

Planning for the verification and count | Electoral Commission

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election Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers Planning for the verification and

count There are a variety of methods for arranging verification and count processes at an election, and there is no one size fits all approach which can be applied.

Every electoral area has its own set of local circumstances that will influence the decisions that you must make as part of your planning for how you will deliver the

verification and count processes. When planning for the delivery of the verification

and count you should keep your general planning assumptions under review to ensure

they continue to be realistic and robust. This should include assumptions on turnout

, the number of candidates, speed and capability of count staff and 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. 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. Decision-making You should keep a record of all steps taken in order to be

able to provide an audit trail demonstrating your decision-making process. You should

be able to explain your decisions, and you should be prepared to do so in response to

enquiries. To help build confidence in your plan for the verification and count, you

should share information and consult and engage on your plan with stakeholders. You

should communicate throughout your planning process and be prepared to explain the

reasons for the decisions you are taking. For key decisions, you should provide your

reasons to stakeholders in writing. You should also identify in advance those

decisions about the management of the count that must be taken in consultation and

agreement with candidates and agents, and make clear to them on what basis you will

be making decisions. This includes, for example, decisions on re-counts 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 as (A)RO. You will need to decide the best way to

communicate these decisions once taken. Documentation You should produce templates

for all the documents to be used at the verification and count in advance and ensure

staff are familiar with them. Colour coding the documentation can be an effective way

of quickly locating the relevant documents. Equipment and set up You will need to

decide what equipment you will require to administer the verification and count (as

appropriate) and to communicate with the candidates and agents and anybody else

attending the count, including: public announcement systems phone lines mobile phones

and mobile signals general IT equipment and spreadsheets for recording verification and count figures equipment for verifying the personal identifiers on returned postal votes (if the final opening of postal votes is to take place at the verification venue) screens for displaying any relevant information throughout the count We have prepared a checklist to help relevant staff ensure that all materials, including stationery and equipment required at the verification and count venue are present. Example checklist of materials required at the verification and count (DOC) We have also developed guidance to support you should you need to procure any equipment. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Planning for the verification and count Verification and Count Principles of an effective verification and count