate after this date / date you submit your nomination papers
- Make **written** request to the ERO – forms are available from the office / are included in your nomination pack.

Access to
electoral
register /
absent voting
lists

- Only use data for permitted purposes!
 - to complete the nomination form
 - to help you campaign
 - to check that donations/loans are permissible

Registration

- As a candidate you are uniquely placed to encourage people to register to vote.
- You should encourage people to register as soon as possible.
- The deadline for applying for the election is **Monday 19 April 2021**.
- Individuals can apply to register online at **<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>**. It only takes a few minutes.

Registration

- When discussing registering to vote with individuals, you will need to make them aware that they will need:
 - their National Insurance number,
 - date of birth and address to register.
- People who do not have / cannot retrieve their National Insurance Number can still register, but they may need to provide further information. If so, they will be contacted by the ERO.

Campaigning dos and don'ts

- Do use imprints on all your campaign material, including websites.
- Do comply with planning rules relating to advertising hoardings and large banners.
- Do make sure outdoor posters are removed 2 weeks 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).

Code of conduct for campaigners

- Campaigners are an essential element of a healthy democracy, but their activities should not bring into question the integrity of the electoral process.
- Electoral registration and absent vote applications:
 - Ensure forms fully confirm to the requirements of electoral law
 - Include the ERO's address for the return of forms
 - Ensure unaltered applications are sent to ERO **as soon as possible and not later than two working days.**
 - Make sure electors understand implications of applying for an absent vote.
 - Do not encourage postal ballot pack redirection.
 - Do not encourage electors to appoint a campaigner as proxy.
 - **Do not ask electors to sign blank proxy applications.**

Code of conduct for campaigners

- **Postal ballot packs:**
 - Never touch a postal ballot paper
 - Never observe electors completing their postal vote.
 - Encourage the voter to post or deliver the completed postal vote pack themselves. If you are given a completed application form, you should forward it directly and without delay to the local Electoral Registration Officer.
- **Campaigning outside polling stations:**
 - You are allowed to put your messages to voters on polling day, including public spaces outside polling places
 - Keep access to polling places and the pavements around polling places clear to allow voters to enter.
 - **Social distancing guidance should be followed.**

Polling Agents and Tellers

- Polling agents are not the same as tellers and the information from inside a polling station can not be used in the same way as a teller
- Polling agents may wish to note on their own copy of the register of electors who has voted, but they cannot take this marked copy of the register out of the polling station until after the close of poll. They must not interfere with the voting process and must not campaign or canvass voters in the polling station.
- **There will be limits on number of people present in polling station at one time**

Polling Agents cont..

- If you do wear a rosette or badge, it should be plain but may display the name of a candidate, party and/ or emblem.
- They have the right to observe the preparation and opening of the polling station and its closure and may add their seal to the ballot box(es) at the close of poll (though not at poll opening).
- During polling hours, polling agents in attendance should be placed at a separate table that is close enough to observe and hear the proceedings, but not in a position that would compromise the secrecy of the ballot or breach social distancing or other public health requirements.

Tellers

- **The County Council's Returning Officer has stated that he does not feel it is appropriate for tellers to be deployed due to the current pandemic. They are discouraged.**
- **At this election, tellers will NOT be allowed inside buildings where polling stations are located. They MUST remain outside, in the open air.**

Tellers cont...

- There should be no more than one teller at a polling station at any time for each candidate.
- Tellers should adhere to social distancing requirements at all times, both in relation to each other and in relation to electors and polling station staff.
- Tellers have no legal status and voters have the right to refuse to give them any information.

Single Point of Contact

- 'Live' issues should be reported via 101 (non emergency) or 999 (emergency).
- Safer Neighbourhood Team staff may visit polling station during the course of the day.
- Economic Crime Unit at West Mercia Police Headquarters deal with potential fraud matters. These should be reported via the 101 (non emergency number). Initial attendance and enquiries will be completed at a local level with advice from the Single Point of Contact.
- All calls made to the Police will be dealt with in the usual manner. There will be no additional resources due to it being Polling Day.
- SPOC – DC 2125 Dianne Knight – 07970 094437

Social Media

- If you use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc), do not post messages during the run up to and on election day that could breach campaigning rules.

Polling day

For **Kidderminster Town Council** elections there are:

- 24 Polling Stations located in 14 Polling Places which will open from 7am to 10pm. Lists are available in the nomination packs.

For **Bewdley Town Council** by-election there is one polling station which will be open from 7am to 10pm.

For **Worcestershire County Council** elections there are:

- 43 Polling Stations located in 29 Polling Places which will open from 7am to 10pm. Lists are available in the nomination packs.

Polling day

- Elections office opens from **6am to 9.45pm** for queries or problems relating to the administration of the election
 - for queries relating to election finance issues, contact the Electoral Commission (*contact details shown later*)
- Voters in the polling station or in a queue outside the polling station at 10 pm can apply for a ballot paper
- Postal votes – can be handed into the polling station within the ward or delivered to the elections office until 10pm.
- A person in a queue at a polling station at 10pm waiting to hand in postal vote can do so after 10pm.

COVID-19 precautions on Polling day

- One way systems
- Hand sanitiser
- Floor markings
- Extra staff to manage queues
- Social distancing to be maintained inside and outside polling station
- Face coverings must be worn inside polling station – legal requirement
- Staff will be wearing face masks and visors

Counting of votes

- The verification will commence at 9.00am on Friday 7 May 2021 at:
 - Wyre Forest Leisure Centre, Silverwoods Way, Kidderminster, DY11 7DT
- Count centre will open from 8.45am on Friday 7 May 2021.
- Opening of postal votes received on polling day will commence at 10.00pm on Thursday 6 May 2021 at Wyre Forest Leisure Centre.
- Candidates and election agents are entitled to attend the count
 - limits to counting agents: **to be determined following close of nominations. Expected to be zero.**

Counting of votes continued

- Verification of all ballot boxes and papers.
- Counting of Worcestershire County Council ballot papers and Bewdley Town Council by-election will commence after verification.
- Once the count teams finish the WCC Divisions they will begin on the Kidderminster Town Council wards.
- KTC (& Stourport division, WCC) counted using the Grass skirt method
- The count is expected to last all day and into the evening.

COVID-19 restrictions at the Count

- Social distancing guidance to be complied with
- Face coverings are required by law
- If not complying you will be asked to leave by the RO or DRO
- A police constable or PCSO can remove a person from the count venue and issue a penalty charge notice for breach of the regulations

Spending issues

Candidate spending

- Defined as certain expenses ‘used for the purposes of the candidate’s election’ during the regulated period.
- Responsibility of **candidate**
- Must get and keep receipts (over £20)
- Limit on expenses:
 - £806 + 7 pence per elector in ward on register in force on **the last day for publication of the notice of election**
 - Reduced for joint candidates
- EnAble fund – a grant for disability-related costs (www.gov.uk/access-to-elected-office-fund)

The Electoral Commission

Candidates' spending returns

- Returns due 28 calendar days after the election (KTC & BTC)
- Returns due 35 calendar days after result of election (WCC)
- Returns made public by **Returning Officer**
- Sample of returns may be reviewed by the **Electoral Commission**
- Failure to submit an expenses return is a criminal offence enforceable by police
- No spending will be reimbursed

Contacts

Contacts

- Wyre Forest District Council Elections office –
01562 732733
Email: electoral@wyreforestdc.gov.uk
- Mobile phone numbers for use after 9.30pm on
Polling day –
- 07515 190917 / 07966 492 938 / 07912 597203
- Worcestershire County Council, Highways
department – 01905 763763
- Electoral Commission
0333 103 1928

Questions

Thank you

Please ensure you get hold of your candidate's pack for guidance