

Candidates and agents briefing

Local Government Elections

Trafford Council

7th May 2026

Topics

This briefing has been updated to cover changes as enacted by the Elections Act. It will outline:

- who's who
- key dates of the election timetable
- qualifications and disqualifications
- nominations
- agents
- voter ID
- postal votes
- polling day
- counting of votes
- candidate spending
- integrity issues
- contacts

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Who's who

- **The Returning Officer** is the person responsible for running the elections. The Returning Officer is **Sara Todd**.
- **The Electoral Registration Officer** is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters' lists. The Electoral Registration Officer is **Sara Todd**.
- Contact details are provided later.

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Election timetable

Timetabled process:	Deadline (2026)
Publication of Notice of Election	Monday 30 th March
Nominations commence	Tuesday 31 st March
Close of nominations	4pm – Thursday 9 th April
Notification of appointment of election agents	Thursday 9 th April
Publication of statement of persons nominated	Thursday 9 th April
Deadline for applications to register to vote	Monday 20 th April
Deadline for new postal vote applications /changes to existing postal or proxy vote applications	5pm – Tuesday 21 st April
Publication of notice of poll/situation of polling stations	Not later than 28 th April

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Election timetable (cont'd)

Timetable process:	Deadline:
Deadline for applications for new proxy votes	5pm – Tuesday 28 th April
Deadline for applications for a Voter Authority Certificate or Anonymous Elector's Document	5pm – Tuesday 28 th April
Appointment of counting and polling agents	Wednesday 29 th April
Polling day	Thursday 7 th May – 7am to 10pm
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	Friday 12 th June

Qualifications

- Candidates must satisfy criteria on the day they are nominated **and** on polling day:
 - be at least 18 years of age
 - be a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, a qualifying EU citizen or an EU citizen with retained rights
- 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

Disqualifications (1)

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

- are **employed by the local authority** 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
- are subject of a **Bankruptcy Restrictions Order** (or interim restrictions order)
- 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

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Disqualifications
(2)

- are 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**

Submitting nomination papers (1)

- The documents that must be submitted by all candidates by 4pm on Thursday 9th April are:
 - the nomination form
 - their home address form
 - the consent to nomination
- Party candidates will also need to submit, by 4pm on Thursday 9th April:
 - A 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)

Submitting nomination papers (2)

- Take care when completing your nomination papers, as mistakes may invalidate your nomination
- Complete nomination papers early and arrange for us to provide an informal check
- The nomination form, home address form and consent to nomination **must be delivered by hand** and cannot be submitted by post, fax, email or other electronic means.

Nomination form (1)

- Include your full name
- Optional: use commonly used name box(es) if commonly known by a name other than your full name and wish to use it instead.

- Description field – 3 options:
- leave blank
 - Independent
 - party candidates can use party name or description authorised by a certificate issued by or on behalf of the Nominating Officer

Nomination form (2)

- Subscribers: 2 subscribers are required for elections
- Must sign and print and after their names. Check details of subscribers against electoral register
- Only ask subscribers to sign **after** completing the name, address and description fields on the form
- Data protection requirements

Home address form

- Part 1 of the home address form must state:
 - your full name and home address in full
 - your qualifying address, or, where you have declared on your 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)
 - the full name and the home address in full of the witness to your consent to nomination

Home address form (2)

- Part 2 of the home address form must be completed if you do not want your address to be made public:
 - The name of the relevant area in which your home address is situated (if your home address is in the UK),
 - if you live outside the UK, the name of the country in which your home address is situated.

Consent to nomination form

- Must include:
 - name
 - which area standing in
 - confirmation of qualification(s) that apply (at least 1, but select all that apply)
 - date of birth & signature
 - date of consent
 - witness' name, and signature

Certificate of authorisation

- Party candidates must have written permission to use the party name/description from the 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
- Must be submitted by 4pm on Thursday 9th April

Emblem request form

- Party candidates can ask for an emblem to be printed on the ballot paper
- Emblem request form must be submitted by 4pm on Thursday 9th April
- Party candidates should supply an electronic version of the emblem to the Returning Officer if required

Joint party candidates

- Nominated by **more than one party**
- 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 but there are no joint party emblems

Election agent

- Responsible for the proper management of your election campaign; particularly its financial management.
- Notification of appointment must reach the RO by 4pm on Thursday 9th April. Form is included in nomination pack.
- You will become your own agent by default if none is appointed.

Other agents

- Other agents can be appointed to attend postal vote openings, polling stations and the count on your behalf:
 - You must give notice in writing of any people appointed as polling and counting agents by Wednesday 29th April.
 - The appointment of postal voting agents attending a particular opening session must be made before the start of the session. We will give 48 hours' notice.

Access to electoral register/absent voting lists

- Access by candidates – once you **officially** become a candidate:
 - earliest, on Monday 30th March if you, or others declared yourself a candidate
 - once you or others have declared yourself a candidate after this date / date you submit your nomination papers
- Make **written** request to the ERO – forms are available from the office / are included in your nomination pack.

Access to
electoral
register /
absent voting
lists

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

- Registration (1)
- 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 Monday 20th April.
 - Individuals can apply to register online at **<https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>**. It only takes a few minutes.

Registration (2)

- 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 ERO.

Absent voting applications

- Highlight that electors can now apply online at www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote or www.gov.uk/apply-proxy-vote
- When talking to electors about applying to vote by post or proxy, you should make them aware of the relevant deadlines and advise them to apply early
- You will need to make them aware that they will need to provide their National Insurance number, date of birth, signature and address to register.
- People who do not have / cannot retrieve their National Insurance Number or cannot provide a signature can still apply, but they may need to provide further information. If so, they will be contacted by the ERO.
- If you are encouraging people to apply for a postal (or proxy) vote, make sure you explain that they will only qualify for one if they are (or will be) registered in time to vote at the elections.

Absent voting - campaigners

- Campaigners cannot handle postal votes for other electors who are not close relatives or someone for whom they provide regular care
- Campaigners may handle postal voting documents if that's a feature of a job they hold (e.g. a postal worker)
- New limits on the number of postal votes that can be handed in – a maximum of five plus their own for each poll

Absent voting – A campaigner is:

Who is a
campaigner?

- a candidate at the election(s)
- an election agent
- employed by the candidate (for the purposes of the candidate's activities at the election)
- a member of a registered political party who is carrying out activity to promote a particular outcome at an election
- someone employed by a registered political party in connection with that party's political activities

Voter Identification

- Voters in this election will need to provide a form of accepted photographic ID if they wish to vote in person at a polling station.
- Voters will be able to present out of date photographic ID so long as the photograph is still a good likeness.
- If a voter fails to present a form of accepted photographic ID they will not be issued with a ballot paper.
- This includes those who act as a proxy for another person.

Accepted forms of Voter ID

- 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 the ERO by 5pm on Tuesday 28th April.

Accepted forms of Voter ID (1)

International travel

- Passport issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or a British Overseas Territory
- Passport or passport card issued by an EEA state or a country whose citizens are Commonwealth citizens

Driving and Parking

- Driving licence (issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state)
- A Blue Badge

Accepted forms of Voter ID (2)

Local travel

- Older Person's bus pass funded by the UK government
- Disabled Person's bus pass funded by the UK government
- Oyster 60+ Card funded by the UK government
- Freedom pass
- National Entitlement card issued by a local authority in Scotland

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- 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- Disabled person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- Senior SmartPass issued in NI
- Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass issued in NI
- War Disablement SmartPass issued in NI
- 60+ SmartPass issued in NI
- Half Fare SmartPass issued in NI

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Accepted forms of Voter ID (3)

Proof of age

- Identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card)

Other Government issued documents

- Biometric immigration document
- Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identify Card)

- Ministry of Defence Form 100 (HM Armed Forces Veteran Card)
- Nationality identity card issued by an EEA state
- Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland
- Voter Authority Certificate
- Anonymous Elector's Document

Campaigning dos and don'ts

- Do use imprints on all your campaign material, including websites.
- Do comply with planning rules relating to advertising hoardings and large banners.
- Do make sure outdoor posters are removed 2 weeks after the election.
- Do not produce material that looks like a poll card.
- Do not pay people to display your adverts (unless they display adverts as part of their normal business).
- Do not handle any postal voting documents you are not entitled to

Code of conduct for campaigners (1)

- 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 confirm to the requirements of electoral law
 - Ensure electors are aware they can apply to register or for an absent vote online
 - Include the EROs address for the return of any paper forms
 - Ensure 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 the ERO

Code of conduct for campaigners (2)

- Postal voting documents:
 - Never touch any of an elector's postal voting documents
 - 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.

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Polling day

- Polling stations open from 7am to 10pm
- Office open 6.45am to 10.15pm for queries or problems relating to the administration of the election
 - for 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
- Voters can request to have their ID checked in private

Completed postal votes handed in to polling stations

- Postal votes can be handed into polling stations within the voting area
- Anyone returning postal votes by hand must complete a postal vote return form, otherwise the postal votes will be rejected
- Polling station staff may assist anyone wishing to hand in postal votes to complete the relevant form
- An individual may hand in a maximum of 6 electors' postal votes (their own and five others) per poll
- If the individual is a campaigner they may only handle their own postal vote and those that belong to close family members or people for whom they provide care
- Polling station staff will not be able to provide advice about whether someone is a campaigner, but they may reject postal votes if they have reasonable cause to believe an individual is a campaigner
- If postal votes are handed in not in accordance with the rules, then they will be rejected

Completed postal votes handed in to council buildings

- Restrictions on the numbers of returned postal votes and who may hand in postal votes are the same as for polling stations
- An individual may hand in a maximum of 6 electors' postal votes (their own and five others) per poll
- Postal votes for all contested electoral areas may be returned by hand to the Elections Office at Trafford Town Hall until 10pm on polling day
- Staff authorised by the Returning Officer may assist anyone wishing to hand in postal votes to complete the relevant form
- Postal votes dropped off to reception or other council office desks or locations or any posted into council letter boxes without completing the postal vote return form will be rejected and will not be counted

Counting of votes

- Details of the count venue and timings will be confirmed in due course.
- Candidates, election agents, counting agents and one other person appointed by the candidate are entitled to attend. Any limitations on numbers will be confirmed in due course.
- We will be issuing a polling day and count guide which will provide all of the information required.

Spending issues

Candidate spending

- Defined as certain expenses ‘used for the purposes of the candidate’s election’ during the regulated period.
- Responsibility of **election agent**
- Limit on expenses:
 - £960 + 8 pence per elector in ward/division on register in force on 1st February
 - reduced for joint candidates
- Must get and keep receipts (over £20)

Candidates' spending returns

- Returns due 35 calendar days after result of election – Friday 12th June
- Returns made public by **Returning Officer**
- Sample of returns may be reviewed by the **Electoral Commission**
- Failure to submit a spending return is a criminal offence enforceable by police
- No spending will be reimbursed

Contacts

Key Contact Details

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Sara Todd	Returning Officer	0161 912 1900
Dominique Sykes	Lead Deputy Returning Officer	0161 912 4293 dominique.sykes@trafford.gov.uk
Sara Saleh	Deputy Returning Officer	0161 912 4009 sara.saleh@trafford.gov.uk
John Addison Emma Malpas Molly Shaw	Principal Governance Manager Candidates and Agents Queries Senior Governance Officer	0161 921 1815 john.addison@trafford.gov.uk emma.malpas@trafford.gov.uk 0161 912 4005 molly.shaw@trafford.gov.uk

Electoral Commission contact: 0333 103 1928

Questions

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Thank you