

Returning Officers administering a UK Parliamentary election in Great Britain You are in the Verification and Count section Home Guidance for (Acting) Returning Officers administering a UK Parliamentary election in Great Britain Verification and Count View the navigation tree Go to main guidance section: Guidance for (Acting) Returning Officers administering a UK Parliamentary election in Great Britain Returning Officer and (Acting) Returning Officer Planning for the election Voter Materials Starting the election timetable Nominations Agents Absent Voting Polling station voting Verification and Count Planning for the verification and count Attendance at the verification and count Verification The count Counting the votes Doubtful ballot papers Reconciliation of count totals Provisional results and recounts Equality of votes Declaring the results Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Verification and Count After the election Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers The count Count staff should arrive at the times agreed by you in advance and should check the count stationery and equipment is present, using our checklist to assist. You should ensure that staff are checked in and that you brief them as necessary to ensure smooth delivery of the count. You must have taken reasonable steps to begin counting the votes as soon as practicable within four hours of the close of poll. The fact that there may be voters waiting in a queue to cast their vote does not alter the fact that close of poll continues to be 10pm. This means that you will need to have taken all reasonable steps to start the count by 2am, even if voters are waiting in a queue at 10pm. 1 At stand-alone polls, you do not have to wait until you have completed the verification, before you can start counting the votes. 2 What to do if you are unable to start the count within four hours of the close of poll If you do not commence counting the votes within four hours of the close of poll you must publish and deliver to the Commission a statement setting out the time at which counting did begin, the steps you had taken to comply with the duty and the reasons why the counting of votes had not commenced by 2am. You must also publish the statement, which should include making it available on the local authority's website. We have produced a template statement for those (A)ROs who do not commence counting within four hours of the close of poll and you can access this from our resources page for this section. 3 It is important that you keep a record of all steps taken in order to provide an audit trail demonstrating your decision making processes. If you consider that all reasonable steps have been taken and that a further step is not reasonable, you should keep a record of your consideration and why you have decided it would not be reasonable. You should be able to explain your decisions, and should be prepared to do so in response to enquiries. The statement should include the: name of constituency name of (Acting) Returning Officer date and time (in 24 hour format, e.g. 03:45) at which the counting of the votes given on the ballot papers began description of the steps taken to ensure the counting of votes commenced within 4 hours of the close of poll (Acting) Returning Officer's explanation for why the counting of the votes did not commence by 2am You should send statements to your local Commission team, preferably by e-mail, and must send them by not later than 30 calendar days of the declaration of result. We are legally required to publish in our statutory report on the election a list of all constituencies where counting did not begin within the prescribed timescale. 1. Schedule 1 rule 45(3A) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Paragraph 22(1AB) The Representation of the People (Combination of Polls) (England and Wales) Regulations 2004 (Combination of Polls Rules) ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Sch 1 rule 45(8) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated:

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