

## **Preparing for Nominations**

The coronavirus pandemic is continuing to impact how we live and presents particular challenges for the Returning Officer (RO), Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) and our team in preparing for and delivering the May 2021 elections.

The Electoral Commission (EC) will be producing guidance for candidates and agents to help you understand the changes to the election process that you can expect to see as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and to give you more information on what you need to be able to participate in the elections safely and with confidence.

## **Public Health principles**

There are general public health principles that everyone should follow in all aspects of daily life to help mitigate the risk of the spread of coronavirus, and these will underpin all aspects of preparing for the elections:

1. Maintain social distancing
2. Clean hands regularly
3. Avoid touching your face
4. Limit your number of contacts
5. Wear a face covering, where necessary
6. Self-isolate and get a test, where necessary

## **Nominations**

### **Communication**

The EC will provide any adaptations to our usual processes for managing nominations in light of coronavirus. This will help to manage expectations and provide reassurance that the arrangements will support you to be able to participate safely and easily while reflecting national and local public health advice.

The EC will provide clear and specific information about what they can expect in relation to the different parts of the process:

- delivery of Candidate and Agents briefings sessions
- the informal checks and manage the delivery of nomination papers.

As always, it will be important to ensure that all candidates, agents and political parties receive the same information in the interests of fairness and consistency.

The EC will also provide information on how to manage supply of copies of the electoral register in a timely and safe way.

For example, we would like to encourage those entitled to a copy of the electoral register to request to receive the register in electronic format and send it securely via encrypted email or using a secure data transfer site. You can be provided with paper

versions of the register but this will need to be picked up from our office.

We can provide reassurance that the current circumstances will not affect anyone's ability to obtain the information and able to stand in the election, and although the nominations process may feel different to previous years, we can assure you that the processes in place to ensure that they are robust and have been designed to support candidates and agents to participate safely.

### **Briefings for candidates and agents**

We will provide briefing sessions before the nomination process starts and after the nomination process is completed. We want to ensure that candidates and agents are provided with all the relevant information required. We will ensure that you understand how the process will be managed in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

We will ensure that these briefings will be accessible to all candidates and agents to support you in participating in the process.

In light of the current public health situation and associated coronavirus restrictions, we will be looking at holding virtual online briefings using video calling and other technology:

- Online briefings will allow us to manage a large number of participants to hear the briefing at the same time, without needing to attend the same venue. To help all participants get the most out of the online sessions, we will need to put in place processes to facilitate for asking and answering of questions during the sessions.
- Due to the impact of the pandemic, the use of video calling has become commonplace and is relatively simple which should mean that this is an accessible medium for the majority of candidates and agents.
- We will provide a power point presentation for candidates and agents to watch on demand at their convenience, with details of how they can ask any follow up questions afterwards included.

We will not be having any briefings in person. We will provide the candidates and agents briefing presentation on Slough election page once this has taken place. If you have any questions regarding the elections please e-mail:

[fiona.ahern@slough.gov.uk](mailto:fiona.ahern@slough.gov.uk).

### **Provision of nomination packs**

You can download a nomination pack on the [SBC website](#).

If you wish to receive a nomination pack on paper you can visit the Electoral Services Office, Observatory House, 25 Windsor Road, SL1 2EL.

Despite the impact of the pandemic and any current national or local restrictions, any person expressing an interest in standing at the election will be able to access a nomination pack. Please ensure you contact Electoral Services first to arrange for a nomination pack to be available at reception in Observatory House.

## **Informal checks of nomination papers**

### **Make candidates and agents aware of the options for informal checks by e-mail**

We will provide candidates and agents with the option for informal checks as early as possible in advance of the start of the nominations process. If you are able to scan your nomination forms to the Electoral Services Office we will make arrangements for checks to be made before accepting your nominations.

We will ensure that due to nomination forms containing personal information, we will take steps to ensure that e-mails are sent and received securely.

### **Carry out in person informal checks**

Where you wish to attend the office for in-person informal checks, we will need to put appropriate measures in place to ensure your safety as well as that of our staff.

- We will ask you to come to our reception at Observatory House and ask for Fiona Ahern. Please ensure that your nominations to be informally checked are put in a clear sleeve. Please ensure you hand sanitise and wear a face mask at all times when visiting Observatory House.
- Candidates, agents and staff will be asked to maintain social distancing.

## **Delivery of nomination forms**

All nomination papers will be delivered to Electoral Services, Observatory House, 25 Windsor Road, Slough, SL1 2EL.

### **Managing the delivery of nomination papers in practice**

We will ensure that whoever is delivering the nomination papers or who is entitled to attend the delivery of other candidates' nomination papers to attend the delivery of other candidates' nomination papers is able to do so safely. For example:

- All venues used for the delivery of nomination papers will be compliant with the public health recommendations on social distancing and will be well-ventilated.
- There will be hand cleaning facilities at the entrance and exit of the venue. Any desk or table where people may be holding or passing over paper documentation, we will ensure visitors and staff maintain social distancing.

In line with guidance it would be advised that one person delivers the nomination papers. This will help take steps to minimise the risk of numerous candidates and agents delivering nomination papers to the same place at the same time. This will help to limit the number of contacts and will also assist our staff with managing the process efficiently.

- We will be providing an appointments system so please contact [fiona.ahern@slough.gov.uk](mailto:fiona.ahern@slough.gov.uk) to arrange an appointment.
- Request that, where possible, only one person should deliver the nomination paper (in a clear sleeve).

## **Inspection of nomination and home address forms after the close of nominations**

### **Communicate information about the arrangements for inspection**

If candidates and agents need to make arrangements for inspection of nomination and home address forms after nominations close you should make an appointment if you wish to view these forms.

Providing early clarity will help us deal with your appointment in light of coronavirus and will help us to manage expectations and provide reassurance that your arrangements will allow inspection while reflecting national and local public health advice.

### **Manage the inspection of nomination papers and home address forms**

We need to ensure that anyone who is inspecting nomination papers or home address forms is able to do so safely.

- The space used for inspection should enable compliance with the public health recommendations on social distancing and will be well ventilated.
- We will provide hand cleaning facilities at the entrance and exit of the office and next to any desk or table where people may be holding paper documentation, visitors and your staff who are supervising will be asked to maintain their distance
- We will try to ensure there is a one-way system for access to the office space where inspection will take place.
- We need to ensure we implement an appointment system for inspection, to help avoid the risk of candidates and agents coming into contact with others.