



The  
Electoral  
Commission

# Candidates and agents Briefing

Local government elections in England:

- Cannock Chase Council
- Various Town & Parish Councils

4 May, 2023

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Commission

# Introduction

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Head of Governance & Corporate Services / Returning Officer

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## The Electoral Commission

### Topics

- Who's who
- Key dates of the election timetable
- Qualifications
- Disqualifications
- Nominations
- Agents
- Postal votes
- The poll
- Counting of votes
- Members Induction
- Candidate spending
- Contacts

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## The Electoral Commission

### Who's who

- **The Returning Officer (RO)** is responsible for running the elections. The Returning Officer is **Judith Aupers**.
- The RO also appoints **Deputies** to act on their behalf, in this case, myself and Stacey, Interim Electoral Services Team Leader.
- Polling Station Inspectors are also to be appointed as DROs with limited powers around Voter ID.
- The Electoral Services team maintains the register of electors and absent voters' lists, which are required at elections.

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Elections detail

Elections in all 15 Cannock Chase wards:

District

- Brereton & Ravenhill
- Cannock East (x2)
- Cannock North
- Cannock South
- Cannock West
- Etching Hill & The Heath
- Hagley
- Hawks Green
- Heath Hayes East & Wimblebury
- Hednesford Green Heath
- Hednesford North
- Hednesford South (x2)
- Norton Canes
- Rawsley
- Western Springs



Elections detail

Elections in only some of the Parish / Town council areas where / if contested:

Parish / Town Councils

- **Brereton & Ravenhill PC**
- **Bridgtown PC**
- **Brindley Heath PC**
  - Brindley Village
  - Chase Side
- **Cannock Wood PC**
- **Heath Hayes & Wimbl'y PC**
  - Hawks Green
  - New Heath Hayes
  - Old Heath Hayes
  - Wimblebury
- **Hednesford TC**
  - Anglesey
  - Pye Green
  - West Hill
- **Norton Canes PC**
- **Rugeley TC**
  - Etching Hill
  - Hagley
  - Western Springs North
  - Western Springs South



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### Election timetable

Timetabled process:	Deadline
Publication of Notice of Election (Not later than 27 March, 2023)	24 March, 2023
<b>Nominations commence</b>	<b>10am Mon 27 March</b>
<b>Close of nominations</b>	<b>4pm Tue 4 April, 2023</b>
Notification of appointment of election agents	4pm Tue 4 April, 2023
Publication of statement of persons nominated	4pm Wed 5 April, 2023
Deadline for applications to register to vote	Midnight Mon 17 April, 2023
Deadline for new postal vote applications /changes to existing postal or proxy vote applications	5pm Tue 18 April, 2023
Publication of notice of poll/situation of polling stations	Tue 25 April, 2023

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### Election timetable (cont'd)

Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	5pm Tue 25 April, 2023
Deadline for applications for a Voter Authority Certificate (VAC) or Anonymous Elector's Document (AED)	5pm Tue 25 April, 2023
Appointment of counting and polling agents	Wed 26 April, 2023
<b>Polling day</b>	<b>7am to 10pm, Thu 4 May, 2023</b>
Deadline to apply to vote by emergency proxy	5pm – polling day
Replacement for lost/spoilt postal votes ends	5pm – polling day
Alterations to register to correct clerical error	9pm – polling day
Return of election expenses: Parish +28 days from poll; District +35 days from result	Parish: Thu 1 June District: Fri 9 June, 2023

Expenses covered later

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### Qualifications

\*Qualifying = someone who has indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK, or does not require such leave.

\*\*Work need not be paid employment.

- Candidates must satisfy criteria on the day they are nominated **and** on polling day:
  - be at least 18 years of age
  - be a British, qualifying\* Commonwealth citizen, or national of an EU member state.
- Also at least one of the following:
  - Registered local government elector for local authority area
  - Occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises in the local authority area during the whole 12 months preceding nomination
  - Principal or only place of work\*\* (including unpaid) during last 12 months in local authority area
  - Lived in the local authority area during the last 12 months (for Parish elections, this can be any area within 3miles or 4.8km of it)

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**Disqualifications** A person **cannot** be a candidate if :

**This list is not comprehensive.** Candidates should refer to Part 1 of the Commission's guidance or seek independent legal advice for further information on disqualifications.

**NB It is not the RO's responsibility to check if qualified or not**

- **Employed by the local authority they are standing for**, 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
- Subject of a **Bankruptcy Restrictions Order** (or interim restrictions 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
- **Serving a disqualification** due to being found guilty of a **corrupt or illegal practice** by an election court
- hold a **politically restricted post**
- are subject to the **notification requirement of or under Part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003**

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### Nomination papers

#### Take care when completing your nomination papers

- mistakes may invalidate your nomination.

**We will provide an informal check** prior to formal 'receipt'.

**Do not leave it until the last minute**

• **All candidates** must submit the following documents by **4pm on Tue, 4 April, 2023**:

- **The nomination form**
- **The home address form**
- **The consent to nomination**

The forms above **must be delivered in person** (i.e. not by post / fax / e-mail or other electronic means) **to the Returning Officer** and not just left at Reception

• **Party candidates** will also need to submit:

- **An original 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)

These forms **may be delivered by hand or post by the same deadline**. (NB don't assume that putting in a post box guarantees receipt by the deadline)



### Nomination form (1)

**Parish council candidates** may use any description up to six words. Must not confuse with a registered political party. Party candidates will need a certificate of authorisation.

- Include full name (forename; middle name(s); surname)
- Commonly used name box(es): Use if commonly known by a different forename or surname other than actual name and wish to use it instead on ballot paper etc. *But you cannot use your first name as a commonly used name to exclude your middle name.*
- Description field – 3 options:
  - **Party candidates** - can use **party name or description**. Must have **certificate of authorisation** issued by / behalf of the Nominating Officer (**description / party name must match that on certificate of authorisation, which must be registered with the Electoral Commission**)
    - **Independent**
    - **Leave blank**



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### Nomination form (2)

- Subscribers: 2 subscribers are required for elections for both CCDC and Parish candidates
- Must sign & print their names. Check that subscribers are registered electors for the electoral area in question
- Check with subscribers that they haven't already subscribed to someone else's nomination
- Only ask subscribers to sign **after** completing the candidate's name, address and description fields on the form
- Data protection requirements

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## The Electoral Commission

### Home address form (1)

- Part 1 of the home address form must state:
  - Candidate's full name; and home address in full
  - Qualifying address, or, where candidate has declared on the consent to nomination that you meet more than one qualification, your qualifying addresses
  - which of the qualifications your qualifying address or addresses relate to (a, b, c and / or d – tick (✓) alongside and complete address in box to right)
  - the full name and the home address in full of the witness to candidate's consent to nomination

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## Home address form (2)

- Part 2 of the home address form must be completed if the candidate does not want the home address to be made public:
  - The name of the relevant area in which the home address is situated (if in the UK), e.g. 'Cannock Chase'
  - If resident outside the UK, the name of the country in which the home address is situated.

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## Consent to nomination form

Candidates must not sign the form if they are not qualified to stand. It is an offence to do so. See Part 1 of the Commission guidance.

- Must include:
    - Name
    - Which area standing in
    - Confirmation of qualification(s) that apply (at least 1, but select all that apply\*)
    - Date of birth and signature
    - Date of consent\*\*
    - witness' name and signature
- \*Would recommend doing so by means of a tick (✓) as per 'Home Address' form
- \*\*Must not sign the consent form earlier than one calendar month before the deadline for submitting nomination papers

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### Certificate of Authorisation (2) and Emblem Request form (3)

**Must be originals; copies are not acceptable**

- Party candidates must have written permission to use the party name/description from the National Nominating Officer (or a person authorised 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
- Party candidates can ask for an emblem to be printed on the ballot paper
- Party candidates should supply an electronic version of the emblem to the Returning Officer if required
- Must both be submitted (i.e. received) by 4pm on Tue, 4 April, 2023

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### Joint party candidates

- Nominated by **more than one party** e.g. **Labour and Cooperative parties**
- May use registered joint party descriptions
  - **must be supported by certificate of authorisation from each party**
- May use one emblem of one of the parties only, but there are no joint party emblems

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### Election agent (form 4)

This is an important role which should not be undertaken lightly

- Responsible for the proper management of the election campaign; **particularly its financial management.**
- Notification of appointment must reach the RO by 4pm Tue, 4 April, 2023. Form is included in nomination pack.
- Candidate will become own agent by default if none is appointed.
- Agents, including a candidate acting as their own agent, can be replaced at any time, subject to prior notification.
- Candidates who act as their own agent and do not provide an office address will have their home address published on the notice of election agents, even if they have requested for this information to be withheld from the SOPN and ballot paper.
- No election agents at Parish / Town Council elections.

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## The Electoral Commission

### Nomination Packs and Guidance

- Nomination packs are available to download from the CCDCC election pages:  
<https://www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/council/elections-voting/elections/information-candidates-agents>
- Full paperwork, including nomination forms etc and guidance for candidates and agents is also available from the Electoral Commission website:
  - District elections  
<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/local-elections-england>
  - Parish / Town elections  
<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/parish-council-elections-england>

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### Other agents

- Other agents can be appointed to attend postal vote openings (postal voting agents), polling stations (polling agents) and the count (counting agents) on your behalf:
  - You must give notice in writing of any people appointed as polling and counting agents by **Wed, 26 April, 2023**. Forms are provided for this purpose in the packs.
  - The appointment of postal voting agents attending a particular opening session must be made at least the day before the session. A list of dates / times of opening sessions is provided in the packs.

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### Access to electoral register / absent voting lists

- Access by candidates – once you **officially** become a candidate:
  - **earliest on Mon 27 March, 2023** (i.e. last date of publication of notice of election) if you have already submitted papers and been declared a candidate.
  - After this date, you are considered a candidate as soon as you or others declare yourself to be so, or as soon as you submit your nomination papers
- Must submit a **written** request to the ERO
  - forms are included in nomination packs.

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## Access to electoral register / absent voting lists

Candidates should refer to Part 4 of the Commission's guidance for further details

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

**A breach of the restrictions on use could lead to a fine (up to £5,000).**

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## 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 **Mon, 17 April, 2023**. Because of the time taken to process via DWP portal, **applications should be submitted well in advance of deadline**.
- Individuals can apply to register online at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote> It only takes a few minutes.

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## Registration

Applications to register to vote should not be left until the last minute as the checking process might mean they miss the deadline and the right to vote at these elections.

- When discussing registering to vote with individuals, you will need to make them aware that they will need to provide:
  - their National Insurance number
  - date of birth and address
- 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 Electoral Services team and might need to agree an appointment for an application to be received and any supporting evidence checked, if time critical.

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## Absent voting

- When talking to electors about voting by post or proxy, you should make them aware of the relevant deadlines and advise them to apply early.
  - **Deadline for applying for a postal vote is 5pm on 18 April, 2023**
  - **Deadline to apply for a proxy vote is 5pm on 25 April, 2023**
- If you are encouraging people who don't have a postal (or proxy) vote to apply for one, make sure you explain that they will only qualify for one in time for the elections if they are (or will be) registered in time to vote at the elections.

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### Voter Identification (Photo ID)

#### New legal requirements

- Voters in this election will need to provide a form of **accepted photo ID** if they wish to vote in person at a polling station.
- Voters will be able to present **out of date** photo ID, such as an expired passport, so long as the photograph is still a good likeness.
- Unfortunately, voter cannot be issued with a ballot unless they can present a form of accepted photo ID.
- If someone forgets or brings the wrong type of ID with them **they can return later** with the correct photo ID, during the hours of poll.
- Proxies also need photo ID.
- If required, photo ID can be viewed in private.

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### Accepted forms of Voter ID

#### Information on acceptable forms of Voter ID is detailed on poll cards. Further information on next slides

- Voters should be encouraged to check whether they have one of the forms of accepted photographic ID well in advance of the election
- If a voter does not have an accepted form of photographic ID, they can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate either online <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate> or using a paper application form.
- Electors who are registered anonymously must have an Elector's Document to vote in person
- Any applications must be received by Electoral Registration by 5pm on Tue 25 April, 2023 (6 working days before poll).

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## Accepted forms of Voter ID (1)

full lists are available online at <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/voter-id/accepted-forms-photo-id>

International Travel	Travel and Parking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Passport</b> (issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, an EEA state or a Commonwealth country)</li> <li>• <b>Irish Passport Card</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Driving licence</b> (issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state)</li> <li>• A <b>Blue Badge</b></li> </ul>
Local Travel	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Older Person's bus pass</b></li> <li>• <b>Disabled Person's bus pass</b></li> <li>• Oyster 60+ Card</li> <li>• Freedom pass</li> <li>• Scottish National Entitlement card</li> <li>• 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card</li> <li>• Senior SmartPass issued in NI</li> <li>• Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass issued in NI</li> <li>• War Disablement SmartPass issued in NI</li> </ul>

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## Accepted forms of Voter ID (2)

Local Travel (continued)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60+ SmartPass issued in NI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Half Fare SmartPass issued in NI</li> </ul>
Proof of Age	Other Govt. Issued Doc's
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Biometric immigration document</b></li> <li>• <b>Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identify Card)</b></li> <li>• <b>Nationality identity card issued by an EEA state</b></li> <li>• <b>Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland</b></li> <li>• <b>Voter Authority Certificate</b></li> <li>• <b>Anonymous Elector's Document</b></li> </ul>

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## Campaigning dos and don'ts

**This list is not comprehensive.**

Candidates should read Part 4 of the Commission's guidance for further information on campaigning

- **Do** use imprints\* on all your campaign material, including websites (\*the name and address of the printer and the promoter).
- **Be mindful** of what you say on social media. Minefield! Wise to consider it in the same way you would any other media. For anybody who is experiencing abuse, the LGA has produced a guide on handling abuse: <https://www.local.gov.uk/handling-abuse-social-media>
- **Do** comply with planning rules relating to advertising hoardings and large banners.
- **Do** make sure outdoor posters are removed 2 weeks after the election.
- **Don't** put election materials on highways property, such as lamp standards (see SCC letter in pack).
- **Don't** produce material that looks like a poll card.
- **Don't** pay people to display your adverts (unless they display adverts as part of their normal business).

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# The Electoral Commission

## Code of conduct for campaigners

The Code of Conduct for campaigners (updated Jan, 2023) can be found on the Commission's website: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/electoral-fraud/electoral-fraud-responsibilities>

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 conform to the requirements of electoral law
  - Include the ERO's address for the return of forms
  - Ensure unopened / unaltered applications are sent to ERO within **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.
- **Voter Authority Certificate applications:**
  - Should not handle paper based Voter Authority Certificate applications and should encourage electors to send them directly to Electoral Registration or apply online.

**Do not open yourself up to risk of complaint / impropriety.**

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## Code of conduct for campaigners

The Commission has also produced a quick guide for party workers on handling postal votes.

- Postal ballot packs:
  - Never touch a postal ballot paper
  - Never observe electors completing their postal vote.
  - Never handle or take any completed ballot paper or postal ballot pack from voters
- 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.
  - Do not cause a nuisance to voters and **respect their right to privacy, i.e., should not ask who they are / ask to see their poll card, if they have one / or directly ask them who they've voted for, as if there is an entitlement to know. Can, however, ask "Do you mind telling me..."**
  - **Tellers are not allowed in polling stations;** should stand outside wearing coloured rosettes of a reasonable size to show electors that they are activists, not electoral officials.

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## Complaints or Allegations of Electoral Fraud

### If you have complaints or allegations of electoral fraud

- Be prepared to raise the matter with the Police, which may include giving a statement and substantiating any allegations.
- Raise the matter with your election agent or local / regional party office.
- If you raise the matter with Electoral Services or the RO / DRO, expect to be directed to the Police Election Malpractice SPOC, DC Rob Hadgett.  
E-mail: [election.spoc@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:election.spoc@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk)

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## Polling day



A small number of polling stations may have changed since the last elections or by-elections. Messages have gone out on poll cards and a full list is available on the Council's website and at: <https://wheredoivote.co.uk>

- Polling stations open from 7am to 10pm
- Office also open across this period for queries or problems relating to the administration of the election
- 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 10pm can apply for a ballot paper
- Voters in this election will need to present photographic ID in the polling station
- Postal votes – can be handed into polling stations within the ward or delivered to the Civic Centre post box until 10pm.
- A person in a queue at a polling station at 10pm waiting to hand in a postal vote can do so after 10pm.

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## Counting of votes

- Count taking place on **Friday, 5 May, 2023 at Chase Leisure Centre**. Commencing at **10:00am**. CCDC followed by any Parish / Town Council counts, as necessary.
- Please respect the job of the count staff.
  - Please do not lean on or place personal items on the tables.
  - Please do not talk to, or about, the staff; it can be very distracting
  - If you have an issue, please speak to the table Supervisor, who can speak to the RO or a DRO.
- Numbers of observers (candidates and agents) in attendance is limited to **max 5 for CCDC** and **4 for Parish / Towns**:
  - Candidate;
  - Election agent (no Election agent at PC / TC elections);
  - 2 x Counting agents and one other person (guest).
- **Admission by ticket only. Tickets not transferrable.** Form to be returned to Electoral Services **by Wed, 26 April, 2023.**

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### If elected - CCDC only

Parish / Town councillors will need to liaise with Parish / Town clerks

- At the count, successful candidates will be given a 'starter pack'; please complete and return forms to Democratic Services.
- ICT will hold an open event for issue of laptops; assistance with setting up e-mail accounts etc between 5 and 6pm on Thu, 11 May, 2023 in the Esperance Room, Civic Centre, Beecroft Road.
- 'Members' Welcome Event' at 6.00pm on Wednesday, 17 May, 2023 in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre.
- Will be advised of the full schedule of the 'Members' Induction Programme' which will follow over the next couple of months
- Annual Council Meeting will be first formal meeting. This takes place at 6.00pm on Wednesday, 24 May, 2023 in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre.
- Full Calendar of Meetings 2023 – 24 already published on the Council website, if you want to know what meetings have been scheduled for the upcoming Municipal year (May, 2023 – May, 2024).

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# Spending issues

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## Candidate spending

Candidates and Agents should read Part 3 of the Commission's guidance for further information on spending and donations

'Regulated period' commences the day after becoming a candidate until day of election

- Defined as certain expenses 'used for the purposes of the candidate's election' during the regulated period.
- **Responsibility of election agent\*** but the candidate must also submit a declaration that the return is correct and, therefore, should also know the rules.
- **\*In Parish / Town Council elections, there is no election agent, so responsibility rests with the candidate.**
- Limit on expenses:
  - £806 + 7 pence per elector in ward/division on register in force on 27 March, 2023
  - reduced for joint candidates (2 or more candidates standing in the same ward with same election agent)
  - Further information provided in the packs
- Must get and keep receipts over £20

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## Candidates' spending returns

- **Parish / Town Council: returns due within 28 calendar days** of election i.e. 1 June, 2023
- **CCDC: returns due within 35 calendar days** after result of election, i.e. 9 June, 2023
- Returns made public by Returning Officer.
- Sample of returns **may be reviewed** by the **Electoral Commission**.
- **Legal requirement** to complete a return, even if election is not contested or no expenditure incurred.
- **Failure to submit** a spending return **is a criminal offence** enforceable by police.
- NB These are **not reimbursable expenses**, i.e. cannot be reclaimed from the Council or the Electoral Commission!

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# Contacts

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## Contacts

- Elections office
  - 01543 464437; 464754; 464457
  - [electionsoffice@cannockchasedc.gov.uk](mailto:electionsoffice@cannockchasedc.gov.uk)
- Returning Officer and Deputy
  - 01543 464411 (Judith)
  - 01543 464588 (Steve)
- Electoral Commission:
  - 0333 103 1928
  - [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/contact-us/our-offices](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/contact-us/our-offices)
  - Further information is provided in the Electoral Commission's guidance for candidates and agents
- Staffordshire Police SPOC (Single Point of Contact)
  - [election.spoc@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:election.spoc@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk)

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# Closing Remarks

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# Questions

Any other  
Questions ?



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