

Part E – Verifying and counting the votes

Local government elections Wales:
guidance for Returning Officers

December 2016 (updated January 2022)

In this guidance we use 'must' when we refer to a specific legal requirement. We use 'should' for items we consider to be recommended practice, but which are not legal requirements.

Translations and other formats

All of our guidance and resources for these polls are also available in Welsh. For information on obtaining this publication in another language or in a large-print or Braille version please contact the Electoral Commission:

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Updates to this document

Updated	Description of change
January 2022	Standalone guidance for Local Government elections in Wales to incorporate legislative changes introduced by: General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 The Local Elections (Principal Areas) (Wales) Rules 2021 The Local Elections (Communities) (Wales) Rules 2021

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1 Principles for an effective verification and count

1.1 You should ensure that your verification and count arrangements can deliver the key principles for an effective verification and count, which are as follows:

- All processes are transparent, with a clear and unambiguous audit trail.
- The verification produces an accurate result. This means that the number of ballot papers in each box either matches the number of ballot papers issued as stated on the ballot paper account or, if it does not:
 - the source of the variance has been identified and can be explained, and/or
 - the box has been recounted at least twice, until the same number of ballot papers is counted on two consecutive occasions
- The count produces an accurate result, where:
 - for single-member vacancies, the total number of votes cast for each candidate and rejected votes matches the total number of ballot papers given on the verification statement for the election
 - for multi-member vacancies, the total number of votes given for each candidate added to the number of rejected votes (i.e. the number of completely rejected ballots multiplied by the number of vacancies plus the number of rejected votes from those ballots rejected in part), plus the number of unused votes matches the total number of votes expected (i.e. the total number of ballot papers as given on the verification statement multiplied by the number of vacancies)
- The verification and count are timely.
- The secrecy of the vote is maintained at all times.
- The security of ballot papers and other stationery is maintained at all times.
- The communication of information at the verification and count is clear and timely.

Mayoral referendums

For a mayoral referendum, all references in this part to votes for a candidate should be taken to mean votes for one of the answers to the referendum question.

At a mayoral referendum, all references to 'candidates and agents' should be read as 'petition organisers' and references to 'counting agents' should be read as 'counting observers' appointed for the purposes of the referendum.

1.2 In addition to considering how to ensure that your processes will enable you to meet the key principles, you will need to consider other relevant practical factors that will affect the organisation and timing of the verification and count, such as:

- the size of your area and the extent of your area in which there are elections
- the geography of your area
- other polls taking place on the same day in your area
- size and capacity of your venue
- cost
- transparency for candidates, agents and observers

2 Preparing for the verification and count

2.1 This chapter covers the general considerations you will need to make when preparing for the verification and count in your area.

2.2 There are a variety of methods for arranging verification and count processes. Your project plan should include your arrangements for the management of the verification and count.



This guidance should be read alongside our [verification and count toolkit](#), which covers the more practical aspects of running the verification and count, as well as the decisions you will need to make on how best to manage these processes.

We recognise that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach which can be applied to running the verification and count process at an election. Every area has its own set of local circumstances that will influence the decisions that you must make in running the verification and count processes. The toolkit we have developed has been designed to ensure consistency of outcomes, following the principles set out in **Chapter 1**, while providing flexibility in recognition of varying local circumstances.

Planning for the verification and count

2.3 As set out in [Part B – Planning and Organisation](#), to plan effectively for any election, you should prepare a project plan that is treated as a 'living document', keeping it under regular review, and using it to monitor progress.

2.4 You should keep your plan for the resourcing and delivery of the verification and count under review, taking into account the particular context of the elections.

2.5 You should review your assumptions to ensure they continue to be realistic and robust, including your assumptions on turnout, the number of candidates, speed and capability of count staff and the expected timing for completing the various count stages. Such a review will help inform a realistic assessment of whether you will be able to deliver the overall plan for the count, and whether and when it may be necessary to implement contingency plans. In all cases your plan should be flexible enough to allow you to respond if any of your assumptions change, covering what contingency actions you will take in such circumstances.

2.6 To help build confidence in your plans for the verification and count, you should, as a minimum, share information on your plans with local political

parties, elected representatives and prospective candidates. To help manage expectations you should also identify in advance those decisions about the management of the count to be taken in consultation or agreement with candidates and agents, and make clear to them on what basis you will be making decisions. This may include, for example, decisions on recounts and the suspension of the count. While you should seek input from those affected or interested to inform your decision-making, ultimately the responsibility for making decisions remains with you.

2.7 The following sections in this chapter set out the legal requirements and provide general guidance on:

- the timing of the verification and count
- staffing and training
- equipment and layout of venues
- managing attendees
- communicating during the verification and count
- security of ballot papers

Timing of the verification and count

2.8 Our [timing of election counts report](#) sets out the overarching principle that should underpin decision-making in relation to the timing of election counts, that is, the need to ensure accurate results in which voters, candidates and political parties have confidence.

2.9 The counting of votes must begin as soon as practicable after the close of poll¹.

Combination

Wherever polls have been combined, the verification can be carried out simultaneously, but all the boxes must be opened and the contents for all polls verified before the count for any of the polls can commence^{i 2}. For detailed guidance on the verification and count, see chapters 5 and 6 below.

2.10 You should bear in mind that there may well be an expectation among candidates, parties and the media that the results will be declared as soon as possible after the close of poll. You should engage with local political parties, candidates and agents as part of your decision-making process, so that there is a well-informed local dialogue about the timing of the count in the context of the local circumstances. Decisions on the timing of the count should be taken

ⁱ In the case of a UK Parliamentary election only, ROs do not have to wait until they have completed the verification for all polls for which you are the RO taking on the combined functions, before they can start counting the votes for the UK Parliamentary election.

before notice of election is published and those with an interest, including local political parties and broadcasters, should be informed at an early stage.

2.11 The period of time specified for the count to take place should be such that you can resource and conduct well-run count processes within it, ensuring accurate results in which voters, candidates and agents can have confidence.

2.12 Your plan should also identify key points during the count process at which you will review progress against the expected schedule. This progress review should be used to keep candidates, agents and the media informed of the progress of the count

Staffing

2.13 To ensure that voters can have confidence that their vote(s) will be counted in the way they intended; you will need to put in place appropriate resources to ensure the verification and count are timely.

2.14 It is important you ensure there are the right number of competent, skilled and knowledgeable staff – and that each member of staff is clear about their role – so that the count is run efficiently and effectively and according to the principles in **Chapter 1 – Principles for an effective verification and count**. You should also ensure there is an appropriate number of reserve staff in case of staff absence on the day of the count.

2.15 You should ensure that staff receive appropriate training and instructions to allow them to carry out their duties effectively and in accordance with the law. Training should include what staff should look for when examining ballot papers to determine which should be included in the count.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to put in place appropriate resources to ensure the verification and count are timely.

To demonstrate that the outcome can be met you will need to set out how the verification and count is to be organised and managed, including the process you followed to arrive at your decision.



Further guidance on staffing the verification and count and the training of verification and count staff can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

Layout and equipment at the verification and count venue

2.16 So that those attending the count can have confidence that the count process is well-managed and can have confidence in the results, you should ensure that all your processes are transparent, with everything at the verification and count carried out in clear view of all those entitled to attend.

2.17 Layout plans of your verification and count venue should be prepared at an early stage. A good layout will be informed by the verification and count model you decide to adopt, consideration of the workflows you intend to follow and the space you will have available.

2.18 You should ensure that all equipment is tested in advance of the verification and count and that you have contingency arrangements in place in case of equipment or power malfunction.



Further guidance on selecting verification and count venues can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#). For practical guidance on how to lay out your verification and count venue and a checklist of useful materials see our verification and count resource '[Planning for an effective verification and count: a toolkit for Returning Officers](#)'.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 2](#), you will need to ensure count processes are transparent, with everything at the verification and count carried out in clear view of all those entitled to attend, with information provided to attendees on the processes to be followed.

To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place a layout plan of the count and have in place information to be provided to attendees at the count.

Communicating during the verification and count

2.19 Good communication, both at candidate and agent briefings in advance of the verification and count and at the event itself, allows those present to properly scrutinise all of the processes and will help to build confidence in the administration of the verification and count. Providing information on the processes to be followed can also help to lower the number of queries raised by candidates and agents – in particular from new or inexperienced candidates or agents - thus reducing the pressure on staff.

2.20 You should produce and distribute an information pack to anyone attending the count containing, for example, information on the facilities, the processes and what those in attendance can expect to see and the procedures for the result declaration.

2.21 You should also ensure that there are timely and co-ordinated communications throughout the verification and count, for example by using a public address system, to ensure that information is communicated in a way that allows those in attendance to fully understand what is happening where and when and alerts candidates and agents to any particular processes at which their attendance is required (e.g. at the adjudication of doubtful ballot papers).

2.22 To ensure transparency of communication between counting staff and other attendees at the count (including counting agents) you should make

clear in instructions to those attending the count that any questions should be communicated via count supervisors rather than counting assistants.

2.23 Also, if agents or observers are dissatisfied in any way with the manner in which the proceedings are being carried out, the opportunity should always be available for them to make direct representations to you at the earliest opportunity so that any concerns may be considered, explanations and reassurances given, and any corrective action taken if necessary.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 2](#), you will need to ensure that count processes are transparent, with everything at the verification and count carried out in clear view of all those entitled to attend, with information provided to attendees on the processes to be followed.

To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have a layout plan of the count and have in place information to be provided to attendees at the count and arrangements to communicate progress at the count.

2.24 You should consider the following when determining what information you will provide to anyone attending the verification and count on the processes to be followed, and how you will provide it:

- Placing information posters and boards throughout the verification and count venue. These should be large enough to be clearly visible, and should show the key members of staff and provide an overview of the procedures to be followed in order to help attendees identify what is happening and where. You may wish to provide pictures of yourself and your key staff to help attendees identify you at the count. This information could also be provided in advance of the count, for example as part of an information pack.
- Providing a layout plan of the venue, indicating the key areas of interest for counting agents and observers.
- Appointing a member of staff to respond to queries and to act as liaison between candidates, agents, observers and key staff.
- Providing a hand-out listing all ballot box numbers and the names of the polling stations they relate to.
- Providing a copy of the template verification and count paperwork that will be used to communicate the outcome of the verification and count, with an indication of the level at which the information will be provided (e.g. ward level / polling district level) – to be followed by the provision of the actual verification statement and statement of results.



For practical guidance on communicating information at the verification and count venue, see our verification and count resource '[Planning for an effective verification and count: a toolkit for Returning Officers](#)'.

Managing attendees

2.25 Your plans should include mechanisms for managing the expectations of those attending the verification and count, so all attendees know what to expect and what their role is. They should also cover how you will maintain the secrecy of the vote throughout the verification and count.

2.26 You should ensure that all attendees at the count, including candidates, their guests, election agents, counting agents, observers and the media, are briefed on and fully understand the process for conducting the count and the standards of behaviour which are expected of them at all times. You should make clear in both written and face-to-face briefings for attendees that you will be excluding attendees from the count venue if their behaviour interferes with the effective conduct of the count. This should help count staff to carry out verification and count activities without interference from counting agents and observers.

2.27 You should also decide on a policy for the use of mobile phones and photography / filming in the verification and count venue and provide this information in advance to those who are entitled to attend.

2.28 Tickets or admission passes should be issued to everyone entitled to attend the count, except accredited observers and Commission representatives who will be wearing silver or pink accreditation badges. You should give consideration to issuing different-coloured tickets or passes to identify the different categories of attendees.

Combination

Different-coloured tickets may be particularly helpful where there are combined polls for easily distinguishing who can attend specific verification and count processes.

2.29 You should liaise with the police to check that their plans for managing the public space outside the count venue will enable people entitled to attend the count to enter and leave the venue freely and without obstruction.



See **Chapter 3 – Attendance at the verification and count** for further guidance on who is entitled to attend the verification and count.

Ensuring the security of ballot papers



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to maintain the secure storage of ballot papers at all times.

To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place arrangements for securely storing ballot papers.

2.30 You should take all necessary steps to ensure the security of ballot papers and relevant stationery from the close of poll through to the declaration of the results, particularly where ballot papers need to be transported from the verification to the count or where a break in proceedings means the ballot papers need to be stored between the conclusion of the verification and the commencement of the count³.

2.31 You should ensure the security of the ballot papers at all times. If you need to store ballot papers (for example, between the verification and the start of the count), you must store them in sealed ballot boxes in a secure place, allowing agents to attach their seals to the ballot boxes⁴.

2.32 You should always open the sealed ballot boxes in clear view of any candidates and agents present, so they can satisfy themselves that nobody has interfered with the ballot papers and the ballot boxes.

2.33 You should liaise with your local police Single Point of Contact (SPOC) when deciding on the most appropriate method for ensuring secure storage.

2.34 You should also brief candidates and agents about your arrangements, so that they can have confidence in the integrity of the count.



For practical information on ensuring the security of ballot boxes and ballot papers see our verification and count resource '[Planning for an effective verification and count: a toolkit for Returning Officers](#)'.

3 Attendance at the verification and count



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 2](#), you will need to ensure count processes are transparent, with everything at the verification and count carried out in clear view of all those entitled to attend, with information provided to attendees on the processes to be followed.

To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have a layout plan of the count, and have in place information to be provided to attendees at the count and arrangements to communicate progress at the count.

Who can attend?

3.1 The following people are entitled by law to attend the verification and count⁵:

- you and your staff
- candidates
- one guest per candidate
- election agents
- counting agents
- Commission representatives
- accredited observers
- police officers and community support officers on duty
- any other person permitted by you to attend (see paragraph **3.6** below)

3.2 You must give notice in writing to counting agents of the time and place at which the verification and counting of votes will start⁶.

Mayoral referendums

At a mayoral referendum, the elected mayor (if any) may also attend the verification and count⁷.

Combination

Where two or more polls are combined, those who are entitled to be present at the verification will include those who are entitled to be present at the verification for each of the other elections⁸.

Once the verification has been completed, only those who are entitled to observe the relevant count are entitled, by right, to be present at the counting

of the votes for the particular election. The relevant Returning Officer can however also permit others to attend (see paragraph **3.6** below).

3.3 You must give counting agents reasonable facilities for overseeing the verification and counting of the votes⁹. You should also ensure that anyone else who is entitled to attend has an unrestricted view of the proceedings, while also ensuring that they will not be able to interfere with the work of your staff.

3.4 You should take all necessary steps to ensure that anyone attending does not interfere with or compromise the secrecy of the vote. You must make such arrangements as you think fit to ensure that all attendees are provided with a copy of the [secrecy requirements](#).¹⁰

3.5 There is no requirement for those attending to arrive by a certain time, and so those entitled to attend should be admitted whenever they arrive. Also, a procedure should be in place so that any attendee who wishes to leave and return later is not prevented from doing so.

3.6 You can, at your discretion, permit other people to attend the proceedings if you are satisfied that it will not impede the efficient verification or counting of votes and, in the case of the count, you have either consulted the election agents in advance, or thought it impracticable to do so.¹¹

Controlling admission

3.7 You should provide lists of those people entitled to attend the verification and count to those on duty at the entrance, and instruct security / door staff to check the tickets or passes of anyone seeking to attend.

3.8 However, security staff should also be briefed that Commission representatives and accredited observers do not need to provide advance notification of where they intend to observe and therefore may not appear on their list but are nevertheless entitled to access the verification and count venue on production of their observer or Commission representative identification badge.

3.9 You should, for health, safety and security reasons, record the names of everyone who actually attends the verification and count.



Further guidance on accredited observers and Commission representatives, including a quick guide to the observer badge types, can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

Counting agents



Guidance on the appointment of counting agents can be found in [Part C – Administering the poll](#).

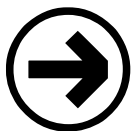
3.10 You must give counting agents reasonable facilities for overseeing the verification and counting of the votes, and provide them with relevant information¹². In particular, where votes are counted by sorting the ballot papers according to candidate and then counting each set of ballot papers, the counting agents are entitled to satisfy themselves that the ballot papers are correctly sorted¹³.

Accredited observers

3.11 Electoral observation is a legitimate and valuable part of the electoral process, and care should be taken not to hinder or obstruct any observers. While you are permitted to limit the number of observers who may be present at any one time during the verification and count¹⁴, you should exercise caution in doing so. You are not entitled to bar all observers from the verification and count, only to limit the number of observers present at any one time, and this discretion must be exercised reasonably.

3.12 Should you suspend access, or exercise your power to remove an accredited observer from the verification or count due to misconduct, you should ensure there is an audit trail to support your decision.

3.13 You must have regard to the [Commission's Code of practice for observers](#) when managing the attendance of observers¹⁵. Should you experience any issues with observers attending the count, contact your [local Commission team](#) at the earliest opportunity.



Further guidance on accredited observers can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

Commission representatives

3.14 Commission representatives are entitled to attend the verification and count and to observe your working practices¹⁶. They can ask questions of your staff and of agents, but will not do so if this would obstruct or disturb the conduct of proceedings. You are not allowed to limit the number of Commission representatives at the verification and count¹⁷.

The media

3.15 You should include space and opportunity for the media to report on the results of the elections. You have discretion to decide which representatives of the media you allow to attend. As with all attendees, you must ensure that media representatives do not interfere with the process or compromise the secrecy of the vote.

3.16 You should ensure that your public relations team are present to deal with media enquiries. You should make sure that they know who to approach if they are asked any technical electoral questions.

3.17 In addition to making practical arrangements for their attendance, any early contact with the media should also include an explanation of the processes to be followed and the expected finish and declaration times.

3.18 If media representatives are accredited by the Commission as observers and are attending in such a capacity, they have the same rights and obligations as any other accredited observer. Like any other observers, they are required to have regard to the [Commission's Code of practice for observers](#) and must abide by any decision that you make on the use of cameras and other recording equipment.¹⁸

3.19 To assist you and your public relations team we have produced, jointly with the national TV news broadcasters, some [tips for managing the media at the count](#)'.



For practical guidance on liaising with the media, see our verification and count resource '[Planning for an effective verification and count: a toolkit for Returning Officers](#)'.

4 Receipt of polling station materials and sealed boxes of postal ballot papers



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standards 1 and 2](#), you will need to ensure count processes are designed and managed to secure an accurate result, with a clear audit trail.

To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place arrangements to maintain a clear audit trail of the count processes.

4.1 In preparation, you should produce templates of all documents which will be completed at the verification and count to provide a clear audit trail. Further guidance on maintaining a clear audit trail of the count processes can be found in this chapter, in **Chapter 5 – Verification** and in **Chapter 6 – The Count**.

4.2 The correct and orderly receipt of ballot boxes and materials from polling stations is a key component of an accurate verification process. Your team of staff receiving materials from polling stations should use a checklist to ensure that all ballot boxes and ballot paper accounts are accurately accounted for, as well as any packets containing postal votes handed in at polling stations.

4.3 Where Presiding Officers are required to transport the ballot boxes to the verification venue, it should be made clear to the staff receiving the ballot boxes that no Presiding Officer should be allowed to leave until their ballot box(es) and all of the documents and packets have been received and checked off by the designated staff member and, wherever possible, a cursory check of the ballot paper accounts has been made. Staff receiving ballot boxes should be instructed to ensure that they have the ballot paper account for each ballot box.

4.4 Following receipt, the ballot paper accounts can be taken to the staff dealing with the management of the ballot box verification process and all of the materials received back from polling stations can be released by receiving staff to the relevant teams, which allows the process of the verification of the unused ballot papers to commence.

4.5 The sacks containing the documents that need to be stored, such as sealed corresponding number lists, should be separated from those containing items that will be reused, such as general stationery items. The packets and parcels from polling stations should be organised in such a way as to enable easy location of any packet.

4.6 All packets of spoilt and unused ballot papers must be opened and counted and then resealed, with the numbers counted supplied to those staff members responsible for the verification process¹⁹. You are prohibited from opening the sealed packets of tendered ballot papers, but you must open and then reseal the packet containing the tendered votes list in order to check the list against the ballot paper accounts²⁰.

4.7 You are not permitted to open the sealed packets containing the corresponding number lists and certificates of employment, the marked copies of the register and the lists of proxies²¹. You should ensure that the materials that you must keep sealed are placed in a designated and secure area for the duration of the verification and count.

Receipt of sealed boxes of postal ballot papers

4.8 Postal ballot papers previously received and opened will have been processed and should be brought to the verification venue in sealed ballot boxes, with an accompanying ballot paper account for each postal ballot box. Staff receiving the postal ballot boxes should use a checklist to ensure that all postal ballot boxes and postal ballot paper accounts are accurately accounted for.

4.9 All packets and ballot boxes containing postal ballot papers must also be subject to verification in the same way as any ballot box from a polling station²². As these will often be some of the first boxes being verified, they present an opportunity to create confidence in the process and in the count as a whole.

5 Verification

5.1 Verification has two main purposes – to ensure and demonstrate that all ballot papers issued at polling stations and all returned postal ballot papers have been brought to the count, and to provide the figure with which the count outcome should reconcile. You should keep both purposes in mind when conducting the verification process.

5.2 The training of Presiding Officers in the completion of ballot paper accounts, coupled with ballot paper accounts produced in a clear, easy-to-complete format, should help to provide a firm foundation for the verification process.



Information on the training of polling station staff is provided in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

5.3 The verification of the used, unused and spoilt ballot papers is a legal requirement, and is central to the declaration of accurate results²³.

5.4 You must verify each ballot paper account and draw up a statement as to the result of the verification²⁴. The statement is a record of the number of ballot papers expected and the number of ballot papers counted, along with an explanation for any variances. You must give a copy of the statement to any election agent who requests it.²⁵ You should supply a copy as soon as it is requested, rather than waiting for the verification to be completed.



Community council elections

At community council elections, you must give a copy of the verification statement to any counting agent who requests it.²⁶

5.5 The verification statement is a key communication tool that will help to ensure that candidates and agents are confident that the processes at the verification and count are transparent and that they will produce an accurate result.

5.6 As with all aspects of the verification and count process, transparency is key and the process followed should be clear to all present.

5.7 The key stages of the verification process are as follows:

- a. Staff must open the packets of unused ballot papers and ascertain the number of ballot papers that were not issued by noting the number of books and number of ballot papers remaining in any part

book of ballot papers inside the packet. The packets of spoilt ballot papers must also be opened and the numbers of papers must be counted. Both unused and spoilt ballot papers must be resealed after they have been counted²⁷.

- b. Staff must break the seals and open the ballot boxes in the presence of any counting agents and observers that are present²⁸. When a box has had a seal attached by an agent at the close of the poll, particular care should be taken to show to any agents and observers present that this seal is still intact prior to it being broken. The ballot papers should be carefully tipped onto the table, ensuring that none have fallen onto the floor and that the box is empty.
- c. The ballot papers must be kept face up at all times during the verification and count²⁹.
- d. You should ensure that the empty box is shown to the agents and observers so that they can be satisfied that it is indeed empty. The counting assistants should then unfold the ballot papers and count them into bundles. Accuracy at this stage is vital, so bundles should be passed to another assistant for rechecking. Any tendered ballot papers that have been mistakenly placed in the ballot box during the day should be removed and handed to the supervisor.

Combination

The ballot papers must be sorted into their respective polls and the verification procedure completed for each of them³⁰.

- e. The totals given on the ballot paper account must be compared against the number of ballot papers counted and recorded as being present inside the ballot box. You must compare the unused and spoilt ballot papers, as well as the tendered votes list, against the figures on each ballot paper account. The total number of ballot papers in the ballot box should agree with the total on the ballot paper account, and reconcile with the total number of unused ballot papers³¹.

Combination

If electors have been asked to place their ballot papers in separate ballot boxes for each poll, the different ballot boxes should be verified at the same time, either at adjacent tables simultaneously or one after the other at the same table and any ballot paper placed in the 'wrong' box should be moved to the correct ballot box³².

5.8 If a ballot paper account does not reconcile, you should undertake the following procedure and document the outcome on the verification statement:

- a. Make a full check of the arithmetic on the ballot paper account and the number of unused ballot papers. Check the other packets of returned

materials and any polling station logbook to try to identify any reason for missing or additional ballot papers. Ensure that returned postal ballots have not been added to the number of votes cast in the polling station. You should consider contacting the Presiding Officer to ask them to try to explain any discrepancies.

- b. Check the record of issued ballot boxes to see if more than one ballot box was issued to the polling station and ensure that all boxes allocated to the station are opened and accounted for.
- c. Check whether the ballot box has come from a polling place with multiple polling stations and, if it has, complete the verification of the ballot paper account(s) for the other polling station(s) to see if there is a compensating error.

Where you have more than one polling station in a polling place, the different ballot boxes should be verified either simultaneously at adjacent tables or one after the other at the same table. The law provides that a ballot paper shall not be rendered invalid simply because it has been put in the 'wrong' box³³. You should therefore ensure that you have in place a procedure to move transparently any ballot papers which have been placed in the 'wrong' ballot box by electors to the correct ballot box during verification.

Combination

Where two or more polls are combined, check the ballot boxes for all electoral events for all polling stations within the same polling place.

- d. If the ballot box is from a single polling station or if there is no compensating error in the figures from the other polling station(s) in that polling place, recount the ballot papers in the box at least twice or until the same figure is achieved on two consecutive occasions.
- e. If, after following the procedures outlined above, any discrepancy still remains, use the number of ballot papers counted and recounted by the count staff as the verified figure and make an appropriate note on the ballot paper account.
- f. Add the verified total and the variance between that and the number on the ballot paper account to the statement as to the result of the verification, if possible with an explanation of why that variance has occurred, and discuss this with any agents and observers present.

5.9 Verification can only be completed once all postal ballot papers, including those received at polling stations, have been opened and processed, and have been through the verification process.

5.10 You must ensure that the verification statement containing the result of the verification of each ballot box is completed³⁴. The statement must in each

case include the total number of postal ballot papers and the total number of ballot papers verified for the poll. You should sign the statement and any agent present may make a copy of the statement as to the result of the verification. You should make copies available for the agents present once verification has been completed and you should, on request, supply a copy of the statement to any agent present.

5.11 If on completion of verification, you do not proceed immediately to the counting of the votes, you must place the ballot papers and other documents in secure packets under your own seal and the seals of any agents present who wish to affix their own seals³⁵. You should take all necessary steps to ensure the security of the ballot papers and the relevant stationery during any break in the verification and count proceedings.

Combination

Once the verification of all ballot boxes from polling stations and of all postal vote ballot boxes is complete and the verification statement produced for each poll, any ballot papers which are not to be counted until a later time must be separated by poll, placed into containers and sealed. They must then either be securely stored until the counting of votes or be delivered to the relevant Returning Officer for counting³⁶.

Where containers of verified ballot papers are sealed for transport or storage to be counted later, candidates and agents for the poll the papers relate to have the right to then add their own seals³⁷.

5.12 Further guidance on ensuring the security of ballot boxes can be found in paragraphs **2.28** to **2.32** above and our verification and count resource '[Planning for an effective verification and count: a toolkit for Returning Officers](#)'.

6 The count

Counting the votes

6.1 The counting of votes must begin as soon as practicable after the close of poll³⁸. At a standalone election, you do not have to wait until you have completed the verification before you can start counting the votes.

Combination

Where polls are combined, the verification of the ballot papers for all the electoral events within each electoral area must be completed before the counting of the votes for any of those polls for that electoral area can be commenced³⁹.

For an explanation of what electoral area means in each case, see [Part A: Returning Officer role and responsibilities](#).

6.2 Where there has been a break in proceedings – for example, where the counting of votes does not immediately follow the verification – all sealed boxes should be opened in full view of any candidates and agents that are present. When a box has had a seal attached by an agent, particular care should be taken to show to any agents present that this seal is still intact prior to it being broken.

6.3 All count processes should be transparent. You should provide appropriate opportunities for those who are entitled to observe and object to doubtful ballot paper adjudication decisions. This should include ensuring that bundles of counted ballot papers are stored in full sight of counting agents in a way which allows them to monitor progress throughout the count.

Mixing

6.4 You must mix the ballot papers so that ballot papers from each ballot box are mixed with ballot papers from at least one other ballot box, and mix the postal ballot papers with ballot papers from at least one other ballot box before sorting and counting the votes⁴⁰.

6.5 At a standalone election you can start the counting of votes before the verification has been completed. If so, you should ensure that you always have one box containing verified ballot papers available at the end of the verification process, so that you can comply with the requirement of mixing the ballot papers from one ballot box with the contents of another.

Combination

Where the polls are combined, you should keep the ballot papers for each poll separate from one another.

Sorting and counting

6.6 Ballot papers must be kept face upwards throughout the counting process in order to prevent the number and other unique identifying mark on the back of the ballot paper being seen⁴¹. The ballot papers should be visible at all times to any candidates, agents and observers present.

Single-member vacancies

6.7 Counting assistants should sort the ballot papers into votes for each candidate. Any doubtful ballot papers should be placed aside for adjudication.

6.8 The number of votes given for each candidate should then be counted and placed into bundles of a predetermined number, e.g., bundles of 10, 20, 25, 50 or 100. A slip or card bearing the candidate's name, together with the number in the bundle, should be attached to the front. It may be helpful to colour-code the slips. The bundles should then be recounted by another counting assistant in order to ensure the accuracy of the bundle.

6.9 Before removing any bundles from the counting staff, supervisors should flick through the bundles in order to ensure that all of the votes in the bundle are marked in the same way.

6.10 It is unlikely that the number of votes in the final bundle will equal the predetermined bundle number, and so a note should be made of the number of votes in those incomplete bundles and attached to the front of the bundle.

Multi-member vacancies

6.11 There are several options for counting votes for multi-member wards, including the 'grass-skirt' method and counting sheets. It is also possible to use a combination of these methods, depending on local preference.

6.12 The '**grass-skirt**' method involves attaching the ballot papers to a large sheet of paper (for example, with double-sided sticky tape) so that they overlap, leaving only the 'X's visible for each candidate. These rows of votes can then be totalled up and transferred to a master sheet. Counting assistants could start by extracting the ballot papers where a voter has used all their votes for candidates of a particular political party – this is often known as 'block voting' – and count them separately. Counting assistants should also record unused votes by having a spare row at the bottom of the sheet: recording the unused votes will assist when checking the number of votes recorded against the total number of votes expected (i.e. the number of ballot papers multiplied by the number of votes permitted on each ballot paper).

6.13 **Counting sheets** can be used in a number of ways, for example by having a separate sheet for each candidate or having all of the candidates

listed on one sheet. Counting assistants should work in pairs, one calling out the name or number of the candidate and the other transferring each vote to the sheet(s). Counting assistants could start by extracting the ballot papers containing 'block votes'. Counting assistants should also record unused votes: recording the unused votes will assist when checking the number of votes recorded against the total number of votes expected (i.e. the number of ballot papers multiplied by the number of votes permitted on each ballot paper).

6.14 Any doubtful ballot papers should be set aside for adjudication.

Doubtful ballot papers

6.15 You should adjudicate doubtful ballot papers regularly as the count proceeds: the adjudication of doubtful ballot papers should not be left until the end of the count.

6.16 You should have regard to the Commission's booklet on doubtful ballot papers for [local government elections](#) throughout the adjudication process. The booklet contains examples of allowed and rejected votes and the key principles to be followed in the adjudication of doubtful ballot papers.

6.17 Examples of allowed and rejected ballot papers are also set out on doubtful ballot paper placemats which you should have on display at the count for candidates, agents and observers to refer to. There are different versions of the placemat as set out below:

- [single member ward](#)
- [two member ward](#)
- [three member ward](#)

6.18 When adjudicating doubtful ballot papers, you should:

- always be clear and consistent
- take time to ensure that a considered decision is given in every case
- determine whether the intention of the voter clearly appears on the ballot paper

6.19 As part of this, you will need to:

- consider the whole of the ballot paper
- consider whether the way a ballot paper has been marked means that
 - at a single-member election, a vote for one candidate is clearly apparent
 - at a multi-member election, one or more votes for up to the allowed number of candidates is clearly apparent

6.20 The legislation provides that you must reject a ballot paper⁴²:

- that does not bear the official mark (not the unique identifying mark)
- on which votes are given for more candidates than the voter is entitled to vote for
- on which anything is written or marked by which the voter can be identified (except the printed ballot paper number or other unique identifying mark)
- that is unmarked or void for uncertainty

6.21 A ballot paper can be rejected in part if more than one candidate is to be elected to the ward. If the voter is entitled to vote for more than one candidate, good votes must not be rejected because another vote on the ballot paper is uncertain⁴³.

6.22 Any unused votes should not be categorised as rejected, but should still be recorded to provide a clear audit trail and help reconcile the verification and count figures.

6.23 However, the legislation states that unless the way the ballot paper is marked identifies the voter, a ballot paper on which the vote is marked in the following ways must not be rejected if the voter's intention is clear⁴⁴:

- elsewhere than in the proper place
- otherwise than by means of a cross, or
- by more than one mark

6.24 In addition, ballot papers displaying any of the following may require further consideration:

- any ballot paper with anything unusual about it (for example, any ballot paper that appears to have been altered, either with a clearly different writing instrument or with correction fluid)
- any ballot paper torn or damaged in any way

6.25 Ballot papers that appear to be altered, either with a clearly different writing instrument or with correction fluid, should be treated as 'doubtful' and put forward for adjudication, where you must decide on their validity in the presence of candidates, agents and observers. Those that are subsequently declared as valid must be counted and included in the total number of votes cast for the appropriate candidate.

6.26 Your decision on any question arising in respect of a ballot paper is final and can only be challenged by way of an election petition⁴⁵. You must draw up a statement showing the number of ballot papers rejected, both completely and in part, and for what reason⁴⁶. You should therefore have a system in place throughout the adjudication process for sorting the rejected ballot papers into the following headings:⁴⁷

- want of official mark

- voting for more candidates than the voter is entitled to vote for
- writing or mark by which the voter can be identified
- unmarked or void for uncertainty

6.27 You should have regard to the Commission's guidance to ensure accurate and consistent categorisation of rejection for reporting on the statement.

6.28 Each rejected ballot paper must have the word 'rejected' or, where applicable, 'rejected in part' marked on it as appropriate, and the words 'rejection objected to' must be added if a counting agent objects to your decision⁴⁸. Although observers should be able to observe this process, unlike agents, they do not have the legal right to object to the rejection of a ballot paper.

6.29 A copy of the statement of rejected ballot papers should be placed in the package for rejected ballot papers.

Cut ballot papers

6.30 You may come across instances where voters have cut or torn off part of the ballot paper. Whether or not such an extract of a ballot paper can be counted will depend on whether it contains the official mark.

6.31 If it does, the ballot paper can be accepted as a valid vote, provided you are satisfied that:

- the intention of the voter is clear
- none of the grounds for rejection apply



See **Chapter 6** of [Part D: Absent voting](#) for guidance on how to deal with cut ballot papers at postal vote openings.

Reconciliation

6.32 Once all of the ballot papers have been sorted and any doubtful ballots adjudicated, the key task of reconciliation can begin.

6.33 In all cases, you should be satisfied that the results or totals (as appropriate) reflect the ballots received and so if the figures do not reconcile, the following procedure should be undertaken in order to try to identify and rectify the discrepancy:

- Check the storage area and check to ensure that all ballot boxes have been opened and are empty.
- Check all floors and surfaces for ballot papers that may have been dropped in the count venue.

- Re-check the verification figures and reconciliation for calculation mistakes.
- Ensure that all rejected ballot papers have been accounted for.
- Check that all bundles and part bundles have been counted.
- Consider recounting the ballot papers in the bundles.

6.34 You should also carry out any other checks you deem necessary.

Reconciliation for single member vacancies

6.35 All of the bundles and part bundles of ballot papers showing a valid vote for each candidate must be counted. The total for each candidate should be added to the total of rejected ballot papers and this figure should match exactly the figure giving the total number of ballot papers obtained at the end of the verification process.

6.36 If the two figures agree, you should proceed to the process of consulting the candidates and agents who are present on the provisional result.⁴⁹

6.37 If the figures do not agree, you should follow the procedure in **6.33** and **6.34** above.

Reconciliation at multi-member vacancies

6.38 When reconciling multi-member vacancies it is important to reconcile votes and ballot papers and avoid confusing one with the other. All of the votes for each candidate should be counted, as well as those votes that have not been used. Additionally, all rejected ballot papers and those rejected in part should be counted.

6.39 Where a ballot paper is rejected in part, you should record the number of ballot papers received and the number of actual votes rejected on those ballot papers.

6.40 The valid votes for all of the candidates should then be added to the number of rejected votes (the number of rejected ballots multiplied by the number of vacancies plus the rejected votes from those ballots rejected in part), plus any unused votes and this total figure should match exactly the verification figure obtained at the end of verification multiplied by the number of vacancies. If the two figures agree, you should proceed to the process of consulting the candidates and agents on the provisional result.⁵⁰

6.41 If the figures do not agree, you should follow the procedure in **6.33** and **6.34** above.

Provisional results and recounts

6.42 You should be satisfied that the number of votes for each candidate is accurate before proceeding to a provisional result.

6.43 All processes should be undertaken within the framework of maximum openness and transparency implemented throughout the various stages of the

count so that all candidates and agents can have confidence in the processes and the provisional result provided.

6.44 Once satisfied, you must advise candidates and election agents of the provisional result and you should seek their agreement on the announcement of the result.⁵¹ You should make clear that the candidates and agents are entitled to request a recount.

6.45 You must give the candidates and agents sufficient time to digest the provisional result before proceeding with the next stage of the process. It is at this point that any candidate or election agent may request to have the votes recounted or, following a recount, recounted again⁵².

6.46 You must consider any recount request but may refuse if, in your opinion, the request is unreasonable⁵³. You may, however, consider offering the candidates and agents the opportunity to inspect the bundles of ballot papers as a means of reassuring them that the result is accurate.

6.47 If you agree to re-count the votes, the candidates and agents present at the count should be informed before the recount commences and briefed on the processes you are going to follow. As with the original count, any recount should be carried out in full view of those present. You are entitled to reconsider which ballot papers should be rejected during the recount (or any further recount).

6.48 The candidates and agents must be consulted on the revised provisional result in the same way as they were consulted on the provisional result at the conclusion of the original count.

6.49 It is possible to have more than one recount. Again, it is for you to consider any request, and you may refuse if in your opinion the request is unreasonable.

Equality of votes

6.50 When two or more candidates have the same number of votes where the equality of votes is between candidates tied for the only or last seat to be allocated, you must decide between the candidates by lot⁵⁴.

6.51 Whichever candidate wins the lot is treated as though they had received an additional vote that enables them to be declared elected.

6.52 In the case of multi-member vacancies, where two or more candidates are both elected with an equal number of votes but the election is for different terms of office (e.g. where a casual vacancy election is held at the same time as the scheduled election), a lot should be drawn to determine which candidate will serve the longer of the two terms of office. Where the election is uncontested, the lot should be drawn at the first full council meeting not at the count.

6.53 There is no requirement to draw lots where one candidate is elected by a majority of votes and the equality of votes is between other candidates who are not in first place and therefore cannot be elected.

6.54 The method of drawing lots is for you to decide. Examples of types of lot include:

- ballot papers, each marked with a vote for one of the candidates with the same number of votes, placed in a container, such as an empty ballot box, mixed around, and then one drawn by you
- slips of paper with the candidates' names on them, placed in sealed envelopes, shuffled and then drawn by you

6.55 You should make an announcement that you intend to proceed with the drawing of lots between the candidates having an equal number of votes, explaining precisely what is about to happen and the method to be used. Candidates, agents, Commission representatives and accredited observers should be present during any preparation and the actual drawing of lots.

6.56 If you use the first method described above, you should, in full view of any candidates and agents, and in the presence of Commission representatives and accredited observers, fold and place a previously counted ballot paper for each of the candidates with the same number of votes in an empty ballot box. An assistant should raise the box to a height where you are unable to see the papers inside the box, but are still able to reach inside to pick one. After mixing, you should draw one of the ballot papers from the box, open it, and read out loud the name of the candidate with the vote marked against their name. That candidate is then adjudged to have been allotted an additional vote.

6.57 Similar preparations should be made should you decide to use any other method of drawing lots.

6.58 A statement should be added to the notice of result to the effect that: 'Following an equality of votes, lots were drawn and, as a consequence, an additional vote was allotted to candidate [*insert candidate's name*]'.

Mayoral referendums

If there is an equality of votes between the two answers, you must decide between the two answers by the drawing of lots in the same way as if candidates were tied for a seat⁵⁵.

Declaring the results

6.59 You must prepare a statement setting out the name of each candidate, the total number of votes given for each candidate and the number of rejected ballot papers given under each heading. Once the statement is prepared, you must declare the result of the election⁵⁶. You must also, as soon as practicable, give a notice stating the names and addresses of elected

candidates to the Proper Officer of the council for which each election is held⁵⁷.

6.60 The following factors should be taken into account when considering the declaration of results:

- Decide on the exact location in the venue where public announcements and declarations will take place and who will be on the platform at these times. The platform should be accessible for all those who need to get up on it. You could make use of display boards to provide a suitable backdrop for the announcement of results.
- Any announcement equipment should be in place and checked before the proceedings begin.
- Double-check that the result is accurate, and that it is written in the form of words for oral delivery in order to avoid any errors. You may need to repeat the declaration so that those in attendance are able to hear the detail clearly, particularly where there is noise from those attending.
- You should take steps to provide media representatives in attendance with a written copy of the results at the time the announcement is made as this will help them to ensure that their transmission of figures is accurate.

6.61 When a candidate has used their commonly used name, you should use both their full name and their commonly used name when declaring the result.

6.62 Once you have declared the result at the count, it is final and cannot be amended. You should therefore take care to ensure that the result you declare is accurate.

6.63 However, if you make an error in your oral announcement you can correct this, provided it is done immediately.



Once you have declared the relevant candidates elected you must also give notice of their names and addresses to the Proper Officer of the council⁵⁸. Further guidance on giving public notice after the election is provided in [Part F – After the declaration of result](#).

¹ Rule 52(1) Schedule 1 Local Elections (Principal Areas) (Wales) Rule 2021 (“Principal Areas Rules 2021”), Rule 52(1) Schedule 1 Local Elections (Communities) (Wales) Rules 2021 (“Communities Rules 2021”),

² Rule 55(2)-(10) Sch 2 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 55(2) – (11) Sch 2 Communities Rules 2021,

³ Rule 55(5)(b) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 55(5)(b) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

⁴ Rule 55(5) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 55(5) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

⁵ Rule 53(1) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 53(1) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

⁶ Rule 52(2) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 52(2) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

⁷, Rule 35(2)(c) Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (Wales) Regulations 2008

⁸ Rule 53 Sch 2 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 53 Sch 2 Communities Rules 2021,

⁹ Rule 53(4) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 53(5) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

¹⁰ Rule 53(6) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 53(7) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

¹¹ Rule 53(2) and (3) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 53(2) and (3) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

¹² Rule 53 Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 53 Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

¹³ Rule 53(5) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 53(5) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021

¹⁴ Section 6E(1) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (“PPERA 2000”)

¹⁵ Section 6F PERA 2000

¹⁶ Rule 53(1) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 53(1) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021, and Section 6A PERA 2000

¹⁷ Section 6E PERA 2000

¹⁸ Section 6G PERA 2000

¹⁹ Rule 54(4) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(4) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

²⁰ Rule 54(4) and 61(3) Sch 2 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(4) and 61(3) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

²¹ Rule 61(3) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 61(3) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

²² Rule 54(6) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(7) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

²³ Rule 54(4) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(4) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

²⁴ Rule 54(5) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(5) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

²⁵ Rule 54(5) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021,

²⁶ Rule 54(6)(b) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021

²⁷ Rule 54(4) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(4) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

²⁸ Rule 53 and 54(2) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 53 and 54(2) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

²⁹ Rule 54(11) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(12) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

³⁰ Rule 55 Sch 2 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 55 Sch 2 Communities Rules 2021,

³¹ Rule 54(4) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(4) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

³² Rule 55(4) Sch 2 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 55(4) Sch 2 Communities Rules 2021,

³³ Rule 55(4) Sch 2 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 55(4) Sch 2 Communities Rules 2021,

³⁴ Rule 54(5) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(5) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

³⁵ Rule 55(5) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 55(5) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

³⁶ Rule 55(9) and 59(6) Sch 2 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 55(10) and 59(6) Sch 2 Communities Rules 2021,

³⁷ Rule 59(6) Sch 2 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 59(6) Sch 2 Communities Rules 2021,

³⁸ Rule 52(1) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 52(1) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

³⁹ Rule 55 and 57 Sch 2 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 55 and 57 Sch 2 Communities Rules 2021,

⁴⁰ Rule 54(10) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(11) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

⁴¹ Rule 54(11) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(12) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

⁴² Rule 56 Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 56 Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

⁴³ Rule 56(2) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 56(2) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

⁴⁴ Rule 56(3) and (4) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 56(3) and (4) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,

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- ⁴⁵ Rule 59 Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 59 Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,
⁴⁶ Rule 56(7) and (8) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 56(7) and (8) Sch 1
Communities Rules 2021,
⁴⁷ Rule 56(8) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 56(8) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,
⁴⁸ Rule 56(5) and (6) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 56(5) and (6) Sch 1
Communities Rules 2021,
⁴⁹ Rule 54(4) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(4) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,
⁵⁰ Rule 54(4) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 54(4) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,
⁵¹ Rule 57 Sch 1 Principle Area Rules 2021, Rule 57 Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,
⁵² Rule 57 Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 57 Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,
⁵³ Rule 57(2) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 57(2) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,
⁵⁴ Rule 58 Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 58 Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,
⁵⁵ Rule 40 Sch 3 Conduct of Referendums (Wales) Rules 2008
⁵⁶ Rule 60(1) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 60(1) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021,
⁵⁷ Rule 60(2), sch 1Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 60(2) sch 1 Communities Rules 2021
⁵⁸ Rule 60(2) Sch 1 Principal Areas Rules 2021, Rule 60(2) Sch 1 Communities Rules 2021