

# Second Candidates and agents briefing

UK Parliamentary General Elections (UKPGE)

Thursday 4 July 2024

Sharon Bridglalsingh - (Acting) Returning Officer (ARO)

Peter Taylor - Electoral Services Manager & Deputy ARO

Peter Brown - Head of Democratic Services & Deputy ARO

## Topics

- who's who
- close of nominations
- key dates of the election timetable
- Reminders:
  - voter ID refresh & postal vote handling
  - campaigning
  - electoral integrity
- postal vote opening sessions
- polling day and polling stations
- count venue
- counting of votes
- contacts

# The Electoral Commission

Who's  
who

Sharon Bridglalsingh is the (Acting) Returning Officer (ARO) and is responsible for running the election.

Sharon Bridglalsingh is also the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) and is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters lists for Milton Keynes.

Michael Bracey, Pete Brown and Peter Taylor are Deputy Acting Returning Officers.

Sarah Ashmead is the ARO responsible for running the elections in the remaining 5 Buckinghamshire constituencies, and the ERO for the whole of Buckinghamshire Council.

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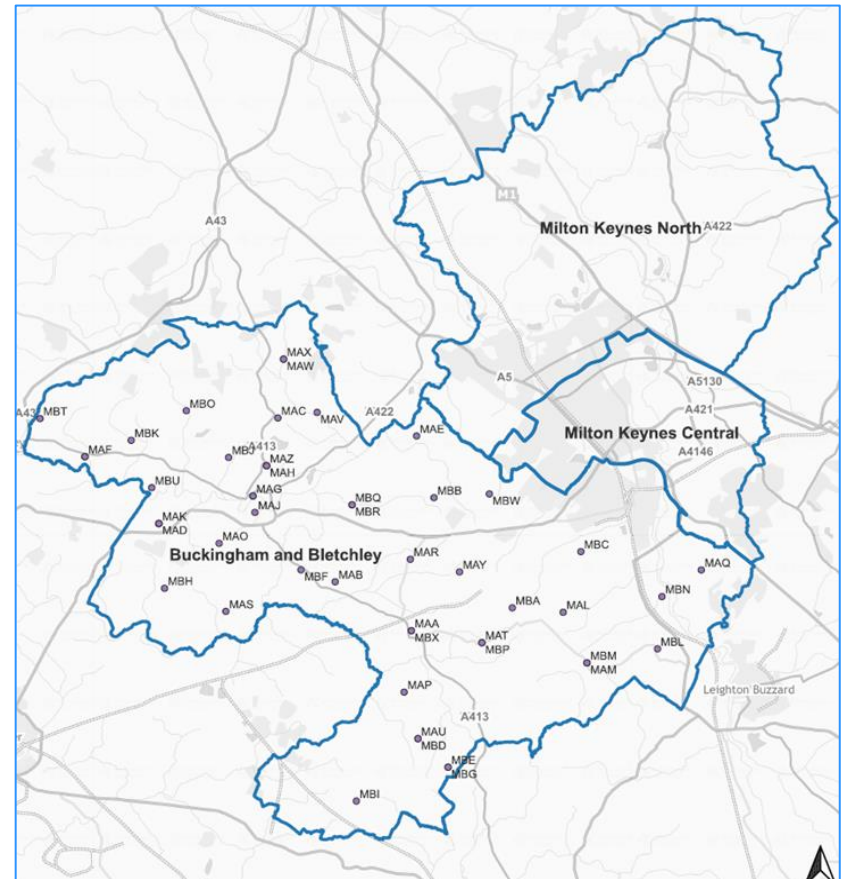
## Close of Nominations

17 candidates in total across 3 constituencies:

- Buckingham & Bletchley - 6 candidates
- Milton Keynes Central - 6 candidates
- Milton Keynes North - 5 candidates

Statement of Persons Nominated with Notice of Poll and briefing slides available on our website:

[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/election-4-July](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/election-4-July)



## Election timetable

Timetable with local dates available at:  
[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/election-4-july](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/election-4-july)

### Part I

First Issue of Poll Cards	6 June
Deadline for applications to register to vote	Midnight - Tuesday 18 June
Deadline for new postal vote applications / changes to existing postal or proxy vote applications	5pm - Wednesday 19 June
Second interim notice	20 June
Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	5pm - Wednesday 26 June
First dispatch of Postal Votes	From 18 June

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## Election timetable

### Part II

Timetable with local dates available at:  
[www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/election-4-july](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/election-4-july)

Deadline for applications for a Voter Authority Certificate or Anonymous Elector's Document	5pm – Wednesday 26 June
Appointment of counting and polling agents	Thursday 27 June
Polling day	7am - 10pm Thursday 4 July
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deadline to apply to vote by emergency proxy</li><li>• Replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes ends</li></ul>	5pm - polling day
Alterations to register to correct clerical error	9pm - polling day
Deadline for production of Temporary Voter Authority Certificates	10pm - polling day
Return of election expenses	+ 35 days from declaration of result Friday 9 August

## Registration Update

Since the election was called on Wednesday 23 May we have had:

- Around 10k new applications to register to vote (some duplicates)
- Absent Votes:
  - 3,337 new postal vote applications
  - 430 proxies
- Overseas Electors -
  - 325 new applications
  - 755 in total (30% do not have an absent vote)
- Voter Authority Certificates - 117 new applications

Buckingham &  
Bletchley:

£20,162.60

Milton Keynes  
Central:

£17,662.08

Milton Keynes  
North:

£19,631.96

The  
Electoral  
Commission

## Reminders **As agent, you are responsible for:**

- Spending and donations – following rules about how much can be spent, who donations can be accepted from, and financial reporting after the election.
- The campaign and following electoral law, including:
  - Imprints on printed and digital material
  - The handling of postal votes
  - Other rules such as false statements about candidates or paying campaigners

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DC 6112 Stephen Perry - [stephen.perry@thamesvalley.police.uk](mailto:stephen.perry@thamesvalley.police.uk)

Thames Valley Police | Economic Crime Unit

[Code of Conduct for Campaigners at UK Parliamentary general elections in Great Britain, local elections in England and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections | Electoral Commission](#)



More information at: [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/voter-ID](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/voter-ID), or  
[www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id)

# The Electoral Commission

## Reminders

## Voter ID

Acceptable photographic ID required before voting in a polling station:

- Passport
- Driving licence (including provisional license)
- Blue badge
- Certain concessionary travel cards
- Identity card with PASS mark (includes the [All in 1 MK card](#))
- Biometric Immigration document
- Defence identity card
- Certain national identity cards
- Expired documents can still be used, provided the photo remains a good likeness
- Those without ID can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate until **5pm on 26 June**
- Electors may request a private area for their ID to be inspected
- A voter can return if they do not have ID, or their ID is not accepted





Only 4 postal votes rejected because of new rules in May

# The Electoral Commission

## Reminders



## Postal vote handling

- Limits on handing in postal votes at polling stations / civic offices - no more than 5 can be handed in (plus your / their own).
- **A postal vote returned by hand that is not accompanied by a postal vote return form will be rejected. Only 4 were rejected in May 2024.**
- Political campaigners also subject to additional restriction: (can only hand in postal votes for close relative or for someone whom they provide regular care).
- No longer possible to 'drop off' postal votes at Civic (security or letter box).
- Secrecy requirements which apply at a polling station are being extended to postal and proxy votes - offence to try to find out how someone has voted on their PV.
- Only Polling Stations (day of poll) and Civic are designated for receipt by relevant officers, from 24 June – 4 July (Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm and [7am - 10pm on polling day]).

## Postal Vote Opening

### Where and when

- Chamber at Civic Offices - Sessions will commence at **2pm & 6.30pm** on Monday 24 June and run every weekday (except the evening session on Friday 28 June) to the 3 July.
- From **2pm** Envelope Bs will be opened and sent for scanning. Scanning will be **continuous from 2pm**.
- From 6.30pm Envelope As will be opened.
- Marshall Arena (Balcony 2) – Final sessions will be at the count venue on the 4 July

### Who can attend?

- Candidate, Election Agent and two Postal Vote Agents per session (agent must be notified before session commences) by e-mailing Roz Tidman
  - ✓ [Roslyn.Tidman@Milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Roslyn.Tidman@Milton-keynes.gov.uk)

### What else...?

- Similar layout to May – counters on the inside of cordon in the middle of the chamber and observers on the outside.
- DRO adjudication of provisionally rejected signatures at **1pm** on the day of every opening session except the first day and polling day.

# Postal Vote Opening

[Link to Guidance](#)

## Access

It is important that you can follow the process and see what is happening, but secrecy is important:

- Ballot papers will be handled face down
- The practice of ‘tallying’ at postal vote opening sessions is prohibited
- You will not be able to lean over tables but able to observe the full process
- You should allow space for staff to work and not attempt to look at ballot paper numbers

## EC Guidance

*Anyone attending an opening session must not attempt to see how individual ballot papers have been marked. It follows therefore that keeping a tally of how ballot papers have been marked is not allowed.*

*...anyone attending a postal vote opening must not attempt to look at identifying marks or numbers on ballot papers, disclose how any particular ballot paper has been marked or pass on any such information gained from the session. Anyone found guilty of breaching these requirements can face an unlimited fine, or may be imprisoned for up to six months.*

## Polling Stations

- No changes to polling stations used in May local and PCC elections.
  - Buckingham & Bletchley - 68 stations
    - 43 in Bucks area, 108 polling staff with 3 triple stations (Buckingham Community Centre, Buckingham Youth Centre, Winslow Public Hall)
    - 1 portacabin in Bletchley outside Cold Harbour School as in May 2024
  - Milton Keynes Central - 54 stations
  - Milton Keynes North - 55 stations
    - 2 portacabins at Redhouse Park and Selkirk Drive as in May 2024
  - One ballot box for all ballot papers (some will have 2 because of volumes).
  - Polling station staff:
    - Additional 100 poll clerks from May staffing levels for additional demand
    - All staff do online training provided by the Association of Electoral Administrators
    - Presiding officers have mandatory f2f briefing incl dealing with queues, PV handling rules and voter ID
    - We will be using greeters outside stations and 'Q' cards for any queues at 10pm
- 
- Polling agents / candidates may ask about how many ballot papers have been issued (but our priority will be voters)
  - Polling agents any not ask for information about voter ID, or postal vote returns

## Polling Stations

### **Campaigning outside polling stations:**

- You are **not allowed** to put your messages to voters, inside the polling station or the polling place (the polling place includes the entirety of the building, its grounds, and the car park).
- Cars should not be left in Polling Station car parks with campaign messages.
- *You can campaign in public spaces near to polling stations but should be careful, however, to ensure that your approach is proportionate and should recognise that groups of supporters may be perceived as intimidating by voters.*

### **Tellers**

- One per candidate at any one time
- Keep access to polling places and the pavements around polling places clear to allow voters to enter
- Tellers will not be given access to the inside of a polling station unless to cast their own vote or act as a companion for a disabled voter
- Not allowed to ask to see voters ID or check if they have it
- They may remind them Voter Id is required as they approach a polling station
- Clearer signs displayed outside with Tellers do's & don'ts

# The Electoral Commission

## Polling day

- Polling stations open from **7am** to **10pm**.
- Office open 6am to 10pm for queries or problems relating to the administration of the election.
- Voters in the polling station or in a queue outside the polling station at 10 pm can apply for a ballot paper, or hand in a postal vote.

## Polling day

- Postal votes – can be handed in on polling day UNTIL 10 pm by filling a form as discussed earlier at:
  - Any polling stations within the **three constituencies (Buckingham & Bletchley, Milton Keynes North, or Milton Keynes South)**
  - Milton Keynes City Council, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ
- Postal votes for Buckingham & Bletchley **cannot be handed in at Bucks Council offices in Aylesbury**



## Counting of votes

### The venue

- The verification for all three constituencies will commence at **10pm** at Marshall Arena, Stadium MK, Stadium Way, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK1 1ST, starting with Postal Vote Ballot Boxes.
- Parking in S1 **has been paid for by MKCC** - Please consider car sharing.
- Access to the venue from 9.15pm via lobby door 6a (same as May).
- Photo ID required to access venue – please avoid large bags and coats.

### Attendees

- Candidates, election agents, and counting agents appointed by the candidate are entitled to attend.
- 16 x Counting Agents per constituency (2 per table as 8 tables in each constituency)
- 2 guests per candidate permitted by ARO - no powers and can only observe constituency where candidate is standing.
- Those not on the list will leave disappointed – **there will be no exceptions**

# The Count Venue

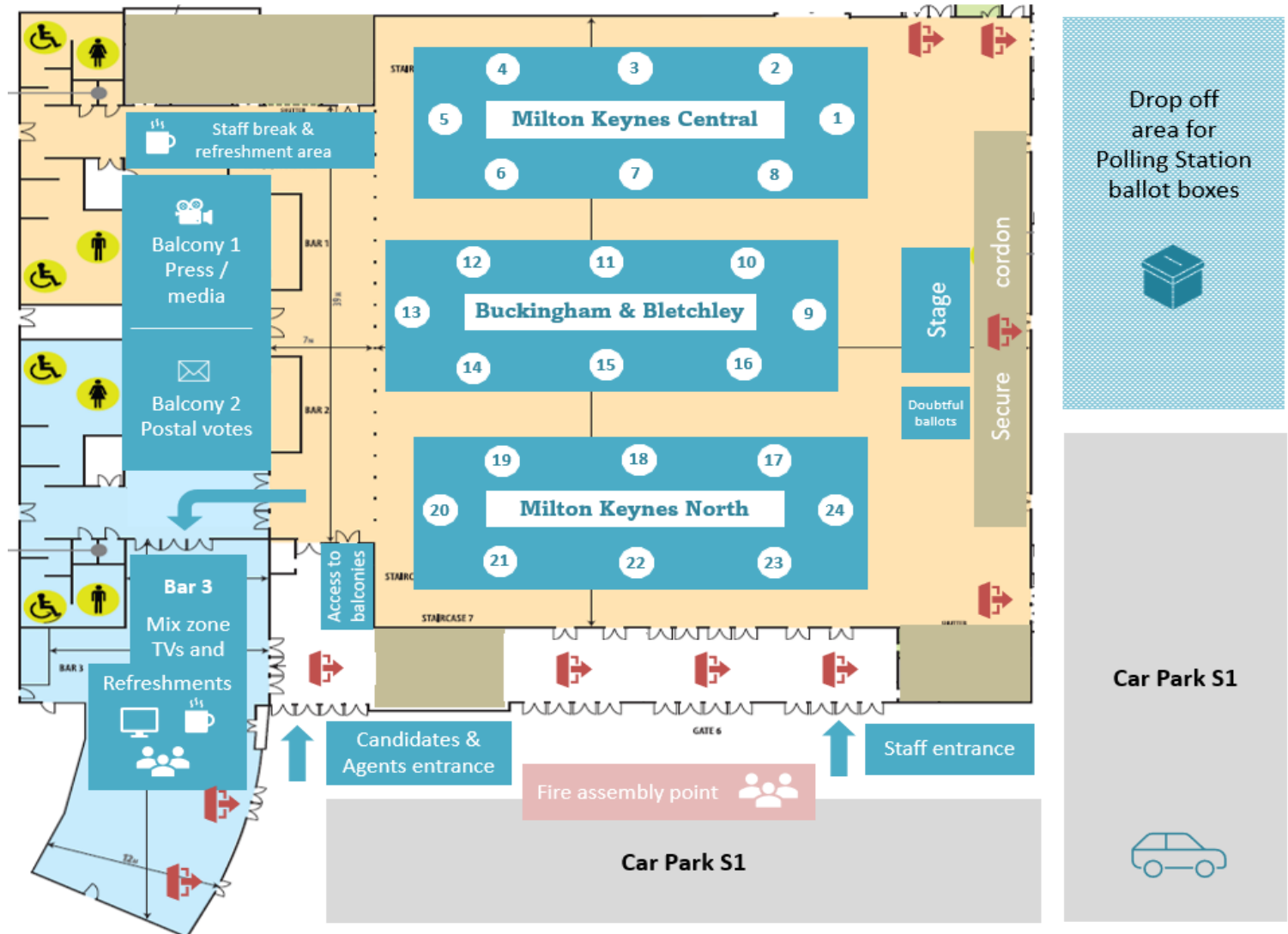
## Layout

- 3 separate areas for each constituency & 3 Deputy AROs for each
- Dedicated area for the press – balcony 1
- Postal vote opening at the venue – balcony 2
- Dedicated area for doubtful ballot adjudication sharing provisional results
- All announcements will be made from main hall and will be audible throughout the venue
- Usual wayfinding signage to help you navigate the venue
- Please stay within your assigned constituencies to avoid overcrowding at tables
- Dedicated area / Bar 3 for candidates, guests and agents
  - Water, tea / coffee, light refreshments e.g. pastries
  - TVs showing election coverage from SKY and BBC News

# The Electoral Commission

## Layout – Marshall Arena

Verification and Count



## Verification & Count process

### The Process

- Each constituency has 8 mini count tables, with a team leader and 8 counters. Dedicated Deputy ARO (ballot boxes colour coded by constituency).
- When you arrive, Postal Vote ballot boxes will be behind each constituency table
- Welcome announcements, then verification of Postal ballot boxes – from 10pm sharp.
- Then verification of Polling station boxes as they arrive – not allocated by ward, but by distance from venue:
  - 119 Polling station Ballot boxes will come directly to the Arena.
  - 2 satellite sites in Buckingham and Newport Pagnell will bring remaining 58.



Short speeches are permitted after the results are announced

# The Electoral Commission

## Verification & Count process

- Usual counting method (finger stools and flicking corners).
- When sorting between candidates, will use the coloured party markers on front tables.
- Supervisors bundle flick at front table before placing on rear table.
- Coloured trays for rear tables with 500 markers – ballot papers **will remain with mini count table.**

## Doubtful Ballot Papers

- As usual, supervisors will reinsert obvious papers into the count
- Adjudication will be undertaken in only one area, announcement with 2-minute warning
- Once adjudicated 'for' a slip will be stapled to the ballot paper

## Recount threshold

- Decision on the day, but: <500 is likely full recount and <750 additional bundle flick

## Your safety Part 1

### What's Available?

- If you consider yourself to be at risk of harm, or you believe a crime has been committed, please contact your local police on 999 or 101.
- Primary responsibility for security during the general election lies with policing. Local Operation Bridger Single Point of Contact to relay concerns or issues:
  - Inspector Tristan Brace – Thames Valley Police (P1406)  
[tristan.brace@thamesvalley.police.uk](mailto:tristan.brace@thamesvalley.police.uk) / 07891 838403
- Police are able to fund additional patrolling in areas that might benefit from a policing focus.
- National Police webinar was last week, Friday 14 June
- The Home Office will consider requests for security on a case by case basis, judging each request on its own merits.
- To request security, please email [HomeOfficeprivatesecurity@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:HomeOfficeprivatesecurity@homeoffice.gov.uk)

Your  
safety  
Part 2

## TVP Arrangements & Roles

- We have met with TVP - extra funding from government to help police these elections locally
- Bucks Operational SPOC will continue to manage any issues for the Buckingham area of Buckingham & Bletchley.
  - Jodie Duggan P6015 [jodie.duggan@thamesvalley.police.uk](mailto:jodie.duggan@thamesvalley.police.uk)
- Count Security – Hourly visits by Police to show a real security presence – option for them to remain in the count.
- MKCC Malpractice & Operational SPOC will continue to manage the risks and issues in the geographical area of Milton Keynes
  - Catherine Storey P1533 in charge of polling day resourcing / operations
  - At least 100 of the 134 polling stations to be visited – high electorate stations targeted
  - Dedicated reference number for Presiding Officer to report incidents
  - 2 Dedicated double crews in MK

Your  
safety  
Part 3

More reading / links

- [Protective Security Guidance for High-Risk Individuals](#)  
advice and guidance on how individuals can protect themselves, staff and family from a range of threats to personal safety and security.
- [When it Goes too Far - Joint Police Guidance for Candidates in Elections](#)  
advice on recognising and responding to intimidatory behaviour.
- [The Blue Book: A Guide to Personal Security](#)  
advice from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office for how to stay safe at home, at work, on-the move and online.



## Upcoming Events

Electoral Commission 15-minute slot advice surgeries for candidates, agents and non-party campaigners:

- Tuesday 18 June
- Wednesday 19 June
- Thursday 20 June

These spots are now full you would like to see if there are any spots available, please email Gee at [gnarendren@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:gnarendren@electoralcommission.org.uk)

## Contacts

- Returning Officer  
[Sharon.bridglalsingh@Milton-Keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Sharon.bridglalsingh@Milton-Keynes.gov.uk) & 01908 252095
- Electoral Services Manager  
[Peter.taylor@Milton-Keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Peter.taylor@Milton-Keynes.gov.uk) & 01908 253930
- Head of Democratic Services  
[Peter.brown@Milton-Keynes.gov.uk](mailto:Peter.brown@Milton-Keynes.gov.uk) & 01908 253671
- Electoral Commission contacts
  - For questions on election spending, contact 020 7271 0616
  - For questions on the Commission's guidance on standing for election, contact 0333 103 1928

## Useful information

- [Candidates online security guidance](#)
- [Candidates and Agents physical safety advice](#)

Questions &  
thank you